

- I. Introduction to the Book
- II. Comment and Commentary on the Book.

Part One: The Life Ministry of Daniel (and friends) in Babylon (1:1-6:28)

Part Two: The Visions and Prophecies of Daniel in Exile (7:1-12:13)

Introduction

- A. Daniel's Vision of four Successive Kingdoms, 7:1-28
- B. Daniel's Vision of the Fourth Kingdom, 8:1-27
- C. Gabriel's revelation to Daniel of the "weeks" 9:1-27

Chapter 9 Lesson: God is sovereign over near and distant events. Just as He has set the limit of the seas, He has set limits upon what nations, even mankind, can do. In the subtle twists and turns of our lives, we can be assured that the One does as He pleases. God finds pleasure in His covenantal relationship with each one of us and we will be gathered into His kingdom when time shall be no more.

1. The prayer of Daniel for his people, vv. 1-14

What is unique in the chapter is that it is not the result of a vision; Gabriel appears personally, speaking directly to Daniel. Thus, some have called the content of the chapter a prophetic revelation.

a. The context of the prayer, vv. 1-3

1) The time frame, v. 1

There is considerable discussion of the succession of Persian monarchs. Are they actual names, titles, or did they have more than one name? The revelation came to Daniel in 538 (the first year of Darius the Mede) when he was likely in his 80s.

2) The discovery, v. 2

Daniel, in his study of Jeremiah's writings, learned that the desolation of Jerusalem would come to an end in "seventy years (25:11-12). "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place' (29:10)."

If the starting point of the "desolation of Jerusalem" was 605, the year of deportation to Babylon, "seventy years" means that the return of the people was near; in fact, Cyrus gave the right to return in 536.

3) The consequence, v. 3

From the insight gained from Jeremiah the Prophet, he turned to prayer beseeching God (LORD, the one who keeps Covenant with His people) to prepare their hearts for the momentous event. He sought the Lord, the ruler, the sovereign One. Reading the prayer echoes the sense that Daniel was passionate, almost overwhelmingly so (the flow is staccato and repetitious).

b. The content of the prayer, vv. 4-14

1) The foundation: the recognition of God's faithfulness, v. 4

His prayer begins with adoration of the person and character of God. He is described as “great and awesome” (literally, one who inspires reverence), the covenant-keeping God (full of loyal love) for his people. God, he says, has the power to fulfill His promises, being full of compassion for his people.

- 2) The confession of the nation’s dereliction, vv. 5-14
 - a. The failure of the nation to obey, vv. 5-6

Daniel turns from praise to confession, identifying with his people (“we”) in their derelicts. I think Daniel is saying that divine judgment was the cause of the desolation of Jerusalem precipitated by perpetual disobedience. In making the point, he uses six verbs: “sinned,” “committed iniquity,” “acted wickedly,” “rebelled,” “turning aside,” and [did not] “listen” spurning the voices of God’s messengers.
 - b. The righteousness of God’s chastisement, vv. 7-15
 - (1) The fact stated, v. 7

Daniel is quite clear that the cause of deportation was not in the Lord, but in human violation of His righteous character. God does not possess the attribute of wrath, but justice that mandates punishment for violation of God’s character in our behavior.
 - (2) The error recognized as just, v. 8

The consequence of dereliction is captured in a twice repeated word: “Open shame” resulting from “their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against thee.”
 - (3) The appeal to God’s character, v. 9

The recognition of God’s compassion and forgiving mercies in hearing that the exile is near an end overwhelms him, revealed as beyond comparison by the extent of their rebellion.
 - (4) The error restated, v. 10

The “seventy years” of exile was rooted in a disobedient, rebellious heart of the nation toward the grace of the Mosaic Law and the warnings of the prophets.
 - c. The justice of God’s actions, vv. 11-14
 - (1) The confession of disobedience, v. 11

This is the fourth time that Daniel states that the Lord’s chastisement is just (“...for we have sinned against Him”), the curses promised (Deut. 28:15-68) by the Lord for disobedience to the Law of Moses.
 - (2) The evidence of disobedience, vv. 12-13

The proof of Israel’s dereliction was the exile itself (“The Lord will bring you and your king...to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known... [Deut. 28:36]).
 - (3) The summary of God’s action, v. 14

For the seventh time, Daniel confesses the nation’s disobedience, that the exile was not unjust on God’s part, but their due because of God’s righteous as well as just character.
- 3) The requests of the prayer, vv. 15-19

With the confessional part of Daniel prayer stated, preceded by adoration, he turned to petitioning (“Now”).

 - a. For the cessation of divine wrath, vv. 15-16

Daniel prefaces his requests by speaking of God’s character, returning to focus on the initial part of the prayer, adoration. He speaks of God’s great

power in bringing the people out of the land of bondage, Egypt, though they did not remember His goodness. While assenting to the Lord's righteous and just action in separating His people from the land that He promised them, he asks that God's anger be abated since God's great city and people have suffered so very much for their sins.

It is interesting that Daniel's request is based on the seventy years of exile that are about to end (perhaps a misconception on Daniel's part. This means that Daniel by prayer is joining with Him in the fulfillment of it.

- b. For the display of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness, vv. 17-18
While the first part of the petition was negative (removal of His wrath), the second part is positive. He asks God to display His glory by restoring His presence among them ("...Let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary").
 - c. A summarizing plea, v. 19
The prayer concludes with a final plea for God to intervene ("forgive," "listen," "take action") and do so "for your glory and for the city and people called by your name."
2. The response of the Lord to Daniel's prayer, vv. 20-27
It seems that we have in this chapter two events referenced: the first is from Jeremiah that the exile would end after 70 years (9:1, "seventy years"). This precipitated Daniel's prayer of delight, confession, and expectancy. The second is the ultimate end at the end of time; thus, the second goes beyond the end of Israel's captivity to the end of our spiritual captivity.
- a. The message from Gabriel, vv. 20-23
 - 1) The context, vv. 20-21
Amid his prayer, Gabriel appeared ("the man"), an archangel (as occurred in 8:15-16), at the time of the daily evening sacrifice. The meaning of "I have come to give you insight..." is not the issue of the end of the 70 years of captivity (Daniel grasps that), but a greater fulfillment in 70 times 7 years of what the return in 536 foreshadows.
 - 2) The purpose, vv. 22-23
The intent of his coming was instructional, to listen and understand the meaning of the revelation that he was bringing. The word in our translations is "vision," but Daniel had no vision that needed interpreting. The term is better translated "revelation," something beyond what he knew. Gabriel was delivering additional information to Daniel ("I have come forth to give you insight with understanding"). See also, v. 25 ("so that you may know....").
 - b. The meaning of the "seventy weeks," and the end of Jerusalem's desolation, vv. 24-27
 - 1) The time to fulfillment: seventy weeks, v. 24
Seventy weeks, seventy sevens, or 490 years are determined to bring to fruition six wonderful things.
 - "To finish transgression:" the infinitive, "to finish," means "to end." It speaks of the end of Israel's disobedience that continued after the exiles returned culminating in the crucifixion of their Messiah.
 - "To make an end to sin:" this seems only to be fulfilled at the end of times when Christ is exalted as Lord, the eternal state.

- "To atone for wickedness:" this likely occurs in the final judgment, the ultimate application of our Lord's death.
- "To bring in everlasting righteous:" That a kingdom is coming without termination that is eternal.
- "To seal up vision and prophecy:" A time when divine revelation to God's people is exhausted, completed.
- "To anoint the most holy:" it most likely refers to the exaltation of Jesus as King of Kings forever.

Gabriel divided these seventy weeks into three units of length with gaps before the commencement of the "weeks" and after the second.

Seven Weeks, the duration of the exile: 605-536

Sixty-weeks, the construction of the walls of Jerusalem to the death of the Messiah: 444-33AD

One Week: the reign of the Anti-Christ, the judgment of the nations, and the coming of the eternal kingdom: yet future.

2) The time of rebuilding, seven weeks, v. 25

Gabriel states that in seven times seven (seven sevens) a decree will be set forth to allow the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls (a city was not a city until was secured by walls in ancient times). We know that such a decree was issued by the Persian Artaxerxes in 444 and completed in 395, 49 years later (though the walls were finished in 52 days, it may not take into consideration the length of the entire project (removal of debris, building of homes and extensive infrastructure ["with plaza and moat"])). If Daniel received the communication from Gabriel, the exile would shortly end in about 538 there is almost one hundred years before the wall construction began under Nehemiah.

3) The time of distress: sixty-two weeks, v. 26

The second in the series of weeks (62 in number or 434 years, 483 years after the decree of Artaxerxes) concludes with the Triumphal entry and crucifixion of Christ (the 69th week or 33 AD). I cannot make the 62 years work out with numerical exactness in the second cycle of sevens, so there must be some sense of symbolism in the number "seven" beyond signifying literal years, though it works in the first and third cycles of the sevens (7 and 1 respectively). We must remember that this is visionary literature!! If taken with mathematical exactness the year of our Lord's "cutting off" would be 39 AD, not 33 AD, as many scholars assume. It would seem that "seven sevens," "62 sevens," and "seventy sevens" are symbolic of the completeness of three units of time (the returnees to rebuild, the initial coming of Christ, and the destruction of the nations culminating in God's eternal dwelling among his people).

After the "cutting off of Messiah" which took place when the leadership of Israel rejected Jesus as their king in the "Triumphal Entry (March 30, 33AD), 434 years later, at the end of the 69th "week." It will be followed by the destruction of the Temple and nation (Rome, "war and desolation")

4) The time of the end: one week, v. 27

There is an indeterminable gap of time between the 69th and 70th weeks. This alone suggests that a strict and linear literalism is not intended. The end would

not come in 490 consecutive years. Seven is the symbolic number of completion so Daniel seems to have three climatic events telling us that after three units, three sevens, three great events you have the end of times.

One final week awaits before the enthronement of the Righteous One. It will be a time of desolation through an emergent despot, "The Man of Sin," "the anti-Christ" ("the one who makes desolate"), and the destruction of all that is evil, the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:21, a time of "great distress").

In the middle of the final week of the 70th week, the Temple, the presence of God among His people, will be desecrated once more (remember Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabean Revolt that issued in the rebirth of the nation in 168, the Maccabean restoration being only a shadowed prefigure of a kingdom that will never end!). Here the nation, the totality of the people of God from all ages will be gathered into God's eternal kingdom under the reign and rule of the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," at the end of the 70th week that is yet to come.

Thoughts:

1. The prayer of Daniel is magnificent. It teaches us that prayer should first recognize the greatness of God. Jesus instructed a crowd on the topic and argued that prayer should begin with worship ("Hallowed be thy name") and the interests of God before we ask for ourselves (Matt. 6: 9-15). To follow, then, should be confession and requests. Prayer, like singing, is worship.
2. Prayer, also, is delighting to voice the promises of God that he announces through His Word. When Daniel heard from the angel the exile would soon end, he immediately prayed that God's will be accomplished. Prayer is joining with God voicing the delights that He has ordained to come to pass. Prayer is entering into the interests of God saying, "Lord, accomplish your will." "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 9-10). The Bible contains God's will, so you know what to pray!
3. The specificity as to time of events in this chapter should be a great comfort; it should bring us great comfort. Our Lord controls events to the minutiae of detail. "He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got you and me brother [sister] in His hands." You and I need not fear that God can ever be surprised, that He might lack power to execute His care and concern for us, or that somehow He lacks in covenant faithfulness to you and me.
4. The Kingdom of God is closer to fruition today than it was yesterday. Does that not fill you with joy and expectancy. "To the Lord, our God belongs compassion and forgiveness." You can know that reality now because He has promised that he will wipe away every tear from our eyes... (Rev. 21:4). "Someday we will say with John, "I saw the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorn for her husband (Rev. 21:2)."
5. While we may not grasp the structure of prophetic events, exemplified in our passage with "seventy-sevens" and gaps between them in three units ending in momentous events, the point is not in the details, but the overall picture that is cast in symbolism. The vagueness in the occurrence of them in the details allows for meaningful application from the perspective of the believer regardless of their century, making sense, explaining what they see, and giving hope. As an interpretative rule, there are many shadows of the final fulfillment of prophetic announcements, making it relevant for people who read it in any century, yet the shadows point to a final, declarative truth: God will bring to His people a

new kingdom that will have no end or diminution when the eternal Son of God, Jesus ,who is the Christ, will gather us to Himself. Is that not wonderful? Does that not give you hope?

6. While I understand that the Bible presents us with legitimate interpretative questions, why do we have a fixation on the meaning of details and not the big picture it reveals to us. Prophetic literature paints a picture, like New Testament parables, with details filling in the fabric of the story. Why do we allow the details to create fraction and loss of harmony among us while all in the family of God believe that have so very much in common agreement? As a historian, I understand the contexts that created disagreement, the issue often not related to the interpretation of prophecy as much as other issues, but I am puzzled why it is that we allow ourselves to be divided over them (I am not saying that we should surrender our opinions, only that we should preserve harmony with each other in attitude and demeanor as family members). Why do we criticize those in the family who have a different understanding of time, but not how time will end?