

## Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Nine, Part 6

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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A few days ago we attended the memorial of a dear friend of my wife, a fellow teacher who unfortunately passed away. The service was held in Mira Mesa, at the church where her friend had worshiped, called the Church of the Good Shepherd. Appropriately, very near the street corner where the church is located stands a sculptured representation of Christ the Good Shepherd, with a lamb in His arms and a sheep at His feet.

When we entered the driveway and took in the scene, my mind flashed back twenty-five years or so, when my wife and I used to live only a few blocks from this very church and would take our dog Kedar on walks in the evening through the neighborhood. The picture of that statue of Christ and the sheep has remained vivid in our minds because when we walked our dog and approached that corner, she became deathly afraid and would cringe in terror. There was something there, maybe in the way the spotlights fell on the figures, that made her pull away in fear and we would have to gently coax her and assure her that there was nothing of which to be afraid. All this came back to my mind as we went back to that church and passed that display.

Reflecting on this, I thought, how much like our little Kedar are so many people! They see in Christ the Good Shepherd something from which to recoil in fear and pull away in distrust. How very sad! Jesus came to show us what God is like. He came to reveal the One Who wishes to be our Friend. But Satan, the enemy, has cast God in a false light and tried his hateful best to cause humans to turn away in fear. He's become an expert at it. Through the living Word and the written Word, God has revealed Himself as a loving, kind and merciful Being Who wants the happiness and eternal joy of His creatures.

When man disobeyed and gave Satan the keys to this planet, God was ready with a plan to win back the right to save His creatures. A Redeemer, God Himself, would come and provide a ransom. He would leave His throne, His glory and come to this world and take upon Himself man's nature. Satan shuddered when in the Garden of Eden he first heard the news of God's plan. Holy angels were astounded at what God proposed to do. Amazing grace! Unheard of kindness!

Through the centuries God's people looked for the coming of the Messiah, God's anointed One, Who would bring salvation. Now, through the prophetic ministry of faithful Daniel, God chose to reveal important information concerning the time and objectives of the mission of the Messiah. One of God's most exalted angels, Gabriel, related to the prophet critical details concerning this ambitious enterprise, the most daring rescue plan ever devised.

The word of the Lord was, "seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy." Daniel 9:24. With these six infinitives God outlined the goals of the Anointed One.

What an incredibly important verse! We will do well to cover the basics of what is contained in these words in our short study today. First, we'll take a look at the three-fold structure revealed in the verse, and then the three-fold application of its message.

When we analyze the structural framework of Gabriel's words, we see that its presentation conforms with the format of Hebrew poetry and is so printed in many Bibles. The six lines are set forth as three couplets, or pairs, with the first two couplets being excellent examples of "synonymous parallelism," in which the thought of the first line is repeated in the second. This is classic Hebrew poetry, which consisted of "rhyme of thought," not rhyme of sound. I well remember being introduced to the concepts of Hebrew poetry in the twelfth-grade classroom of our teacher

Herschel Hendley. It will be important to keep these principles in mind later, as we examine the remaining verses of the chapter.

Notice the repetition in the first two couplets. In the first pair, we have the phrase "to make an end of sins" repeating the thought that precedes it, "to finish the transgression." In this couplet, "to make an end of" is synonymous with "to finish," and "sin" is the same thing as "transgression." This is basic Hebrew poetry. In the same way, in the second couplet we see that, "to bring in everlasting righteousness" echoes the previous line, "to make reconciliation for iniquity." The last couplet is not an example of synonymous parallelism, but of "synthetic parallelism," in which the second line adds to, modifies or explains the thought of the first line.

The three-fold application of these phrases has to do foremost with the mission of the Messiah and we will spend most of our time with that in focus. But it also has to do with Daniel's people, the Jews, and it has to do, in a third application, with you and me. We'll take just a brief look at verse 24 as it relates to the Jewish nation. We would be remiss in ignoring this application because Gabriel said, "seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city." Direct application to Daniel's people is unmistakable.

The verb translated "determined" has the meaning of "decreed, decided or cut." Our word "decide" means "cut off." That meaning is seen more clearly in the noun "decision," as compared with incision and excision. The seventy weeks were "cut off" of the longer 2300 day period. Strong's Lexicon gives the meaning "to divide, determine, mark out," and in his Exhaustive Concordance he stresses the Chaldee meaning of "to cut off, or to cut in pieces." Gesenius gives the meaning as "to cut, decide, determine, destine." The Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon renders it "divide, determine," from a root which means "cut, cut off, decide." The Greek translation made by Theodotian in the second century A.D. uses a Greek word (sunetmethesan, which is the word in the Septuagint translations

today) which means "to cut off," or "cut short." The commentator Barnes says, "The meaning would seem to be, that this portion of time--the seventy weeks-- was *cut off* from the whole of duration, or cut out of it, as it were, and set by itself for a definite purpose." Concerning this word the Pulpit Commentary says, "It means 'to cut off.'"

The New American Standard Bible and many others say, "seventy weeks have been decreed for your people." The Douay-Rheims Bible says, "seventy weeks are shortened upon your people." The Darby translation says, "seventy weeks are apportioned out upon thy people." The Vulgate uses the verb *abbreviare*, "to cut short."

Although it's the only time in the Bible that this particular word is used, the meaning is clear from the context, and we've been studying this principle in our last few sermons; that this period of seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 literal years, was a time especially allotted to "your people and city," that is, the Jews and Jerusalem. The purposes outlined by Gabriel have a very real application toward the nation of Israel.

Remember that Gabriel came the second time in response to Daniel's prayer, which was a prayer acknowledging the sins of his people which brought about God's displeasure and the captivity. Daniel held nothing back in his confession, but used practically every word in the Hebrew dictionary to express the sins of his nation. He says, "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law and has departed so as not to obey Your voice." Daniel 9:5, 6, 11. In his prayer, Daniel confessed their sin in not obeying God's will for the nation.

It was absolutely true then, that as pertaining to the nation of Israel, this 490 year period was given to "finish the transgression and make an end of sins," that is, the transgression and sin of rebelling against God, to which Daniel referred in his prayer.

These were the sins sadly recorded in Scriptures such as II Kings 17 and other chapters which related the departure of God's people from His design. It was God's purpose that during these 490 years of additional probation, the nation replace those evil patterns by "bringing in everlasting righteousness," that is, complete conformity to the plan for Israel as God had originally purposed it. This was most certainly the will and wish of God. It was His design that Israel learn from the discipline and come forth to be reborn in service and love to God and their fellow man. The glorious prophecies of Ezekiel could have been fulfilled in them had they been truly converted and lived out His purpose for them. They didn't choose that way, as we have noted.

So, the first application of the words of Gabriel can be seen toward the nation of the Jews. Without question, however, these words apply *primarily* to the mission and goals of the Messiah. The lofty objectives set forth, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy," relate most directly with the work to be accomplished when Jesus would come to this earth and God would become a man.

When Satan was successful in deceiving mankind into sin and rebellion against God, he felt certain that the chain of disobedience that held the human family captive would never be broken. They had consented to become his allies, and they were his forever. The same claim that he had advanced in heaven, that God's law was defective and impossible to obey, he proclaimed now with even greater vigor, having seduced the human family into joining his train of wickedness.

But God announced a radical plan, an unimaginable solution. It was a plan of rescue that would have never crossed human minds. About that time, or perhaps shortly before this, the story of King Darius, Daniel, and the lions' den unfolded. Though Darius was a good king, though the law broken by Daniel was unfair and capricious, in a million years Darius would never have considered

taking Daniel's place in the den as a solution to his problem. But that's exactly what God did. He stepped off his royal throne, laid aside His glorious robes of divinity and came to this earth, where lurked the roaring lion who seeks whom he may devour. Jesus came here as God in the flesh to "make an end of sins" and to "bring in everlasting righteousness.

Jesus defeated the devil and redeemed man's disgraceful fall. He demonstrated beyond question that Adam had no reason to disobey. He took upon Himself our nature and demonstrated that every son and daughter of Adam can overcome as He did, by faith in God and the strength of His Spirit. He came, not to the Garden of Eden, but to the Garden of Gethsemane. He came, not to a paradise where birds and butterflies would light upon your hand, but to a harsh wilderness with wild and ferocious beasts. Yet He overcame the devil.

Notice how emphatically the Bible states the certainty and completeness of His victory. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Jesus walked the same path of life that we do. Though He was completely God, He did not use His divinity to overcome, but conquered through the Spirit and the Word, the very same resources available to you and me.

By "condemning sin in the flesh" Christ showed that Satan's charges against the government and law of God were totally false. Christ came, not as Adam in Edenic perfection, but after 4,000 years had scarred the world. Paul describes His condition as coming "in the likeness of sinful flesh." It was a very real human body that Christ lived in, one on which four millennia of declension and weakness had visited. His name "Immanuel" means "God with us." It was no mirage, no illusion. Jesus became tired (John 4:6), hungry (Matthew 21:18) and thirsty (John 4:7; 19:28) just as we do.

A week ago or so a letter to the editor appeared in our local newspaper written by someone who doesn't know the truth about our God. He spoke bitterly about a "god" (he wouldn't give Him the courtesy of capitalizing His name) who doesn't care about human suffering. I was unable to rest with these strong charges being made against the Lord I know and love. The Spirit moved me to write a response to his harsh accusations, pointing out that our God does care and knows all about suffering, having come to this world Himself and experienced life on this planet, enduring all the insults and cruelty that were heaped upon Him. The One Who is in heaven guiding the stars knows personally and cares about the tragedy of the human condition.

In one of the most emphasized verses in all of the Bible we are told, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15. He knew what it was to be tempted and tried. "We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15.

He overcame. He lived without sinning, even by a thought. His testimony was, "the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." John 14:30. To His question, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" His rejecters had no answer. John 8:46. His enemies, who scrutinized every one of His movements, who parsed and dissected every one of His words, could find nothing with which to accuse Him. In the end, they had to hire false witnesses, who contradicted themselves. Their final charge was based on a statement misquoted and taken out of context. "And some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" Mark 15:57, 58.

That is not what Jesus said! They misquoted Him. What He had said was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," referring to the fact that *they* would "destroy this temple," that is, put Him to death on the cross (not that He would destroy the physical temple in an act of sedition). John 2:19. The very work that they were about to do they charged against the Lord! This has been one of the devil's most successful tactics from the beginning of time.

Christ's victory over Satan was complete. He was as Samson, pulling the kingdom of the devil down by His death. The nails that the adversary put through Christ's hands ended up being nails in his own coffin. The words, "It is finished" were uttered neither as a whisper nor a whimper. They sprang forth as the words of a Champion, a conquering Hero, a triumphant Victor. In His achievement, Paul says He "disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Colossians 2:15.

By His resurrection God has given us assurance that all who believe receive eternal life in Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16. How rich and true were the words of the prophecy describing the mission of the Messiah, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness." The apostle John puts it this way. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." I John 3:8.

One more couplet follows, describing very important things to take place during these first seventy weeks. The last pair includes the words, "to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." The word "vision" in this verse is the Hebrew *chazon*. Except for one time when it is used in a very general way in chapter one, where it says, "Daniel had understanding in all visions (*chazon*) and dreams" (Daniel 1:17), this word is *not* used until chapter eight. Another word altogether is used to introduce

the visions and dreams of chapters two, four and seven. Therefore we must conclude that the purpose of the seventy weeks are to “seal up” the vision of chapter eight.

What does “seal up” mean in this context? The Hebrew verb (*chatham*) is found most often in settings where documents or evidence were being “sealed” for authenticity. Jeremiah reports, “I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed the money in the balances.” Jeremiah 32:10. Jezebel had letters written in King Ahab’s name and sealed them to show they were authentic. I Kings 21:8. Those who pledged themselves to a covenant of renewal in the days of Nehemiah put their seal on the document to confirm their intention. Nehemiah 9:38; 10:1. King Ahasuerus told Esther and her uncle Mordecai, “You yourselves write a decree for the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring; for a letter which is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.” Esther 8:8. This was done so everyone would know the document was true and reliable.

The key thought in this phrase is that by the faithful fulfillment of the various events that were to take place in these first seventy weeks, which share the same beginning point as the larger 2300 day prophecy of chapter eight, confidence would be cultivated that what was promised in the larger vision would likewise be fulfilled. If you were to tell someone how to get to your house, in addition to giving the address of the final destination you might say something like, “turn right after you pass the Arco station, then turn left after you come to the Albertson’s store.” In the same way, God designed that by the precise fulfillment of the events described in the first seventy weeks, assurance would be inspired in the validity of the whole. The concept of “seal up the vision” means to “authenticate, confirm, verify, give evidence for and attest or witness to” the veracity of the vision of chapter eight.

What did the prophecy of the seventy weeks say? By the time the period concluded, Jerusalem would be rebuilt, including its wall

and the Messiah would appear. What does history tell us? By the time the seventy weeks were finished, Jerusalem was rebuilt, including its temple and wall. Through the command of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, the Jewish people were allowed to return and rebuild, even charging expenses to the king's account. The rebuilding of the wall took place under the guidance of Nehemiah and as the prophecy pointed out, indeed it would be during "troublesome times." Daniel 9:25. The hindering influences of Tobiah, Sanballat and Geshem are recorded in the book bearing Nehemiah's name. Nevertheless, the construction was completed within the time specified by prophecy. History tells us Jesus Christ came as the Messiah. (The word "Messiah" in Hebrew and the word "Christ" in Greek both mean "anointed One.") The prophecy (of chapter eight) was "sealed up," or authenticated by the accurate fulfillment of the events, confirmed by history, brought to view within the seventy weeks.

Lastly, during this period, which ended by A.D. 34, the Most Holy would be anointed. The term "Most Holy" is used to describe the inner sanctum of God's meeting place, the tabernacle of the wilderness and the temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel. When God commissioned the building of the wilderness tent of meeting under the direction of Moses, at the completion and erection of the structure there was a dedication of the building. By a special service it was set apart for holy use. With all the pieces in place, it was finally inaugurated for service, as described in the last chapter of Exodus. "So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Exodus 40:33, 34.

Of course, that tabernacle with its furnishings, priesthood and offerings, served only as an illustration of the true tabernacle in heaven, the one "made without hands," which the "Lord pitched and not man." Before the expiration of the seventy weeks, when Jesus ascended into the heavens, having completed His mission of becoming the Sacrifice for sin, the Holy places above were "anointed" for the beginning of Christ's priestly ministry in our behalf. Though our human eye cannot discern past the curtain

that now separates, by faith we can enter within the veil and claim His atoning sacrifice for our sins. This the writer of the book of Hebrews makes clear. Christ is now our High Priest ministering salvation through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thus every detail of Gabriel's explanation concerning the seventy weeks was fulfilled accurately.

There is a third application of this verse, bearing on our lives directly. It is because of Jesus' victory at the cross that His accomplishments can be given to us. Unworthy though we are, Christ stands ready to minister to us the benefit of His attainments. We are like players on a team of last place losers who have been traded to the winning team just in time for the superbowl celebration. Through His mercy He freely forgives. By His grace He strengthens us for daily living. Thus the words of Gabriel have meaning for you and me personally as in our lives Christ designs "to finish the transgression in us, to make an end of sins in us, to make reconciliation for iniquity for us, to bring in everlasting righteousness in us, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy in our behalf." That's what the Good News teaches us. He wants to impart to us His victory in overcoming sin and giving us everlasting righteousness. He wants to live out His life within us. He wants to use us as evidence that His power is stronger than that of sin or the devil. He wants to give to us the anointing of His Spirit that we might live holy lives. The prophecy of the seventy weeks was fulfilled completely in the life of the Savior. Will you allow it to be fulfilled in yours?