

LESSON 28

Verses 11-14

In verses 11-14 of his prayer, Daniel praises the justice of God in dealing with his people according to all of the warnings and promises that had been given to Moses. Should we be surprised that Daniel was praising God's justice when he and his fellow exiles were suffering under that justice? It is not surprising at all if you know Daniel. As one commentator noted:

To Daniel it was more important for the God of Israel to retain his integrity and uphold his moral law than for his guilty people to escape the consequences of their infidelity. Had God not fulfilled his word of judgment, little credence could be placed in his word of grace. If a nation like Judah, instructed so perfectly in the truth of God, could fall into idolatry and immorality and defy the Lord to punish them as he had promised to do, why should anyone obey the Almighty or believe in him?

The punishment of the Jews vindicated the holiness and righteousness of God and demonstrated to the world the sanctity of God's law and word. And that was why Daniel here praises and exalts the justice of God.

Verse 12 says that the calamity was unlike anything that had ever happened in the world. Is this literal? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that this was the first of the desolations targeted against God's people and Jerusalem. But no, with regard to the literal severity of the destruction. The language simply stresses the extent of the trouble that befell the city. Matthew 24:21 makes a similar statement about the fall

of Jerusalem in AD 70. The statement here in verse 12 is describing the destruction of the same city, but in 586 BC. A similar description is found in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 5:9 — *And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.*

Notice that Daniel twice reminds God about what God himself had said in the law of Moses (verses 11 and 13). Is it proper to quote the Bible when we pray? I have heard some answer no. Why? Because, they say, God wrote the Bible, and he already knows what is in it. But if I can tell God only things that he does not already know, then I will not have much to pray about! If we take Daniel as an example, then I think we can quote the Bible when we pray (although, as with most things, it is possible to go overboard with that). Consider the following quotes:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The most promising method of prayer is to allow oneself to be guided by the word of the Scriptures, to pray on the basis of a word of Scripture. In this way we shall not become the victims of our own emptiness.

E. M. Bounds: The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved.

Dick Eastman: By bringing God's word directly into our praying, we are bringing God's power directly into our praying.

Armin Gesswein: God's word is known at the throne. Use it every time you pray. It is your prayer language.

Some religious groups have special prayer books. So do we — our Bible is our prayer book.

Verses 15-19

In verses 15-19 of his prayer, Daniel appeals to God's pity on the exiled nation and the ruined city of Jerusalem. He bases his appeal on God's honor and glory. He asks God in verse 17 to restore the sanctuary for God's own sake.

What is Daniel's primary concern in this prayer? It is not the discomfort of the Jews, or his own discomfort. Instead, Daniels' concern is the tarnishing that Daniel and his people have inflicted upon God's image and God's reputation in the eyes of the world. In verse 19 Daniel says:

Delay not, for thy own sake ... because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

To Daniel, the worst part of the captivity was that someone might look at it and conclude that God was not able to deliver his people. Daniel did not pray, "Get me out of this!" Instead Daniel's primary concern was for God and for God's reputation. (Is this how we look at things? Do we think of God first as Daniel did?)

2 Timothy 2:19 — *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

In verse 19 Daniel asks God to do three things: hear, forgive, and act — and, as we will soon see, it doesn't take long for Daniel to get an answer to that request.

But notice also that Daniel prayed for the very thing that the Bible had assured him would happen. Daniel did not sit back, and apathetically say that God will do what God wants to do in God's own time, and there is nothing I can do about it. Daniel knew better than that. He knew that although God certainly works according to his own plans and timetable, God nevertheless works through people—through their actions and through their prayers. God's people are not passive observers in the plan of God; they are active participants. We have a role to play, just as Daniel did. And, as Calvin said, "nothing ... can be better for us than to ask for what he has promised."

Daniel 9:20-21

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

Sometimes God's people have to wait months, years—even a lifetime—for God to answer their prayer. Not so with Daniel. While Daniel was praying, Gabriel came to him in swift flight (perhaps indicating that angels do, in fact, have wings as they are so often depicted).

Prayer has been called the world's greatest wireless connection — and perhaps there is no better example of that than what we see here. And that is not a new illustration — a 1908 commentary on this section of Daniel included the subtitle, *The Electric Telegraph of Prayer*.

Notice that the use of the term “man” in verse 21 does not imply that Gabriel was a man rather than an angel. The Hebrew word “man” simply means that Gabriel appeared in human-like form.

The “time of evening oblation (or sacrifice)” means late afternoon. Of course, no actual sacrifice could have been offered in Babylon (or even in Palestine) without the

restored altar, but the Jews still observed sunrise and sunset as appropriate times for offering praise and worship to God.

One commentator on verse 21 wryly noted that if Gabriel was going to catch many of us in prayer, he would have to be swift indeed!

Daniel 9:22-23

22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

Daniel receives wisdom and understanding in response to his prayer. But prayer doesn't work like that today. Right? When we pray we never see angels flying swiftly to answer our prayers. But because we do not see them as Daniel did, does that mean they are not there? The age of miracles is over, but we know that does not mean God is not at work in this world. We know that God hears and answers our prayers, and he may still use swift angels behind the scenes for that purpose.

Notice how eager God was to answer Daniel's prayer. Verse 23 — "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth." God is more eager to answer than we are to ask. This is the nature of prayer. Not that I am stumbling toward God but that God is running towards me just as the father ran to meet the prodigal son. "The fatted calf, the shoes, the robe, the ring; All for me, unworthy son. But sweet-

er to me, the most wonderful thing, God ran to meet me. I saw God run!” That is how God responds to his children.

Verse 23 says that Daniel was greatly beloved by God. Why?

- Because Daniel had refused to compromise with the world.
- Because Daniel was faithful and true to God.
- Because Daniel was a man of prayer.
- Because Daniel studied his Bible and knew it was true.
- Because Daniel was a man of great faith.

Do we want to be “greatly beloved” by God as Daniel was? Then that is what we should do. Daniel is an example we can follow.

Daniel 9:24

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

As one commentator noted:

Reading commentaries on the last four verses of Daniel 9 is akin to entering a bewildering maze: so many choices of ways to take, so many blind alleys and dead ends; which is the way out?

In AD 400, Jerome simply listed nine conflicting opinions of “the great teachers of the church” and left it “to the reader’s judgment as to whose explanation ought to be followed.” Another noted:

The history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks is the Dismal Swamp of Old Testament criticism.

This section of Daniel 9 is one of the most commented upon sections in the entire Bible. It has been called the “backbone” of all prophecy, which I believe we will see is a bit of an overstatement. (The vision is concerned with the Jews and with Jerusalem, so, while very important, it is not the “backbone” of all prophecy. (Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 53 are much closer to being backbones than is Daniel 9.) In any event, we are going to need to proceed very carefully.

What is the setting?

Daniel has been reading and praying about a seventy year decree upon the Jews found in Jeremiah. God uses that decree in Jeremiah as an opportunity to tell Daniel about another decree also regarding the Jews and Jerusalem — a decree of seventy weeks.

What is the seventy weeks decree?

First, it is an answer and a swift response to the prayer that began Chapter 9, and we must not forget that fact. If our interpretation of this decree goes adrift from Daniel’s prayer about his people and about their sin and their future and their city, then our interpretation is almost certainly wrong. And, this decree is not *just* an answer to Daniel’s prayer, it is an answer swiftly delivered by Gabriel himself in response to that prayer.

Second, the decree gets its name from verse 24 — “seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” Those seventy weeks are divided into three subsets of weeks: Verse 25 will mention seven weeks and 62 weeks, which

combined give us 69 weeks. Verse 27 will mention a final week, which then accounts for all 70 weeks. Verse 27 will also cut that final week in half.

The “seventy weeks” in verse 24 is literally “seventy sevens,” but all translators agree that the phrase means seventy weeks. In fact, the same word “sevens” is also translated “weeks” in Daniel 10:2 — “in those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.” But we should not miss the symbolism in the Hebrew word for “seven” being used here to denote a week. When we see “week” in this chapter, we should be thinking “seven.” So when we see a week cut in half, what do we see? We see a broken seven, which is a symbol that should be very familiar to us.

The Importance of Verse 24

Verse 24 is crucial in understanding verses 25-27. Many commentaries rush right past verse 24 in their hurry to get to the events in the following verses, but we must not make that mistake. Why? Two reasons. First, verse 24 gives us the focus of the prophecy, and second, verse 24 gives us an all-important time frame for the prophecies that follow.

What is the focus of the prophecy? “Thy people” and “thy holy city.” That is, the Jews and Jerusalem. Any interpretation of this prophecy in which the Jews and Jerusalem are not the focus is a wrong interpretation.

How does verse 24 give us a time frame? Because verse 24 gives us a list of six things that are to be accomplished by the seventy weeks decree, so if we can figure out when those things occurred, then we have a strong indication of the time frame for the prophecy.

The six items in verse 24 that are to be accomplished by the decree are listed across the top of your handout (available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com):

- To finish the transgression,
- To make an end of sins,

- To make reconciliation for iniquity,
- To bring in everlasting righteousness,
- To seal up the vision and prophecy, and
- To anoint the most Holy.

After reading that list, we should already have a good idea as to the termination point for this vision — but let's take a closer look at each of the six events.

Event #1: To finish transgression.

This event could mean that under this decree the transgression of God's own people would reach its peak or its limit. That is, the transgression of the Jews who rejected Christ (as well as all of the prophets) would reach its peak and then be punished. We see such descriptions elsewhere.

Matthew 23:31-32 — *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*

1 Thessalonians 2:14b-16 — *For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*

Matthew 21:37-43 — *But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard*

cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

But “to finish transgression” could mean something else. It could mean that transgression would be dealt with effectively and finally under this decree, which of course is what occurred at the cross.

Hebrews 9:15 — *And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

Either way, the first event in our list of six occurred in the first century.

Event #2: To make an end of sins.

This event also occurred in the first century, and it was also accomplished at the cross.

Hebrews 9:26 — *For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Hebrews 10:12-14 — *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

Romans 8:3 — *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*

Event #3: To make reconciliation for iniquity.

Again, a first century event, and again, an event that occurred at the cross.

Romans 5:10 — *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

2 Corinthians 5:19 — *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

Event #4: To bring in everlasting righteousness.

Again, a first century event, and again, an event that occurred at the cross.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 — *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE Lord OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 — *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Hebrews 1:8 — *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

Romans 3:21-22 — *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.*

Romans 10:4 — *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

Event #5: To seal up vision and prophecy.

What does this event mean? It could mean that this decree would bring about the fullness of God's revelation, and that afterward there would be no further revelation by visions and prophets.

Hebrews 1:1-2 — *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

1 Corinthians 13:9-10 — *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

It could also point to the hardening of the Jews that occurred at this time. That is, the prophecy would be sealed to them because they would not understand it due to their hardness of heart.

Isaiah 29:10-11 — *For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.*

Romans 11:7-8 — *What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.*

2 Corinthians 3:14 — *But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.*

Again, whichever event we choose, both happened in the first century.

Event #6: To anoint the most holy.

If the “most holy” refers to a person, then it must refer to Christ who was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power at his baptism.

Luke 3:21-22 — *Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*

Acts 10:38 — *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good,*

and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Luke 4:16-21 — *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. 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 hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

The “most holy” could refer instead or in addition to the church of Christ — the new dwelling place of God, which God has also anointed. This view fits well with the context since the decree ends with the destruction of the old dwelling place of God — the Jewish sanctuary.

2 Corinthians 1:21 — *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.*

1 John 2:27 — *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.*

Ephesians 2:19-22 — *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the founda-*

tion of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Again, either way, this event occurred in the first century.

The Verse 24 Time Frame

What we have seen is that all six of the events in verse 24 occurred in the first century. These are the six things that the seventy weeks decree was to accomplish — and they were all accomplished in the first century. You should start with verse 24 if anyone ever tells you that the fulfillment of the seventy week decree is yet future.

Daniel 9:25-27

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the

end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

What is our Game Plan?

As we have said, these three verses are some of the most difficult and most commented upon verses in the entire Bible. How are we going to tackle them?

First, can we be dogmatic about the meaning of this prophecy? Yes and no. There are some fine points about which we can easily differ and remain within the confines of Scripture. But there are some other points about which we must remain firm. For example, the termination point of this prophecy was in the first century. Why is that important? Isn't it just a timing issue? Yes, it is a timing issue, but it is a very important timing issue. Why? Because the focus of this prophecy is the people of Daniel, the Jews, and if the termination point of this prophecy is the end of the world, then this prophecy is telling us that God has a special plan of salvation for the Jews under the New Covenant different from the plan for non-Jews, which we know is **not** the case.

Galatians 3:28 — *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Yes, God has a wonderful plan for the Jews, but it is the same wonderful plan that God has for everyone else.

Romans 1:16 — *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

So what then is our game plan in tackling these difficult verses? There are nine events in these three verses, and those nine events are shown on your handout (available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com) next to the eight circled letters A through H. (Event F has two events.) The seventy weeks are divided into three main divisions: a seven week period, a 62 week period, and a final one week period. That final week is further subdivided into two half weeks. **Our task is to place those nine events in their proper positions within the 70 weeks.** Some of those placements are very difficult, others are less difficult, and others are easy.

What is Event A?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 25 — *“From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.”*

This event and the next event are easy to place. Verse 25 tells us that Event A is the start of a 69 week period (7 weeks + 62 weeks). Our only question is which commandment is in view. The natural answer would be the decree of Cyrus, which led to the first return from exile and which would occur very shortly after this prophecy was received from God. But some argue that Cyrus's decree was not to build Jerusalem, and they argue that this commandment refers to a later return. We will address those arguments later when we look at some other views about the seventy weeks prophecy. All we need for our purposes now is to note that Event A occurs at the beginning of the 70 weeks, and on this point all commentators are in agreement.

What is Event B?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 25 — *“Unto the Messiah the Prince.”*

All commentators also agree that Event B ends the 69 weeks, and all agree that the Messiah is Christ. There is some disagreement over what part of Christ’s life is in view here. His birth? His baptism? His death? His resurrection? His ascension? His coming in judgment against Jerusalem in AD 70? We will investigate that question as we move on through the list of events, but for now all we need to know is that Event B ends the 69 week period.

Why is the Messiah called a Prince? Because in addition to being our perfect High Priest, Jesus is also King of kings and Lord of lords. We see that same combination in Zechariah.

Zechariah 6:13 — *Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*

And recall that Jesus cannot be our High Priest under the old law, which confirms that the old law has been permanently replaced by something better.

Hebrews 7:14 — *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*

What is Event C?

Let’s start by reading the text.

Verse 25 — *“The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”*

Event C is a little more difficult to place. Verse 25 tells us that from the command to restore Jerusalem up until the Messiah will be seven weeks and 62 weeks. The end of verse 25 describes the rebuilding efforts. That ordering, along with the division into seven weeks followed by a much longer 62 weeks, causes almost all commenta-

tors to conclude that this rebuilding occurs during the initial seven weeks and is completed at the end of that seven week period. That is, from the command to restore Jerusalem until the restoration of Jerusalem takes seven weeks, and then from that point until the Messiah comes is 62 weeks. Thus, Event C occurs after the initial seven week period and before the following 62 week period. This part of the decree speaks of the rebuilding efforts under Nehemiah and Ezra. The events described in those books explain what is meant by the “troublous times” in verse 25.

By the way, we will look soon at some different views of the seventy week prophecy that are based on the notion that each day in this seventy week period is a year. That chronological view really breaks down here. Under that view, seven weeks would denote 49 years, but it did not take 49 years to rebuild the city. (One particularly desperate commentator has suggested that they may have finished much earlier but it took them a long time to clear away all the extra construction material and garbage! That’s a lot of garbage — in more ways than one.) If we agree, as I think we must, that the seven weeks to rebuild the city is figurative, then that should confirm that the seventy weeks is also figurative. (More about this view later.)