

“Christmas according to . . . Daniel”

“Recognizing the Time of His Coming”

Daniel 9:20-27

God predicted the coming of Jesus to the earth through Old Testament prophets. Isaiah lived 600 years before Jesus' birth yet he told us the Messiah would come from the line of David (Is. 11), that He would be born of a virgin (Is. 7:14) and that God Himself would give us His Son as a baby (Is. 9:6). Micah, who also lived around Isaiah's time would predict the very place of His birth, Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), a prophecy even Herod believed to be true. And God used a lousy prophet named Balaam (Num. 24:17) to predict a star would one day rise out of Jacob. Also fulfilled when the Magi came.

We like these prophecies. We even like to quote them as proof of God's faithful promises. But even though God has batted 1,000 so far with every prophecy ever uttered by a prophet even down to place and time, why then are we so reluctant to believe the prophecies of Jesus' return even when God tells us details? Some Christians try to spiritualize them away so they sound vague and confusing; often shaking their heads and saying 'Well, we don't really know' or we don't want to be 'controversial'.

Did God change? Did He change from detailed prophecy about Jesus' 1st coming and then switch to vague, confusion about Jesus' second coming? We've been down this road before and what I've tried to show you from Scripture is the future prophecies of Christ's coming are just as clear as the ones about His 1st coming. We're given some detailed information about both and serious clues to know roughly when they will occur. God has even given us the framework so we can at least have a rough idea and know where God is going.

The most important passage in the bible that predicts both Jesus' comings is Daniel 9:20-27. He was given detailed information about Jesus' first coming and about His second coming. The main reasons why we fail to understand prophecy are 1) we don't really read the text. We keep trying to read into it and not what it actually says. 2) We keep trying to put the church in these prophecies when God is talking about Israel. God has a separate plan for the church and a separate plan for Israel. When we understand God's plan for Israel we understand our place in God's plan.

Daniel 9:20-27 is an answer to Daniel's prayer from 1-19. It's 538 BC, the 1st year of Darius the Mede's reign. Babylon has been overthrown by the Medes and Persians. It is now 67 years since the exile began when Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were taken along with Israel's best and brightest to Babylon. Daniel is now in his mid 80's. He's old enough to remember Jerusalem and the temple before its destruction. He had been reading Jeremiah's prophecy in Jer. 25 and 29 that God would end the exile after 70 years. Daniel believed in a literal interpretation of prophecy, so he is praying for God to restore the temple in Jerusalem and return the people to Israel, forgiving them of their rebellious sin. Daniel also knows from Jeremiah and Isaiah's prophecies that a wonderful age of righteousness and peace with the Messiah on David's throne is to happen when Israel gets back into their land. So this is what he's ultimately praying about. However, Daniel has also interpreted two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 2 & 4) and received two visions of his own (ch. 7-8) that indicate Babylon is only the first of a number of successive gentile powers who will rule over Israel and there's going to a terrible period for Israel when this 'beast' takes power. Yet, he still prays for God to forgive the nation of their sins and restore Jerusalem and the temple, hoping that it might happen soon

If we keep Daniel's prayer in mind we will not have a hard time understanding the prophecy. Because the prophecy is about when God will forgive Israel's sin, when He will restore Jerusalem and the temple. As Daniel was praying God sent Gabriel to give him a direct answer to his prayer about Jerusalem, the temple and Israel's forgiveness. Gabriel's answer from God to Daniel (and us) reminds us that . . .

Jesus' Coming is Always Tied to God's Plan with Israel (9:20-24)

Daniel understood that God wasn't going to restore Israel to her former glory nor would He bring in the Messiah and the Kingdom until Israel confessed and repented of her sin of rebellion. This is why Daniel was *"confessing my sin and the sin of the people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for His holy hill"* (v.20). When Gabriel arrives and speaks to Daniel to instruct him about these very things he says, *"Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding."* These words mean to have a capacity to understand as a result of proper teaching. God's answer to his prayer about Israel's kingdom restoration was . . .

To bring clarity from confusion (vv.20-23)

God has not changed His promises for Israel. He wants us to have insight and understanding about future things. Satan is called a deceiver and the father of lies. One of his most successful campaigns has been to deceive the church into thinking God no longer has a plan for Israel and that prophecy is too complicated so we shouldn't waste our time. Why else would God tell us in Rev. 1:3

"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."

Through his and Nebuchadnezzar's dreams Daniel was told that Israel's restoration and Messiah's rule would not come after Babylon's demise, nor after the Medes and Persians would come, not after the Greeks, but sometime after the Roman. Daniel was confused because he thought Israel would be restored and receive her glorious king and kingdom after they returned from Babylon. So God wants to clarify that Israel's kingdom is still coming and that . . .

God wants to deal with Israel's sin (v.24)

Daniel's prayer was for Israel's forgiveness and restoration. Gabriel tells Daniel that seventy sevens are decreed for *"your people [Israel] and your holy city [Jerusalem]."* Some translations say 'weeks' which might confuse the reader. Does he mean 70 weeks or 70 times 7 days, weeks or years? When studying the Bible a good rule of thumb is to always remember 'Context is king'. In other words what clues do we have already from this chapter about the number 70? Well, back in v.2 Daniel noted the prophecy of Jeremiah said the exile would last 70 years so he prays that the exile would be over now that 70 years is almost complete. God tells Daniel that Israel's complete forgiveness and complete restoration won't happen in 70 years but in 70 times seven years, 490 years.

God tells Daniel that He has six purposes that are decreed when the 490 years are over. By the way, the word 'decreed' means determined, ordained, pertaining to a plan which will occur.

These six purposes concern Israel and Jerusalem. This was the context of the prayer. It is the context of the answer. It is not about the church. Too often we try to read the church into Israel. If we interpret this for the church we will misunderstand the obvious reading of the passage and miss out on future events and purposes.

Daniel prayed that God would forgive Israel's sin [resulting in exile] when the 490 years are done. Israel's 'Transgression' literally reads, "the rebellion". Israel had not returned to God during the exile. They continued to rebel as a nation and still continue to rebel today against God because they deny God's Son Jesus as their Messiah. After the 490th year of prophecy, there will be a complete turning to God of the entire nation one day. This is what Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 and Zech. 8 and 13 speak about. A national repentance followed by a complete indwelling of the Spirit so that we read in Jer. 31:34, *"no longer will a man teach his neighbour or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord' because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest"*.

At that time Israel's sin will be completely atoned for. Wasn't their sin – and ours – completely atoned for when Jesus died? Atonement for sin was made available when Jesus died on the cross but sins are only atoned for when people have accepted Jesus' atonement for their sins. Israel has yet to do that. Many individuals have but not the nation.

When they ask for their sins to be completely forgiven God will at the same time bring in everlasting righteousness because Jesus will return at the end of 490 years to establish His righteous rule on the earth during the millennial kingdom. Israel will have returned to their land and God will have fulfilled all His promises to Israel regarding the land. So there will be no need for any more prophecy or visions because God's plan for Israel will be completely fulfilled. And at that time God will also *"anoint the Most Holy."* Since Daniel's prayer was about God's sanctuary being desolate God assures Daniel that when these 490 years are completed the sanctuary including the Holy of holies which contained God's presence would be restored. This means there will be a temple in the millennium which is in agreement with Ezekiel 40-48.

Is this confirmed in the New Testament? Rom. 11:25-27,

²⁵ I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

As we already know concerning Jesus' birth . . .

Jesus' Coming was Clearly Predicted (9:25-26)

When did the 490 year period begin? Gabriel divides these 70 sevens of years into three sections: the first 7 x seven years (49), then the next 62 x seven years (434 years) and the last 7 years. Here's what we're told about Jesus' coming:

The timing (v.25a)

"Know and understand this: from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed, One, the Ruler comes, there will be 7 sevens and 62 sevens. It [Jerusalem] will be rebuilt with streets and a trench but in times of trouble."

So we can start calculating the time from the issuing of a decree, made by someone important if not royalty, to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. While Cyrus issued a decree for Israel to return and rebuild their temple in 536 BC only King Artaxerxes issued a decree to Nehemiah to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem. We know from historical records it was March 445 BC. While Nehemiah

would help Israel get the walls back up in 52 days the rebuilding of the city took 49 years.

62 x seven is 434 plus the 49 years since Artaxerxes decree gives us 483 years when Messiah, the Ruler would come. If we do the math (based on Israel's calendar where each month has 30 days) we would come to the spring of 32 AD as the year when "*Messiah, the Anointed One, the ruler comes.*" Why emphasize *Anointed One, the ruler*?" When was the only public affirmation by the people that Jesus was the Messiah? His triumphal entry into Jerusalem days before his death.

So the beginning point of 69x 7 years starts with Artaxerxes decree and the ending point of 483 years is Jesus' Triumphal entry. Even Jesus validated that. Jesus purposely arranged the triumphal entry. Jesus intentionally rode a donkey's foal to fulfil Zech. 9:9. To ride a donkey was a symbol that a new king was taking the throne. Jesus allowed the people to proclaim Him as Son of David, and even when the Pharisees told him to rebuke His disciples He said, even if they didn't the stones would cry out.' Then He said this:

Luke 19: 42 "If you, even you had only known on this day, what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Jesus said they should have known the day of His coming but they did not. Daniel's prophecy gave them the timing (483 years) of Jesus coming and identification as Messiah but they didn't believe what God's Word said.

Daniel also was told by Gabriel of

The rejection (v.26a)

Here Daniel is told the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. Jesus of course was crucified 5 days after His triumphal entry. Luke 19:46-48 records right after His triumphal entry and exchange with the religious leaders that they began to plot His death.

Then we read about . . .

The destruction (v.26b)

. . . of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem once more, this time referring to 70 AD. But 70 AD is more than 7 years after 32 AD? One would expect that the 70th group of 7 years would follow the others. Except that God told us here in His Word that there is a gap of time between Christ's comings. We're also told about . . .

The wait (v.26c)

. . . between Jesus' two comings. "*After the 62 sevens [which followed the first 7 sevens] . . . "After" the 483 years things will happen before the seventh seven which doesn't start until v.27. What else happened after Jesus died? "The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary."* In 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed again along with the temple by the Roman empire. Who is this 'ruler who will come'?

Somehow the final and future Gentile world power is related to the ancient Roman empire. "The ruler who will come" will rule this final empire. Right now we are in this gap of time. This is the church age which Paul called the mystery in Eph. 3:2-6. The prophecy doesn't deal with the church. It deals with God's plan for Israel. "*War will continue until the end and desolations have been decreed.*" While this may sound like a general statement about history from then til now, I think it is still talking about Israel. Israel has always been at war and always been persecuted.

Even though they finally got their land back in 1948 the persecution has increased. Part of this is God's refining and disciplining them because they still are in rebellion against Him as a nation and most refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

So this last verse refers to the time prior to Jesus' return to Israel on the Mt. of Olives. Not only was Jesus' 1st coming clearly predicted and tied to God's plan with Israel so also . . .

Jesus' Return is Clearly Predicted with God's Plan for Israel **(9:27)**

We continue to be in the 'waiting' period for Jesus' return. We are still in this undisclosed gap of time between the 69th and 70th seven. Daniel 9:27 tells us there is still . . .

One more 7 year period left to come

. . . before Jesus' returns when God will turn once again towards Israel and finish up His plan with them. This passage is all about God's plan for Israel and how Jesus' comings fit into it since He is their Messiah. How can there be thousands of years difference in-between these 2 verses? There are numerous places in Scripture where the prophets predicted in the same sentence or back to back verses about Jesus' first coming and second coming. The famous verse from Isaiah 9:6 says,

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, [1st coming] and the government will be on his shoulders [return]. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. . .

Zech. 9:9 predicts Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a colt at His first coming but listen to v.10,

⁹Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

And listen to Jesus Himself quote Is. 61:1-3 in Luke 4:18

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor [in Luke 4:21 He stopped here and said 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Because the rest of the passage talks about events at His return] and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

The last seven years will be a terrible time for Israel when God uses the anti-christ to bring out a remnant from Israel who will all one day turn to Him. When will that start? When

The false covenant of peace and the fake Christ

.. . happen. A powerful and charismatic figure will arrive on the scene and do the impossible; he will arrange a 7 year covenant of peace between Israel and her enemies. But he will break the covenant at the 3 ½ year point (where we are given details in Matt. 24:15 and onward by Jesus Himself. Because this covenant involves sacrifices this means there must be a temple. There is no temple today and Israel has very little hope of ever building one again since the Muslims have one of their most sacred shrines on that spot, the Dome of the Rock which sits on the temple mount.

What will happen that many of Israel will agree to a covenant with this person? The only way we can imagine this happening is that Israel gives the Muslims what they want, part of their land. The Palestinians have no land of their own and will only settle for Israel's land. Some-how they will agree to a trade; land from Israel in exchange for peace or protection by this ruler. This covenant will be a seven year covenant that will give Israel what they want, a temple so they can make sacrifices. That they want to make sacrifices tells us they are still in rebellion against God because they still have not accepted Jesus as their Messiah.

So the anti-christ will have 3 ½ years to try and annihilate Israel, details given in Rev. 13 and Matt. 24 and 1 Thes. 5 and 2 Thes. 2. But we also read that "the end that is decreed will be poured out on Him". Rev. 19 tells us the ant-christ and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire when Jesus Christ returns to the earth. When He returns and sets His feet on the Mount of Olives the remaining survivors of Israel – 1/3- will *Look on Him who they have pierced and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly as one grieves for a first-born son*" (Zech. 12:10). Tears of repentance of how they mistreated and disbelieved him but now accept Him. Then Zech. 13:1 says *"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity"*.

Paul says of this time in Rom. 11:26, *"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, 'A deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'"*

What can we take away from this for application? God meant that

****Prophecy should change how we live**

2 Pet. 3:11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

While we live in the gap of time between the 69th 7 and the final 7. We're supposed to share the gospel by the way we live and by sharing the good news of great joy. Jesus came to Bethlehem just as God said. He's coming back to the Mt. of Olives just as God said. Let's live like we believe that.

Is there anything we can do about prophecy?

****Prophecy is advanced through prayer & evangelism**

Did Jesus not command us to pray *'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name, Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Daniel was praying when God revealed to him His kingdom plans. Should we not be praying for Jesus to come and bring His rule to the earth? Of course Jesus also said His kingdom rule can begin in the hearts of people who believe He is Lord and submit to His will as we have. So Peter told us to look forward to that day and speed its coming. How? Well, Paul told us Jesus won't return until the full number of Gentiles comes in. God has in mind a certain number of non Jews who will get saved. The more we evangelize the sooner Jesus returns. People live in the dark now. They don't recognize Jesus as their Saviour who came to Bethlehem. We need to help them recognize Him before He returns outside of Jerusalem.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net