

Kings and Prophets 17-06-22

This is Thursday, the 22nd of June, 2017. We continue our study of kings and prophets, looking at the history of the united and divided monarchy in Israel, followed by the destruction of the southern kingdom, the captivity. And we're currently in the early closing period of the captivity, and taking the prophets in order as they have been raised up by God and called to communicate to God's people.

We have come to the prophet Daniel. We are in the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, moving down through to Darius and Artaxerxes, and the closing period of the Persians, who of course first took Daniel and his friends and many of the other people of Judah captive. We have come to Daniel chapter 9, and we took a detailed look last time at the prophecy of the 70 weeks, the answer to Daniel's prayer that we saw in the earlier part of the chapter.

And so we'll do a quick review of that and move into chapter 10 tonight. The big idea being, rather than a verse by verse or detailed study of the book of Daniel, to see his place in the unfolding of God's plan for the people of Israel, and ultimately for us, why was he raised up? Why was he given these prophetic insights, whether through the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar or his own information received from God? Why Daniel? Why then? Why map out the scope of human history in its outline form and anticipate the end times? Why did Daniel in particular receive these? And why is it in our Bible? What is the pertinence and applicability for us? So we'll be moving toward the close of the collection of Daniel's prophecies here tonight and next time, and then we'll be anticipating the return to the land and the setup for the eventual coming of the Lord Jesus in His first advent. Let's begin our study tonight by going to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll dive in.

Father, thank you for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your word. We pray that your Holy Spirit will illuminate these truths for us and bless them to our hearts as we look at them together, that each of us will find in them encouragement, motivation, and understanding so that we can pursue the calling and the purpose that you have assigned to each one of us individually and as families and groups together, so that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus in our lives in the time that remains to us here on this earth. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. So by way of quick review, and I promise it will be quick because we have a lot of ground to cover tonight, in Daniel chapter 9 you will remember that it begins with Daniel's prayer. And that is not to be overlooked.

So often when people go diving back into the prophetic scriptures, they start in the middle of the chapter and skim over how and why Daniel received this information. The why is really important. He pursued it.

He knew his scriptures. He prayed on the basis of those scriptures. He says, Lord, I've been

reading the letters of Jeremiah, and I know that the time is near when our 70 years of being together as a family will be fulfilled.

And he didn't just say, well, isn't that great? We'll soon be able to be free to go back to the land and just go on his merry way. He was down on his knees, first of all examining himself and confessing his own personal sins, and then those of the people and of the nation before God, because Daniel knew that life is more than circumstance. It's more than situation.

It's more than what is required of me today and where must I be tomorrow. It is, for us, spiritual in nature first. And so knowing that the judgment itself was from God, that the termination of the judgment and the removal of that divine displeasure was near at hand, Daniel knew that it would just repeat itself if the underlying problem was not addressed.

And so he goes to the Lord God and he says, I recognize for myself and on behalf of my people why this had to happen. We understand. We are ready to move forward in your plan and purpose.

We want to be the people that shine as a light in the world. We want to be the people through whom salvation comes to everyone. He casts it in spiritual terms.

And you remember that in his preparation he had studied the word diligently. That was number one. He knew his Bible and he prayed his Bible.

He prayed to God what he learned. He said, Lord, you have said, you have promised. This is what is declared and decreed in your word.

I know these things. And he quoted it. You like to do this.

You like to bring some authority in when you're going to make a request. Lord, you have said, casting all our cares upon you. Here's some cares I'm getting ready to cast.

But we state our groundwork. This is why we close all of our prayers in a certain way. What's the best way for a Christian to close his prayers? I pray this.

How? In Jesus' name. What are we saying when we say that? Lord, I am coming before you and entering into the throne on the basis of my Savior's shed blood and my standing in him before you. And I am bringing these things before your throne in the name of Jesus.

Well, we want to be sure these things that we've brought in qualify for that underwriting and that approval. That's what Daniel does. Then he set his face.

He had a purpose and he had a plan. He thought about it. He planned it out and he set that as a priority.

He fasted, meaning he did something different than the usual. He set this as a priority and set aside normal rest and normal dress and normal eating to focus on this thing. What does it tell

you when someone fasts? What was the purpose of sackcloth and ashes? Could Robinson Crusoe get anywhere with sackcloth and ashes? That is a communication to others.

When Israelites would put ashes on their head and tear their clothes, that's a communication to people around, I am on a mission here. I have a spiritual issue and a spiritual priority and it is a quiet but effective way of letting people know. The same thing when they would take a vow.

The Apostle Paul takes a vow a couple of times. The Nazarite vow, you do something different and you abstain from haircuts among other things and drink no wine or strong drink. What are you doing? You are letting people know that there is something heavy on your heart.

You have a burden. You have an issue and you are taking it to the Lord God. So Daniel's example here, I think, is even more important than parsing the 70 weeks and it's often overlooked.

He prayed and confessed. Confession is an essential part of our prayers. As long as we retain issues in our souls, if we have grudges against others, if we have unconfessed, unacknowledged sin, the Lord will not hear us.

You remember the memory verse we've reviewed many times, your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. It is essential that we examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, acknowledge the sins that we can identify. He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, even the ones that we are unaware of.

So it's a wonderful truth and it was pertinent in the Old Testament as well as the New. And then he made his supplication. Having done all of those things, you know what it's like when you have a job interview or if you are going to go somewhere where there are some formalities involved.

What do you do ahead of time? Do you just look at your watch and say, oh wow, I've got to be there in 10 minutes and dash out the door? What do you do? You spend time ahead of time making sure you've got the right clothes and you've washed what you need to wash and gotten things back from the cleaners and you look at your shoes and make sure there is no mud on the soles and you look at yourself in the mirror and you do your personal hygiene and you want to put your best foot forward. In essence, this is what Daniel does. He respects God enough to prepare before he comes in to make his supplication and it's a good example for us.

Well, and then having made that supplication, God honors it and God sends the angel Gabriel who, to use the vernacular, is no slouch of an angel. He is one of the highest ranking angels we are aware of. He is the one that is going to announce the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary and it is that Gabriel who is sent in response to Daniel's careful and thought-out supplication.

And so he comes and gives this 70-week prophecy and we looked at this last time because it

basically is a chronology-related prophecy. The earlier ones with the beasts going hither and yong and attacking and devouring and crunching bones between their teeth and losing wings, sprouting wings, all the different things is general. It wasn't time-tied the way this one is.

But it begins with a number. 70 sevens are determined. So the answer to Daniel's prayer, O Lord, this 70 is nearly complete.

Restore us, renew us, we want to be no longer qualified for judgment. But Daniel's whole prayer is predicated on Jeremiah's statement that the judgment will last a 70. Well, he prays this prayer and in wonderful mercy and in love because Daniel is told twice he is greatly beloved.

God says, don't pin your hopes on the end of this 70 because there are going to be 70 sevens coming up that are determined on your people. So don't think that, well, that was a seven-decade episode and now we'll go back to the way things were. There is an ongoing program for Israel and that's why he says these things are for your people and for your holy city.

And then the six purposes. To finish 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. Six specific purposes in these 70 sevens.

When the 70 sevens have been fulfilled, these six purposes will have been fulfilled. So you note that there is an allocated time and there are designated purposes. And this is true in our lives.

God has ordained times for everybody. If we've lasted any length of time at all, we have a time of youth. We have a time of transition in our teenage years.

We move into early adulthood, middle adulthood, late adulthood, early old age, middle old age, late old age. These are ordained times. And if we last long enough, we traverse through those.

They are set periods. And God will have multiple purposes during those times. In our earlier years, hopefully the purpose is to prepare us and to teach us things that will enable us for service later on.

Then we have opportunities for service. And then we have opportunities as we move into the presbuteros category, the elder category, to serve as examples and to counsel and to pray for and to share wisdom with us. And then those who are in earlier phases.

So the idea that is expressed here, that God's plan operates sensitive to time and with specific purposes, is certainly pertinent to us as well. And it's easy to forget. We think, well, I'm just doing a job and I'm going back and forth.

I'm trying to keep groceries on the table and keep the bills paid and not be late for anything and not be dinged for anything. And we don't always remember that God's plan operates in that way. We want to be upward-looking.

We want to be before God's throne and ensure that we are qualified to fulfill the purposes that

are assigned in that time. Seventy-sevens are determined, these six purposes. Know therefore, verse 25, and understand that from the going forth of the command, or the word, to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

This is where I suspect, and hopefully I'm not being cheeky before the Lord in this, but I wonder if the Lord didn't smile just very slightly when he gave this word to Gabriel to pass along to Daniel. Seventy, from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem. Attention to detail.

It's not just any old command. It's not a command that's sort of about Jerusalem. It's not a command that pertains to something that's in Jerusalem or near Jerusalem or above Jerusalem.

There is one and only one decree that will satisfy this. It is the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Not the temple, not the walls, not anything else.

It is Jerusalem itself. It's the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. And we saw just based on that, that these seven weeks and 62 weeks start, that clock starts running when there is a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

So I reminded you that there are four candidate decrees that are generally proffered that came shortly after this time. Cyrus had a decree in 538 B.C. This is recorded in 2 Chronicles 36 and in Ezra 1, 1-4. This decree is specifically to build the house of God.

Build the house of God. Nothing about building the city, only rebuilding the temple. Restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

It's not in there. And if you do the math, it's interesting to take these four decrees, start their dates as a column, and then subtract 49 years, which is the seven sevens, and then see did anything significant happen? This one was in 538, so did anything happen 49 years later in 489 that would be of spiritual import or biblical significance or relate to the people of God? Well, they've got a great thing. You can go in to Google or something and say what happened in 489 B.C. and there's a page and it will tell you all of the world events.

Nothing interesting happened in 489 that I can find. The second decree, Darius I in 520 B.C., 18 years later. This is recorded in Ezra 6, 8. This is a confirmation and extension of the first decree.

It confirms it and extends it. Still nothing about restoring or rebuilding Jerusalem whatsoever. But you do the math, 520 minus 49, you get down to 471 B.C. if my math is right.

And you look in Wiki, what happened in 471? Nothing. My dad used to have a plaque here on the fireplace that said in some given year in the past on this spot, nothing happened. Well, you could put that plaque on these years.

There's just nothing of importance. And remember, God didn't say 62 7's and 7 7's. It's 7 and then 62.

So, he marks out the first 49 years as something special. So, if you've got the right decree, something special could have been anticipated and then fulfilled 49 years later. First two don't cut it.

The third one, Artaxerxes Longhands, Artaxerxes Longimanus, and Artaxerxes Longhands decreed in 457 B.C. that now that they were at work rebuilding the temple, they needed priests and they needed money to do the pans and the pots and the forks and the jugs and the vessels and the service of the temple. So, in 457, he makes provision for the financing of the temple. Now, there's a reason why I'm agonizing through this a second time, so just bear with me.

And it has to do with something Jesus said. He said it in Luke 17 and he said it in Matthew 24. So, we have a destination.

There is a purpose in this time that I am spending right here. Time and purpose, right? So, the third decree, 457. Now, this one is, if I had to pick one of these four decrees instead of the one I told you about, this is the one I would pick because despite the fact that you can't find anything that happened 49 years later in 408 B.C., if you just use standard years and go 483 years into the future, and you say at the end of the 69 weeks, the Messiah is cut off but not for himself, the year that you arrive at 483, 69 weeks after this decree is 27, A.D. 27.

Well, that's into the public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the year of Jesus, right? And nobody knows exactly what year he was born, and trust me when I tell you, nobody knows exactly what year the Lord Jesus was crucified. It's astonishing. It's the most important event in human history.

We don't know when it happened. We do not know what year. And don't let anybody tell you they do, because they don't.

It's somewhere in a span anywhere from 25 to 35 on this side of B.C. A.D. But they don't know what year it was. They don't know exactly when. So 27, that would make good sense.

However, the decree is wrong. The fourth decree also by Artaxerxes Longinus was a few years later, about 13 years later in 444 or 445 B.C. And this one is recorded in Nehemiah chapter 2, and in chapter 3 verses 8 and 9. The previous one, by the way, if you didn't get the reference, was Ezra chapter 7 verses 11 and following for number 3, and the number 4 is in Nehemiah 2. Same thing. You can read this decree until you're blue in the face, backwards, forwards, upside down.

It talks about priests. It talks about the temple. It talks about going back.

It doesn't talk about restoring or rebuilding the city. Now, why review these? Why refresh your mind about them? Because looking at these four decrees is exactly what people did as those sevens passed. And as they got down to the late time of the B.C.s, in the decades just before the Lord Jesus, and the decades after, they were counting, they were calculating, and they got it wrong.

If they said, well, it's the decree of Cyrus, then they were going to be looking for the Lord Jesus in 55 B.C. That's about 70 years too early, right? And what a disappointment. It's like the rapture predictors in our own day. How many times have we had somebody pick a date and sell all their possessions and all go stand out on the patio, gazing up into the sky, and nothing happened? I have a wonderful book on my shelf that's got the year on the front.

That's the title of the book. He was so sure. The book, I am not kidding you, it's nearly three inches thick, with all of the calculations by which he triangulated exactly when the Lord Jesus would come.

Well, this was back in the 1990s. And I fervently hope the Lord Jesus did not come back then, because if he did, I missed it, and so did you. But attention to detail.

As we seek the Lord's will and our life, and as we look at the Word of God for guidance, we want to pay attention to detail. What does it say, and what does it not say? What have we inherited in terms of tradition, in terms of assumption, in terms of common practice that isn't actually in the Word of God? And the more diligent we are, the closer we're going to be to Daniel's example. And it is the diligence and the commitment that Daniel had to the truth of God's Word and to coming before Him prepared that resulted in him being honored with these wonderful words from God.

We want to be in that category in some fashion. So what is the decree if none of these work? And as I mentioned last time, my suggestion is that this decree was issued in the days of Queen Esther. We've got a whole book of the Bible dedicated to the occasion on which this decree was issued.

There is a feast in Israel that's not in the Law of Moses that has been celebrated annually ever since. It is an annual reminder of this decree. What better candidate can you have than a decree that's got its own book with the explanation of how and why the decree came, and an annual feast that reminds everybody year by year, the Feast of Purim, that this decree was issued.

If you read the book of Esther and read the second to last chapter, you will see in it the details of that decree, and it's very understated. It never mentions Jerusalem. As you know, the book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that never mentions God, which is a clue.

Look for what is not explicitly said, but is tacit and understandable from the context. Esther is all about the working of God in preserving His people, and He's never mentioned. And the decree is all about restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem, although Jerusalem is never mentioned.

It is the people who make up the city, and it is the people who are empowered to protect themselves and their possessions. And if you read it, it doesn't say Jerusalem, it doesn't say Judea, it doesn't say the land of Israel. It says all of the king's provinces, all of Xerxes' provinces.

Is Judea one of Xerxes' provinces? Yes, it is. He's the king of Persia. The Persians inherited the Babylonian conquest, which includes Judea.

So this decree pertains all across Judea. It pertains to Jerusalem, and all of the Jews who are there, this is the first time that they have been given self-preservation and self-determination. They can fight, and they can even kill those who try to take their stuff and keep them from living on their land.

This is where they are restored. This is where they can now rebuild without fear of somebody just taking it away from them. They are no longer slaves, and they are no longer captives.

Due to the decree of Xerxes, which by the way happens in 478, and without any mathematical hijinks, if you do the math, you will find there is a wonderful marker 49 years later, and then there is a wonderful marker at the 483-year mark. Because the prophecy goes on to say, from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks, so 69 weeks total. And 483 years after this decree to the very year, that is the year that Jesus was 12 years old.

That's the year He was 12. That is the year that He does His first public teaching. That is the year He is made manifest down there confounding the scribes and the priests and the doctors of the law in Jerusalem.

And it is the year that is marked by that three-day absence. His parents suddenly miss Him, and for three days they can't find Him, just like at the end of His first advent. He is missing from view for three days.

That is 483 years exactly from Xerxes' decree that gives the Jews self-determination, the right to restore and rebuild their city and hang on to it. So what do we learn from all this? Jesus warned people saying, beware if you hear someone say, look, He's here, or look, He's over there. Remember that? It's recorded in all three Gospels other than John, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

It's in Luke 17, it's in Matthew 24, and it's also in Mark. And He says, don't pay attention when someone says, come out and see, go look, here He is, there He is. He says, you'll know when I have come by what I am telling you.

If you pay attention to My word, this is how you will know, because it's going to be like lightning. If you have to ask, I wonder if that's the Lord, it's not Him. It's going to be like lightning.

Does anybody have to say, was that lightning? It's pretty apparent and plain. You see the bolt, you hear the thunder a moment later, and you say, that was lightning. So shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

You remember that in Jesus' day, there had been many claims for Messiah. Many had come, and Jesus said, many will come in My name, saying, I am He. Don't pay attention.

We have to know the word of God well enough to not be led astray by people who quote the word of God and cite the word of God. And as I said, many people have extrapolated from the

scriptures and made predictions and also made a set of teachings. Prosperity Gospel, Dominion Now, Dominion Theology, Holy Laughter, these things all incorporate scripture and quote verses.

How can we not be led astray? How can we be like Daniel? Dare to be a Daniel is a lot more than going into the lion's den. It is dedication. It is preparation.

It is prayer. And it is knowledge of the scriptures, thoughtfully reflecting on them, praying on them, asking God for light and wisdom. And you know the promise of the Lord, if we go to Him and ask for bread, He is not going to give us a rock or a snake or a scorpion.

If you being evil know how to give good things to your kids, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask, who seek, who knock? We will receive to the level that our heart is interested and committed, just as Daniel. And you can see the level of his commitment now as you look at the result of having received this. The one verse we didn't review, as he goes on through and describes basically the Antichrist during the 70th week.

It says after 69 weeks, Messiah will be cut off. And the timer sort of stops at this point. We don't know how long after, but he says it will be 69 weeks until He comes.

And then some indefinite time after that, He will be cut off, but not for Himself. And we know in this case, it was about 21 years later. Three times seven later, at the age of about 33, the Lord Jesus was cut off.

He appears at the end of the 69 weeks, in my view, at age 12, and He is crucified after three plus years of public ministry, which began when He was about 30 years of age according to the Scriptures. So 21 years will pass, three sevens of years in that span, and He is cut off, but not for Himself. Then you have this one with the fierce features.

There's a description of the Antichrist, and I'm so down on the Antichrist, I'm not going to talk about him too much. We've seen that in detail in Revelation. Through his cunning in verse 25, He'll cause deceit to prosper under His rule.

Our hearts are deceitful. There's deceit in the world. How do we see through it and stick to the truth? Just like Daniel did.

He will be broken without human means, and the vision of the evenings and mornings. Actually, I've flipped a page. I'm back in chapter 8. It all pertains to Him as well.

But He confirms a covenant with the many for one week. In the middle of the week, He brings the end to sacrifice and offering. On the wing of abomination shall be one who makes desolate until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

It's really fascinating verbiage in Hebrew, but I want to give you an interesting quote about the 70 weeks written by a scholar some long years ago. This is a fellow named Montgomery, and

this should give you a bit of levity. The history of the exegesis of the 70 weeks is the dismal swamp of Old Testament criticism.

The difficulties that beset any rationalistic treatment of the figures are great enough, but the critics on this side of the fence do not agree among themselves. But the trackless wilderness of assumptions and theories and efforts to obtain an exact chronology fitting into the history of salvation after these 2,000 years of infinitely varied interpretations would seem to preclude any use of the 70 weeks for the determination of a definite prophetic chronology. As we've seen, early Jewish and Christian exegesis came to interpret the datum eschatologically, found it fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem, only slowly did the themed prophecy of the advent of Christ impress itself on the church.

What he's saying is, originally they tried to get the 70 weeks to come out at the fall of Jerusalem. Later on they said, well, it really, what about Messiah the Prince? We need to back it up. So the thing's been all over the map.

But I like that. The dismal swamp of Old Testament criticism. So it's a trackless wilderness of assumptions and theories.

It certainly can be, but why did God give it to us? Did he really want us to try to figure out to the day and to the hour when things are going to happen? Or is it a wonderful example of encouragement and revelation and answer to prayer for a faithful believer? And I think it is certainly the latter, if not the former. So when you come to chapter 10, in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, remember Darius only had one year. And that was when this last one came.

Then the year chronology of Cyrus picks up. So this is basically three to four years after what we just saw in chapter 9, in chapter 10. So notice that the word of God comes to Daniel.

And in all of these dated prophecies there are significant spans of time between them. It doesn't say four days later Gabriel came back and explained some more. It doesn't say six months later, eight months later.

You get the idea that there is so much to chew on and so much to reflect on and so much meat and sustenance. Remember when the angel came and fed Elijah and he went in the strength of that meat for 40 days and 40 nights. The Lord Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights and then the angels fed him.

He's kind of like a chiastic Elijah. Elijah gets it at the beginning and goes 40 days. Jesus goes 40 days and gets it at the end.

But there's such richness in the word of God that Daniel has several years to reflect on this. But it says in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true and he understood the message.

Remember the previous ones where he said, I don't understand. I'm completely bamboozled by

this. And so the angelic messenger comes to explain it.

He says, I got this one. I would suggest to you that the reason Daniel understood this one is that he paid attention when the previous ones were explained and he has had a lot of time to reflect on that and he has incorporated that understanding into his soul just as we should. The man who has a delight in the law of the Lord is going to meditate on it day and night.

He's the one that's like a tree planted by the rivers of water bringing forth his fruit in his season. His leaf doesn't wither and whatever he does prospers. That's drawing in the word and being nurtured and sustained by it.

So Daniel does this and so when the next vision comes he gets this one. You remember when they first started coming and he got sick for days and had all kinds of problems. That's why I was reading the end of chapter 8. I Daniel fainted and was sick for days.

Then I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished. No one understood it.

But you look at the difference here. Now he's back to being the old Daniel, the interpreter of dreams and visions and the one who understands the word of the Lord. So in those days I Daniel, verse 2, was mourning three full weeks.

He understands it but he hasn't gotten it yet. He tells us he's going to understand it but why does he get this vision? He has been in mourning three full weeks. And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month I was by the side of the great river.

I lifted my eyes, a certain man clothed in linen, girded with gold, body like barrel, face like the appearance of lightning, eyes like torches of fire, arms and feet burnished bronze, sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. So, human or beyond human? Obviously from heaven, reflecting the fiery glory of God, it's an angel or if those who believe in pre-incarnate appearances of the Lord Jesus, you'd have to consider this a possibility. I Daniel alone saw the vision.

For the men who were with me did not see the vision. What? What do you think about that? Daniel is not alone. There are several other people there and only Daniel sees the vision.

Why is that? Can you think of another occasion where something like this happened? Blinding flash of light on the road to Damascus and the men who are accompanying Saul hear thunder. What does Saul hear? The voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks and so on. Everybody else just heard thunder.

What do you think about that? Wouldn't it give credibility to Daniel if other people heard this message and they wouldn't say, well, you just had a fit or you ate something that didn't agree with you? Who knows what was actually said? We only have your word for it. Wouldn't it be better to have in the mouth of two or three witnesses the thing is established? I could quote scripture, but only Daniel gets this vision and the men who are with him don't. Why? If these

men are with Daniel, they're probably pretty good guys, aren't they? Or they wouldn't be with him.

Think again about the example of Daniel. Why were we given all of these details going back through? He prays three times a day, lifelong. He commits.

He is sensitive to spiritual issues in his life and in the life of his nation. And how long has he been mourning here? Three solid weeks. Three sevens.

What was the distance between Jesus at the age of 12 and Jesus on the cross? Three sevens. At the end of three weeks of mourning, when you mourn, you tend to fast, sackcloth and ashes, Daniel is a man of commitment. And once he commits himself to something, he sticks with it.

And he does it for weeks. This is why God honors him with a response and not these other men, I think. I, Daniel, alone saw the vision.

Verse 8, I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me, for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words, and while I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground. I would suggest the significance of this is that there is a point at which you don't arrive at an understanding of God's truth by human ingenuity, by the efforts and the scholarship that you want to exercise.

When God is about to reveal this to Daniel, he is revealing it to Daniel because of his attitude, not because of his expertise. It is wonderful to be committed to the Scriptures and to understand them as best we can, but if we begin to rely on our exegetical prowess or on our theological heights of attainment, we're going to find ourselves falling short. Daniel has no strength of his own to receive this.

It is all of God. It is all of grace. But he has qualified himself.

He has put himself in the place where he doesn't need his strength. He can barely get up on his hands and knees. Look at the next verse, "...suddenly a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands." He's trying to get up, but he doesn't have the strength.

He's managed to get to his hands and knees, and enablement is given to him by heaven, by the angelic messenger here. And he says to him again, O Daniel, man greatly beloved. This is attitude.

This is standing. This is relationship with God that leads. It's not even his enthusiasm or his fervor per se.

It's his love for God and the things of God that qualifies him to receive the expression of God's love in return at this level. O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to

you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you. While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

So strength has been given to him, and he can stand on his feet. Then he said, Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, you can just stop right there and circle those words. God honors those who honor him.

God has magnified his word above his name. And if we seek that truth, if we search for it, I can tell you hidden treasures, we will understand the fear of the Lord. We will find the knowledge of God.

It all depends on setting our hearts to understand. From the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. That attitude, your prayers are absolutely bouncing off the walls of the throne room of heaven directly into the ears of God.

That is what the Lord God is looking for. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ died to redeem us, to take unto himself a zealous people who love the Lord God and love one another. There was some resistance.

The Prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days. It took the angel three weeks to hack through the barriers and the obstacles and all of the friction that was thrown up by the opposition. And he had to have help.

This is my argument that it's not the Lord Jesus, because the Lord Jesus doesn't need anybody's help. If he can conquer sin and death in the grave, I don't think he would have trouble with a few fallen angels. But the Lord Jesus did not intervene.

God the Father did not intervene. God sent his own angel on an important mission to Daniel, and that angel encountered resistance that the angel had to overcome. And the angel had to have help from another angel to overcome.

And such it is with us. So it is with us. There is a purpose in our difficulties.

And part of it is to learn to persevere, knowing that God has assigned us a time and a place and a means of accomplishing his will. But we have to expect that it is going to take time. Just remember, from the beginning tonight, time and purpose.

Seventy-sevens are determined. Here are the six purposes. There are times allocated to us, and sometimes they are times of struggle.

They are times of resistance, and times of opposition, times of difficulty. And there is a reason for it. If God wanted Daniel to absolutely get this message on the first day, do you think Daniel would have gotten it on the first day? It was good for Daniel to wait three weeks.

It was good for the angel to fight through the opposition for three weeks. And I would suggest

to you that one of the exciting things about the eternal future is that it's not going to be a wonderful bas-relief or a freeze where we're all frozen in beatific postures of worship and joy. God is going to give us things to do.

Remember Jesus said, to him who has, more will be given. If you're faithful in that which is least, you're going to get to be faithful in that which is much. And we will have tasks.

We'll have opportunities. We'll have hills to climb and challenges to meet and obstacles to face, even in the eternal future. Just because we're free of the power of sin and the fallen nature and our enemy who roams about seeking to devour us, doesn't mean... Look at the angels.

This is an unfallen angel doing the will of God, sent on a divine command, a divine mission to a wonderful, beloved man, and it took him three weeks to get there. So we should not be surprised if the purposes that God builds into our lives take time, necessary time, meaningful time, blessed time. It is good for us to fight.

It is good for us to wrestle against the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age. It strengthens us. It draws us closer to God.

If you don't have a sense of need, you don't have a sense of purpose. You don't have a sense of appreciation. Kids that are given everything that they can imagine all the way through their lives have no sense of appreciation, don't know what it is to work, don't know the value of a thing that you had to sacrifice for, that you had to wait for, that you had to earn by work and sweat.

It's just not there. It can't be there. So as we move into Daniel chapter 10, think about time and purpose.

That's the big picture here in this passage. And as Daniel passes this word on to the people of God in Israel, what is the message? There is going to be time before you return to the land. There is going to be time before the city is rebuilt.

And even after it is rebuilt, it will be destroyed. It is going to exist for a period of time and then it is going to be destroyed. The people of the prince who is to come, in verse 26, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

He just got through saying it's going to be rebuilt in troublesome times and now he says it's going to be knocked down again. Don't build your hopes and don't plant your heart in the city. Cities come and cities go.

Cities are built and cities are destroyed. It is that heavenly existence. It is that heavenly tie and relationship with God that counts.

So time and purpose. You can't help but think of Ecclesiastes. To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.

Valuable words from the wisest man who ever lived. Banging his head against the glass ceiling of the Old Testament Solomon was in Ecclesiastes, recognizing the limitations of life without the ubiquitous Holy Spirit such as we have Him. And he says, I live in a time that's a part of God's purpose and if I abide my time, if I wait and if I'm faithful, there is coming a time when God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

Take out the heart of stone and give us a heart that is receptive. But there is a time. Well that gets us into chapter 10.

We'll pick up and look at the specifics of this message to Daniel and see what it means and move through into chapter 11 where the Persian Empire is overthrown. And keep in mind, just by way of review, that 7-7's and 62-7's, what happened after the decree of Xerxes exactly 49 years later? Artaxerxes Longimanus who issued these wonderful decrees. Read the decrees.

Read those two decrees that I gave you in those chapters. In Ezra chapter 7, that's Artaxerxes Longimanus begins at verse 11. And in Nehemiah chapter 2 and in chapter 3, Artaxerxes Longimanus, he couldn't have been a bigger benefactor to the people of Judah, returning and financing and decreeing execution for anybody that got in their way to let them go and rebuild the house of God.

He said, I don't want the king and his sons to be in any danger from your God. I honor your God and I want you to honor your God. You go build his temple.

Here's everything you need. Here's the money. Keep him happy.

Longimanus was a great friend to the Jews. He dies exactly 49 years after Xerxes decree. To the year.

425 he dies. And there is no more friendship between the Jews and Israel in the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, or the Roman Empire to follow. Their period of opportunity is that 49 years from when Xerxes gives them self-preservation and entitlement to freedom, privacy, and property until the death of Longimanus.

And after that, there's such instability in Persia and guys assassinating one another. There is no protection. And that period of opportunity to make the most of those resources ends.

49 years exactly after Xerxes decree. That's when the 62 sevenths clock begins, culminating when the Lord Jesus first appears in the city of Jerusalem and opens his mouth to teach. What a great prophetic hope is given through Daniel to the people.

And if they watch closely, they would like Anna, and Simeon, and Anna, and those others that they knew who were watching for the hope of Israel. They knew when to watch because they knew which was the right decree. And they weren't fooled.

They weren't let out, oh he is here, he is there. They knew because they knew the word of God

just like Daniel. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word and for the wonderful opportunity to have it implanted into our hearts, to bear the fruit of the spirit within us, to give us love and joy and peace and patience, to teach us and guide us in the way that we should go so that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ who died to give us this wonderful standing before you, who opened the way through his own flesh into your very presence. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will bring these things to our minds in the hours and days ahead, help us to see their pertinence and their usefulness as we consider how to employ our time and how to invest our resources so that we can live our lives here as a testimony to those who are still seeking and searching for that which only you can provide. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and we pray it in his name.

Amen.