

Daniel 9:26

Introduction

In the beginning of chapter nine, Daniel reads in Jeremiah about the fact that seventy years had been decreed for the desolations of Jerusalem. Daniel sees that the seventy years must be about up especially because Babylon has now fallen to the Persians. So Daniel prays. He prays for the end of Israel's exile; but more than that he prays for all that the end of this exile would ultimately mean for God's people – the end of Israel's transgression (the constant covenant-breaking of God's people), the sealing up of sin, the atoning for iniquity, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the sealing up of vision and prophet, and the anointing of a most holy. These are the things Daniel prays for because these are the things that he knew would accompany, in some way, Israel's return from exile.

In response to Daniel's prayer, the angel Gabriel is sent to Daniel with this message: Israel's physical return to the land after the seventy years will only be the preparation for, and a foreshadowing of, the true spiritual salvation and gathering in of all God's sheep not after seventy years, but after seventy "sevens." Seventy sevens is the equivalent of ten Jubilee cycles (ten times 49), culminating in the true Jubilee and Sabbath rest of God's people – the very thing that Daniel was praying for. God is using the calendar He gave to Israel (with its Sabbaths and Jubilees) as a way of picturing that ultimate redemptive calendar that's fully known only to Him. In other words, the point was not to give Daniel dates and calculations, but to assure him that while there was still going to be what felt like a long "delay" ("seventy sevens") all was still progressing according to plan – according to God's sovereign timetable ("seventy sevens are decreed"). And so we can know the same thing today. If God was sovereign over time before the seventy sevens were fulfilled, how much more can we know that He is sovereign over time today when the seventy sevens *have* now been fulfilled (in the "fullness of time") and Christ is now ruling and reigning at His right hand? The angel Gabriel continues in verse 25:

- Daniel 9:25 — Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven sevens and then sixty-two sevens when it shall be built again with square and moat, but in a troubled time.

The going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem was the decree of Cyrus (or Darius) in 538 BC (the very year that Daniel prayed this prayer) which allowed the exiled Jews to return home and begin rebuilding the temple and the city. We can read about this decree in 1 Chronicles 36 and Ezra 1. The "anointed one," the "prince," is Jesus Christ as our great High Priest and King and the one who brings the seventy sevens to their fulfillment and completion. Between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 538 BC and the coming of this Messiah there would first be a period of seven sevens at the end of which the city would be completed ("built again with square and moat"). This period of about ninety-five years is symbolically pictured as a single Jubilee cycle ("seven sevens") because it really did culminate in a wonderful and joyful—though still "shadowy"—Jubilee in the days of Nehemiah when the city walls were completed. We can read about this Jubilee in Nehemiah chapters 6-12. But this was still a "shadowy" Jubilee because it was followed not by Messiah's kingdom, but rather by 62 more "sevens" of "troubled times" when Jerusalem was still under the rule of foreign empires – the Persians, the Greeks, and the

Romans. Why “sixty-two” sevens? That’s just the number of sevens that comes in between the symbolic seventh seven (that still shadowy Jubilee of the restoration of God’s people in the rebuilding of Jerusalem) and the symbolic seventieth seven (the ultimate Jubilee when the Messiah comes and establishes His kingdom).

Remember, the point here is not literal years or dates that we can calculate on a calendar. The point was to give Daniel “insight” and “wisdom” and “understanding” for the daily living of his life – and so also to give us wisdom, and insight, and understanding for the daily living of our lives. And so this morning we come to that seventieth seven and the inauguration of that true Jubilee and Sabbath rest of God’s people. Only what we’re about to read is not what any one of us would have expected in our human wisdom.

I. Daniel 9:26a — And after the sixty-two sevens, an anointed one shall be cut off [*ka-rat*] and shall have nothing.

Who is this “anointed one”? We’re reminded of the “anointing” of a “most holy” in verse 24 and so we assume that this “anointed one” must be in some way that “most holy” – the true fulfillment of Israel’s priesthood and temple. We’re also reminded of the “anointed one” in verse 25 and so we assume that this “anointed one” is also a “prince” – the one who rules for God over His people. It’s *this* anointed one who, *in the seventieth seven*, will accomplish all those things that the angel Gabriel announced: The end of the covenant-breaking of God’s people, the sealing up of sin, the atoning for iniquity, the gift of an everlasting righteousness, and the sealing up of vision and prophet. And yet it’s also this anointed one who the angel Gabriel says will be “cut off” and left with nothing. That’s not the way of human wisdom, is it? In the very *last* seven—the *seventieth* seven—an anointed one *cut off*. But this is even more “foolish” than we’ve yet understood.

Why does Gabriel say that this anointed one will be “cut off”? Why doesn’t he just say he’ll be killed or put to death – or “destroyed,” or “trampled,” or “devoured” (cf. 7:7, 19; 8:10, 24)? Why say that he’ll be “cut off” (*ka-rat*)? If you were a Jew reading the Hebrew Old Testament, you would encounter this word for the very first time in Genesis chapter 9, when God says to Noah:

- **Genesis 9:11** — I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be **cut off** by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

When all flesh was “*cut off*” by the waters of the flood, this was the judgment and the curse of God poured out on a wicked and sinful world. “Cut off,” here, refers to a penalty—the ultimate penalty of death—imposed by a righteous Judge. And then we read in Genesis chapter 17 where God says to Abraham:

- **Genesis 17:14** — Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be **cut off** from his people; he has broken my covenant.

Here, to be “cut off” is to experience the curse of the covenant – the curse for being a covenant-breaker. We read again in Exodus 31:

- Exodus 31:14 — You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be **cut off** from among his people.

Over and over and over again in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers the curse for covenant-breaking is described with the language of being “cut off” – *cut off* from God’s people; *cut off* from God’s favor; *cut off* from life itself.¹ Almost everywhere else that this word (*ka-rat*) is used of a person or people being “cut off,” what’s being described are the righteous judgments of God poured out in anger and wrath on the wicked and sinners.² We hear of God *cutting off* the nations before Israel (Deut. 12:29; 19:1) and of God *cutting off* Israel from the land that He had given them (1 Kings 9:7), and then we read things like this in the Psalms:

- Psalm 37:9, 22, 28, 34, 38 — Evildoers shall be **cut off**, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land... Those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be **cut off**... The LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be **cut off**... Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are **cut off**... Transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be **cut off**.

To be “cut off” (*ka-rat*) was the judicial sentence of death—physical and spiritual—for sin and covenant-breaking.

So, then, what does it mean when the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that in the very *last* seven—the *seventieth* seven, when the final and everlasting Jubilee is to be ushered in—an anointed one shall be “*cut off*”? Can you feel, now, the full weight and meaning of that word, *ka-rat*, here in this context? This “anointed one” who will suffer the ultimate covenant curse for breaking the covenant. This “anointed one” who will experience all the fury of God’s wrath poured out in judgment upon wickedness and sin. This isn’t the way of human wisdom. According to all human wisdom, what this means is that the seventy sevens must end hopelessly in despair—until we stop with Daniel and seek insight and understanding from God; until we stop with Daniel and ask ourselves this question: For whose covenant breaking will this “anointed one” be “cut off”? Certainly not for His own! Because after all, this “anointed one” is the *goal* of the seventy sevens; this is the one through whom God will bring in that everlasting Jubilee. Liberty for God’s people, joy, peace, and righteousness. So then, for whose covenant breaking will this anointed one be “cut off”? Not for His own, but for ours. For whose sin and wickedness will this anointed one endure the fury of God’s wrath in judgment? Not for His own, but for ours. Daniel would certainly have known these words in Isaiah:

¹ Cf. Exod. 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; Lev. 7:20, 21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9, 10, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3, 5, 6, 17, 18; 22:3; 23:29; Num. 9:13; 15:30-31; 19:13, 20

² Cf. 1 Sam. 2:33; 20:15; 1 Kings 14:10, 14; 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8; Psalm 12:3; 34:16; 101:8; 109:13, 15; Prov. 2:22; 10:31; Isa. 9:14; 11:13; 14:22; 29:20; 48:9, 19; 56:5; Jer. 44:7-8, 11; Ezek. 14:8, 13, 17, 19, 21; 21:3-4; 25:7, 13, 16; 29:8; 30:15; 35:7; Amos 1:5, 8; 2:3; Obad. 9-10; Nah. 1:15; 3:15; Zeph. 1:3-4, 11; 3:6; Zech. 9:6, 10; 13:8; Mal. 2:12

- Isaiah 53:8 — By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off [*gazar*] out of the land of the living, stricken *for the transgression of my people*?

And so Daniel *learns*, and we *learn* with him, that it's by this anointed one being “cut off” in death and judgment—it's by His suffering of the curse that was due to us—that He will accomplish *for us* our Jubilee and Sabbath rest. The transgression ended, iniquity sealed up, sin atoned for; the free gift of an everlasting righteousness. And so we learn wisdom, and we gain insight and understanding for the daily living of our lives. Peter writes of Jesus, who was “cut off” for us.

- 1 Peter 2:24 — He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Does he not, then, deserve our wholehearted service and devotion and love? Should we not, then, every day be dying to sin and living to righteousness?

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 — For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

“An anointed one shall be cut off,” Gabriel says, “*and shall have nothing.*” And I think, again, of Isaiah 53:

- Isaiah 53:3 — He was *despised* and *rejected by men*, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was *despised*, and we *esteemed him not*.
- John 1:10–11 — He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and *his own people did not receive him*.
- Philippians 2:7–8 — [He] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He was “cut off” so that we might be reconciled and brought near to God. He suffered the curse for breaking the covenant so that we might inherit the reward for keeping the covenant. He drank to the dregs the full cup of God's wrath—which none of us can ever comprehend—so that our cup might be full to overflowing only and always with God's goodness and mercy (cf. Ps. 23:5–6).

But there is still another side to this story. As a result of the “cutting off” of this anointed one, the last and final eschatological judgment will be poured out on Jerusalem and the temple. “After the sixty-two sevens [after sixty-nine sevens total], an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing...”

II. Daniel 9:26b — And the people of a prince—the one who is coming—shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

We're going to talk next week about who this "prince" is, and who the "people" of this prince are, but that won't be necessary now. Once again, this is not what we might have expected, is it? Daniel is praying for the restoration of God's covenant people not just spiritually, but also physically and nationally because he sees that these things are somehow related. In response to Daniel's prayer, the angel Gabriel is sent to tell him that after seven sevens the temple and the city would be rebuilt, and then in the seventieth seven,³ not only would the salvation of God's people be accomplished, but after this salvation was accomplished the city and the temple would experience *final, eschatological* judgment. Look at the language that's used: "Its **end** shall come **with a flood**, and **to the end** there shall be war. **Desolations** are decreed." There's an irrevocable finality about these words. This isn't a destruction that will be followed by even more restorations and renewals (at least not in terms of God's redemptive plan for history). This is an eschatological judgment of the earthly city with its earthly temple that's final and irreversible. We know today that this judgment was fulfilled in 70 AD according to the word of Jesus (cf. 1 Thess. 2:14-16):

- Matthew 23:37-38 — "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate.
- Matthew 24:1-2 (cf. Mk. 13:1-2; Lk. 21:5-6) — Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

The temple and the city that were rebuilt after the *seventh* seven (that first and "shadowy" Jubilee) will be finally destroyed in the 70th seven (at the inauguration of the everlasting Jubilee). But how can this be? How can the seventy sevens *culminate* and *end* not just with the "cutting off" of an "anointed one," but with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple? How does this fit with the promised renewal and recreation of God's people?

We've already seen the answer to this question in verse 24 which speaks of the anointing of "a most holy." Remember that this "most holy" is the temple, along with the priesthood and the sacrifices that go with it, *fulfilled in Christ*. Christ is Himself the "most holy"—He is the temple with sacrifice and priesthood—that will never, ever again be desecrated or destroyed. So while on the one hand, the earthly city and sanctuary will be destroyed as a judgment on the people who rejected their Messiah, on the other hand this earthly city and sanctuary are no longer needed because they've served their purpose and been brought to their fulfillment in Christ (cf. Hebrews). So this judgment of Jerusalem is not at all the same thing this time as it's been in the past. It's still a judgment, yes, but it's not the same. Once the anointed one has been "cut off" there no longer remains any need for an "earthly" temple of any kind. There no longer remains even any need for the earthly city of Jerusalem (at least not in terms of redemptive history) because this earthly city was always just a shadow of the Jerusalem that is above — the real Jerusalem that is the fulfillment of the earthly Jerusalem. The real Jerusalem that is our home.

³ Some commentators suggest that the destruction of Jerusalem occurs after the end of the 70th seven. I admit that this is possible, but I do not see sufficient evidence for this in the text.

Remember, when Daniel heard of the anointing of a “most holy” in verse 24—a temple where the final salvation of God’s people would be accomplished—he had to wonder what kind of temple this could be. So when he sees here the final, eschatological destruction of the earthly Jerusalem and the earthly temple in the seventieth and final week, what would he have to conclude? The “temple” that’s to be anointed within these seventy weeks and that will never again be destroyed must not be another “earthly” temple, but rather the true and ultimate *fulfillment* of that temple.

So it’s actually *in* the destruction and final end of the earthly Jerusalem and temple that we see not only the eschatological judgment of God poured out, but also the eschatological salvation of God accomplished. Do you see, now, how this can be? The destruction of the earthly Jerusalem was the final evidence that the old age had passed and the new had come. So the Apostle Paul can write in Galatians:

- Galatians 4:25–26 — Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

And then the writer of Hebrews says:

- Hebrews 12:22 & 13:14 (cf. Heb. 11:8-16) — [We] have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem... *here* we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

The eschatological destruction of the earthly Jerusalem was the final proof that we are indeed those on whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor. 10:11; cf. Heb. 9:26). We are those who are living now in the days when the seventy sevens are fulfilled.

Conclusion

So let’s read again Daniel chapter nine, verses 25-26:

- “Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven sevens, and then sixty-two sevens when [the city] shall be built again with square and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two sevens [in the 70th seven], an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of a prince—the one who is coming—shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.”

Here in this eschatological judgment is the ultimate evidence and proof of a wonderful good news. The earthly temple and city can be destroyed only *because* that true temple and heavenly city are now present realities for us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ – the “anointed one” who was “cut off” for us. What does Paul say? “The Jerusalem above *is* free, and she *is* our mother.” And what does the writer of Hebrews say? “[We] *have come* to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” This city is our true home. One day this city will come

down out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:2, 10) and we will know the inexpressible joy of entering by the gates into that city (Rev. 22:14) – a city with no temple in it because its temple *is* the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22); a city where God will dwell with us, and we will be His people, and God Himself will be with us as our God (Rev. 21:3). So listen to these words of Jesus to us:

- Revelation 3:12 (cf. 22:14-15, 18-19) — The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God [which is the city]. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the *new* Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

Truly, it's in the destruction and final end of the earthly Jerusalem and temple that we see not just the eschatological judgment of God poured out, but also the eschatological salvation of God accomplished. And so today we wait with longing for that city that God has prepared for us – the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-16).

“Savior, since of Zion's city I through grace a member am,
let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Thy name.
Fading are the world's best pleasures, all its boasted pomp and show;
solid joys and lasting treasures none but Zion's children know.”
(John Newton)

“Seventy Sevens”

Daniel 9:24-27

