

*At the end of a worship service, the pastor invited people to come forward if they wanted someone to pray for them, and sure enough, a visitor – a big and burly looking man walked up front.*

*When the pastor asked about his prayer request, the guy answered, “Preacher, I need you to pray for my hearing.” So, the pastor placed his hands over the man’s ears and began to fervently pray for restored hearing.*

*When he finished praying, he looked the man squarely in the eyes and shouted above the music and the singing, “How’s you’re hearing now” – to which the man loudly replied, “I don’t know yet, Preacher – my hearing ain’t till next Wednesday at the county courthouse.”*

So, the pastor made an assumption and his prayer missed the mark. When **Daniel 9** is mentioned, any student of Bible prophecy is going to perk up because the prophecy in this chapter is foundational to all other end times prophecy. It’s a great chapter of prophecy, but what is often overlooked in this chapter is that two-thirds of it is a prayer. The prophecy we will look at this morning, comes on the heels of a prayer – a prayer without assumptions – a prayer that truly hits the mark. So, if you have your Bible turn to **Daniel 9** and we will begin with **verse 1**.

**<sup>1</sup>In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— <sup>2</sup>in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.**

The year is 538 B.C. Daniel has outlived the Babylonian Empire, he’s more than eighty years old, he’s pulled out of retirement, and now he serves **Darius** the Mede who was appointed by the Persian Emperor Cyrus to rule over Babylon.

It’s the first year of Darius, and here we find Daniel studying Scripture. Now, Daniel didn’t have a copy of the Bible like we have today, instead he had access to various scrolls of the Old Testament that the Jewish exiles had likely brought with them, and some of these scrolls contained the writings of the prophet **Jeremiah**.

For some forty years, Jeremiah had warned God’s people of their coming demise – a warning they disregarded. As a young boy, Daniel may have heard Jeremiah speak in the temple – calling the Jews to repent from their false worship, and now as a very old man, Daniel is studying his writings – and then, I believe, he comes to these words that jump out at him. In **Jeremiah 29**, beginning with **verse 10**, I think Daniel reads this,

*<sup>10</sup> “For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup> I will be found by you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’*

God revealed to Jeremiah that the Jews would be taken to Babylon, exiled for seventy years, and then be returned to their land. Daniel is reading this and he starts to do the math. We know that Daniel and others were taken captive in 605 B.C. – that was the first wave to Babylon – it’s now 538 B.C., and Daniel realizes that the seventy years is almost up – it’s really close, and God’s people will be allowed to return to their homeland.

Daniel believed God’s Word – he knew changes were coming for his people, and so, **what did he do?** He did the only thing he could do – he did what Jeremiah said he should do. He went to God about it. Look at **verse 3**.

**So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.**

When Daniel read in the book of **Jeremiah** that God was going to keep His people in captivity for seventy years and then send them home – he believed it. Daniel knew what God was going to do, and in response, he was moved to prayer.

Now, let’s think about that for a moment. God said what He was going to do. Daniel knew what God was going to do, and yet he prayed about it. **Why would he pray about it?** I mean, if God said He is going to do it – **then what is there for us to do?** Well, Daniel prayed about it because God was going to do what He was going to do – but He was going to do it through the prayer of His people. You see, for God, prayer is a way He has chosen to include us and involve us in His plan.

I like how David Jeremiah – another Jeremiah, puts it. He says,

*“God knows His plan, and even when He reveals His plan to us, He expects us to pray over that plan. The Bible tells us in **1 John 5:14-15**,*

*This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*

*David Jeremiah continues, “Sometimes I get the impression that I have misunderstood the meaning of prayer. Prayer is not to get God to change His will. If we really believe the will of God is perfect, then why would we want Him to change it? Our prayers really ought to be prompted out of our deep understanding of what the will of God is. There are a lot of folks who go to prayer, not to ascertain the will of God, but to ask Him to do what they want. Prayer is not getting God to adjust His program to what we want, it is adjusting our lives to the revealed will of God. When we pray, it isn’t God who changes, it’s us.”*

If I may clarify this – yes, prayer may change things – yes, it may change our circumstances, but ideally, it is to change our perspective from our will to His. Daniel knew God’s will – he believed it, and he responded to it through prayer just as Jeremiah said God’s people ought to do, and beginning with **verse 4** here it is,

**<sup>4</sup>I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, <sup>5</sup> we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. <sup>6</sup> Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup> “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. <sup>8</sup> Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. <sup>9</sup> To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; <sup>10</sup> nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. <sup>12</sup> Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> As it is written in the law of**

**Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.**

Daniel comes to God in brokenness and humility. He makes confession, and if you noticed – several times Daniel uses the pronouns “**we**” and “**us**” and “**our**” – he includes himself in this confession. God, we were wrong and we deserved every bit of these seventy years of exile. You warned us beforehand they were coming. You sent Your messengers like Jeremiah who told us to change our wicked ways or judgment was on its way. There were no secrets about this. You said it would come to pass – and yet we passed on You and did what we wanted to do.

We committed **iniquity** which means to *twist*. God, we twisted Your Word to suit ourselves. We have acted **wickedly**. We have **rebelled**. You were faithful to us O God, but we were not faithful to You – instead we disrespected You and departed from Your Word. Now look at that last verse. Daniel seems to be saying that although God’s people had gone through **calamity** – calamity they brought upon themselves, they still remained unchanged.

Then, beginning with **verse 15**, Daniel’s prayer takes a turn. We read,

**<sup>15</sup> “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. <sup>16</sup> O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. <sup>17</sup> So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. <sup>18</sup> O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. <sup>19</sup> O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”**

Daniel pleads for mercy – the same kind of mercy God extended to His people who were once in bondage in Egypt. This plea was not made because of the people’s

righteousness – for they had none – instead it was based on the character of God – He is merciful and compassionate.

Daniel thought about God’s character, but he also thought about God’s **name**. The Jews were God’s chosen people and Jerusalem was the place of His holy temple, and in so many words, Daniel was saying, “*God, everybody is talking about us as Your people. They are saying that You have forgotten us. God, for the sake of Your Word – for the sake of Your name, restore us to the place we once knew.*”

Daniel is in deep prayer, and before he can say “*Amen*” – he gets an answer. Let’s continue beginning with **verse 20**.

**<sup>20</sup> Now while 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 in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, <sup>21</sup> while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. <sup>22</sup> He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. <sup>23</sup> At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.**

The angel **Gabriel**, sent by God at high speed, shows up again with an answer to prayer – but it’s not about the *seventy-year plan* mentioned by Jeremiah, instead it’s about something much greater – it’s about the *seventy times seven year plan* – a plan that is laid out by Gabriel beginning with **verse 24**.

**Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.**

This passage starts with the words “**seventy weeks**” but don’t let that word “**weeks**” mislead you. In Hebrew it is “*shabua*” which means a period of seven.

Just like we might use the word “*dozen*” to mean the number twelve – the word *weeks* refers to the number seven. So, **seventy weeks** literally means *seventy sevens*, and in context – it’s seventy sevens of years, and if you do the math, that adds up to 490 years – 490 years have been **decreed**, according to the angel Gabriel, for **your people** – Daniel’s people. This is about the Jews and the **holy**

city of Jerusalem. This is very important so please don't miss this. God has set 490 years, specifically for the Jews – for a purpose, and here it is:

**to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.**

That's the purpose. Human rebellion ends and **atonement** is made to make things right with God. God's plan is to bring **everlasting righteousness** – right with God and right with each other for ever and ever. Not only that, all of God's promises and all of God's visions about the future will be completely fulfilled. No more need for prophecy, and lastly, the **most holy place** – the temple in Jerusalem will be anointed by the Lord's presence.

That's the summary of God's plan for the Jews, and we know it's a future plan because there isn't everlasting righteousness in Israel. The Jews have not turned to Jesus, and there is no temple in Jerusalem to anoint. So, taken as a whole, this speaks of Israel's eventual repentance by turning to Jesus as their Messiah and the establishment of the Lord's earthly kingdom at His second coming where everything is finally fulfilled and made right.

That's the eventual outcome after these 490 years have run their course, and fortunately for us, we are given a starting point. Look at **verse 25**.

**So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.**

Here, Gabriel reveals two out of the three segments of this 490-year period. The first segment, is **seven weeks**, or we could say "*seven sevens*" which equates to 49 years and it begins with the **decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem** – not the temple, but the city, with its buildings, and streets, its walls, and gates.

This decree, recorded in **Nehemiah 2**, was made during the month of Nisan – that's sometime during March or April in 445 B.C. when King Artaxerxes of Persia gave Nehemiah permission, safe passage, and the supplies to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city after it had been left desolate for several decades – and if you read **Nehemiah**, you will see the rebuilding work occurred during very troubling times. So, we have a good firm starting point to work from.

The second segment given by Gabriel is **sixty-two weeks** or “*sixty-two sevens*” or 434 years. It begins after the first segment and it brings us forward in time to the Lord’s earthly ministry as the **Messiah**. So, adding these first two segments together, from the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem to the Lord’s earthly ministry would be “*sixty-nine sevens*” or 483 years.

We started with 490 years – and 483 years have come and gone, so that leaves us with only one week or seven years remaining. **What happened to the remaining seven years?** Well, we are given a clue in the first part of **verse 26**.

**Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,**

After the Lord’s earthly ministry, after the **sixty-two weeks**, we are told the **Messiah** will be **cut off** – executed, crucified, and it’s at that point the calendar stops with the seven years remaining. Remember, this is about Daniel’s people – the Jews rejected their Messiah, and as a consequence, they are set aside for a season to usher in the church age. Jesus talked about this very thing with the Jewish religious leaders in **Matthew 21:42-43**.

<sup>42</sup>*Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the LORD, and it was marvelous in our eyes?’* <sup>43</sup>*“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.*

The seven years stopped for the Jews, and in **Acts**, the church became front and center – tasked with carrying out God’s mission to reach a lost and dying world. That’s the present purpose for the church, but as we come to the last part of **verse 26** and **verse 27**, we get a sneak peek into the future for the Jews. We are told,

**and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. <sup>27</sup> And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.**

We are told **the people of the prince who is to come** will destroy the city and the temple. In 70 A.D., *the people* – referring to the Romans, under the command of



Titus, came in like a **flood** and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple – not one stone was left standing upon another just as Jesus had predicted some forty years earlier, and as a result, the Jews were left homeless and scattered for centuries. The Jews had no nation or temple to call their own.

Then we are told in **verse 27**, and this is where it gets interesting, that **he** – still referring to this future prince whose people were the Romans – so now we should consider a *revived Roman Empire* – he will make a **covenant**, a peace treaty for **one week** – for seven years, and in the middle of these seven years, this future prince will put a stop to the sacrifices and the offerings – sacrifices and offerings which are only made in the temple. Now this seems very unrealistic, because after 70 A.D, there was no Jewish nation to make a treaty with and there was no temple to make sacrifices and offerings in – and to this day, there still isn't a temple in Jerusalem. **So, how can this prophecy be fulfilled without a Jewish nation or a temple – both of which are prominently featured in the end times?**

Well as you already know, God is true to His Word, and go figure, in 1948 Israel was rebirthed as a nation. That had never happened before. So now, we got a nation, and all the Jews lack is a temple, and a temple has to be rebuilt for these final events to happen – to include the **abomination** that will occur later in it.

Well, let me tell you what I think happens. This prince to come is the Antichrist. He will come as a man of peace, a strong leader with all kinds of energy and great promises, and I believe it is he who will make a way, through a treaty with the nation of Israel and her neighbors, to construct the temple in Jerusalem, and with this seven-year treaty, it's here the calendar starts back up again for the Jews – a time we call "*the Tribulation period*" – a time I describe as *hell on earth*, but a time which serves a purpose – that being to bring those who are lost, and more specifically Daniel's people – the Jewish people, to repentance and salvation through their Messiah Jesus Christ. That is the outcome after the 490 years have run their full course and Jesus returns to establish His earthly kingdom.

**So, what does all of this say to us?** It says to me that it is time to take seriously the days in which we live. No matter your views, we are responsible to act according to the Word of God, according to His expressed will, and to understand that God's plan is going to run its course exactly as He said.

Like Daniel, God wants us to get on board with His plan and join Him in His work, and therefore, our prayer and our attitude should be, "*Not my will God, but Your's be done – no matter what.*"



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