

“WALKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE ANTICHRIST”

“Powerful Prayers of a Prayerful Person” (Daniel 9:1-27)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; (v1)

The next vision was around 13 years after the 2nd vision in Daniel 8. It is dated from the first year of Darius the Mede (538/539BC). There was a new Empire in control. The Babylonian Lion of Daniel 7 had been replaced with the Medo-Persian Bear. One of the amazing things was that the Persians retained Daniel as Prime Minister when the Empire changed. This was probably unprecedented in world history and speaks volumes for his testimony and integrity. Daniel was a man who consistently honoured the Lord and the Lord truly honoured him in return.

In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: (v2-3)

Daniel was a man who was known for his great faith and his great prayer life. But we must notice the connection between these attributes and the Word of God. Biblical faith must always be anchored on the object of God's Word, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Rom. 10:17) God's word should stimulate a response in the heart of the believer. In the case of Daniel it led to the place of prayer. Too many believers simply study prophecy for intellectual curiosity or to win an argument, but that is wrong. The revelations as to the future of this world should always drive us to our knees to cry, “*Thy Kingdom Come – Thy Will be done.*”

What must be noted is that Daniel was an old man here (over 80) of great spiritual maturity who had seen God answer his prayers in a most remarkable way. He was also a man that was widely recognised, even by unbelievers, for his tremendous natural wisdom and intuition. But even as an old man Daniel was not relying on his spiritual maturity or great natural wisdom but still took time to actively seek the wisdom of God in the Word of God. He was convinced that “*in thy light shall we see light.*” (Psa. 36:9) Daniel did not have the whole of Scripture and was blessed by seeing incredible visions for the future but he still spent time to seek God's will in the Word of God. Boice observes, “Daniel was a prophet himself. Nevertheless he found it important to read the Scriptures and be instructed by it, rather than to trust in some special new revelation. We are not prophets so how much more important a role should Bible study play in our own lives.”

The message that Daniel was instructed and touched by was the prophecy from Jeremiah before the Babylonian captivity,

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I

will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. (Jeremiah 29:10-14)

The Lord promised that He would bring them back after the 70 years of captivity are complete, *“I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”* Daniel now knew that if he dated the initial captivity from the first conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC recorded in Daniel 1:1-2 that in 538/539 BC the return is only a matter of a few years. He also read that the Lord called on His people to pray for that desired end, *“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity..”* These statements were the foundation for his next response, *“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.”*

Daniel’s prayer in v4-19 is rooted in the promises and person of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. He fervently prayed for the very thing that the Bible had assured him would happen. Daniel knew God’s will. And he prayed according to God’s will. That’s the perfect way to pray. Often believers read this statement, *“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us”* (1 John 5:14; cf. John 15:7) and are confused why their prayers are not answered. This is not a name it and claim it prayer promise for anything your fleshly desire wants. God is not a celestial genie that obeys your sovereign will. The critical key is to *“ask any thing according to His will”* and the way to be sure this is happening is to pray the explicit promises of God. God delights in hearing the cries of His children in line with His sovereign will promised in the Bible. Bible reading and prayer stand or fall together. John Calvin put it well, *“Nothing, therefore, can be better for us, than to ask for what he has promised.”* We should saturate our prayers with the promise of Scripture. The Bible should stimulate and direct our prayers. That is why John after receiving 22 incredible apocalyptic chapters in the Book of Revelation cried in prayer, *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* John MacArthur makes a good observation about the need to pray for future revealed events,

Now, human reason would say this: You’re reading along in Jeremiah, and you read it will be seventy years, and God always fulfills His Word, right? So your response would be what’s to pray for. What are you going pray for? It’s cut and dried. Seventy years, it’s over. What are we praying for? Now, that’s the typical response of human reason. It doesn’t make sense. But that is not Daniel’s response...when Daniel read of the plan of God, rather than becoming fatalistic about it and slamming shut those...the book or closing down the scroll, and saying, *“Well, that’s that. Let me get my rocker, man. It’s almost over.”* He went immediately to his knees in brokenness and penitence and cried out to God in sackcloth and ashes on the behalf of his people....You say, *“Why?”* Let me tell you why. You know why we ought to pray when we find out God’s purposes in His Word? Not because God needs our prayers to do it, but because we need to line up with God’s causes. Prayer is for us. It’s for us... We line our hearts up with His causes. We see our sinfulness. We see the need of His grace and power. And we submit ourselves to His plan.

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O LORD, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. (v5-10)

This prayer is a good one to instruct us as a model of effective and fervent prayer of a righteous man. It is a balance of truth and fervency. Many pray with one aspect to the neglect of the other. Daniel begins his prayer by worshipping the Lord for Who He is, “O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.” He then proceeded with a great corporate confession of the sins of the nation of Israel. Daniel included himself in that confession using repeatedly the pronoun “we” as he also was a sinner, “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled... Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” Daniel used multiple strong expressions to highlight the depth and breadth of the sins of the Jews. He made no excuses for their sin and placed the blame on their collective shoulders.

Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. (v11-14)

Daniel in v11-14 then acknowledged that the Lord had justly acted in judgment upon them for their sins. The covenant promises that were written in the Book of Moses had been fulfilled in judging them for their sins. Daniel had no complaints against what God had done. We also need to recognise the same. The judge of all the earth always does right. It also is a vital point for our future as believers. For if God was not faithful to His covenantal promises to judge sin in passages like Leviticus 26, we would doubt that He would be faithful to His covenantal promises to justify us eternally.

And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O LORD, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications,

and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. (v15-19)

In the final part of Daniel's prayer he pleaded for the mercy of God upon the Jewish people. It is only after confession and repentance, can anyone seek God's forgiveness. That is still the case today. Daniel acknowledged that they didn't deserve the Lord to extend mercy and restore them to their ancient homeland, "*for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.*" He pleads for God's intervention for the glory of God, "*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*" This was an incredibly emotional and moving cry from the depths of the heart of Daniel. Such prayers touch the heart of God. It also is a wonderful insight into grace and mercy. We have a tendency to forget that we don't deserve anything from the Lord but His judgment. When things don't go the way we want, we whine and become bitter because we secretly think we have "earned" the right to have God's blessing.

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; 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. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 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. (v20-23)

This was a great prayer from a great prayer warrior about a great subject and it received a great answer. The Lord now immediately steps in to answer the prayer of Daniel while he was still at prayer, "*And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*" (Isa. 65:24) Gabriel brings the answer to Daniel's prayer and reveals to him that God has a personal interest in him, "*I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved.*" Ray Pritchard gives a helpful application,

This sudden appearance of Gabriel reminds us that time and distance are no problem to God. I suppose most of us think of our prayers as ascending to some distant throne in heaven, which we may imagine to be in some far-off corner of the vast universe. And since (if you stop and think about it) there must be multiplied millions of prayers being offered at any given moment, it's easy to suppose that your prayers will not receive God's undivided attention. But Daniel's experience teaches us otherwise. Because God is God, he can give undivided attention to millions of prayers at the same time. How that can be I cannot say since he is God and I'm not, but it is certainly true nonetheless.

THE MOST REMARKABLE PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE

The rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by the majority of the Jewish people, "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*" (John 1:11) is not something that can easily be excused. In the

Book of Daniel the Lord gave to Daniel a most remarkable prophecy about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This prophecy pinpoints the exact moment in history when the Jewish Messiah would present Himself to the Jewish people. It is the backbone prophecy of the past, present, and future,

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. 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. 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. 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. (v24-27)

This prophecy is clearly about the future of the Jews and Jerusalem, “*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city*” (v24a).

We need to break this amazing prophecy down. The term in v24 of “*weeks*” is a Hebrew word that simply means a “unit of seven” so “*Seventy weeks*” means “70 units of seven.” It could therefore be interpreted as 70 x 7 weeks or 70 x 7 years (cf. Lev. 25:8; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6). Most commentators believe that the context requires it to be taken as 70 x 7 years or 490 years as that makes logical sense with the biblical timeline.

The calculations in the prophecy is broken down into three distinct parts:

(PART 1) The first part is “*that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks...*”

This “*seven weeks*” is **7 x 7 = 49 years**.

When did this period begin and end? The most common view is that this is the decree of Artaxerxes in 444 B.C. allowing Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem to supervise the rebuilding of the city walls. This was “*in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king...*” (Neh. 2:1) This period of 49 years ends with the wall of Jerusalem rebuilt and the end of the OT revelation.

(PART 2) The second part refers to “*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.*”

This “*threescore and two weeks*” is **62 x 7 years = 434 years**.

This gives us a total in the first two sections of **49 + 434 = 483 years (or 173,880 days as Jewish lunar year has 360 days)**

This **483 years (or 173,880 days)** was fulfilled from the 444 B.C. decree of Artaxerxes to the triumphal entry of the Lord Jesus Christ in the month Nisan of the year 33 A.D.¹ recorded in Matthew 21:1-9. This was just a few days before His crucifixion or when “*Messiah be cut off.*” S. Lewis Johnson explains the calculation using 5th March 444 B.C. as the day of the decree of Artaxerxes and the 30th March 33 A.D. as the day of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem,

Consequently from 444 BC to AD 33 is 476 years. That equals...173,855 days, and since there are some days from March 5th to March 30th we add 25 days and we have 173,880 days from the time of the decree of Artaxerxes to Messiah the Prince according to that 25th verse. So, we divide 173,880 days by 360 days a year, and we come to 483 years, which is of course the 49 plus the 434. And the 483 divided by seven, which is of course because these are seven weeks of years, we have 69 weeks of years thus QED. We know then that from the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem, the decree of Artaxerxes, the end of the 483 years, the 69 weeks is March 30, 33 AD.

We must marvel at the amazing accuracy of this prophecy. A Gentile king issued a decree that 483 years later culminates with the crucifixion of the Messiah. Exactly as God promised! The rejection and death of the Messiah in His first appearing should not be surprising. His death was prophesied in the OT Scriptures repeatedly such as Isaiah 53:3-8.

This crucifixion when “*Messiah be cut off...*” leads to a subsequent judgment of the Jews and Jerusalem, “...*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.*” This destruction was fulfilled when Titus’ armies destroyed the temple, the city, and scattered the remaining Jews around the world in 70 A.D.

(PART 3) The final part is “*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.*” (v26) The “*he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week*” here is not the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather it is the antichrist. With the true Messiah “*cut off*” the devil seizes the opportunity to introduce his man the Antichrist. He will seek to take the place of the true Christ (*anti* means “against” or “instead of”).

There is a gap between the 69 weeks and the last week of Daniel’s 70 weeks prophecy. So far the gap has lasted almost 2,000 years since Messiah was cut off in crucifixion. Ray Pritchard points out,

I don’t think we should be surprised at this since the text itself mentions two events that happen between the 69th and 70th weeks. First, the Messiah must be “cut off,” and second, Jerusalem will be sacked by the Roman army. The very end of verse 26 says that wars will continue until the end, which seems to imply a long and undefined period.

The OT prophecies of Jesus Christ often juxtapose together aspects of His first and Second Coming. The indeterminate temporal “gap” does not pose a problem for the biblical

¹ some argue its 445 B.C and 32 A.D. but either way the calculation remains same.

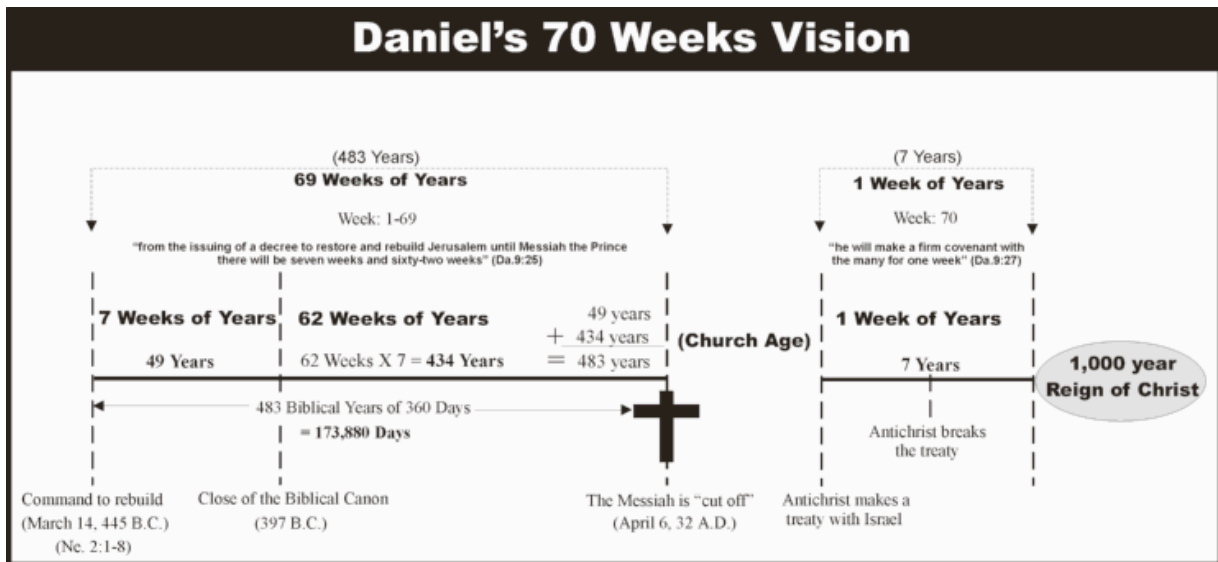
scholar. For instance, Isaiah 9 places together in one section certain aspects of the First and Second Coming of Christ,

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isa. 9:6-7)

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE TIMING OF THE LAST WEEK?

The “one week” is following the timeframe above a period of seven years i.e. $1 \times 7 = 7$ years

When Christ was crucified and Jerusalem destroyed by Titus there are no credible candidates to date to carry out these prophesied functions of “*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.*” Daniel revealed his identity more fully in Chapter 7 and 11 as the Antichrist. John gives us even greater detail in Revelation 13-19 and Paul references him in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 as the “*man of sin.*”



So in this final part of the prophecy we are placed in a 7 year period called the “Great Tribulation” detailed in Revelation and by the Lord Jesus Christ in His Olivet Discourse, “*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*” (Matt. 24:21) The covenant is an agreement between the Jews and the Antichrist. It seems some sort of peace agreement to allow them to live in peace and sacrifice in peace on the Temple Mount in a rebuilt Jewish Temple. Interestingly, today that is the longing of every Jew. They are

willing to do anything to accomplish this dream. Any man who pulls this off for them would be considered as their Messiah.

However, in the middle of the 7 years (3 and a half years) we are told, *“he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate.”* Most commentators view this as a point when the Antichrist ceases the animal sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem and demands that worship is directed to him alone. This corresponds to the infamous “mark of the beast” mentioned in Revelation 13 and what Christ described as a future reference point in Matthew 24,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) (Matt. 24:15)

The Apostle Paul referred to this act of self-idolatry of the coming Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, *“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”*

The final part of the Great Tribulation will be one of unprecedented bloodshed by the forces of Antichrist against the saints of God. In Revelation 12:6 and Revelation 13:5 we discover the Antichrist wages this campaign for *“forty and two months,”* which is three and a half years. Alongside that God will unleash terrible judgments on rebellious mankind. It will culminate in the spiritual salvation of the Jewish people and then the destruction of antichrist and his armies by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:16, 20).