

The sermon

Intro

Last week I began by saying that Daniel 9:24-27 is kind of like your life journey spelled out in significant detail beforehand.

There will be progress (city and temple rebuilt). There will be setbacks (city and temple destroyed again). There will come a significant event that ties everything together (the crucifixion of Jesus Christ). There will be turmoil up until the very end (wars, desolations).

But here's how the story closes: sin ends and everlasting righteousness arrives.

This morning we learn that...

BIG IDEA: Relief is coming, but there's a long, hard road ahead.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

9:24 is the end. 9:25-27 is what happens before the end. There's 70 week until the end.

We'll attempt to interpret 9:25-27. Then we'll consider some applications. Because of the complexity here, questions may remain.

That's okay. Some things are clear. Jesus will be crucified. Sin will continue till the end of the age, but sin will end. A kingdom of everlasting righteousness is coming.

70 Weeks?

When do the 70 weeks start?

The weeks begin with *"the word to restore and build Jerusalem"* (9:25).

Option 1: 538 BC (1st year of Cyrus' reign)

*Ezra 1:1-3

Cyrus, king of Persia, issues a proclamation (1:1) telling the exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of the LORD = the temple.

By 520 BC, the 2nd year of king Darius (Hag 1:1), the exiles already lived in paneled houses (Hag 1:4). This indicates Jerusalem was already being rebuilt, but the temple wasn't rebuilt yet (Hag 1:2).

Option 2: 458 BC (7th year of Artaxerxes' reign)

*Ezra 7:7, 12-27

Artaxerxes gave Ezra a letter to take with him on his journey to Jerusalem. The letter allowed any Jew who desired to do so to go back to Jerusalem. The decree (7:13) concerned the house of the LORD. However, the decree also gave Ezra authority to appoint magistrates and judges which might imply the rebuilding of the city.

Option 3: 445 BC (20th year of Artaxerxes' reign)

*Nehemiah 2:1, 3, 5-8

Upon Nehemiah's request, Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah back to Jerusalem with letters authorizing a rebuilding of the city. City walls were a central concern.

For me, the correct date is a little fuzzy. My best guess is the 70 weeks begin at 538 BC.

- 1) Return implies rebuild.
- 2) Restoration does begin in 538 BC.
- 3) "*Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city*" sounds like the decree begins immediately.
- 4) 70 weeks starting when 70 years in exile end flows well.
- 5) 70 weeks is God's answer to the end of the 70 years.

When do the first 69 weeks end?

The completion of the first 69 weeks coincides with "*the coming of an anointed one, a prince*" = Jesus Christ. The first 69 weeks bring us to Jesus' arrival.

Note footnote 5 in the ESV. Their alternate translation is better. Other translations take it this way. 9:25 should read "*Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks [and] sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.*"

ESV's 9:25 makes it sound like the Messiah comes after seven weeks, but 9:26 indicates it's after the 62 weeks that the Messiah is cut off.

Jesus' arrival may mean his birth (5 BC), the beginning of his public ministry (28-30 AD), or the end of his public ministry (30 or 33 BC).

Is it 490 years?

1. Nothing in the vision says a week = 7 years.

That has to be assumed.

2. Seven is a symbolic number of completeness in the Bible.

"*And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done*" (**Gen 2:2**).

In Revelation we have seven golden lampstands (Rev 1:12) = seven churches (Rev 1:20), seven stars (Rev 1:16) = seven angels (Rev 1:20), seven spirits of God (Rev 3:1), seven seals (5:1), seven trumpets (Rev 8:2), seven plagues (Rev 15:1), a great red dragon with seven heads (Rev 12:3).

70 weeks (7 x 10) may mean a tenfold completeness.

3. No matter where you start the 70 weeks, if you take 69 weeks as 483 years (69 x 7 = 483), they do not line up exactly with Jesus' birth, the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, or the end of Jesus' public ministry.

*538 – 483 = 55 BC.

*458 – 483 = 25 AD.

*445 – 483 = 38 AD.

None match up with 5 BC (Jesus' birth), 28-30 BC (beginning of Jesus' public ministry), or 30/33 BC (end of Jesus' public ministry = crucifixion). Only 458 BC gets really close. 458 BC to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry is a possibility. The 70 weeks are a symbolic period of time not equaling 490 years is another possibility.

Questions remain. I'm going with 538 BC and 5 BC as the beginning and the end meaning 70 weeks \neq 490 years. The 70 weeks begin when the 70 years of exile are over.

For some of you, you're very concerned about being literal. Taking the Messiah's coming as Jesus' birth would be literal right? If I'm literal on that detail, I can't arrive at a week = 7 years.

Let's move on to some items with greater clarity.

7 Weeks and 62 Weeks (9:25)

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. – 9:25

The big picture is this:

- 1) Begins with *“the word to restore and build Jerusalem.”*
- 2) Ends with *“the coming of an anointed one, a prince”* = Jesus.

“anointed one” is the word for Messiah. It's not so clear when the word went out, but it's clear that Jesus is the “anointed one.”

- 3) The city will be rebuilt.

In 586 BC, the temple was burned and the wall of Jerusalem was broken (2 Chron 36:19). By 520 BC, people were living in paneled houses but the temple wasn't finished (Hag 1:1-4). The rebuilt temple was completed in 515 BC (Ezra 6:14-15). And the city walls were completed in 445 BC (Neh 6:15).

- 4) The 69 weeks will be a time of distress (“a troubled time”).

They never regained their independence. Various ethnic groups opposed them during the rebuild (Neh 2:19; 4:7-8). After the rebuild, their struggles included the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), the little horn of Daniel 8 (8:9-14, 23-25).

7 weeks is followed by 62 weeks which is followed by a 70th week.

After the 62 Weeks (9:26)

A number of events transpire after the 69th week:

- 1) *“an anointed one shall be cut off”* = Jesus is crucified.
- 2) *“And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary”* = Rome in 70 AD.

"the prince who is to come" = the end-time Antichrist. Recall there's end-time little horn who makes war on the saints and who's destroyed at the coming of Christ. He arises from the 4th beast, which I identified as Rome (7:7-8; 13-14, 23-27).

Rome ruled in the 1st century and emerges at the end of time much like Babylon ruled in 6th century BC and was present in 1st century Rome (Rev 17:1-6, 9, 18). The spirit of Rome lives on in the rule of a future, end-time Antichrist.

- 3) *"Its end shall come with a flood"* = the temple rebuilt in 515 BC was destroyed in 70 AD.
- 4) *"and to the end shall be war"* = war will continue till Christ returns.

War goes on till sin ends and everlasting righteousness comes. I'm taking "the end" as the time when Jesus comes on the clouds and the everlasting kingdom comes (7:13-14, 27).

- 5) *"Desolations are decreed"* = decided and determined by God and unable to be altered.

Various desolations will occur before the end. Desolation generally refers to great disasters of a physical nature. Like the destruction of the sanctuary in 70 AD. In Daniel, the *"abomination of desolation"* (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) refers to idolatrous acts of defiance against God as well.

Note God is revealing in 539 BC what will happen in 70AD. God is revealing what Rome will do 609 years from now. 609 years before it happens. God is real! The Scriptures are a supernatural book!

70th Week (9:27)

"And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering."

Several questions emerge. Who is the he? Is there a gap period between the 69th and 70th weeks? Are the events part of 9:26 part of the 70th week?

First, the he is *"the prince who is to come"* = end-time little horn = final Antichrist.

I believe there is a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. And I believe the events of 9:26 are not part of the 70th week. Why?

Taking *"the coming of an anointed one"* as either Jesus' birth or the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, the events of 9:26 take place after the Messiah's coming so they occur after the 69th week. And these events can't be part of the 70th week because *"the prince who is to come"* = Daniel 7 little horn = final, end-time Antichrist has not yet come at 70 AD, the time when the city and sanctuary are destroyed.

When the little horn comes, which is the 70th week, he will make a covenant and put an end to the sacrifice and offering for half of that time period.

The nature of the covenant and the parties aren't revealed. This recalls **Daniel 7:25**.

He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

This restates what is said in 9:26-27a. The little horn is coming. He will repeat the abomination of desolation pattern. He will be destroyed. His destruction coincides with Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven and the everlasting kingdom (7:13-14, 26-27).

The abomination of desolation pattern (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt 24:15-16) will come to end. There will be a final abomination of desolation at the end of time (7:25).

If the 69 weeks aren't 483 years, the final week need not be 7 years. But the coming of Christ will be preceded by a period of tribulation (Matt 24:26-31) and a final little horn.

Given the 70th week brings us to the end of sin (9:24) and concerns the activity of the little horn who's destroyed when the kingdom comes, the 70th week is the end of this age.

Application

As your pastor I have challenges. How do I apply this without repeating myself once again?

Gabriel's basically saying the near future is going to be pretty awful. The city and the temple will be rebuilt, but distress will remain. Restoration will take place, but you're going to remain under foreign rule. Bringing in Daniel 8, distress will include satanically inspired pagan rulers (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) invading your land and offering sacrifices to their gods in the temple, burning the Scriptures, and executing the faithful. Your Messiah will come and be killed. The city and the temple will be rebuilt, but they're going to be destroyed again. And to make matters worse, it's going to be awful up until the very end: wars, desolations, Antichrist figures, war on the saints.

We live in a distressing world. And distress isn't limited to God's people. Inflation. Alzheimer's. Shootings in our state. International conflicts in Israel. People afraid. People grieving the loss of loved ones. People worried about what's next and where will my food come from and how long will this last?

How do we come to terms with this state of affairs?

1. Remember the atonement

The atonement for iniquity, the Messiah, Jesus Christ being cut off (crucified) is the event that ties everything together. In the atonement there's permanent rescue from this state of affairs.

Atonement speaks to a **substitute** taking the place of sinners, the **removal** of the sinner's guilt, and the **appeasement** of God's wrath against sin.

On the cross, Jesus died as a substitute, removing the guilt for all those who would ever believe, thus satisfying God's wrath against their sins. Jesus invites you to trust in his death and resurrection and experience the removal of your sins and God's wrath.

God can put an end to sin without excluding every sinner from his coming kingdom of everlasting righteousness because Jesus died on the cross. Jesus' death allows sinful us to dwell with the holy God forever! Distress will come to an end for those who trust Jesus.

Those who turn to Jesus will find him merciful.

Do you believe this?

2. Distress reveals God's goodness

On Thursday I had a child come to me in distress. They couldn't sleep because of fear that a shooter's on the loose.

I remember being a non-Christian interested in Christianity at the time of the Columbine shootings in Colorado. On April 20, 1999 two students opened fire in the school, killing 12 students and one teacher.

I remember the pastor preaching on **Jeremiah 17:9**. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”* The pastor said the problem wasn’t the gun. It was the human heart.

The light dawned. My mind raced. God gave me sight. Humans are utterly evil and broken. Man is the problem, not God. If everyone obeyed the Bible, Columbine wouldn’t happen! It’s that simple.

The whole problem is rebellion against God. God’s ways are good. Man is broken. I saw that I was broken and needed to be rescued by God. Shootings testify to God’s goodness and man’s brokenness. If only they feared God!

In early October 2002, for a period of three weeks, there was a string of shootings in Maryland where I lived and Northern Virginia where I worked and went to church. The Beltway snipers they were called.

Each shooting was a single shot from a good distance in seemingly random locations: craft store parking lots, grocery store parking lots, restaurant parking lots, a Home Depot parking lot, a middle school, random neighborhoods. An employee was shot mowing the lawn at a mall. Multiple shootings occurred at gas stations. It seemed like there was a shooting every day. I remember looking over my back while pumping gas. Gas stations provided tarps to hide customers pumping gas.

I remember having an evening seminary class at my church. There was a shooting nearby while we were in class. On the drive home the four lane highway was funneled into one lane going five miles per hour with loud helicopters above and marines in the middle of the highway with guns pointed at you.

This world is scary. Because desolations are decreed. Because war will go on till the end. Because war on the saints will go on till the end. Because the human heart is sick.

This is life in a world where God and his word are rejected. This is life in a world where man’s heart is deceived, confused, and sick. Turning to Jesus for rescue is the answer.

Daniel 9 tells we’ll live with these things till Jesus returns. Daniel 9 tells us rebellion against God will give way to everlasting righteousness, the end of sin.

Do you believe this?