

Daniel 06-03-19b

Let's continue our study now in Daniel chapter 9, looking at the prophecy of the 70 weeks, one of the most central passages in the entire scripture. It is a critical passage for understanding the chronology of God's plan and purpose, both for Israel and for the church. The decrees that we want to look at here, so that we understand which one is in view, that begins the clock ticking, is the fourth, as I mentioned before, that was given by these Medo-Persian kings relative to the Jews and Israel.

The first decree was given by Cyrus in 538 BC. Now, when is Daniel chapter 9 set? When does Daniel do his praying and so on? It's 539. So, very soon after the events that we see recorded here, the decree to allow the Jews to go back to the land is going to be made, and this is 538 BC.

You find this decree recorded in scripture in passages such as 2 Chronicles 36, verses 22 and 23. 2 Chronicles 36, right at the end of that book, In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me, and he has commanded me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is among you of all his people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up. Very interesting statement by a Gentile king, a Persian king. But as we have seen, God worked in and through Nebuchadnezzar, and in and through the subsequent rulers, all the way down into the time of Esther and Ahasuerus.

So this is the first decree, 538 B.C. You can also find references to this in Ezra chapter 1, verses 1 through 4, the very next book here. Just turn the page. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled.

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. And you have the very same statement made. Notice, after he says, He has commanded me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is among you of all his people? May his God be with him. Let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. He is God, which is in Jerusalem, and whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.

And there is a further reference to this a few chapters over in Ezra. Ezra chapter 5, verse 13. Because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon.

However, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. King Cyrus has taken the gold and silver articles of the house of God that were in the temple of Babylon and were given to Shesh-Bazar. Take these articles, carry them to the temple, to the site that is in Jerusalem.

Let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site. Shesh-Bazar came, laid the foundation of the house of God, which is in Jerusalem. But from that time, even until now, it has been under construction and it is not finished.

So, obviously the decree goes forth, but the consummation and fulfillment of the decree is not immediate. Again, this happens over and over in Scripture. That is decree number one, 538 B.C. Decree number two, the decree of Darius, Darius I, in 520 B.C. This is 18 years after the first decree.

Darius I. Ezra chapter 6, as you continue there. King Darius issued a decree and a search was made in the archives where the treasures were stored in Babylon and at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found and in it a record was written thus. Once again, first year of King Cyrus, here is the decree.

So, verses 6-12, Tattenai, governor of the region, etc. Darius says in verse 8, I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews for the building of the house of God. So, this is a confirmation and extension of the first decree by Cyrus by Darius I. The third decree is a decree by Artaxerxes Longinus.

Decree number three, Artaxerxes Longinus, in 457 B.C. Now, this is some time after the first one, 520 down to 457. You have about 60 years, 60 odd years after. 457 B.C., this is found in Ezra chapter 7, verses 11 and following.

It says in verse 11 of Ezra 7, a copy of the letter King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord. Artaxerxes, king of kings to Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace and so forth. Just skipped all the rest of the introduction there.

Perfect peace and so forth. I issue a decree, verse 13, that all those people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem may go with you. You're being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire, etc., etc.

This is the third decree, 457 B.C. So, the first two decrees pertain to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The third relates to financing the operation of the temple. Look at verse 17 here in Ezra chapter 7. Now therefore be careful to buy with this money all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem.

That's verse 16. This is funding for animal sacrifices. Be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs with their grain offerings and their drink offerings and to offer them on the

altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.

It's one thing to rebuild the temple, but where are you going to get the operating money? Whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God. Very generous decree, isn't it? Money from Babylon combined with freewill offerings buys the animal sacrifices and the grain and whatever else they need to fulfill the will of God. Articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem.

Whatever more may be needed for the house of your God which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king's treasury. A lot of people today would love to have this kind of legislative authority and funding from the government. Even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the river.

Whatever as for the priest, the scribe, or the law of the God of heaven may require of you, let it be done diligently. Amazing. That's the third decree.

So the first two, rebuild the temple. The third, fund the operation of the temple. None of these three decrees in Chronicles and Ezra say anything about rebuilding the city, do they? It doesn't say anything about rebuilding the walls.

It doesn't say anything about restoring the defenses. An unwalled city is not a threat to any government or any military power. So, none of these three matches what God tells Daniel through Gabriel.

Decree to restore and build Jerusalem. This is not going to occur until the fourth decree which is also given under Artaxerxes Longimanus. This one is issued, we even know the actual date, March the 5th, 444 B.C. Or 445, depending on who you listen to chronologically.

This is found in the book of Nehemiah. Remember, Ezra is concerned with the temple. Nehemiah is concerned with the city.

Nehemiah chapter 2. He came to pass in the month of Nisan in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes. When wine was before him, Nehemiah goes in. It's a capital offense to be sad in the presence of the king.

Nehemiah cannot hide his sorrow. The king says, what's the matter with you? He says, may the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my father's tombs lies waste and its gates are burned with fire.

Now, Artaxerxes has already been very generous in funding the temple and whatever it requires. But Nehemiah is sad because the city itself still lies in ruins. Nehemiah says, I prayed to the God of heaven and I said to the king, if it pleases the king and your servant is found favoring your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my father's tombs, that I may rebuild it.

Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, how long will your journey be? When will you return? So it pleased the king to send me. My request is, send me to Judah that I may rebuild. Rebuild is the operative key term here.

So, I said to the king, if it pleases the king, in verse 7, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the river that they may permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel, which pertains to the temple, for the city wall and for the house that I will occupy. The king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me. And all the rest of Nehemiah talks about these repairs.

You go down to chapter 3, verse 9, Rephiah, the son of her, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. Uzziel, the son of Harhiah, in verse 8, made repairs. All of chapter 3, rebuilding the wall, making repairs.

So, this is the decree from which God decrees 70 weeks. Now, this decree itself, who put it in the heart of Artaxerxes to fund the rebuilding of the worship life at the temple and to rebuild the walls and the structures of Jerusalem? Artaxerxes could easily have been a Belshazzar or some other evil dictator and the generosity and the extensive funding involved in these decrees is really quite remarkable. But this is a part of the decree of God.

We have seen over and over again. We saw it in Daniel and his three friends. We've seen it most recently with Esther that if the people of God need the favor and the goodwill of people to accomplish God's will, God will ensure that that favor and that benevolence is present.

We do not have to curry the favor of people. God grants favor when we need it. We don't have to compromise.

We don't have to give in. We don't have to tap dance. We don't have to be coy.

Nehemiah directly states why he is sad. He doesn't dissemble. He doesn't evade.

He doesn't give a false reason or an invalid excuse. There are times when we deal with people where as a reflection of our spiritual life, we have to say what's on our mind. And we don't have to worry about what people are going to think.

Well, if I say this, I could lose my job. If I say this, I could lose my friend. If I say this, I will disrupt a relationship in my family or whatever.

We can easily get the idea that we are dependent upon people for certain things. We are dependent upon people for their goodwill or for their employment or for freedom, just to have peace and to not have dissension and ripples in the water and so on. God issues the decrees from heaven in advance that are implemented in and through people.

And if we need the goodwill of people, if we need promotion, if we need friendship, if we need

benevolence, if we need a smile and support from people, God will make that happen. We don't have to try to create it ourselves. That doesn't mean we should just run around taking everybody off, because we can.

But you get the idea here. This is an act of God. The decrees of Artaxerxes follow after the decree of God that was given the first year that Daniel prayed.

And we are now 100 years after the fact. Daniel prays in 539. This decree goes forth in 444.

So 95 years. Is my math right? 95 years after the fact. The decree that Gabriel told Daniel about, and I think by this time we can safely assume Daniel has gone to rest with his fathers.

Artaxerxes gives the Jews permission to rebuild the walls. This is the decree of Daniel 9.25. So, from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince. The word until in Hebrew is Ad, A-D.

So we have Ad Mashiach Nagid. Messiah, the Anointed One. Nagid is the word Prince.

It is the word applied to the ruler of God's people. So from that word until Mashiach Nagid, 7 weeks and 62 weeks. 7 weeks and 62 weeks.

Now, we are by no means the first ones to ask this question. Why doesn't it just say 69 weeks? Who cares about the first 49 years? Why is that mentioned? Well, because of various ideas about how this ought to be interpreted and whether or not it is a reference to the coming of Christ and whether or not the book of Daniel was late and written after the fact and so on. People have tried to play games with the Hebrew here.

I told you about Ad Mashiach Nagid. Then it says, Shavuim Sheva. That's 7 weeks.

You hear the S-H-B there, like from Shabbat. Shabbat is the root that has the idea of 7. So you have Shavuim. That's your weeks.

And Sheva is the word for 7. So you have weeks 7. Shavuim Sheva. Then you have the word and, the little wow that looks like a shepherd's staff. Shavuim Sheshim V'Shanim.

So literally it says, from the going forth of the Word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, weeks 7 and weeks 60 and 2. Then it talks about the building of the street, the wall in troublesome times. Why this division? Well, what takes place in those next 7 weeks is different than what takes place in the 62 weeks that follow. Because in those 49 years, you have the active work of Ezra, you have the active work of Nehemiah, and you have the ministry and the writing of the last prophet in Israel.

By the time that those 7 weeks are complete, Malachi will have ministered and written his book and the Old Testament canon closes at the end of those 49 years. At the end of those 49 years, the city reconstruction, as well as temple worship and so on, is essentially complete. There's some fade in.

There's not a single day where you can say, okay, it's all finished. But in those 49 years, the work accomplished in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah is complete. But most importantly, the last official prophet in Israel finishes his work in those 7 weeks.

And in God's mind, that is the end of an era. It is the end of the Old Testament canon. It is the end of revelation from God via the supernatural revelation and Holy Spirit inspiration of the prophets.

And in God's mind, that is a mark. That is a boundary that is crossed. Interestingly, the age of Israel is not over when prophecy ceases.

It has several hundred more years to run. But before the end of the age, the active communication of God's word is complete. I think it is interesting that you have this 400 odd year period of no prophetic activity, no revealed word from God.

And in the same way in the church age, once the New Testament canon is complete, then the rest of the age unrolls with no further supernatural revealed word of God. In other words, we have a precedent for the cessationist view of supernatural revelation from God. A lot of people today are into the word of knowledge and God is revealing things through promptings and signs and so on.

What we need to know from God is in His word. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians. We have prophecies that cease.

There are things that remain. Faith, hope, and love. Faith is in God's word.

So, that is the explanation of the seven weeks and the 62 weeks. This also gives us some of that extra communication regarding biblical numbers. Seven is the number of perfection and completion.

Six days God created the heavens and the earth and in the seventh He rested. Seven days complete a week. And this is seven sevens.

And that is going to complete the revelation of God to the Old Testament economy, to the Old Testament believers, to His people Israel. Seven sevens. When that decree goes forth from Artaxerxes, this is the implementation of the word that came from God's throne in 539 when Gabriel left to communicate that fact to Daniel.

And once God's word goes into action in 445, 444, this final clock of 49 years ticks. It is during that time that God is active in the affairs superintended by Ezra and then by Nehemiah and in the ministry of Malachi. And when those 49 years run out, that's a big period at the end of the long Old Testament sentence.

And yet there is going to be this time that continues for another 400 years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, seven weeks and 62 weeks. Now, some people, as I said, have wanted

to play games with the Hebrew here.

Samuel Driver of Brown, Driver, and Briggs fame, great Old Testament and Hebrew scholar, totally messes this up because he has a late view of Daniel. He doesn't think this is a reference to Jesus. And he says that the way that, and in fact there was actually an English translation of the Bible.

I think the English standard version or something actually translates in keeping with what Driver and some others believe. They say, from the going forth of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks. 49 years.

And in 62 weeks, the street will be built again on the wall They don't respect the wows there that are all sequential. Remember the seven weeks and the 60 weeks and the two weeks. It's all sequential.

But Driver arbitrarily divides that and says, well, to the coming of the Prince, the anointed Prince is 49 years. And then he tries to equate this with a earthly ruler who comes to the throne after our desert sees. And it's a mess.

It doesn't track at all. But this is what people will do. If you have a view and you try to insert it into scripture instead of letting scripture define your view, that's what you end up with.

It is a caution for us all. But then in verse 26 it says, it goes on to say, and after the 62 weeks, Messiah shall be cut off. And it says, but not for himself.

And I agree with many translators who translate this as, Messiah shall be cut off with nothing for himself. I.e., he is the anointed one, but he doesn't come away with a kingdom. He is not accepted as the king.

Messiah shall be cut off with nothing for himself. And if you think about the crucifixion, at that point, Jesus does not have a kingdom. He does not have a bride.

The bride is going to take 2,000 years to be assembled. And so at the point that he is cut off and leaves the earth, he has nothing in terms of Israel and the kingdom and the fulfillment of the covenant promises. He came and he saw and he conquers sin and death, but he came into his own and his own received him not.

And so at the point that he is cut off, he really has nothing of what he is going to have when he is going to have a kingdom and authority and a bride and great glory and so on that's going to take place at the second advent. But after the 62 weeks, Messiah is cut off with nothing for himself. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Now we have given sort of short shrift to the end of verse 25 where it says the street shall be built again and the wall even in troublesome times. Read Nehemiah if you want to know about these troublesome times. However, there is also a bit of a symmetry here.

Think about this for a minute now. You have the seven weeks and you have the 62 weeks and they are separated. Well, lay those side by side so to speak.

There is at the beginning of those 49 years the decree that allows them to go in and actually rebuild the city. For the next 50 years, they are engaged in trying to get that done and get everything back to normal. And Malachi comes in and talks about the deficits and the problems in the worship life of Israel.

You say one thing, I say something else. Remember that all through Malachi. You have that theme at the very end.

He says, I'm going to send you one more prophet. And it's very significant that Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, predicts the coming of the messenger who will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and fathers to the children else I will smite the land with a curse. Which is exactly what happens.

The hearts are not turned and the land is smitten with a curse. But during those 49 years, those seven sevens of weeks, there is this building process and then there is sort of an evaluation at the end. And the evaluation at the end is Malachi's evaluation.

You're not there. And your heart is not right. You need to pay attention.

At the end of the 62 weeks, Herod has rebuilt the temple. There is worship life and active sacrifice and so on. And yet, at the end of that period, Malachi's words are resonating, aren't they? I will send my messenger.

He will change your hearts else I will smite the land with a curse. And there's a sense in which these first 49 years in miniature reflect what's going to take place over the next set of years, the next 62 weeks. And each of them is going to end with the people in about the same condition.

So after the 62 weeks, Messiah shall be cut off with nothing for himself and the people of the prince who shall come. Now, who is the prince who shall come? Once again, this verse uses the same two words. It says, until the coming of Messiah the prince, and you have Mashiach Nagid.

Remember I gave you that up in verse 25? Here, Mashiach is cut off and there is a Nagid who shall come. Now, Mashiach is the Nagid from God. Mashiach Nagid, the anointed one, the prince.

But Mashiach is cut off, has nothing for himself, and a different Nagid is holding sway, is exercising authority. The people of the Nagid who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Now, this is just the opposite.

There's a decree that goes forth to restore and rebuild the city. And of course the sanctuary is rebuilt even before the city is. But because Mashiach Nagid is cut off and has nothing for himself, here comes a different Nagid and the city and the sanctuary are destroyed.

The people of the prince who is to come destroy the city and the sanctuary, the end of it with a flood, until the end of the war, before desolations are determined. Now, this almost sounds like Nostradamus where you say, well, it's so vague you could read almost anything into it. Well, let's break this down.

First of all, the people of the prince who is to come. Who is the other prince? Who is this other Nagid? And who are his people? Well, Daniel knows this. Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Head of gold. Shoulders and arms of silver. Belly and thighs of brass.

Legs of iron. And the feet of iron mixed with clay. And the four beasts that were seen.

Coming all the way down to which we're going to see here in chapter 10 and following. So, the people of the prince who is to come. And this is the anti-Nagid.

The anti-prince. He's the anti-Christ. He's the anti-Mashiach.

And he's also the anti-Nagid. Now, there is a foreshadowing of this in the legions of Titus coming in in 70 AD. Destroying the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

But that is not the ultimate prince who shall come. There is a statement that you often hear, especially in our circles, that says there is no prophecy for the church age. There's no unfulfilled prophecy, is a better way of saying it.

Because there is some prophecy for the church age. Jesus said some things about Peter and John. And this prophecy extends down into the church age.

Because the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be as the flood. The destruction is going to be as complete as that which was wrought on the earth by the flood.

Jesus himself said there will be not one stone upon another. You go to the Temple Mount today. How much of the temple can you find? Zero.

Not a paving stone. All you can do is go down below and find the retaining wall. You've seen houses where there's a house and it's on a hill and then there's a retaining wall, the rocks that keep the lawn from washing away.

Well, if a tornado came and swooped the house away and you wanted to come back and say, Oh, my poor house. And so you went down in front of the lawn and got down and banged your head against the retaining stones that hold your lawn in place. That's what the Jews do today at the Wailing Wall.

That wall is the retaining wall for the dirt that was under the stones that were under the foundation that were under the temple that is completely gone. There's not a rock of it left.

That is the destruction like the flood.

When Noah got out of the ark and looked around, nothing remained. So the end of the sanctuary, and it refers specifically to the sanctuary. Obviously, there's a remnant of the city of Jerusalem, but the sanctuary specifically, the end is going to be as the flood.

Until the end of the war, desolations are determined. And this slides seamlessly into the final week. After the 62 weeks, Messiah is cut off.

The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. And you have this overlap. We saw a fulfillment of these words in 70 AD, which is 40 years into the church age.

Almost exactly 40 years. In fact, I think it is exactly 40 years into the church age. That 40 years time of testing.

Are you going to go into the land or not? Old Testament saints, like those that came out of Egypt with Moses, had a 40 year period of testing. And those who survived that experience, Caleb and Joshua, went on into the land after those 40 years. There's exactly 40 years between the day of Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem by the legions of Rome.

And that generation, that 40 year time of testing is the opportunity for Old Testament saints to recognize that the Messiah has in fact come, that Jesus was the fulfillment of their Old Testament scriptures, and move out of the wilderness where they are going to drop into the land of promise, which is the church age. And to exchange their old covenants for new ones founded on new and better promises. I think it's very much in keeping with the symmetry of God's plan that there is sort of a 40 year overlap, if you will.

A 40 year time where an Old Testament saint can be alive, and like the Apostle Paul, come to an understanding of who Christ is, and exchange their lot from the dying in the wilderness age to the living in the land age. So, this overlaps because the ultimate Prince who shall come is the Antichrist of the Tribulation Period, the 70th week. And so there is a foreshadowing in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. with what is going to come in the final week.

And the actual fulfillment of verse 26, the second half, destroying the city and the sanctuary and the end with a flood till the end of the war, desolations are determined. Those desolations are your seals and your trumpets and your bowls. And the judgment on the earth that is a result of the rule and reign of Antichrist and accepting of the mark of the beast and so on.

He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of the week, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. That final 70th week is going to begin with a great treaty, a great agreement for world peace.

People say, peace in our time, visualize world peace, peace and safety. This is going to be the hallmark of the Antichrist. He is going to bring in world peace.

Everybody is going to sign the agreement. And it will initially have a seven year term. In the middle of the week, He will bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

And on the wing of abomination shall be one who makes desolate even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate. We'll look at these words. We need a whole Sunday to look at this next time.

But here's the point. This is the decree of God. Nothing can change it.

Nothing can stand in its way. Nothing can keep it from being fulfilled. And yet, it is going to be brought about by the actions of people.

The good parts of it, provision for restoration to the land, restoration of the city, restoration of the temple, God brings it about. Judgment on those who reject, judgment on those who are unbelievers, it is a certitude. It's been graven into the decrees, the Word of God that lives and abides forever.

The same is true for you and me. We have a life to live before God. And it is a life of faith and it's a life of obedience.

And we cannot afford to let the world, the flesh, or the devil obscure our faithfulness and our obedience and our trust that God will give us favor where we need favor. And God will preserve us when we need preservation. And God will provide for us when we need provision.

Our confidence has to be in Him. Remember our memory verse? Cursed is the man who trusts in man who makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. He shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see good when it comes.

So many in Israel, when Messiah came, could not see the good that had come. And they are the shrubs that wither and blow away in the desert. Scripture says we are convinced of better things concerning you.

Things pertaining to deliverance. Things pertaining to salvation. That's our great hope and our great opportunity.

Well, it's a fascinating passage. We've figured out quite a bit in verse 26 and that's what we'll pick up next week. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the encouragement that it gives us that in the short time that remains, we can have confidence that the decrees that issue from Your throne will be fulfilled and that our opportunity is to rest in Your promises, in the principles and doctrines of Your Word, by faith. We pray that we can do that, that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths in our hearts and remind us of them in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.