

Pastor's Corner – 2-10-2018
Reviewing Daniel 9

Last Sabbath during the sermon we took a look at Daniel 9. The prophecy can be a bit confusing at times and we covered quite a lot of material in a short period of time. I thought it might be helpful for some if I used the Pastor's Corner this Sabbath to write up a brief recap of some of the more significant points. Enjoy!

1. Daniel 8 and 9 are connected – There are several indicators that reveal these two chapters are part of the same whole. First, there is the triple repetition in Daniel 8 that the vision concerning the desolation of the sanctuary would extend to the time of the end (8:17, 19, and 26). The only way this prophecy can extend to the time of the end is if we count the 2,300 prophetic days as literal years. After all, 2,300 literal days is just over 6.3 years which is hardly long enough to take us to the time of the end. Second, there is a time prophecy in chapter 8 that has no clear starting point (Dan 8:14 – “for two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” 2300 days starting when? The passage doesn't say). In Daniel 9 we have a second time prophecy that has a very clear starting point (9:25). Additionally the Hebrew text of 9:24 says that “seventy weeks are cut off for your people...” If seventy weeks are cut off, what are they cut off from? The most likely option is the 2300 days from the previous chapter. In that case seventy weeks (490 days) out of the larger 2300 days is reserved for the Jews and Jerusalem. Third, Daniel 8:27 ends with the statement that the vision was beyond understanding and in Daniel 9:23 the angel Gabriel (who also appeared in ch 8) shows up and tells Daniel, “consider the matter, and understand the vision.” What vision was Daniel supposed to understand? It can only be the one from chapter 8. There is no vision in Ch. 9 and Ch. 8 had a vision that was previously understood. The two match up perfectly.
2. Daniel's prayer – when we read through Daniel's prayer in Ch. 9 we see that his primary concern is about God's people and God's holy city (Dan 9:19). The reason why Daniel is so concerned is because he had been reading the prophecies of Jeremiah who had predicted two events related to Israel and Babylon. The first is God's promise that after 70 years of captivity He would punish the king of Babylon and the entire nation (Jer 25:12). The second event was to be the restoration of Israel to their homeland, again, after 70 years (Jer 29:10). Daniel was concerned because the 70 years had already passed, Babylon had fallen to the Medo-Persian Empire, and the Israelites were still being held captive. It seemed to him as if God had fulfilled the first part of the promise but not the second. Adding to Daniel's anxiety was the vision of the 2,300 days from chapter 8. In that prophecy he is told that it would take 2,300 days before the sanctuary would be cleansed/reconsecrated. If he understood the 2,300 days as a prophecy extending far into the future (which he should have because that's what the angel told him), he may have assumed that the captivity and desolation of Jerusalem would last for many centuries. Perhaps God was going to extend their punishment far into the future? Hence Daniel's fervent prayer for the restoration of the people and the city.
3. The AB, AB pattern – Another key to understanding the explanation given by Gabriel in Dan 9:24-27 is to recognize that we are looking at Hebrew poetry which often utilizes a pattern of repeating themes. Daniel's prayer actually gives us the key to identifying the pattern that Gabriel follows. Remember that Daniel is praying for **(A)** God's people and **(B)** God's city and sanctuary. When Gabriel answers he responds to those two specific items in a repeating **AB, AB, AB** format. Let's look at the text.

²⁴ “Seventy weeks are determined **(A)** for your people and **(B)** for your holy city, to finish the 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.

²⁵ **(A)** “Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, *there shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; **(B)** The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

²⁶ **(A)** “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; **(B)** And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

The end of it *shall be* with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

²⁷ **(A)** Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

(B) And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”

Notice that when Gabriel speaks about the fate of God’s chosen people he is always referencing the Messiah as the one who will fulfill all covenant promises. That’s the good news. The bad news is that the city doesn’t fare quite so well. Gabriel explains that it will be rebuilt, but in time it will again be destroyed and made desolate (fulfilled by the Romans in AD 70).

So what’s the takeaway from all this. For me this is a reminder that details matter when it comes to Bible prophecy. The original language matters. The structure matters. If we want to figure out what these prophecies are all about, it requires a bit of study.

Another take away for me is that God always fulfills his promises, but it’s not always in the way we expect or on the timetable we would prefer. Through these prophecies we discover that God will keep his word regarding his covenant with Israel, but we also see that Israel as a chosen nation would come to an end. How then does God honor his covenant with Israel? By sending the Messiah to establish a new and better covenant with a spiritual Israel (see the book of Hebrews for more). It’s not what Daniel expected, but God shows he is faithful and that his plan is greater than what we might anticipate.

Over the next couple of weeks we’ll continue to explore Daniel 8 and 9. I’ll probably include supplemental material here in the Pastor’s Corner each week as well. If you have any specific questions shoot me an email at tybower@msn.com and I’ll try to answer them here.

Blessings!
Pastor Tyler