

SESSION #47

DANIEL (part 2)

7. Prophecies

Daniel chapter 9 deals with Israel in particular and uses a phrase which is also a famous biblical statement: *“the seventy weeks”*. This phrase, and this chapter, are key to understanding what God’s plan is for His people Israel. It is a reference to God’s time clock for the nation: seventy sevens, is the Hebrew wording. As you study the book of Daniel it becomes clear that the “sevens” here are not days or weeks, but years.

So, God has set forth a schedule of seventy times seven years, 490 years altogether, a timetable dealing with His people, Israel. Chapter 9:24 says, *“Seventy weeks [seventy sevens] are determined for your people [the Jews] and for your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”* These are the things which God has purposed, but which will take 490 years to complete.

In the following verses, God tells Daniel that this “seventy sevens” will be broken up into two time periods. There will be one period of time of 69 “weeks” amounting to 483 years. That will leave one leftover “week”, another period of 7 years which will not come into play until the end of human history. And God tells Daniel precisely what will be the beginning point of that 483 years and what will be the ending point, given in verse 25: *“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks... After the sixty-two weeks [or sevens] Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself...”*

There is a starting point. King Artaxerxes – a king yet to come when God gives this revelation to Daniel – will issue a particular decree allowing the Jews to start rebuilding Jerusalem. That is a well-known historical event. From that point, until the Messiah, the

Anointed One, comes and is cut off but “not for Himself” (He will be cut off for the sake of His people), there will be 483 years.

We know this decree was issued on March 14, 445 BC. The Jewish calendar year was 360 days long, so the 483 years takes us precisely to Palm Sunday, AD 32.¹ The Anointed One, Messiah the Prince, comes into Jerusalem with much rejoicing, but of course during that same week, He is rejected and cut off, but not for Himself. He is the Lamb of God who dies for all mankind. Jesus is God’s Anointed One but not received as such by His own people. As a result of their rejection of the Messiah whom God sends, God’s time clock for Israel stops and won’t start up again until much later in history when it will run through that final 70th “week” (or 7 year period).

This period, which Daniel prophesied, is still to come. You and I live in-between those two blocks of time. The Church Age comes between the 69th seven and the 70th seven of God’s time clock for Israel. If you remember our “mountain peak” diagram, this is the big valley between peak #3 and peak #4 which none of the prophets saw.

Lots of Scriptures deal with that 70th week, the seven-year period called “*the Great Tribulation*”. And there are numerous theological positions regarding this time period known as the “end times”, which we don’t have time to deal with in this brief survey.

Daniel provides for us in this chapter 9 the important key to understanding God’s timetable for the Jewish people, the nation of Israel. But not only for the Jews. He provides a key for God’s dealing with the Gentile nations. In chapters 2 – 9 we see a time clock for the non-Jewish peoples of the world.

Chapter 2 tells us the story of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image, which he later used to build a large statue. God gave him this dream of an image of a man. Daniel had to be called in to interpret this dream.

Later, in chapter 7, God gives a dream or series of visions directly to Daniel which precisely parallel the dream which Nebuchadnezzar had earlier. The great statue of

¹ Chuck Smith, in his book “Standing Up in a Fallen World” (The Word for Today), page 99, provides more details on how these dates are determined.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream is now seen to be a series of wild beasts in Daniel's vision. In both cases, they picture the coming political kingdoms of the Gentiles. It is rather interesting when you compare chapter 2 with chapter 7 to note the differences.

Nebuchadnezzar dreams about this glorious image – head of gold, chest and arms of silver, etc. – and then builds a model of it, but plated entirely with gold from head to toe – an expression of his own pride and desire for his kingdom to last forever. He sets it up in an open plain near the city of Babylon. It was a picture in advance of what the kingdoms of this world would be. And as far as men were concerned, it was a very beautiful image.

But when God showed Daniel the reality of what these kingdoms would be, it wasn't a pretty sight. Chapter 7 shows us a series of ferocious ugly beasts, each representing another world kingdom, giving us a glimpse into the inner nature of the political kingdoms of this world. The outward appearance, seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, was one thing; but the inner nature of political power is a different thing altogether. Much more like ravaging beasts.

The head of gold in the image becomes a powerful lion in Daniel's vision. Both reflect the Middle Eastern empire of that time, the kingdom of Babylon. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar clearly, *"You are that head of gold"*. The kingdom of Babylon is the first of the series of kingdoms described in both Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision.

The second kingdom is represented by the silver chest and arms in the statue but by a bear in the dream of beasts. This is the coming kingdom which will take over after Babylon, the Medo-Persian empire.

The third element in both visions, a brass trunk in the image and a leopard in the vision, predicts the kingdom of Greece led by Alexander the Great. There are some very clear specifics here as to what Alexander would do and what would happen to his kingdom when he died. And they all came to pass precisely as Daniel describes them.

After that third kingdom will arise a fourth – the legs and feet of iron, matched by a strange, diverse beast, aggressive and ferocious, which Daniel could not identify within

the animal kingdom. This one represented the Roman Empire which wouldn't come for hundreds of years. But when it came it would be as strong as iron and as deadly as a ferocious beast.

Then at the end of time, there would be another kingdom – the feet and toes made of a mixture of iron and clay – having something of the kingdom of Rome's attributes but very unstable, so it will not last. Then ten kings appear as horns on the beast, followed by another king coming up out of those kings who would be the world ruler in the end of human history, the Anti-Christ. The Book of Revelation tells us much more about this personality.

In the revelation which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar and to Daniel, He pictures what will happen in the end of time following all these earlier kingdoms. That final kingdom would finally be destroyed. And all the kingdoms of man's political adventures will come crashing down to the ground. A stone cut out of a mountain without hands will come rolling down on Babylon, crushing the feet of that great statue and turning it all into dust.

The stone then grows and becomes a kingdom which fills the entire earth – a picture, of course, of Jesus Christ and His kingdom. He, the stone "*cut out without hands*", will judge the nations of the world, destroy all political power, and then replace all of that evil power with His own kingdom.

In other words, as we look at the stories and prophecies in the book of Daniel, we see two major movements in history. One is that evil is getting worse and worse all the time. At the same time, good is abounding more and more as God's family increases through the centuries. Two trends which parallel each other throughout human history until they reach a climax point at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, predicted in many Scriptures throughout both the OT and the NT.

8. Prominence of the Supernatural

When you consider all of Scripture, isn't it interesting and maybe a little surprising that there were only four periods of time in biblical history when miracles were prominent?

First, the Exodus as God miraculously delivered His people from Egypt. Secondly, the times of Elijah and Elisha. The third period was that of Daniel. And then the fourth was the time of Christ and the early church. So, Daniel is one of these rare periods of concentrated miracles.

Why did God intervene on behalf of His people in Daniel's day with such memorable miracles like the three friends in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the den of lions? These miracles were signs from God, both to the Gentiles and to Israel.

These signs to the Gentiles, in the first place, were to teach the nations of the world through the ruling emperor of the middle east of that time, Nebuchadnezzar, that everyone who is in political authority has accountability to the one true God, whether they recognize Him or not. Nebuchadnezzar refused to recognize who God was so God had to bring some miraculous events into his experience in order to make him realize that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

They were also signs to Israel because, as you can imagine, in their captivity they lost a lot of hope. They were a discouraged people wondering, *"Has God forsaken us forever? Are we stuck here in Babylon for the rest of our national history? Is God finished with us?"*

And God brings the miraculous into the times of Daniel in order to encourage the people of God and strengthen their faith that God is still here! He's still alive and well and shows how much He cares by His presence in the fiery furnace and in the den of lions. He's still a miracle-working God. And as a result of the miracles, and God's interventions during the time of Daniel, the people of Judah who went into captivity to Babylon as helpless addicts to idolatry came back out again 70 years later as the most rigid monotheistic people in the world, worshipping one God and one God only. It was the greatest revolution in Israel's history: this change of heart from the worship of many gods to a very strict worship of only one God, Jehovah. And a major factor was the presence of supernatural events wrought by God.

The whole book of Daniel centers around the sovereignty of God. We may not experience miracles, but we can be sure that God is still in control just as much now as

He was in Daniel's day. When the ungodly culture of our times presses in on you, remember this truth and find your security in His sovereignty. Stand strong! Even if it means a fiery furnace, God will be there with you.

Our next session will take us into the historical books again, looking this time at Ezra.
