

Daniel 9

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 10 April 2017 14:41

This chapter has been used by many to make some highly controversial interpretations, even though the actual information is sparse. We will avoid doing that by adhering to what scripture says. Also, the study will not enter deeply into the theology of the chapter, by being as simple as Daniel makes it. That is, I will only give an outline, just as Daniel gave an outline. A full exposition would require many more pages.

The idea is to present what Daniel says, without trying to make what he said 'fit' a particular theory of the future. As many of you know, I hold to no such theory, but prefer scripture to speak for itself.

Thus, we find that the topic of Daniel's words is simple: the Temple would be rebuilt; the Messiah would come and be killed; after that the Temple would be destroyed again. This is what the prophecy is all about. More information on this is also found in Jeremiah, as Daniel himself states.

If this is so, why bother to look at it at all? The reason is that God speaks and we can plot what He says in prophecy. This should encourage all Christians to believe what God says. These prophecies, though past, are proof that He is true and we should listen to everything He says to us. It also means that if God's word *comes* true and *is* true, we should not be so lax in our daily lives. We must know what He says and obey. Few obey, and that is why these readings are important. Unless we understand that God is ever-near, when we are awake and when we sleep, we will not take His word seriously and sin is easy.

Verses 1-6

1.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

2.

In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

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3.

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4.

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

5.

We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

6.

Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

Daniel begins at the time Jerusalem was overtaken by Darius the Mede, son of Ahasuerus, and his first year as ruler (538 BC). Daniel, though a very young man, decided to investigate what was happening, by reading the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he said *"he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."*

We have already come across this idea of 'desolations' of the Temple at Jerusalem. The first desolations against the Temple occurred when the Persians took over the rule, through Darius the Mede, and continued until the Jews were allowed to return home, to rebuild their Temple. The final desolation took place in 70 AD.

Daniel says he read the prophecy of Jeremiah, and saw that the ruin upon Jerusalem would last 70 years. Thus, Daniel realized that his exile and the state of the Temple would last for all that time. With this in mind he prayed continually to God, confessing his sins, whilst wearing sackcloth and with ashes strewn over his head and body in remorse. As he said in his prayer to God, God is faithful to those who are faithful in return. He keeps His promises to those who love Him.

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Note that the God we should love is *“great and dreadful”*. The word ‘dreadful’, yare’, means to revere and be afraid; to stand in awe; to be terrified. This aspect of our response to God is always downplayed in modern days, as if God is only a God of love. What an error. Yes, God is love, but to those who do not bother to obey, He is, as the colloquial term puts it, ‘Your worst nightmare’. He is the God Who will assign men and women to eternal hell if they are unsaved. He can crush whole nations as if they were nothing. He can bring down kings and peasants alike. To be afraid of such an Almighty God is reasonable and proper.

In this text we see the fact of predestination and election. God keeps His promises and shows mercy to those that *“keep his commandments”*. That means those who are His by faith; for today, it means those who are saved. He shows no mercy to anyone else. Daniel admitted the nation was wicked and had sinned; they had rebelled against their God by turning from His laws and commands. The Hebrews had not listened to the prophets sent by God to speak to the kings of Israel and to the people. Thus, he implies what is true – that they cannot assume God’s benefits or mercy when they were so far removed from Him. This is not always apparent in a person’s life, but may be sin within the soul, hidden but brilliantly highlighted by the Holy Spirit before the Father. He sees everything and hears all! And that is why Jerusalem fell and the Hebrews were taken into captivity for 70 years, the earthly abode of their God in ruins.

God has always dealt with His people, sometimes in a hard manner. It is very foolish to think we can, as Christians, do what we like and not suffer the consequences. God has no qualms about striking us down, or allowing us to suffer, if we do not obey; we come to know misery because of our lack of love for the Lord and disobedience, so our shallow prayers are unanswered. Sometimes such earthly punishment can last a lifetime, so do not believe you are unique, or that God will not suddenly visit you, if you continue to sin willingly. (Remember, sin may be outward and vile, or inward and ‘small’. Unbelief or trite living is as bad as murder in God’s eyes).

Verses 7&8

1.

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

2.

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O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

God *is* Righteousness. He demands of us what He is Himself. Unlike human beings, He never accepts second-best or substandard beliefs. His word and his teachers lead us along His path. It is up to us to follow and to obey. This is not something we do as a chore, or unwillingly. If we think of it that way then we are either unsaved, or we are disobedient! We obey willingly because we love God; we love Him because He sent His Son to save us. If we can express gratitude to a man who pulls us out of a raging river, we can certainly thank God Who saves us for all eternity!

God is, then, supreme. He is righteous and demands the same from us. On the other hand, said Daniel, men had a *"confusion of faces"*. He was referring to what had happened to Jerusalem and to the Jewish faith. The 'confusion', ***bosheth***, means the destruction of the Temple was shameful to the people and the invaders, 'the faces'.

It was not just shameful to have happened, it was also a shame on the people, whose disobedience and bad religion had brought themselves under attack in the first place, as a punishment from God. Hence it was a shame to the nation, to the people of Jerusalem, and to Judah, whether the Hebrews lived in the land or far off in foreign places. They had been driven out of their own country by advancing armies, who were acting as the arm of God. God sent armies after them *"because of their trespass that they have trespassed against (God)."*

Because of the national heresy and laxity, God brought enemies to their doors; they were to suffer the consequences of disobedience – the 'confusion of face' of the kings, the priests, and the people. They suffered *"because we have sinned against thee."* When terror reigns and when Christians feel the hot breath of Satan on their necks, it is because of their sins. When we are being savaged as a people, we must look to ourselves for the answer and repent. Our salvation from what is happening may not be immediate – God must first ensure we learn the lesson.

It is important to really think about this: *"whither thou hast driven them"*. God will and does chasten His children. Even up to modern times He has done so. Let us not come under His stern gaze, but let us delight in being true to Him.

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Verses 9-14

1.

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

2.

Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

3.

Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

4.

And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

5.

As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

6.

Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

God is not only righteous, He is also the source and epitome of mercy and forgiveness: Any talk of mercy and forgiveness is meaningless unless we acknowledge God and His existence. Only God has the right and the power to show mercy and forgiveness. Human beings are too fickle, too finite, too irresponsible, to be the source of mercy and forgiveness. When we sin we sin

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primarily against God. We may harm fellow human beings, but the sin is against the Lord of us all. That is why only He can show mercy with authority. It is also why only He can give forgiveness.

Most Christians are wrong in their view of forgiveness. They think they must show forgiveness to those who abuse them. This is not the case. We can only forgive those who have repented of their sin and have asked to be forgiven. If they do not, they cannot be forgiven and we may not forgive. Because only God can forgive, we may only forgive by proxy, as He would forgive. Of course, we cannot forgive a person when His sin is against God (e.g. blasphemy) – he must face God alone in that kind of case.

Very often, Christians say they forgive a person, but they have no right to do so, and the 'forgiveness' is invalid. Often, too, the act of proclaiming forgiveness is only an emotional prop to make themselves feel better about having anger. We can have righteous anger without it being sinful. We can even be angry when we are attacked or abused, so long as we do not let it fester within or cause us to sin in return.

"We have rebelled against Him" (verse 9). We have sinned against God. That is why He holds mercy and forgiveness in His own hands. Sin is rebellion. How many Christians today understand that concept? How many think they can sin and get away with it? How many think they can just 'forget' they have sinned and not seek God's mercy, on their knees in subjection? A criminal goes to court wearing a suit and tie, with a nice new haircut; he apologises profusely to the judge, even though he does not mean it, in the hope of mercy. How much more so should we give God our best when we seek forgiveness for sin? Not superficially because we want to be 'let off', but deeply, with a sense of shame, for grieving our Father?

The prophets and forefathers taught the Hebrews how to live and how to approach the Lord. Time and again, the people rebelled and sinned, and came to great grief. Yet, because God chose them as His people, He repeatedly guided them back to truth. At times, He allowed them to know misery. At other times He deliberately brought judgment upon their heads when they continually forgot Him and mistreated His laws. Daniel, young as he was, knew that the Hebrews had brought the destruction of the Temple, and exile, upon their own heads (verse 10).

Do you recognize the same kind of judgment is upon the Christians of the West, right now? This is why we have seen the removal of godly laws and the imposition of evil men, with godless

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intent. It is why anti-God laws are instituted, ruled by wicked people with hearts of stone and minds of filth. We have brought it upon ourselves by our laxity and sinful attitudes and beliefs. And the longer we deny it, the longer it will take for us to repent, in the hope that He will again show mercy to us, His deviant people.

God warned the people, yet they ignored Him (verse 12). The destruction of the Temple was a great and hitherto unseen terror. It was *"a great evil"*. Yet, God had warned them time and again and they rejected His word... just as Christians are doing today.

Moses told them (and us): *"all this evil is come upon us"*. Today, Christian groups are trying to fight governments for the way they are treating us so badly. But, they do not recognize that it is too late. God has pronounced His judgment upon us for our sins and so the punishment must continue for a season. Instead of now fighting what was once a legitimate target of concern (but which was lost because of our sin), we should be repenting and living true lives based on God's word. We cannot fight God's judgment upon us – we can only repent and live humble, contrite lives. Until we learn this, all the fighting of evils will make no difference, and all our efforts are in vain.

As Daniel said, let us pray for forgiveness and mercy *"that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth."* This is the real point! Until we do this, God will continue to allow wicked men to rule over us and overturn His statutes.

"The Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us" (verse 14). In this text 'evil', **ra'**, means something very unpleasant, bringing misery and pain; distress, calamity, and injury. Do not be fooled by modern Christians who say God is only a God of Love! The wrath of God is greater and more awful than anything Satan can concoct against us! Do you acknowledge God as a God of Wrath? If you do not, then I very much doubt that you have godly fear, or that you have a right regard for sin.

God *"watched"* upon the evil. That is, He was **shaqad** – alert to what His people were doing and ready to bring judgment, for their own good. As Daniel said, whether God acts in love or wrath, everything He does is righteous, for everything God does is always right, holy and pure. The judgment came upon the people *"for we obeyed not his voice"*.

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We live in days of judgment from God. Recognize it and act accordingly.

Verses 15-19

1.

And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

2.

O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

3.

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

4.

O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

5.

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

Daniel, like so many before him, looked back to the time God took the people out of Egypt *“with a mighty hand”*.

Today, Christians KNOW God is the same God, and yet they mumble and grumble and bemoan their lot, as if God is no longer with us! God was

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“renown”

because of His exploits, but, Daniel said,

“we have sinned, we have done wickedly.”

Despite all that God had done, the people degenerated into sin, knowing that God was also a God of wrath. And we do the same... then we cry out to God in surprise, wondering

“Where was God when...”

this or that cataclysm happened! We must look to ourselves for the answers.

Daniel asks God to turn away His anger from the people by saving Jerusalem, though Daniel acknowledges that it has come to this because of the nation's infidelity. What interests me in this text is that Daniel was a powerful prophet and wise man, even at a young age, yet he did not know if God would save them at the last moment. There are times when I know what is to happen. But, at other times, I am just as bereft of knowledge as the next Christian. Beware of those supposed modern 'prophets' who claim to know everything about everything!

Jerusalem was under attack and Daniel knew why. He knew that because of national disobedience to God's laws, enemies were now taking hold of the Holy Mountain, Jerusalem, making a mockery of Israel to surrounding nations. But, this is what God intended, to bring His people to their knees in repentance. However, because God will never rescind a judgment once He has pronounced it, the Hebrews would have to put up with 70 years exile as a punishment for disobedience. This is why I always tell Christians the time to repent is NOW... because we never know when God will hand us over to our enemies, or punish us. Daniel even begged God to hold back His anger (verse 18) and to save the sanctuary already ruined, *“for the Lord's sake”*.

too late – God had pronounced judgment.

But, it was

Daniel begs Him to listen and to see the ruin come upon the Temple and the city *“called by thy name”*

wshalaim,

'teaching of peace'. Wisely, Daniel adds that he prays not in the name of their own righteousness – because it was dashed to the ground by their own disobedience – but in the name of God's mercy, which is always righteous. He prayed to Him because they were His people.

God will not hold back from bringing judgment on any of His people, including you and I. He has chosen us in eternity, but He will punish when it is necessary. We will never lose salvation, but we can lose our earthly peace and safety. That is why we MUST, of necessity, obey and live holy lives.

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Verses 20-23

1.

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;

2.

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

3.

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

4.

At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

As Daniel was praying and calling upon God, "*even the man Gabriel*" appeared to him. It was at the time of the *evening oblation* :

he was offering a sacrifice even though the altar was in ruins. Daniel recognised the archangel from his previous vision. Gabriel had been sent by God to talk to Daniel,

"being caused to fly swiftly"

to him. Gabriel

"touched"

Daniel: that is, he reached out and approached him. Other meanings do not apply in this text. Note that Gabriel appeared when Daniel was awake; it was not in a vision. Some think Gabriel was Jesus Christ, I do not... created angels were normally used to take messages from God to man.

The "*evening oblation*" was the time of the grain offering to God. Gabriel said he had come to give him understanding and wisdom concerning the vision. As soon as Daniel began to pray to

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God, God sent Gabriel to meet with him. God did this because, as Gabriel said: *"thou art greatly beloved"*.

God will answer each one of us if we are similarly holy and we pray in truth and humility. God recognizes truth in a man and woman, and will not keep us in suspense for long – He will answer if our hearts are right before Him. *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10). God answers our prayers not so much on the strength of what we say, but because He can see into our hearts and knows beforehand if our spirit is sincere.

Thus, He answers because the intention in us is from God anyway. Many of us are so worried we insist on praying continually, and so do not stay quiet, allowing God to speak. In this way we miss what God has to say, or confuse it with our anxieties. This is why we must sit quietly... wait... pray... wait... listen. His voice will be quiet and so we must obey by simply staying still, knowing He is God and *will* answer.

Verses 24-27

1.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

2.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

3.

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

4.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations

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he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Gabriel then explains the vision to Daniel, in words that have caused many to argue for a long time! He said it would take 70 weeks *"to finish the transgression"*. It is followed very quickly with a conjunction (which means the next part is part of the previous phrase).

The word 'and' is a 'correlative conjunction' because it coordinates two things. Therefore, any meaning given to the first phrase must also apply to the next phrase, which is *"to make an end of sins"*. A further correlative conjunction is given, followed by *"and to make reconciliation for iniquity"*. Four more correlative conjunctions are added, so the phrases they introduce are also connected to the others. These are:

"to bring in everlasting righteousness"; "to seal up the vision and prophecy"; "to anoint the most Holy."

Because all these phrases are co-joined, any explanation must likewise join them together as one interpretation. So, what is meant by *"seventy weeks"*? The word 'weeks' in this text is shabuwa'. It can mean: seven; a period of seven days or years. Which is it? The answer is determined by the subject of the weeks... the *"transgression"*. This can mean against God, or against the people by their enemy. In this text it refers to the penalty of sin paid out to those who sinned against God, the Hebrews.

This punishment would last *"seventy weeks"*. We know that the exile lasted 70 years, but the other phrases do not make sense if we limit ourselves to seeing this as the end of the exile. For example, when the exile finished, it did not *"make an end of sins"* (as Jesus did on the cross). Nor was reconciliation made for those sins (by His sacrifice). The return of the Hebrews to Jerusalem certainly did not bring *"everlasting righteousness"*... if that were true, the priests at the time of Jesus would not have murdered the Messiah! Nor did the return from exile *"seal up the vision and prophecy"* (Christ did it on the cross: *"it is finished"*). More vitally, the finish of the exile did not *"anoint the most Holy"*.

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So, what does
“seventy weeks”
mean in this context?

It can only have reference to the time when Christ came to this earth. Only He could put an end to sin and pay for its dishonour of the Lord; only He could finish the work given to Him by the Father, and only He could be “the most Holy”.

Therefore, the seventy weeks, in this context, means seventy times seven years (490 years, as Matthew Henry observes). The Temple was ruined by the Persians, and rebuilt after the exile... but the Messiah had to come to finish the task set forth by God, 490 years later. Thus, the desolation continued up to the time of Jesus, and beyond to the time the Romans finally destroyed the Jewish nation and its Temple, in 70 AD. Given the subject of the vision, this is the only possible answer we can give.

In this way, the Hebrews were handed back their nation and rebuilt their Temple. However, they soon degenerated again and the lessons were not learned, even when the Messiah actually came to this earth.

Gabriel further expands on the meaning of the vision (verse 25): the time taken from the rebuilding of the Temple to the coming of the *“Messiah the Prince”* would be *“seven weeks”* (explained above)

“and three score and seven weeks”.

The rebuilding would be
undertaken “even in troublesome times”.

No man can say he fully understands everything about this prophecy, so I will go no farther on this occasion. Suffice to say it is all about reaching its climax with Christ’s birth and life, and His death.

“After three score and two weeks” the Messiah would be killed, *“but not for Himself”*. That is, He was put to death because the Jews thought He was an imposter. “The people of the prince” refers to the Roman soldiers acting on behalf of the Roman emperor, to destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD. Thus, all talk of ‘weeks’ must fit into the first and last incidents – the return from exile and the overthrow of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

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The end of the desolations will be “with a flood”. Flood is **sheteph**, which can indeed mean a literal flood, but it is not the interpretation in this context. Rather, it assumes another of its meanings: something outrageous; an overflowing army. This describes the Roman battle that finished off the Temple, as Roman soldiers flooded into the city.

The meaning of the last verse is that after the death of the Messiah, God would wrap up the Jewish nation in their misery and cause the temple to be finally destroyed. There would be an “*overspreading of abominations*”, meaning that when the temple was finally destroyed the nation would scatter and be no more, knowing only destruction and tainting of their religion. To this day Jerusalem remains desolate, because the Jews have not repented and received the Messiah in salvation. Which is why “*that (which was) determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*” (The text does not refer to the salvation of elect Jews towards the end of time, but which is spoken of in the New Testament).

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