

## Daniel 7:24 (Part I)

### Introduction

In answer to Daniel’s pleas for mercy on behalf of his people and the city of Jerusalem (cf. 9:16, 18-19) the angel Gabriel was sent to him with these words from God: “Seventy sevens are decreed with regard to your people and your holy city...” (9:24a). We saw last week the wonderful, beautiful *meaning* of these seventy sevens. We saw how they symbolized for Daniel the *time* required to bring in not the once-every-fifty-years Jubilee, but the everlasting “Jubilee,” the day when the trumpet would sound and liberty would be proclaimed to all God’s people; not the once-every-seven-days or once-every-seven-years Sabbath but our true and everlasting Sabbath rest. We saw last week how the angel Gabriel described this wonderful future in six different ways – which we can divide up into two matching sets of three (the first set being “negative” and the second set “positive”).

“Seventy sevens are decreed with regard to your people and your holy city...”  
to make an end of the transgression,  
to SEAL up *sin*,  
**and** to atone for *iniquity*,  
to bring in everlasting righteousness,  
to SEAL both vision and prophet,  
**and** to anoint a most holy.

Seventy sevens—to accomplish all that. Can you imagine being Daniel and thinking to yourself how wonderful the end of these seventy sevens would be – and wondering to yourself what it would be like to be alive in those days? In those days of Sabbath rest and Jubilee? We read these words of the angel Gabriel—“to make an end of the transgression, to seal up sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy”—and though we may not feel quite clear yet on all the details, we know instinctively that this is about the promised kingdom of the Messiah and the true salvation of all God’s people. So today and next week we’re going to take some time to savor these things. We’re going to see how these things have all been fulfilled, and are still being fulfilled, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**I. Daniel 9:24a** — Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to make an end of the transgression...

---

<sup>1</sup> The ESV says “to *finish* the transgression” (cf. NASB; ASV; KJV; NKJV; NASB), but this could give the impression that the emphasis is on the transgression reaching its completeness (cf. 8:23). In other words, seventy weeks are decreed until your people reach the height of their transgression. That’s also probably true, but it’s not the point. The point here is not on the completeness of Israel’s transgression, but on the *ceasing* or the *ending* of that transgression [cf. NIV; HCSB; NET; NCV; NLT]. We see this meaning in other places where we have the same form of this Hebrew verb (infinitive construct in the Piel stem):

2 Kings 13:17 (cf. v. 19; 1 Sam. 3:12) — You shall fight the Syrians in Aphek until you have **made an end of** them.

“To make an end of the transgression.” For sinners like us there should be right away a wonderful beauty to those words. I can imagine coming to one of the great, natural wonders of the world and standing there, gazing in awe. That’s what we do here – because here’s a far greater wonder than any natural wonder we’ll ever see in this world.

Notice how the angel says, “to make an end of *the* transgression.” What *particular* transgression is it that the angel’s talking about? It’s all the transgression that Daniel’s just been confessing; specifically, the transgression of God’s own treacherous and rebellious covenant people – the transgression that brought down upon God’s own covenant people the curse of exile—which symbolized death and condemnation. Are you feeling the weight of this? This isn’t “just” the rebellion and death of heathens and pagans, this is the rebellion and death and condemnation of God’s *own* people – the people in covenant with Him. How can this be?

The covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai was a gracious covenant (cf. Jn. 1:16-17; NIV) – it was a holy and righteous and good covenant (Rom. 7:12). There wasn’t any defect or flaw in that covenant – not in and of itself. How could there be, since God was the one who had made it? And yet this covenant that (typologically) promised life to God’s people only, always brought to them death instead (Rom. 7:10). How can that be if the covenant had no defect or flaw? The defect and the flaw was, all along, in God’s people – in the other party to the covenant. Do we feel the reality and the truth of this even in ourselves? Because of sin God’s people were incapable of keeping that gracious and holy and righteous and good covenant – in fact, they couldn’t do anything else *but* sin continuously and break the covenant continuously (Rom. 7:13). You don’t have to read very far into the Old Testament to see this. The Lord said to Samuel, and then to Jeremiah:

- 1 Samuel 8:8 — According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.
- Jeremiah 7:25–26 (cf. Ps. 106) — From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck.

This is the power that sin holds over us in our natural state. We may not like to admit it, but we’re helpless to obey because we won’t obey; because that’s our choice. My will is free in the sense that it’s never coerced, and yet at the same time the terrible reality is that my will is enslaved to my own sinful nature. In our natural state—that state in which each and every single one of us was born into this world—we’ll always, ultimately *choose* sin because we *are* sinners – because sin dwells in us and has infected every part of who we are – our thinking and reasoning, our feelings and emotions, our motives and desires, and therefore also our words and our actions.

---

2 Chronicles 31:1 — All Israel... broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had **destroyed [made an end of]** them all.

Ezra 9:14 — Would you not be angry with us until you **consumed [made an end of]** us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape?

The exile and death of even God's own covenant people is an ultimate proof of these things. And so while the Old Covenant had no defect or flaw, but was in every way gracious and holy and righteous and good—in spite of all this, it was still insufficient. While it required the circumcision of the flesh as that which symbolized the necessity of a circumcised heart (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 44:7, 9), it made no provision in and of itself for our hearts to be circumcised. While it required the shedding of blood and washing with water for the cleansing of the flesh, symbolizing our need for cleansed hearts, it made no provision in and of itself for our hearts to be cleansed. While the Old Covenant featured the law of God written externally on tablets of stone, it made no provision in and of itself for those laws to be written internally on the tablets of our hearts. Will any of us blame or fault God for these things? None of these things were defects or flaws in the covenant that God had made. Instead, it was because of our own wickedness and sinfulness that the Old Covenant was insufficient. It was sin that produced death even in God's own people *through* what was in every way gracious and holy and righteous and good in order that sin might be shown to be **sin**, and through the commandment might become **sinful beyond measure** (Rom. 7:13).

I know there are many who believe that Romans 7 is a description of the conflict and struggle in the experience of a true Christian, but I would sincerely and wholeheartedly disagree. I'm not saying that as Christians we don't still struggle with sin. We do! Paul describes this struggle in Galatians chapter five (Gal. 5:16-24). But this struggle as it's described in Galatians is not at all the hopeless and despairing struggle that we see in Romans chapter seven. What Paul is describing in Romans is, I believe, the experience of the Jew who was externally in covenant with God and even agreed that the law was good (Rom. 7:16), but who was internally still in his sins and so wholly unable to truly carry it out – wholly unable to truly keep covenant with God – trapped in his sin. Paul describes his own experience of being in the covenant but still outside of Christ with these despairing words:

□ Romans 7:14, 19, 22–23 — The law is spiritual, but *I* am of the flesh, sold under sin... For I do not do the good I want [or that I agree is “good”], but the evil I do not want [because I agree it is “evil”] is what I keep on doing... For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being [because I agree it is good], but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Brothers and sisters, can you imagine a condition more wretched than this? Looking back even on our own previous condition outside of Christ, how can we not cry out with Paul in light of who we once were:

□ Romans 7:24 — Wretched[—*wretched*—]man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death [from this body of sin]?

In the Old Testament there were always Moses's and Samuel's (Jer. 15:1), and Noah's and Daniel's and Job's (Ezek. 14:14, 20), but the faith and righteousness of these men was not the fruit of the Old Covenant. If it had been, can you see that there would never have been any covenant-breakers in Israel? These men were just a small and lonely remnant inside the covenant people (Num. 11:29) – saved by faith in a coming Messiah and on the grounds—even as

members still in waiting—of a different covenant, a new covenant, not yet made with God’s people (cf. Rom. 3:23-25).

So now, in the light of all this, don’t we rejoice in these words of the angel Gabriel to Daniel: “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, **to make an end** of the transgression...” The stem of the Hebrew word, here, is intensive. Perhaps in light of this and in light of the context, we could say, “Seventy weeks are decreed... to *consume*, and *destroy*, and *put to death* the transgression.” As those who live now in the days of a New Covenant, when Christ has already come and proclaimed liberty to the captive and Sabbath rest to the weary and heavy-laden, we rejoice today in the fulfillment of these words (cf. Col. 2:13-14).

- Romans 8:3 — God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, **he condemned sin in the flesh**.
- 1 John 3:5, 8 — [We] know that he appeared **in order to take away sins**, and in him there is no sin... Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil** [to destroy even sin itself].

Romans 6:6–7 — We know that our old self was crucified with him **in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing**, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been **set free from sin**.

Romans 7:24–25a — Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

All of us who are truly parties to the New Covenant that’s sealed in Christ’s blood—yes, we do still sin, we do still struggle, but we’re no longer enslaved to sin. We’re no longer “sold under sin” or “captive to the law of sin.” The words of Paul in Romans 7 are no longer our words. We can no longer be guilty of breaking the Covenant, because *the covenant itself* has made an *end* of the transgression for *all* of God’s Covenant people. Within the covenant itself a full and complete provision has been made to turn us from covenant-breakers into covenant-keepers. And so we truly are *free*. Free *from* the transgression (which has been “condemned, and “destroyed, and “brought to nothing”), and set free *for* and *unto* righteousness. If we put our matching pairs together (from the two sets of three) the first pair would be this:

**II. Daniel 9:24d** — Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to make an end of the transgression... **[and] to bring in everlasting righteousness**.

Especially in the light of all that we’ve just seen, is “righteousness” a beautiful word to you? I think of Jesus’ words in Matthew chapter five: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Mat. 5:6). I think of how Paul said that the kingdom of God is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). And I think of how Peter encouraged us with that marvelous “promise” of God – according to which “we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). Is “righteousness” a beautiful word to you – not just sentimentally, but biblically and practically and experientially?

Here in Daniel, do you see the wonderful contrast between an *end* of the transgression and a righteousness that's *everlasting*? Isn't it this righteousness that God's covenant people needed? Not the "on again off again" "righteousness" of their own sinful self-effort, but that everlasting righteousness that can only have its source in the everlasting God Himself. Are we able to see now what a miracle this kind of righteousness must be?

All of us who are truly parties to the *New Covenant* are also, by default, truly righteous. How can that be? Because *the covenant itself* has now provided this righteousness as a free gift of God's grace. Because now, within the covenant itself, a full and complete provision has been made to turn me from a covenant-breaker, trapped in my sin, into someone who will persevere to the end in faithfulness to the covenant – in repentant faith and trust in Christ my Savior. On the one hand, I've been covered—clothed—in the perfect righteousness of Christ – an "alien" righteousness that's been fully transferred to *my* account through faith. What a wonderful, beautiful, glorious gift this is. Unlike in the Old Testament, today, you can't be in the covenant without being in Christ – because the blood of the covenant itself has infallibly secured our repentance and faith in Him. Therefore, you can't be in the covenant without also having as your very own present possession the righteousness of Christ. Paul writes:

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 — For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that *in him* we might become the righteousness of God.
- Romans 3:21–22 (cf. Phil. 3:8-9) — But *now* the righteousness of God [the righteousness that God gives as a free gift] has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

It's this righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ that has actually merited and earned for us everlasting life. So we read again in Romans:

- Romans 5:19–21 — As by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign **through righteousness leading to eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Can you see in this light why we read in Daniel of the bringing in of "*everlasting* righteousness"? How can the righteousness that is God's gracious gift not be everlasting? Would He give anything less? Could He give anything less? And so how can the righteousness that's from God not assure us of everlasting life?

On the one hand this righteousness from God is an alien righteousness that we have no part in whatsoever and that's imputed to our account through our union with Christ. On the other hand, it's this same union with Christ that also imparts to us the gift of a righteousness that's truly our own and that God graciously chooses to reward with eternal life. So Paul can say to all of us today under the *New Covenant*:

- Romans 6:10–11 — The death [that Christ] died he died to sin, once for all, *but the life he lives he lives to God*. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and *alive to God in Christ Jesus*.

Peter writes:

- 1 Peter 2:24 — He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live [practically and experientially] to righteousness.

And then, again, Paul:

- Romans 8:3–4 — God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

And what's the result of this righteousness? What is God's gracious response to this righteousness that He Himself is causing us to bring forth for His glory? Listen, again, to what Paul says:

- Romans 6:20–22 — When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to **righteousness**. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? **For the end of those things is death**. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become **slaves of God**, the fruit you get **leads to sanctification [righteousness] and its end, eternal life**.

Can you see, again, why we read in Daniel of the bringing in of “*everlasting* righteousness”? Brothers and sisters, will God begin a work in us and not bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6)? How can this righteousness that God Himself is working and producing in us not lead us in the end to the inheritance of eternal life – to the consummation of our present Jubilee and Sabbath rest (Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 1:3-4; Col. 1:22-23; 1 Thess. 3:11-13; 5:23; Rev. 3:4)? Are you seeing the difference, and yet also the intimate relationship between Christ's imputed righteousness which truly merits eternal life for us and the righteousness that God is producing *in us* which—though it can never earn or merit anything at all—will nevertheless be graciously rewarded with eternal life? Are you seeing in this *righteousness* the infinite extent and the boundless riches of God's *GRACE*?

## Conclusion

Because we are now living in the days when the seventy weeks have been fulfilled—when an end has been made of the transgression and everlasting righteousness has been brought in—Paul can now say to all of us who are in covenant with God:

- Romans 6:13 — Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God **as those who have been brought from death to life**, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

For us who are in Christ, in covenant with God, this truly is the law of liberty. Paul can say to us, and with humility and joy we can hear him say to us:

- Ephesians 4:22–24 — Put off your old self, which belongs to your *former* manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and... be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and... put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

“Seventy weeks are decreed... to make an end of the transgression... [and] to bring in everlasting righteousness.” “To God be [*all*] the glory, great things He has done.”