**DANIEL CHAPTER 9**

This chapter covers the third of Daniel’s prophecies. It is totally different from the previous two we studied. For one thing it is not revealed in the form of a dream or vision. Instead the archangel Gabriel verbally tells Daniel the events that will take place. Also, this prophecy occurs after the Persians have conquered Babylon.

READ Daniel 9:1-2. Darius mentioned here is the same Darius from Chapter 6 that had Daniel thrown into the lion’s den. The year is easily established from historical records to be 538 B.C. So, 12 years has elapsed since the vision in Chapter 8 that we looked at last week.

Daniel is reading from the Book of Jeremiah He may very well have been reading Jeremiah 25:11, which says, “This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” At the time that Jeremiah prophesied this, the people of Judah and the many false prophets in the land just laughed at him. They did NOT believe that God would allow something like this to happen – not to His own people. But they were dead wrong! God used Babylon’s King Neb to conquer Judah and carry the Jews far away from their homeland into foreign captivity. Daniel himself had been among the first group of exiles deported to Babylon some 67 years before when he was a teenager.

[Question 1] The seventy years is about up. Daniel knows from what he’s reading that the time for the “desolations of Jerusalem” is nearly complete. If what Jeremiah said is true then they will soon be going home. You would think that the eminent release of the Jews from Babylonian captivity is good news. But something deeply troubles Daniel. So he goes to God in prayer.

We’ve already noted that Daniel has an amazing prayer life and whenever you study the great prayers of the Bible the prayer here in Daniel 9 is certainly included.

READ Daniel 9:3.

[Question 2]. This was the custom of the Jewish people in times of deep distress – fasting and putting on sackcloth and ashes or dirt. The practice is first mentioned in Genesis 37 when Jacob was informed by his sons that his favorite son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (the lie they told him). In the book of Esther Mordecai did this when he found out about Haman’s decree to kill all the Jewish people. Daniel is troubled by something that has to do with his own people. In his prayer Daniel pleads to God for mercy on behalf of his people.

I want to go ahead and read Daniel’s entire prayer. It’s long, 16 verses, going from verse 4 thru 19. As I read it I want you to keep in mind the two things that weigh heavy on Daniel’s heart. The first is the physical condition of the city of Jerusalem and the temple. That once beautiful city of God has now been lying in ruins and basically uninhabited for seventy years. The temple was ransacked and destroyed.

The second is the spiritual condition of the Jewish people. At this point in time they appear to be quite comfortable with their life in Babylon. Most of the Jews living in Babylon have never known any other home. They apparently have no intention of returning to the homeland of their fathers because, after all, they see Babylon as their home. So keep these in mind as you listen to Daniel’s prayer.

READ Daniel 9:4-19.

In this prayer Daniel identifies himself with the sins of his people the Jews. Thirty-two times we hear Daniel associate himself with their sins – both past and present. He confesses those sins as though they were his own.

[Question 3] Examples of specific sins: wickedness; rebellion; turned aside from God’s commandments and rules (unfaithfulness); treachery against God; not listened to the prophets, not obeyed God, and not kept God’s laws (disobedience); not repented and not turned away from iniquities (spiritual apathy).

As I thought about these sins they certainly were the sins of the nation that led to their captivity. They were the sins that brought God’s judgment upon the people in the first place. That’s what Jeremiah had said. The sad truth is that here we are some 70 years later and God’s covenant people have the same basic spiritual issues. The one sin they seem to have abandoned is idolatry. But they still have a lot to work on.

This is a great prayer. It has all the elements you associate with a sinner’s prayer. The first element is confession. To confess is to tell it like it is and to take personal responsibility for your actions.

The second element is the acknowledgement that God’s punishment is deserved because of those sins which we committed. We deserve His wrath.

The third element is an appeal to God for mercy. I love Daniel’s statement in v 18 which I have highlighted: “For we do not present our pleas before You because of OUR righteousness, but because of YOUR great mercy.” It’s not about us or about what we deserve. It is all about God and His great mercy.

[Question 4] Well, Daniel hasn’t even said “Amen” at the end of his prayer and he receives a word from God. This becomes the third recorded prophecy that he will receive. Again the angelic messenger is Gabriel who we heard from last week in Ch 8.

READ Daniel 9:20-23. Gabriel tells Daniel why he has been sent to him. It’s to give Daniel insight. He informs Daniel that he, Daniel, has found favor with God.

You need to understand Daniel’s frame of mind. He is burdened and confused. God, through the prophet Jeremiah, told the people that they would be in captivity for 70 years. After that they would return to their homeland. But as Daniel looks around he can see no evidence that his people will be released any time soon. And the Jewish people show no signs that they even want to return to Jerusalem. Could God be mistaken? Had Daniel misunderstood the teaching of Jeremiah? Could he have wrongly interpreted the meaning of the 70 years? What is going to happen to God’s people? Well, Gabriel addresses Daniel’s concerns in the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks that we will be looking at next.

The word rendered “weeks” in all of the English translations of the Bible literally means “sevens.” Gabriel never actually specifies a period of time. You need to understand that. The most common interpretation of this rather complex prophecy assumes that one week represents, not seven days as you and I normally think of a week, but seven years. We have the benefit of looking back at history and seeing when the various parts of this prophecy were actually fulfilled. That’s why most of the so-called experts see one “week” here in Daniel Chapter 9 as seven years – frankly it is because the math works out pretty nicely that way.

At this point I want to be sure you have the handout shown in this slide here [show Daniels seventy weeks slide]. You will notice, the 70 “weeks” (those seven-year periods of time) described in Daniel 9, the roughly 490 years, are not consecutive. You have 7 weeks (49 years) followed by 62 weeks (434 years). Then between the 69th week and the 70th week there is this “GAP,” an unknown period of time. We’ll talk about all this as we go through verses 24-27. Keep the 70th week of Daniel timeline in front of you. We’ll refer to it several times this morning.

Gabriel speaks the following message to Daniel… READ Daniel 9:24.

In other words, Daniel, there will be 70 seven-year periods of time in which certain events must take place in order to complete Jewish history. These events will fulfill God’s purposes, which are, first, to “finish the transgression”, “make an end of sin,” and “make atonement for iniquity.” This will be fulfilled with the death of Jesus on the cross. We know that looking back. The second event will be to “bring in everlasting righteousness.” This will occur when God sets up the eternal kingdom. We know this from Revelation. The third event, to “seal up vision and prophecy” will be accomplished only when all the prophecies concerning the Jewish people have come to pass. “Anoint the most holy place” refers to the millennial kingdom temple. Again, see Revelation. We can actually understand this from our vantage point in time better than Daniel could.

Here’s what you really need to understand… The prophecy here in Chapter 9, the Seventy Weeks, deals with the Jewish people and the temple at Jerusalem, just like it says. Don’t read anything more into it than that. This prophecy has nothing to do with the New Testament church. Some have read that into this passage. I just don’t see it that way.

While Gabriel does not answer all of Daniel’s questions, he does fill in a lot of the gaps. So what happens during these 70 “weeks”?

READ Daniel 9:25.

[Question 5] The 70 “weeks” begins with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

There were several different decrees involving Jerusalem that were issued. First you have the decree by Cyrus (Ezra 1) allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. That return was led by Zerubbabel. You have the decree by Darius (Ezra 6) to continue the work on the temple which had been put on hold for a while. You have the decree by Artaxerxes (Ezra 7) to send a second group of exiles back to their homeland. This group was led by Ezra. Finally you have the decree by Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2). This effort was led by Nehemiah. So which of these four major decrees is this verse talking about? Historically the math works out the best if we say it was the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 444 B.C. According to verse 25 it would be 7 “weeks” or roughly 49 years, until the plaza (streets) and moat (walls) were completed. Doing the math, this takes us up to 395 B.C. There is nothing significant about that year. It takes up to the end of the Old Testament and the Book of Malachi.

The last part of verse 25 says that the rebuilding of Jerusalem will take place “in a troubled time.” We know from reading the accounts given by Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi, the last three chronological books of the Old Testament, that the resettlement years for God’s people were indeed troubled times. The Jews were never able to recapture their former glory, the way it had been before the Exile.

Following the seven “weeks” is a period of time of 62 “weeks” or approximately 434 years. This period of time ends by an event mentioned in verse 26…

READ Daniel 9:26. “An anointed one (the Messiah) will be cut off and have nothing.”

[Question 6] This key event happened in 33 A.D. Again, we can look back at it. The math here works out really close, roughly 430 years.

Now there is another event described in the last part of verse 26. From Daniel’s perspective 500 years B.C. these two events happen roughly at the same time. In reality they occur 38 years apart.

[Question 7] Most Bible scholars interpret this to be the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple when Titus led his Roman troops against that city in 70 A.D. to put down a rebellion. This was a major event in Jewish history. It effectively put an end to animal sacrifices on the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem.

This takes us now to verse 27, a passage that baffles a lot of people. It describes the last one-week or seven year period of time. This is the 70th and final week.

READ Daniel 9:27. There’s a lot to sort out here. First of all, when does this 70th week occur? Most interpretations say that this is still a future event even for us today and that the seven years coincides with the seven-year Tribulation period described in great detail in Revelation 4 thru 18.

So then, why is there this unknown gap of time between weeks 69 and 70? What is Gabriel not telling Daniel? This is the period of time between the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (32-33 A.D.) and the beginning of the Tribulation period (???? A.D.). This unknown period of time is what is commonly called the Church Age – from Pentecost (Acts 2) to the Rapture (1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15).

Closely linked with the 7-year Tribulation Period is a person that we already discussed back in Chapter 7. This same individual is the desolator of Daniel 9:27.

[Question 8] According to Gabriel’s statement to Daniel here, at the beginning of the Tribulation period the antichrist will make a pact with many of the Jewish people. However, in the middle of the week (3 ½ years later) the antichrist will turn right around and break his pact. He will desecrate and then destroy the temple. This parallels the events of Revelation 11 where the antichrist is referred to as the beast. For three and a half years the abominations against the Jewish people will continue until a complete destruction is poured out on the desolator. This of course is a reference to the final destruction of the antichrist in Revelation 19. During the last half of the Tribulation the Jews will be severely persecuted and the Lord will use this to prune and purge the nation of Israel. Many will be saved and become martyrs for their faith. You can read about all that in Revelation.

So what is the point of all this to Daniel? Why does Gabriel tell him all of this? To correct Daniel’s and the people’s faulty theology that the end of the 70 years of captivity would finish the desolations of Jerusalem. Here’s the main message – there is a lot more going to happen to the Jewish people after their return to their homeland. Not all of it is going to be good or pleasant. But through all the years that follow God is at work to redeem His people. And He will accomplish this through their coming Messiah.

God has a plan and a purpose that He will continue to work out over the coming centuries.