

The Sanctuary Message

Background

In the previous newsletter #10 we studied how Daniel presented two issues to God in prayer (Daniel chapter 9). The first one concerned his people whom he compassionately interceded for. After the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, Daniel questioned that they had truly repented. God answered by showing His magnificent grace. After the 70 years had come to an end, He would give them an additional 490 years to stop their rebellion.

The second issue in Daniel's prayer was the desolation of God's Temple in Jerusalem. Would the ruins continue to be a heckling reason for the surrounding nations? Would it ever be rebuilt? If not, the temple ruins would be the symbol of a defeated God? A people without a sanctuary meant a people without a powerful God. Such a people, could easily be conquered and subdued. The Israelites could potentially end up in captivity again. Therefore, the Sanctuary issue was very important to Daniel.

Dream or Vision

Before we continue we need to look at some other aspects. The common understanding is that God communicates to people in dreams when they are sleep and in visions when they are awake. Most of the time, this observation appears to be correct. But if we study all the passages about visions and dreams, we find that in the book of Daniel that is not always the case. Therefore I suggest a somewhat different concept. A dream appears to be a one-way communication from God's messenger to a human being whereas a vision is a two-way interaction.

"Your People"

This subtitle is not so important for this particular newsletter but for our future studies it is vital, especially when we come to Daniel 10-12. We have understood that Daniel interceded for his people. Therefore it seems very logical that the response concerns the same people, doesn't it? Daniel 9:24:

Seventy "sevens" are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. (NIV)

The message concerns Daniel's people and Gabriel simply calls them "your people." It must have felt very precious and reassuring to Daniel to hear God's messenger speak of Jerusalem as "your holy city." The fact that he calls it "holy" shows God's approval of them as a nation. With these words he knew that God, in spite of all that had happened, still considered Jerusalem as His City. A city is not holy unless it is dedicated to the Lord. So Daniel is comforted. Daniel's people the Israelites are still God's people.

Atone for Wickedness

The fact that they still were God's people did not mean that God accepted their sinful behavior. He asks for a change of heart. This is so important that it's stated three times. First, God wants them to (1) "finish transgression." Then He asks that they (2) "put an end to sin" and lastly that they should (3) "Atone for wickedness." These are the things that Daniel's people were requested to do.

Everlasting Righteousness

But God had something else in mind as well. After having asked these three things of Daniel's people, He now let Daniel know of His long term plan. Already in the third request "to atone for wickedness" we see that God had the Messiah in mind. The Israelites needed to repent and to atone for their sins but God knew that perfect Atonement was necessary.

God is not interested in “short term” righteousness – but eternal. That is why the next phrase emphasizes, “to bring in *everlasting* righteousness.” God wanted to take care of the sin-problem once and for all. He knew that little lambs sacrificed on an altar would only bring righteousness, if the true Lamb of God came to die for all sinners. This Lamb was Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son.

Anoint the Most Holy

Could Daniel’s people bring in “everlasting” righteousness? Of course, not! The Father was the only One who could do this through the ultimate sacrifice of His perfect Son. So their part was to *accept* the Messiah and His death on the cross as the atonement for their sins. So, what about the last phrase in Daniel 9:24; “to anoint the Most Holy?” The innermost part of the Temple was called “the Most Holy.” What do you think Daniel had in mind? I am sure he thought about the rebuilding of the Temple and then the consecration of it.

But God had a deeper meaning in mind. In our previous studies we have found that Jesus is the True Sanctuary (Isaiah 8:13-14, John 2:19-21 and Revelation 21:22). In Matthew 12:6 Jesus speaks about Himself as “one *greater* than the Temple.” With that in mind, the “anointing of the Most Holy” could very well refer to the Messiah. The “anointing” of the Messiah would be the people’s *acceptance* of Him as their Lord and King. Jesus was anointed and accepted by God at the time of His baptism, Acts 10:38.

Seal up the Vision

Now it is important to go back to the phrase in Daniel 9:24 that we skipped before; “to seal up vision.” There are two words in Hebrew that translate to “seal.” One means to “close up,” “keep secret,” “shut out” or “stop” but that word is not the word used in Daniel 9:24. The word there is one that is used when “making a deal with someone.” That word for “seal” consequently means “to ratify,” “to make sure,” “to establish” or “to confirm.”

Thus God’s “deal” with Daniel’s people was that they not only should stop their sin and rebellion, not only to anoint the Messiah, but also that they should “seal up...prophecy!” They were “to make sure” that this prophecy was fulfilled. That was their part of the deal. They should be “for” the Messiah and not “against” Him.

Thus far we have seen that the prophecy firstly concerned Daniel’s people and their standing before God. Secondly, the focus was on the Temple building in Jerusalem. Thirdly, God had introduced the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, namely the Messiah. This aspect strengthens and actually dominates the rest of Daniel 9.

Consider the Message and Understand the Vision

After these introductory comments we will now study the “message,” that Gabriel spoke of, Daniel 9:23. Daniel’s questions had been answered, and now it was very important that Daniel would “consider the message and understand the vision.” The reason is simple. God wanted to take Daniel beyond his own horizon and let him understand the divine importance of this vision.

The next verse, Daniel 9:25, starts with “Know and understand this:” Gabriel is about to focus on God’s special agenda. Now Daniel needs to listen carefully! What Gabriel says next confirms that our interpretation of “the message” and “the vision” is correct, Daniel 9:25:

*Know and understand this: From the issuing of the **decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem** until the **Anointed One, the ruler, comes**, there will be seven “sevens,” and sixty-two “sevens.” It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. (NIV)*

There is some controversy regarding when the 490-year prophecy began. There are namely four decrees concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. Now, afterwards, we can go back in history to see

which one of the decrees that fit the best.

The dictionaries tell us that the Hebrew word for “restore” denotes *repetition*. That is interesting since it actually supports that there were several decrees. If there was only one it would have been possible to calculate the exact time for the coming of the Messiah. That was obviously not God’s plan and the same appears to be true for the second coming. “No one knows the day or the hour...”

The Anointed One

Daniel 9:25 introduces “Messiah the Prince” (NKJV) or “the Anointed One, the ruler” (NIV). For most people this clearly refers to the Messiah. The word “Messiah” means “the anointed” so the two Bible versions above are in agreement. The word for “Prince” could also have been translated to “ruler.” Therefore there are no conflicts there either.

It is important to notice that “the ruler” in this context refers to “the Anointed One.” Therefore, when we see the same word “ruler” or “prince” in the next verse, Daniel 9:26, it refers to the same Messiah.

The Hebrew word in this passage for “Prince” or “ruler” is “nagid.” “Nagid” occurs only three times in the Book of Daniel. Each time there is a clear connotation to Jesus Christ. The three verses I am referring to are Daniel 9:25, 26 and 11:22. There are other instances when the translators use “prince” or “ruler” where the original is not “nagid.” There we need to be careful and consider the possibility of “other” rulers.

Seven Seventies

We have already established that this prophecy covers 490 years. In Daniel 9:24 we read about “seven seventies” (seventy: referring to periods or units of 70 years) which equals 490 years. When this prophecy is broken down into smaller increments of time we should use the same principle. Daniel 9:25 begins speaking about “seven sevens” which consequently equals 49 years. Then we read about “seven sixty-twos” that consequently equals 434 years. In 9:27 we read about “seven ones” which is another seven years. If we add them all together: 49 + 434 + 7 they equal 490 years. This means we need to continue to understand these times as literal years.

After the 49 years and *during* the 434 years, the streets and the trench/wall around Jerusalem would be built. That means it took a long time to rebuild the City. The prophecy correctly tells us that it would happen during “troublesome times.” Let’s now go to the next verse and read from Dan 9:26:

*After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be **cut off** and will **have nothing**. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. (NIV)*

It is important to remember the *order* of the “sevens.” First came “seven sevens” (49 years) and then the “seven sixty-two’s” (434 years). This means that when the Bible says “After the “seven sixty-two’s” it actually says after the 49 + 434 years, which equals 483 years. Thus, after these 483 years something extremely important was to happen. The prophecy brings us from 457 B.C. to 27 A.D which is the time when Jesus was baptized.

In these two verses, Daniel 9:24 and 25 God specifically answered Daniel’s two questions. In addition to that God also foretold the coming of the Savior, the Messiah.

Be Cut off

The next thing mentioned in Daniel 9:26 is that the “Anointed One will be cut off.” For most scholars this phrase simply implies that sometime after the 483 years, i.e. sometime after His baptism, the Messiah would “be cut off.” The expression “cut off” means to “be killed.” We know that this certainly happened at the cross in

A.D. 31. Thus Christ's death confirmed this prophecy.

There is another possible understanding of the expression "cut off." The Hebrew word could also be translated to "to cut a covenant," according to Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon. This option describes very well what actually happened at the cross and goes hand in hand with what we have concluded in earlier studies. This thought of "cutting a covenant" leads us to the next part of Daniel 9:26.

The Old Testament describes God's relationship with His people as a marriage, Jeremiah 3:8, 14, 20, etc. According to the Law there are two acceptable reasons for the breaking of a marriage covenant. The first approved reason is adultery. God sent one prophet after another to the Israelites pleading with them to turn away from their spiritual adultery. The second approved reason is the death of the husband, Rom 7:2. This happened when Jesus died on the cross. With this in mind, we understand that Jesus not only *died* on the cross but at the same time a *divorce* took place. The Covenant was cut!

Have Nothing

When the Messiah had been killed, Daniel 9:26 continues to say that He "will have nothing." Most Bible versions today translate it in this way. I believe that is the best translation as it accurately describes Jesus' position. But it is true in several ways.

When He died on the cross, taking all the sin of the world on Himself, He was totally alone. Up to this point Jesus had been *one* with the Father but at that moment He had to be separated from His Father, Matthew 27:46, to be "made to sin." Jesus cried with a loud voice: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? In that perspective He truly had "nothing."

A second fulfillment very likely concerned His relationship with His covenant people. When He died on the cross the divorce from the Israelites was a fact and from that perspective, He "had nothing." Now Romans 7:2 was fulfilled as well as what He said in Matthew 21:43: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." The physical pain must have been excruciating for the Lord but the pain of this total separation from God and the carrying of the sin of the world must have been much worse!

Summary

- Daniel prayed and interceded on behalf of his people and was very worried about their status before God. God quickly assured Daniel that they still were His Covenant people.
- However, God firmly rejected their rebellion towards Him and told them to finish transgression and put an end to sin. To really show them His mercy, He gave them 490 years to repent.
- When Daniel prayed about the temple building in ruins in Jerusalem God plainly told him that it would be rebuilt. With that statement Daniel was assured that God's name would be restored among the surrounding nations.
- Then God brought in His agenda and gave a wonderful prophecy concerning the Messiah. However, neither did they recognize the Anointed One nor accept Him. He was rejected and crucified and thus the "divorce" was a fact.