

"What is the Next Known Prophetic Event?"

Daniel 9:24-27

I'm grateful to God that I plan ahead what I'm going to preach on, so that you know that this is not a reactionary message to what is going on today in Israel. I am not a sensationalist preacher, jumping on the current climate and fad or cultural dilemma that happened this week and speaking on that. Not that we don't speak on these things but we deal with them deliberately through Scripture. So, our theme in 2024 will be on our identity in Christ, so at some point we will look at how the Bible defines identity vs. what our culture defines identity.

I mentioned to you at the beginning of this year I would preach two short series on prophecy. The first one which we looked at in Feb/March I called "Prophecy: Where are We Now?" then we looked at God's prophetic timetable as revealed in Scripture and where that puts us in 2023. And I had already planned to return to it the Sunday after Thanksgiving, looking forward to what's next prophetically. I've avoided clicking on those video links where people are wondering how does what's happening in Israel relate to prophecy? I can tell you with 100 % accuracy that whatever is happening there somehow relates to God's future plan, only because I believe everything that happens in the world is always related to God working His future plan. I can tell you with 100% prophetic accuracy though, is that the tribulation has not started. The Tribulation or technically the 70th week of Daniel, is the next known prophetic event on God's future timetable.

Maybe you're wondering, why am I not talking about the rapture? Well, some believe the rapture occurs before the tribulation and some believe at the end. While I do hold to a rapture prior to the tribulation, we have to understand what the tribulation is that we're raptured out of or not out of before we can talk about the rapture. So let's talk about what we can clearly know before we talk about what we're unsure of yet.

How do we know the tribulation is real and will last 7 years? We have to go back to Daniel 9. Without understanding Daniel we will be confused when it comes to prophecy. You can't make sense of Matt. 24, 1 Thes. 4-5, 2 Thes. 2 or the book of Revelation. You can't make sense of any book by only reading the end. You have to read the rest of the book.

The main reasons we misunderstand prophecy is 1) we don't really read the text. We keep trying to read into it and not what it actually says. Then we try to apply what it means for us before we've understood what it meant for the original audience. 2) We keep trying to put the church where God is talking about Israel. God has a separate plan for the church and a separate plan for Israel. The church (body of Jews and Gentiles in Jesus) is not in the Old Testament). Paul says in Eph. 3 this is the mystery the prophets never saw that we now understand. That doesn't mean the Old Testament isn't relative – far from it. All Scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:15).

Let's review the context of Daniel 9. Daniel and many other Jews were taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and its king Jehoiakim (Dan. 1). While in Babylon, A young Daniel rises to prominence as he and his 3 friends earn themselves positions of responsibility as the kings' wise men, advisers. In Daniel 2, Daniel relates and interprets a dream from God that Nebuchadnezzar has that terrifies Nebuchadnezzar. The dream is about a large statue made of different metals of diminishing value, Nebuchadnezzar being the head of gold. All these, Daniel explains, are successive kingdoms that will follow in the future including God's kingdom at the very end.

In Ch. 4 Nebuchadnezzar has another dream that Daniel again interprets, this time referring to Nebuchadnezzar's becoming insane for 7 years and then coming to his senses. A punishment from God for his arrogance. In Daniel 5 an older Daniel, is called upon to interpret the writing on the wall of a mysterious hand during Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar's short tenure. He interprets the writing saying this is the hand of God denouncing Belshazzar and announcing Babylon's end, and the Medo-Persian empire's beginning.

In Ch.'s 7-8, which chronologically happen before Ch. 5 during Belshazzar's reign, we read that Daniel received two more dreams with more details about the future kingdoms that follow Babylon, this time receiving dreams about a terrifying future kingdom that precedes the coming of God's kingdom, ruled by one like a Son of Man (7:13-14).

Ch. 6 and 9 both happen early in the reign of Darius the Mede, who along with Cyrus of Persia had defeated the Babylonians, just as God decreed. We're unsure of whether the lions den incident happened before the visit of the angel Gabriel in Ch. 9, but if it did, obviously it was a way of telling an aging Daniel by now (in his 80's), God had more work for him to do. Ch. 6 reminds us Daniel has never faltered in his faith in God and continued to pray every day. For what? Daniel 9 explains.

Daniel was reading Jeremiah's prophecy in Jer. 25:11 and 29:10-11 where God said He would end the exile after 70 years. It is now 68 years since the exile began. Daniel believes in a literal interpretation of prophecy, so he is praying for God to return the people to Israel and restore Jerusalem and forgiving them for their rebellious ways. Daniel knows from Jeremiah and Isaiah's prophecies that a wonderful age of righteousness and peace with the Messiah on David's throne is going to happen when Israel gets back into their land. This is what he's ultimately praying about.

Keep in mind Daniel's prayer is for Israel's restoration if we're to understand prophecy. The prophecy is about when God will wipe out 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 speaks from God to tell Daniel that what he's asking won't happen yet but in 70 x 7 years.

²⁴ *"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.*

If 70 times 7 years are decreed then make sure we know

God Has Decreed a 7 Year Tribulation Will Come **(9:24)**

Because that's how it will conclude, with one final 7-year period of time that will be an awful time, but when it's over it will usher in a wonderful time for Israel to enjoy the Messiah's rule of peace in their land; the time Daniel is praying about.

Gabriel is sent by God to deliver a message and an answer to Daniel's prayer. He told Daniel,

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

The word for decree means 'set apart, determined, carved out.' Daniel was thinking that with the 70 years almost over that God will forgive Israel's sin of rebellion and restore His relationship with them. Unfortunately, Israel was not ready or willing to repent as nation yet. Gabriel says that will take seventy times seven, in other words 490 years. As we will see in a minute, sixty-nine periods of 7 years have already been fulfilled. This is not even debatable; we know this. So, there must be one more period of 7 years left before

God fulfils His plan for Israel (v.24)

Israel did not nor has yet to repent of their rebellion against God. In v.26 we are told when the Messiah will come and be cut off. They rejected Jesus as their Messiah when He came. John wrote in John 1:10

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

I am not going to go into detail in v.24 today but I will return to it to flesh it out more. But these verses are for Israel. This is what Daniel was praying for. And there are many passages that speak of the nation returning to God in repentance and accepting Jesus as their Messiah when the 7 years are over (Jer. 33; Ezek. 35-37; Zech 12-13; Rom. 11). God has decreed this to happen. If sixty-nine sevens are fulfilled then the last seven will be fulfilled and God will fulfil all His promises to a believing remnant of Israelites.

Gabriel goes on to tell Daniel when the sixty-nine times 7 years (483 years) are done. He tells us

Jesus' crucifixion marked the completion of the first 69 weeks (vv.25-26a)

It will start with the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and end when the Anointed One (Messiah – Jesus) comes (v.25). King Artaxerxes of Persia issued that decree when on Nehemiah's request in Neh. 2 he gave Nehemiah letters from himself sending Nehemiah to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. This was Mar. 14, 445 BC. The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar and consists of 30-day months, a 360-day year. 483 equals 5796 months, times 30 days = 173,880 days which takes you to the end of March, 32 AD. Gabriel said the Messiah will 'come'.

It would seem to refer to some kind of appearing of the Messiah to the nation. Many believe this is the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday when Jesus allowed the crowds to proclaim Him as Messiah, something the Jewish leaders were very upset about. It was Jesus Himself who said, on that day, in Luke 19:41

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.

So the 70 years of 7's has 3 sections. The first 7 (49 years) is the rebuilding of the city will have a trench (or moat) during times of distress. We know Nehemiah faced a lot of opposition to rebuilding the walls and the city. The second section ends with the next 62 periods of 7 years (483 years in total counting the first 49 years) with the coming of the anointed, the prince. At this point Gabriel tells us there is a gap of time between the last 7 years (which begins in v,27) and after the

cutting off the Messiah (referring of course to Jesus' crucifixion. And then another major event in this gap of time is the destruction of Jerusalem mentioned here:

The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

At this point Daniel is not given any more information regarding Israel until v.27 because that is the focus. Gabriel tells us

God Has Temporarily Delayed This Last Seven Years(9:26b)

Some Christians have come to think God's delay for Israel means God has deleted His plan for Israel. God has done no such thing. We will talk about this in more detail in the next 2 weeks. God is faithful to His Word. Daniel was praying from Jeremiah asking God to fulfil His Word for Israel and Jerusalem. Gabriel comes and says not yet. There are other things yet to happen. The dreams Daniel interpreted had not been fulfilled yet. The Medes and Persians defeated Babylon – as God said – but Greece is yet to come and then the Roman Empire. In the dreams this Roman Empire always seems to be the final Empire before God's rule comes. The Roman Empire splintered into smaller empires at the end of the fifth century AD. But according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 the feet of clay (which is the Roman empire that defeated the Greeks [belly & thighs of Bronze]) also extends to ten toes. It would seem a Roman like empire will arise again because we read here that the 'people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and sanctuary.'

Rome did that but this ruler who is to come yet, will come out of a future Roman empire. Now he talks about this ruler to come in vv.26c-27 which is all about the final 7 years.

God Has Given Us Some Markers About the Last 7 Years (9:26c-27)

Sometimes people ask, are we in the tribulation? The answer is no. How do we know? Because God has given us some very specific markers that will indicate when the last 7 years starts, what happens in the middle and what happens to the antichrist. First, as already indicated

The antichrist will have a connection to the ancient Roman Empire (v.26c)

When we get into this in more detail in Dan. 7 & 8 we find that the antichrist will arise out a consortium of ten rulers. He will be a Gentile, a non-Jew. He will be in a position of power prior to the last 7 years. If the tribulation is soon, then he is alive today. But we do not know when this will take place, except that

He will make a 7-year covenant with Israel (v.27a)

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.

'The many' will be Israel and this covenant will be for 7 years. Most covenants are made to keep peace, to protect one another. Most covenants also are about an exchange or concessions. "We'll agree to this if you agree to that". What will be a concession that the antichrist will promise Israel? If he is going to put an end to sacrifice and offering it would seem part of this covenant will result in Israel being allowed to rebuild their temple and offer sacrifices again. This is not a good thing

because the Israelites who want this are not followers of Jesus. What will all be involved in this we do not know but Israel will have to give up something in order to get the right to build a temple again. We might think this would never happen, but God says it will. And this verse also tells us

The antichrist will break the covenant at midpoint (v.27b)

In the middle of 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation,

The last 7 years will be divided into two periods of three ½ years. The first three ½ is a false sense of peace and security, the second, a terrible time of persecution on Israel by the antichrist who will proclaim himself to be the messiah from the temple; this is the abomination referred to here. Jesus referred to this future event as well in Matt. 24:15 when He spoke about this last 7-year period prior to His return:

¹⁵ "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²² If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Thankfully God has already predetermined these days to be short lived – although 3 ½ years will seem like a long time if you're in it. But thankfully, even as God decrees this terrible time to end, he also predicts that

The end of the antichrist's is already decreed (v.27c)

And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him

He will not succeed in destroying Israel. Jesus will return at this point and throw the antichrist into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). The reason the enemy is bent on destroying Israel is because if Israel is wiped out how can God fulfil His promises to them? How can the Messiah rule from David's throne if there is no throne of David in Jerusalem to rule from? Why does God have this 7-year tribulation as part of His plan before Christ returns? We will talk about that next week.

God sent Gabriel to help Daniel have insight and understanding, to know and understand future biblical truths. And that is my aim and prayer also. I believe our understanding about future prophecy begins here. Daniel 9 gives us a framework of God's future end time plan. The Bible is progressive, in that the New Testament builds on the foundation of the Old, not replaces it. Thessalonians and Revelation and Romans fit within this framework making it understandable and knowable.

The Bible contains many future truths that we should study and know. But do not be afraid because we are secure in the Lord. When Paul taught the Thessalonians about future things he said this in 1 Thes. 5:9-11

⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Our hope is in the Lord. Our security is in Him not in a frail, sinful world. As is quite obvious every day, people need hope; people need the Lord and they need to know Him sooner than later. God wants us to be informed about the future so we can warn those not ready. We alone know where the world is going. Let us be ready to share the reason for the hope that we have.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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