

## Daniel's Vision of Chapter 9, Part 7

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

January 31, 2009

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When King David was at the height of his success, we're told that his armies defeated the king of Rabbah, a city of the Ammonites. "Then David took their king's crown from his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it. And it was set on David's head." I Chronicles 20:2.

Although we don't have a precise figure for what a "talent" was back then, it was probably about 75 pounds or so. Try to imagine wearing something that weighed that much on your head! I'm not sure it would be too comfortable. But it was beautiful and of great value!

The crown Jesus has prepared for you will be more beautiful than the one David wore that day. It will be filled with jewels and precious stones and shine like the sun. It will be a crown of life, and presented to everyone who overcomes in His name. This crown is yours now. The Bible tells us, "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." Revelation 3:11. In just a short while Jesus Himself will place this crown on you, if you are faithful to Him. Are you looking forward to that day? Are you living your life in the expectation of that moment? Are you willing to do whatever He asks?

This crown has been purchased at a great price, even the death of the Son of God. The Lord was kind enough to reveal through His prophets important details of His plan of salvation, and we've been studying one of the greatest of His prophecies in the book of Daniel, chapter nine.

Because such vital information about Jesus' love and His plan to win back planet Earth is disclosed in this vision, the devil has been hard at work to obscure and twist it. But through diligent study and the illumination of His Spirit, we can understand the message He has for us in this chapter! God intended it to be understood by His children, so that His people in the days of Daniel would be encouraged by knowing what His plan would be and so that we, looking back can see how every specification of His predictions came true, as verified by history.

Last week we noted how one of the purposes of this portion of the vision was to “seal up,” or “confirm, authenticate” the prophecy and vision; that is, when we see how accurately the details of this prophecy were fulfilled in history, we can have confidence that the whole vision (of chapter eight) likewise will come true according to His Word.

This is important because, while the way-markers in chapter nine were things that could be seen by the human eye and verified by history, the event to which the prophecy of chapter eight points is something which cannot be seen by human vision. It took place in heaven, not on earth. Our natural vision cannot penetrate beyond the curtain at this present time. But the eye of faith, bolstered by the confidence of the fulfilled predictions given within Gabriel’s explanation, knows that God’s word has come true.

Jesus said on one occasion, “Let all things be confirmed by two or three witnesses.” In this case, He has provided four “witnesses” on which we can base our confidence. These four events are the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the appearance of the Messiah, the unique death of the Messiah, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Notice that the fate of the beloved city, Jerusalem, its rebuilding and destruction, form “bookends” to this seventy-week section of the prophecy.

Remember that when Gabriel began his explanation, he said, “seventy weeks are determined upon your people,” and we discovered that the word translated “determined” comes from a Chaldee root meaning “divide, decide, cut, cut off or cut up.” We can look at these seventy weeks, these 490 years as being “cut off” from the larger period of 2300 years, since Gabriel’s explanatory message pertains to the vision of chapter eight. We can also look at these seventy weeks as being “subdivided,” or “segmented” for further clarification and focus. This aspect will come into our view as we read the rest of Gabriel’s words.

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troubles times. And after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end of it shall be with a flood. And till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate; even until the

consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.” Daniel 9:25-27.

We see then that this period of seventy weeks, 490 years, is further divided up into three sections; 7 weeks, 62 weeks and 1 week. Together, of course, they add up to seventy weeks. With reference to these three sections, we’re going to propose the following dates as being the markers on Gabriel’s timeline, and then discuss them in a little more detail. The end of the 7 weeks was reached in 408 B. C. The end of the 69 weeks was in A. D. 27. The “midst of the week” is A. D. 31, the year of Christ’s death, and the end of the seventy weeks is A.D. 34, when the Gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles in earnest. In each of these dates, there might be some room for discussion (for example, there was a Passover that occurred on Friday both in A.D. 30 and 31), but these dates provide a perfectly reasonable and harmonious symmetry, and taken together provide a sound basis of understanding.

Basically, the first section of 7 “weeks,” or 49 years (applying the “day for a year in symbolic prophecy” guideline, because this is a part of the symbolic prophecy of chapter eight) was allotted for the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. With the beginning point being established as 457 B. C., 49 years later would bring us to 408 B.C. History tells us that the rebuilding process, including the construction of the temple and wall, was completed by that time. Hindrances, noted by Gabriel as “troublesome times,” such as the attempt to rescind the decree by Cyrus and Darius giving the Jews permission to rebuild (see Ezra 4 and 5), and the attacks of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem in the days of Nehemiah during the building of the wall, tried to delay the process, but through God’s mercy these were overcome.

If we add the two segments together, the 7 “weeks” and the 62 “weeks,” we have a total of 69 weeks, or 483 years. From the beginning point of 457 B. C., if we attempt to add 483 we find that we cross the transition line between B. C. (“before Christ”) and A. D. (“in the year of our Lord”). Because of this we have to make two adjustments. First, we must take into account that when chronologists made their calculations long ago, they neglected to do something very important. Do you know what that was? They forgot to put a “zero” between 1 B. C. and 1 A. D.! In mathematics, “zero” is a necessary integer. Any golfer knows that if his or her score is +1 and a birdie is attained, the score then becomes par (or “zero”) and not - 1. So in our calculations we will have to make an adjustment and add “one” to replace the missing zero.

We should point out also, that when chronologists made their computations, it became apparent later that their calculations were slightly off, with the result that

we now place the year of Christ's birth in the year 4 B. C., which strictly speaking is a contradiction, but is nevertheless accurate. This is the date proposed by Ussher in his chronology. Why was this date chosen? The Bible tells us that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1), who died, according to history, in 4 B.C.

But the prophecy of Daniel nine does not speak directly to Christ's birth, as important as that event was. The text says that there would be 69 weeks to "Messiah the Prince." In my Bible, those two words are capitalized, which I believe is proper. Remember, Gabriel had stated the purposes or the goals to be accomplished during this period of highlighted time. During this period "reconciliation for iniquity" was to be achieved, and "everlasting righteousness" was to be brought in. These are things that God would do through the ministry of Jesus. These words most certainly direct our attention to the mission of Christ.

The 69<sup>th</sup> week was to bring us to "Messiah the Prince." This reference is not to Jesus' birth, but to His baptism. The word *messiah* is a Hebrew term meaning "anointed one." The Greek word for that term is *christos*, from which we derive the word "Christ." To say, "Jesus Christ" is not using a "first and last name," but a name and title; Jesus the Christ, or anointed One. This "anointing" refers to the beginning of His ministry, not the beginning of His life in the cradle of Bethlehem.

What was the purpose of anointing? When set apart for sacred duty in Old Testament times, certain candidates were anointed to signify the holiness of their calling and the divine means of its accomplishment. Kings, priests and prophets were anointed prior to the beginning of their service. Aaron the priest and his sons were anointed by oil and by blood. Exodus 29:7, 20. King David was anointed by oil through the ministry of Samuel. I Samuel 16:13. Elisha the prophet was anointed by Elijah. I Kings 19:16. By this means they were commissioned for their work and promised God's help in being successful.

Jesus is the fulfillment and ultimate Expression of all of these offices. He is our High Priest, ministering now in the tabernacle not made with hands. He is the King of kings, coming soon in glory. He is the Prophet, through Whom God speaks of heavenly things. When was Jesus anointed? It is true that Jesus was filled with the Spirit from His birth, but anointing took place when one was ready to begin his work. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) when He was baptized, when His public ministry began. It was then that the King of heaven spoke out and said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17. What

do you call the son of a king? A prince. So, at His baptism He became *Messiah* (anointed One) the *Prince* (the Son of the King).

Early in His ministry, Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth, where He had been brought up. “And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has *anointed Me to preach the gospel* to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD.’

“Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” Luke 4:16-21.

Chronological information about the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is sketchy, but Luke gives the reference of the “fifteenth year of Tiberius” as pertaining to John’s ministry and Jesus’ baptism. The year A.D. 27 coincides with our best efforts to determine the exact placement of that year. Taking the beginning point of 457 B.C. and adding 483 years (69 “weeks”) gives the number 26, and then adding one more (for the absence of the “zero” year) results in the year A.D. 27.

Jesus would then have been about thirty years of age when He began His ministry, which agrees with the testimony of Luke 3:23. This was the age when a Jewish man would be considered to be an adult. This was the age when Levites were eligible to serve in the temple (Numbers 4:47) and when King David began to reign. II Samuel 5:4.

Last week we discussed the phrase “anoint the Most Holy,” as being one of the objectives of the seventy weeks. It is true that the term “Most Holy” refers, according to the way it is used in other Scriptures, to the Most Holy *Place*, but it would not be improper to see in this phrase an application to the “Most Holy *One*.” After all, it is because God is holy that the place of the tabernacle is holy. His divine presence is what makes the place holy.

Gabriel said, “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” Here we enter upon holy ground. Here we must recognize that we are approaching sacred themes which necessitate our fullest and most reverent attention. Two key phrases come to light in this passage; “cut off” and “not for Himself.”

What does the term “cut off” mean? The Hebrew word (*karath*) means “to cut down, to cut off, to cut asunder.” It is a word suggestive of *violent death*. This was certainly an accurate prediction of Jesus’ death. Crucifixion was the most torturous form of death ever invented. Satan was desperate to tempt Jesus to abandon His mission and so he inspired priests, who should have been heralding His ministry, to clamor for His execution. Unlike the animals of sacrifice, the death of the Lamb of God would not be the humane knife to the throat, which in the hand of a skillful operator would hardly be felt. No, it was by the most cruel device engineered by man that our Lord would die.

To be “cut off” brings to mind several salvation stories in the Bible. The wood that formed Noah’s ark of salvation was “cut off.” The tree that cured the bitter waters of Marah when Israel left Egypt was “cut off.” The stick that Elisha threw in the water to recover the sunken axe head was “cut off.” In each of those cases, the death of the agent, the wood, was necessary for the salvation of others. The wood had to be mercilessly chopped down in order to save.

But the Hebrew term says much more than “violent death.” It speaks to “classification of death” as well as to “manner of death.” Does the Bible speak about more than one type of death? Absolutely! There is the “first death,” called by the Bible “sleep,” which is the death to which we all succumb until His return. That is not the death to be feared.

The Bible tells us about the second death with these words: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the *second death* has no power. Revelation 20:6. It is clear that the ones of whom John spoke had died; they died the “first death,” because they will be resurrected, or raised from the dead at His coming. But they will *not be subject to the second death*. The “second death” is to be eternally separated from God, Who is the Source of life. It is the death to which Jesus referred when He said, “God so loved the world, that whoever believes in Him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. It is clear that those who believed have *died* (that is, they have fallen asleep in the first death), but not *perished* in the sense of being eternally lost.

Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:23. The contrast Paul is addressing, which is the same as that to what Jesus referred, is the difference between eternal life and eternal death. *The second death is the final reward of the wicked*. In Old Testament parlance, it was to be “cut off.” It was much more than “to die;” to be “cut off” in the Old Testament society meant that you were “disowned, disinherited and abandoned.” It meant not

only that you “died,” but that you were “lost, condemned, forsaken and rejected.” The term encompasses the “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” which Jesus used to describe the unsaved.

It is to this death that the angel Gabriel speaks. The Messiah was to be “cut off.” Jesus died a cruel, ignominious and painful death, to be sure. We would not underestimate that in the least. But it was much more than that! He died the second death. In fact, when the Bible says his grave was with the rich “at His death,” the Hebrew for death is plural! Isaiah 53:9. He made His grave with the rich at His deaths, which is accurate, because He died the first death (sleep) and the second death (the penalty for transgression). He experienced what the lost sinner will feel on that last day. He felt the abandonment, the rejection, the forlorn feeling that the wicked will sense when they cry out and gnash their teeth. This sensation Christ experienced on the cross, and wrung from His soul the plea, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? In Aramaic He said, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” Matthew 27:46. Those words were misunderstood back then, some thinking He was crying out for Elijah. They are still misunderstood today! What we need to realize is that Jesus died the death of the guilty, the lost sinner. He experienced the second death. He drank the full measure of the cup of iniquity. He became sin for us, a sight abhorrent to Deity, and God shielded His face from His Son.

We may sense guilt when we sin, but it is only a small measure of what guilt is. God allows us to feel some pain, that we may know that sin is wrong and be encouraged to repent. But Jesus felt the awful woe of unmeasured guilt, even the guilt of the whole human race.

Someone might be asking, “If Christ died the second death, the death of the lost sinner, how could He say He would rise again? Good question! There are thirteen references in the Gospels to Christ predicting He would rise on the third day. Doesn’t this diminish the quality of His sacrifice? No! It is true that He made those predictions. He made them by faith, the same faith that Abraham had when he and Isaac went up Mount Moriah and Abraham, knowing that the Lord had commanded that he offer Isaac as a sacrifice, said to the servants, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.” Genesis 22:5. How could Abraham say “we will come back”? It was by faith. Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, if necessary, to fulfill the covenant promise.

Jesus said He would rise again, but when the guilt of the world was laid on Him, He indeed felt the woe and agony of the lost sinner. He said in Gethsemane, “My

soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.” Matthew 26:38. On the cross, He knew what it felt like to be forsaken of God. It was a very real sacrifice. He “tasted death (the second death; the death that is the wages of sin) for everyone.” Hebrews 2:9. He was willing to give up His eternal existence that we might be saved. *It had to be thus*, for our salvation to be accomplished. He had to die the death of the lost for the scales of divine justice to balance. If Jesus did not die the death of the sinner, Satan would be ready to cry, “Unfair.”

He would be “cut off,” but not for Himself. No, it was not for any sin of His own that Jesus died, for He was sinless. But somehow, and I say this reverently, through a *miracle as great as the incarnation when God became man, Jesus became sin*. “For He made Him Who knew no sin *to be sin* for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” II Corinthians 5:21.

He “made Him to be sin.” It was more than merely pasting it on Him like a label. He became sin. He became vile and ugly and repulsive in the sight of the Father. The descriptions of sin in the Bible are neither flattering nor pretty. He became the description of Isaiah 1 where we read, “Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment.” Isaiah 1:5, 6. That’s what God saw when He looked at Jesus!

Have you ever seen something so ugly and repugnant that you had to turn away, your stomach became queasy and you became violently ill? He became, through the process of becoming the Sacrifice for sin, our Substitute, the description found in Revelation 3:17. “You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.” Again, I speak reverently. What is the result of being in that condition, as found in that passage? It is the disgust which results in vomiting. Do you see the application here? It was as if Jesus, in becoming so closely identified with sin, for us, caused God to turn away in repulsion. Do you appreciate what Jesus did for you?

He became the curse and was seen that way by God. For our sake, He became the embodiment of evil. That’s why when speaking to Nicodemus, He referred to the snake on the pole and said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:14, 15. A snake on a pole representing Christ? It doesn’t seem to make sense! A snake represents evil in the Bible, doesn’t it? Yet for our sakes, Christ “became sin.” I can’t explain it. I can only accept it and receive the free gift of salvation He provides.

Spoke the prophet Isaiah, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken (as with leprosy), smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken, and they made His grave with the wicked--but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, he shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge, My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with (or “accounted as”) the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.” Isaiah 53:4-12.

The death of Jesus on the cross was unique. The world, the universe, had never before witnessed something like this. He died of a broken heart. It was typical that crucifixion would prolong the agony of the victim and death would come mercifully after a few days. But Jesus died within about six hours! It was a matter of surprise to the officials that He had already expired, and so a soldier confirmed His death by thrusting his spear into Christ’s side. It was a one-of-a-kind death offered by our Savior. He was “cut off, but not for Himself.” He had no sin of which to repent. He died for us. The death He died should have been ours. Because of sin, we deserved it. What sacrifice is this! The Commander of heaven, the Creator of the universe, suffering and dying that His wayward children might have the life that was His! This thought should call forth the greatest appreciation from our hearts. How can we turn away in apathy when “so great salvation” has been given to us!