"THE BACKBONE OF PROPHECY"
Daniel 9:24-27

Last week we discovered that in the first year of Darius, the prophet Daniel made an important discovery in the book of Jeremiah. . .

> **Jeremiah 29:10–14**… "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. **11** 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. **12** 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. **13** 'You will seek Me and find *Me* when you search for Me with all your heart. **14** 'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

By this time, Daniel was an old man who was godly to the core. God's people would only be in exile for 70 years. That time was nearing completion, in fact Daniel surmised that they were within 3 years of God's deadline. So, he gave himself to extraordinary, fervent prayer on behalf of himself, God's people, and the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's prophecy had revealed God's plan for the nation only up to the end of the 70-year Babylonian Captivity. Daniel wanted to know what would transpire after that.[1]

A cursory reading of Daniel's prayer reveals that he was deeply concerned about Jerusalem and Mt. Zion (v. 20).

- **Would the city be restored?**
- **Would the temple be rebuilt?**

[1]Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985.

- **Would the nation ever get right with God?**
- **Would righteousness ever dwell on the earth?**

Gabriel had all the answers for Daniel. . .

Daniel 9:20–23… **Now while 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 in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in *my* extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 He gave *me* instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23 "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell *you,* for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.**

Why did Gabriel come? It was to give Daniel *"insight with understanding."* The angel Gabriel revealed the prophecy of the 70 weeks to Daniel. . .

Daniel 9:24–27… **"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. 25 "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."**

The word "<u>week</u>" is a translation of the Hebrew word for "seven." Therefore, most Bible scholars and Bible teachers believe that the *"<u>week</u>"* refers to a period of 7

years. **So, 70 X 7= 490 years.** Here's how it's broken down in this important prophecy. . .

- **7 weeks (49 years)**
- **62 weeks (434 years)**
- **1 week (7 years)**

Keep this in mind—the Jewish calendar was composed of 360 days per year. God was showing Daniel how His plan for Israel fits with His plan for the Gentiles. During this period, God would deal with the Jews *while they were in their land*. Understand that when God is not dealing with the Jews, the prophetic clock (set at 490 years) stops.

1. THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECY

Daniel 9:24… **"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city…."**

It is important that you and I understand that the subject of this prophecy is both for the Jews and for Jerusalem. Okay, with that in mind, we need to grasp when the prophetic clock started ticking. Look at verse 25. . .

Daniel 9:25… **"So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."**

I want to call your attention to two decrees. One by King Cyrus of Persia and the other one by Artaxerxes, the Medo-Persian king. Ezra mentions a decree by Cyrus, King of Persia. . .

> **Ezra 1:1–4**… Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying: **2** "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia,

> ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. **3** ‘Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. **4** ‘Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.’ ”

This decree seems to focus on *rebuilding the Temple*. Next, take a look at the decree of King Artaxerxes. . .

> **Nehemiah 2:3–8**… I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” **4** Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. **5** I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” **6** Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. **7** And I said to the king, “If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors *of the provinces* beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, **8** and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted *them* to me because the good hand of my God *was* on me.

Artaxerxes’s decree focused on *rebuilding the city of Jerusalem*. John Lennox’s comments proved helpful. . .

> **His new decree permitting the rebuilding of Jerusalem, was issued in the month Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (March, 444 BC). It was a historic moment. God’s plan for Jerusalem took a major leap forward: The city would be rebuilt, and the seventy weeks began to run.**

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPHECY

Daniel 9:24… **"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*."**

During the seventy sevens (490 years), six things will occur:

- **Rebellion will be finished.**
- **An end to sin is to be made.**
- **Atonement for iniquity will take place.**
- **Everlasting righteousness is to be brought in.**
- **Vision and prophecy will be sealed up.**
- **The most holy place or Holy One will be anointed.**

Anyone with even limited knowledge and understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith could read this and immediately respond, "This is talking about Jesus and what he did for us." [2]

> **The book of Revelation also refers to a period of time during which the holy city is trampled underfoot (11:2), and this period of time is connected with the return of Christ. Since there is desecration of the sanctuary, trampling down of the people and the city, and violent persecution leading up to the time of Christ's return it is obvious that the finishing of the transgression and bringing in of everlasting righteousness, promised by Daniel 9:24, did not occur in AD 33, 70, or any subsequent time up to the present.** (Lennox, p. 304)

[2] Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 122.

This is what all of this means. The prophetic clock has stopped for the time being. It's stuck at 483 years. There's 7 more years to come. We know it to be the tribulation period at the end of the age. It is also Daniel's seventieth week.

Maybe your thinking, "Why are we focusing on 49 years (7 sevens), 434 years (62 sevens), and that final 7 years (1 seven)?" That last seven years may not materialize for many years or the prophetic clock could start ticking any day now. Lennox commented. . .

> **Such a tiny bit of time can have no relevance to us; thinking about it only detracts from the actual business of Christian living in the real world today! Is it not this kind of speculation that gives Christianity a bad name? Why don't we just avoid it completely, and concentrate on what really matters? However, I believe Daniel was a prophet who spoke the Word of God. Daniel 9 is part of that Word, so I must treat it as such. Of course I must not lose a sense of proportion and spend all my time thinking about one short part of God's Word and ignore the rest. It means, however, that I should give Daniel 9 its due weight, and not dismiss it as irrelevant.** (Against the Flow, pp. 304-305)

As we wrap up our time tonight, I want to remind you that this amazing prophecy was God's response to Daniel's concern for the city of Jerusalem, which bore God's name and was connected with God's reputation in the world. On the one hand, God was preparing Daniel for the fact that all of this would take a long time. On the other hand, God was encouraging His prophet by reminding him that one day Jerusalem's fortunes would be reversed!