

Daniel's Vision Of Chapter 9, Part 8

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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When the Lord revealed vital truth about His plan of salvation to Daniel through the angel Gabriel, the devil determined to obscure and twist the message so that the meaning and effectiveness would be lost. To this end he caused the teachers of Israel to focus on those prophecies of the Messiah that highlighted His reign, and not His suffering, so that the Jews of Jesus' day looked for a different messiah, one who would drive the hated Romans out and set up an earthly kingdom. Of course, Jesus didn't meet their expectations. He came to establish a spiritual kingdom. He seemed to be unattached to the political causes of their day, even saying that they should pay taxes to Rome. Their misinterpretation of prophecy caused them to be unprepared for His coming. The devil doesn't care if you study the Bible if he can put his slant on it.

And yet, the prophecy of Daniel 9 clearly pointed to the Messiah's violent death, His being "cut off, but not for Himself." Had they not been misguided by their spiritual leaders, many more would have welcomed the humble Nazarene as the Savior of the world than the few who did.

The devil is still at work to cloud the prophecy of Daniel 9 and distort the message Gabriel gave. The devil knows that if he can cause people to have an incorrect interpretation of God's messages, he can, just as he did before, cause them to be unprepared for His second coming.

And yet it was clearly God's intent that these words be understood. Gabriel said to Daniel, "I have now come forth to give you skill to understand." Daniel 9:22. He said, "Know therefore and understand." Daniel 9:25. Jesus, when commenting on this passage said, "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place' (whoever reads, let him understand)." Matthew 24:15. There must be a reason why God desired us to understand what was written!

Today we will study the last verses of Daniel 9, and as we do so, ask God's blessing to come to a correct understanding of His Word. Take one more look at the message brought by Gabriel, and see how it is laid out.

(v. 24) “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sin,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.

(v. 25) 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 troublous times.

(v. 26) *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. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

(v. 27) *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 9:24-27.

We discussed before the poetic arrangement of this passage, when we looked at the couplets of verse 24. We see also that there is a poetic arrangement in the remainder of the passage, in which there is an *alternating pattern*, an “A / B / a / b” scheme employed. This type of “back and forth” poetry is quite common in Old Testament literature. David sang,

(A) “The LORD is my light and my salvation;

(B) Whom shall I fear?

(a) The LORD is the strength of my life;

(b) Of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1

Do you see in his poem that the first and third lines are basically the same, while the second and fourth are also very similar? Notice how this pattern is revealed in another psalm:

(A) “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret--it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off.

(B) But those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

(a) For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more.

(b) But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” Psalm 37:8-11.

See again how the first and third lines are synonymous, while the second and fourth say basically the same thing. Notice now how this alternating style of poetry is utilized in Gabriel’s explanatory message.

Gabriel begins by speaking of the rebuilding of Jerusalem (v. 25 first part), *then by pointing to the coming Messiah* (second part of v. 25). Then he refers again to the rebuilding of Jerusalem (v. 25, third part), *followed by the mission of the Messiah* (v. 26, first part).

He then addresses the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 26, second part), *then comes back to the mission of the Messiah* (v. 27, first part), ending with the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 27, second part). You will notice the *italics* printed above to make that arrangement clearer.

Seeing it this way, understanding it this way leads to a harmonious whole; a poetic symmetry. There is unity in the presentation of Gabriel and prophetic specifications that history has confirmed as being accurate. The message toggles

between things pertaining to Jerusalem and the *Messiah*. We see the message of these verse as:

Jerusalem will be rebuilt.

Messiah will appear.

The street and wall of Jerusalem will be rebuilt

The Messiah is cut off, but not for Himself

Jerusalem is destroyed

Messiah confirms the covenant, causes the sacrifice to cease

Jerusalem is desolated

That the last part of verse 26 and the last part of verse 27 are saying the same thing is evident from the synonyms used:

“end,” “flood,” “desolations,” “determined” v. 26

“consummation,” “poured out,” “desolate,” “determined” v. 27

Based on the “alternating pattern” already established in the previous verse, it makes perfect sense that the first part of verse 26 be seen as complementary to the verse part of 27. The first part of verse 26 refers to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. As we saw last week, He was “cut off, but not for Himself.” He died a violent death by crucifixion, but more than that, received the sinner’s penalty by experiencing the guilt of the world and feeling the rejection of His holy Father. He felt that sin was so offensive that it would forever separate Him from His beloved Father, yet He was willing to give up His eternal existence to save sinners.

Up to that moment, the message of God’s love through the sacrifice of His Son was taught by the offering of animals. From the first sin in Eden (by stating “For Adam and hi wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them,” it is clear that an animal had to die to provide the garment. Genesis 3:21), for the next 4,000 years animals had been offered on altars as illustrations of the Messiah’s death. The blood of bulls and goats could not atone for sin, but they were God’s appointed means of teaching about the death of the Messiah which would atone for sin.

But the day came when Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary as the Sacrifice for mankind. He was “cut off, but not for Himself.” He died the death of the sinner so we won’t have to. Therefore, when Jesus died, there was no longer any need for animal sacrifices to illustrate His death. No more would earthly priests be required to slay innocent and spotless animals to prefigure the cross, because prophecy had become reality. To Isaac’s question, “Where is the lamb?” the answer rang out from Calvary, “I will provide Myself a Lamb,” or “I will provide Myself as the Lamb.”

How do we know this? “Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Matthew 27:50, 51. This was God’s way of saying that the sacrificial services had come to their end. Type and met anti-type. The “shadow” had met the “Substance.” The New Testament makes it clear that those things which were illustrations (the book of Hebrews speaks of “copies” and “shadows,” Hebrews 8:5) of Jesus’ death are no longer required of Christians. We don’t have to slay a lamb to demonstrate our faith in the Savior. The ceremonial law (which is to be distinguished from the moral law, or God’s Ten Commandments) was abolished at the cross. By His being “cut off,” the Messiah brought “an end to sacrifice and offering.”

The Messiah would “confirm” the “covenant” for one “week.” This includes the everlasting covenant of salvation, by which God has generously made available to all the benefits of salvation through Christ and it takes into consideration the covenant He made with His people Israel, the ones of whom Gabriel spoke when he said, “seventy weeks are determined upon your people.” This special covenant relationship, as we saw a few weeks ago, was subject to annulment if the people did not honor its provisions. We saw that when the Jews declared that they had no king but Caesar, when “last of all He sent His Son,” and they slew Him, Israel’s day as a favored nation came to its end. Yet, there would be a short time in which emphasis would be given to Israel after Christ’s death.

The prophecy said that it would be in the “middle of the week” that the Messiah’s death, which would bring to an end the system of sacrifices, would occur. We noted that the last week of these seventy began in the year A.D. 27, the “fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar,” according to Luke’s Gospel. By general agreement Christ’s public ministry stretched across 3 ½ years. This would place his death squarely in “the middle of the week” of Daniel 9, since seven divided in half is 3 ½.

Because the decree by Artaxerxes went into effect in the late summer or fall of 457 B.C., according to the narrative of Ezra 7, this would also place the beginning of the seventieth week in the fall of A.D. 27 (remember, it is 483 years after 457 B.C., but because there was no “zero” year included by chronologists, we have to add 1 more to the “26,” thereby coming up with 27 A.D.). Three and a half years later would bring us to the spring of A.D. 31 when Jesus died. We know it was the spring, because it was during the Passover that He, as our Passover Lamb, died for our sins on the cross.

The seventy week prophecy closes by predicting the destruction of Jerusalem. How sad! It began Jerusalem’s being rebuilt. The angel Gabriel’s return was sparked by Daniel’s prayer of confession and concern for the ruined city. Despite great opposition, by the guidance of God’s hand the reconstruction took place. But a few centuries later, because of the same insubordination, she would fall once more, not by Babylonian armies this time, but by the Romans. It didn’t need to happen. Jesus would have protected her, as he did from the Assyrians when He sent His angel and smote 185,000 of those proud soldiers, but they refused Him.

Sensing this rejection, with tears of anguish in His voice, He said to the Jewish leaders, “Your house is left to you desolate.” Matthew 23:38. The rejection of Jesus by the Jews resulted in God’s presence leaving them “desolate,” a word drawn directly from Daniel’s prophecy. The *physical* “desolation” would come a little later. Already Christ could see what would happen four decades later, when Olivet would become a forest of crosses as the Romans overthrew the city and slaughtered its inhabitants. He saw the pregnant women violated. He saw her young men thrust through with swords. Yet, He would not force their allegiance. He would not compel their surrender. Love would do all it could, but force is not in God’s arsenal. The nation turned their back on Him, and reluctantly God would turn His back on them. His protective presence being removed, His “strange act,” destruction, would descend and Jerusalem would be leveled, plowed like a field.

We can be certain that this is the event to which the prophecy of the seventy weeks points because of the words of Christ Himself. He advised His followers, “‘When you see the “*abomination of desolation*,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’” Matthew 24:15. Luke reports this counsel as, “When you see Jerusalem *surrounded by armies*, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains,…” Luke 21:20.

It is clear by a comparison of these two passages that the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel refers to the desolating destruction of the Roman armies which took place in A.D. 70. Christians recognized the idolatrous and blasphemous banners (the “abomination”) of the Roman armies near the sacred precincts of the holy city as the fulfillment of the prophecy. True to Christ’s word, not one Christian died in the attack against Jerusalem. They heeded the counsel and fled to Pella, a short distance away, and preserved their lives. The judgment on Jerusalem had been pronounced at the close of the seventy weeks, but in God’s mercy there was a delay in the execution of the sentence.

The early part of Acts demonstrates that the apostles carried forth the Jesus’ command to be His witnesses first in Jerusalem and Judea, then Samaria and to the far reaches of the world. Matthew 28:20. We find in the early chapters of Acts the disciples’ work among the Jews. But as time went on, the focus changed in the story of Acts, toward the Gentile world, confirming that the seventy weeks had come to their end, and the nation of Israel was no longer the “people of God.” The stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and the conversion of Saul/Paul may be placed in the year A.D. 34, when the seventy weeks expired.

Taken this way, there is perfect harmony in the message of Gabriel. History substantiates the prophecy. The purpose of the prophecy, “to seal up vision and prophecy,” is maintained by the four “witnesses” that testify as way-markers on the timeline of prophecy. The mission of the Messiah, as well as the probation of the nation of the Jews is brought into clear focus in the prophetic spotlight prophecy.

Such a revelation of God’s love and a clear warning to repent, as well as being a potent confirmation of the accuracy of the larger prophecy of 2300 years, naturally stirred Satan into bringing discredit and confusion into the picture. Those who studied the prophecy and anticipated the coming of the Messiah, and inquired whether Jesus was the Christ of prophecy were spurned by the religious leaders. Eventually they pronounced a curse on anyone who studied the prophecy of the seventy weeks. Nevertheless, every detail was fulfilled faithfully.

Realizing that the Church after the departure of Christ would greatly benefit by knowing the truths of this vision, Satan has not been slack in his attempts to bring confusion. For most of the Christian era, this prophecy was seen as a seamless whole. The Protestant reformers held that the seventy weeks were intact and continuous.

But then in the 19th century new theories were put forth. The roots of these ideas can be found much earlier, but among Protestants they weren't embraced. Some of the ideas actually came from Jesuit theologians (as Francisco Ribera) who sought to hinder the Protestant movement in the 16th century by teaching that the papacy was not the anti-Christ of prophecy; the appearance of the anti-Christ would be in the far-distant future.

Regarding the views of Bible commentators in the early 19th century, the author L. E. Froom states, "It is to be particularly observed that seventy or more of these expositors began the 2300 years synchronously with the 70 weeks of years--beginning them together in the time of Artaxerxes of Persia and ending the longer period in 1843, 1844, or 1847, most of them ending the seventy weeks at or near the time of the cross. The separation of the seventieth week from the preceding 69 weeks was part of a late development--Futurism--stemming either out of the pro-Catholic positions espoused by James H. Todd (d. 1869) and William Burgh (d. 1866), or from Edward Irving's or J. N. Darby's view set forth at Powerscourt Conference, later championed by the Futurist Plymouth Brethren. It is presently held by most Fundamentalists.

"This comparatively recent isolation of the seventieth week, thrusting it forward into the future, has therefore neither warrant of Protestant Reformation exposition nor of post-Reformation interpretation, until one comes to Todd,..." Froom, Prophetic Faith Of Our Fathers, Vol. IV, p. 408.

Froom continues, "It should also be borne in mind that it was not until the first decade of twentieth century that Dispensationalism, with its rapture theory, and the separation of the seventieth week from the previous sixty-nine weeks of years of Daniel 9, became general in the then newly forming Fundamentalist wing of Protestantism. This was largely brought about by the acceptance of Dr. C. I. Scofield's bold and revolutionary thesis, and the aggressive support given this postulate by the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago." Froom, op. cit., p. 1203, 1204.

So, in the 1830's commentators among the Plymouth Brethren and later certain others such as Scofield, began advancing the concepts of Futurism, including the idea that the last prophetic week of Daniel 9, the seventieth, should be separated by a "gap" of indeterminate length. Along with the "gap" separating the last week from the others, the teaching of the rapture and a future anti-Christ were

introduced, drastically changing the nature and impact of the vision as given by Gabriel.

With Christian kindness we point out that the interpretation of Daniel's vision as given by Gabriel would be *unrecognized by him* in the teachings of most Christian Churches today. The angel might ask, "Who gave the authority to dismantle the pieces of prophecy that I gave?" He might inquire, "Who gave the authority to separate the last week from the other 69, and bring these other teachings into the picture?" The "rapture," as taught by most churches today, is not supported by Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ's coming is but one event, not two separated by a period of seven years. The overly-literalistic interpretations of these teachings miss the mark as to the great issues to which the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation point. The emphasis on literal Israel disregards the Scriptural teaching that the Christian Church now stands in the place of ancient Israel "according to the flesh," as His representatives on earth.

Notice what has happened to this prophecy by these relatively newer ideas. The impact of the four "witnesses" is cut in half. The timing of Christ's unique death is lost in this scheme, because that which brings "an end to sacrifice and offering" is not the death of the Messiah in verse 26, but a rebel at the end of time. The abomination of desolation in the destruction of Jerusalem is shoved into the future, requiring another rebuilding of the temple, along with the re-institution of sacrificial offerings.

We affirm that there is no reason or justification to change the interpretation of the seventy weeks as understood by Protestant Reformers. The seventy weeks, like the garment of Christ, form a seamless whole. God has given to no one a scalpel to slice off the last week, containing so much vital information that confirms the authenticity of the larger 2300 year prophecy. The very purpose of the giving of the seventy weeks, to "seal up vision and prophecy," that is to provide essential data that can be authenticated by history so that our confidence in the truth of the larger vision can have solid footing, is thwarted by the teachings of Futurism and its "gap theory." Jesus loves us! He wants us to know and be ready for His coming!