

## **“God’s Prophetic Clock”**

Daniel 9:24-27

Let’s turn once more to Daniel 9. People are interested when it comes to knowing the future. I read that Americans spend nearly a billion dollars annually on consulting psychics, horoscopes, and palm readers. In the last year, Google searches on phrases such as ‘the end of the world’ or ‘how close are we to the apocalypse’ were at an all time high. Man has always been curious about the future, and has tried his best to predict it, speculate what it holds.

In 1870, there was a bishop with the Church of the United Brethren who came to an Indiana college campus for a conference. During his visit, he heard the president of the college say something that shocked him. “We live in an age of wonders,” said the head of the college. “I believe the day is not far off when men will fly in the skies like birds.” Afterwards, the bishop pulled the man aside and said, “Sir, you are speaking blasphemy! The Bible tells us that the gift of flight is reserved strictly for the angels.” The bishop’s name was Milton Wright who just so happened to have two sons by the name of Orville and Wilbur. Three decades later, at Kitty Hawk, NC—they flew.

Throughout history people have always had a strong desire to know the future, to predict the future, and to know what is ahead. Are we living in the last days? How close are we to the return of Jesus Christ? Perhaps more than at any other time in our lives, these questions have been on our mind in recent days. Let me tell you, the future is not a matter of knowing what—its all about knowing Who.

**Isaiah 46:9-10—“For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done.”**

An omniscient God knows precisely what is ahead, an omnipresent God is already there, and an omnipotent God is in control of it all. The Bible says that He is the architect of history. He is perfectly orchestrating the circumstances in the universe by bringing human history to its intended conclusion.

**Corrie Ten Boom** — *“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”*

The ninth chapter of Daniel is a passage that deals with the future. Specifically, it deals with the future of Israel and the way it fits in the overall redemptive plan that God has for humanity. It is a prophecy known as ‘the seventy weeks.’ Not weeks in the sense of days, but in the sense of years. Literally, seventy ‘sevens’ or seventy ‘seven-year’ time periods in which God is going to accomplish some very important things as far as Israel is concerned, and as His redemptive plan is concerned. It was revealed to Daniel that God has a specific plan in which the Messiah will come and deal decisively with sin, though it means He is to be ‘cut off’ in the process. Intense times of tribulation will precede and follow His coming. The nation of Israel will, in particular, will experience tribulation. Yet God has determined how and when the end will come. And so Daniel is shown here how God is in control of it all, and regardless of what would happen in the world around him, God is to be trusted. His plan will come to fruition just as He has promised.

Now, we’ve been looking at this remarkable prophecy for the past couple of Sundays. It really serves as ‘God’s prophetic clock’ as far as Israel is concerned. I want us to consider the final week of the prophecy, but before we do, let’s briefly review...

### **1—What was FORETOLD by Gabriel (9:24-26a)**

*“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city...”*

Gabriel had been sent to Daniel in response to his prayer in the first part of chapter 9. Specifically, the angel came to give Daniel ‘insight’ into what God would do for His people in the future. In verse 24, Gabriel summarizes what the overall purpose is that will be accomplished by God after these 70 weeks have passed. He mentions a specific period of time that is marked out by God —“Seventy weeks are decreed.” The word ‘decreed’ comes from a Hebrew word that means to be cut out. The idea is that the time period has been cut out by the predetermined purpose of God.

The prophecy is directly related to the Jews and to the city of Jerusalem. The angel tells Daniel in verse 24, “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city.” This is a prophecy concerning the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem. Daniel is being told that God hasn’t forgotten His chosen people, the Jewish nation. He has cut out of the calendar a period of time in which He is going to do something for Israel.

The total scene that has been revealed will last seventy weeks. It is not a ‘week’ in the sense of seven 24-hour days that are being referred to here. Instead, it literally means seventy sevens or seventy ‘seven-year’ time periods. God divides them up into three prophetic periods—seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one final week. What was foretold would happen during these prophetic years?

#### The completing of Israel’s redemption

*“...to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.”*

At the end of these seventy weeks, there are six objectives that God is going to accomplish. Three are negative and three are positive. All together, these

objectives represent the comprehensive nature of God's redemptive plan. The first three deal with sin and its eradication, while the last three deal with righteousness and its application. Banish all sin, usher in righteousness.

*Objective #1 – To Finish the Transgression*

This is the first item on the list of things that God is going to accomplish during the seventy weeks. The word 'finish' is used in the sense that sin will come under control and will no longer grow and flourish. Israel's apostasy and exile will be brought to completion within the seventy weeks.

*Objective #2 – To Put an End to Sin*

If the first objective has to do with allowing Israel's sin to run its course, the second means that sin's power will be broken. Not only to firmly restrain sin in principle, but to break the power of sin specifically, to deal with the sins themselves. It involves the idea of judging those sins and bringing about forgiveness. It points to the time when sin will be eliminated in practice.

*Objective #3 – To Atonement for Iniquity*

It refers to reconciliation between God and man. The word 'atone' means to cover, to expiate, to wipe out. For man to have a relationship with God, atonement must be made. Gabriel says that the Lord has determined that this would become reality within these seventy weeks.

And so these first three objectives specifically deal with sin and its eradication. Daniel is told that God is going to deal with the sin problem. And yet that is not all. Sin has to be eliminated, but righteousness has to be inaugurated. Sin has to be wiped out, and righteousness has to be ushered in. The next three objectives deal with that.

#### *Objective #4— To Bring In Everlasting Righteousness*

Everlasting righteousness refers to the establishing of the kingdom of God. It is what Jesus taught us to pray for in the Model Prayer: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” This is a reference to the righteousness of heaven being found on earth, as all the imperfect governments of man are swallowed up by the righteous government of God.

**Jeremiah 23:5-6—“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which He will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”**

#### *Objective #5— To Seal Both Vision and Prophecy*

The Hebrew phrase ‘to seal’ means to complete something and bring it to an end. This refers to the time in the future when all prophecies will be fulfilled. In other words, during the seventy weeks, God will seal up vision and prophecy, and that will be the end of revelation. When Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom, all prophecy concerning Him will have become reality.

#### *Objective #6— To Anoint a Most Holy Place*

Literally, it means that God will anoint a new holy of holies where His presence will reside. Formerly, that had been in the tabernacle in the wilderness and Solomon’s temple that had been destroyed by Babylon. But in the future, Daniel learns that God is going to do something altogether new.

Daniel is told that God has determined a time in which sin will be canceled, salvation will be completed, scripture will be confirmed, and a sanctuary will be

consecrated. And all of this is the big picture of what God is going to accomplish during the seventy weeks. At the end of those weeks, He will have completely dealt with sin, and He will have totally ushered in everlasting righteousness. Personally, I am of the conviction that this is reference to the millennial reign. Yet there is also a sense in which these realities are true now spiritually for us as believers because of what Christ has accomplished through His death and resurrection. Our sin has been dealt with, our salvation is secure, and we are the sanctuary of God's indwelling Spirit. Notice that something else is foretold:

### The construction of Jerusalem

Notice in verse 25 that Daniel is told when these weeks of years would begin —“...from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem.” There would be a word that went out that allowed for the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt. The majority of Bible scholars agree that this refers to the decree of King Artaxerxes in 445 BC which is recorded in detail in Nehemiah 2. He granted Nehemiah's request by having the official documents drawn up that gave him authority to rebuild the city.

So the seventy weeks will begin with this official decree to restore and build Jerusalem. Yet Daniel learns in verse 25 that it will be rebuilt from the inside to the outside during a troubled time. Remember all the opposition that Nehemiah faced? The workers who built the wall of the city had to lay bricks with one hand and hold a sword in the other! But the wall was built nevertheless, the city was restored, and the prophetic clock began to tick. It was a countdown to Christ!

### The cutting off of Messiah

From the time that the word went out to rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of an Anointed One will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. Notice the first two

periods are divided: 7 weeks, followed by 62 weeks, adding up to 69 weeks. The first seven is a 49 year period, beginning in 445 BC, taking us to 396 BC.

Historically during that time, not only had the Jews returned home and the city of Jerusalem rebuilt, but it was also the time in which the Old Testament canon was completed.

**John MacArthur** — *“It’s as if God established His people in their land, God established His city, God established a temple, and God established His Word. And from there to the coming of John the Baptist, there was no prophet. God had affirmed His people, His city, and His Word.”*

Daniel learns that from the word to rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of an ‘Anointed One, a prince,’ (literally in Hebrew ‘Meshiach Nagid’) will be 7 weeks followed by an additional 62 weeks. So based on the Jewish calendar of 360 days, 483 years from the king’s decree brings us to 33 AD, to the very day when Jesus rides into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey in His triumphal entry. That also was fulfillment of prophecy:

**Zechariah 9:9**—**“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**

Luke 19 tells us how it happened. As Jesus rode along, His disciples spread their cloaks on the road. Then:

**Luke 19:37-40**—**“...the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ And some of the Pharisees in**

**the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.’”**

There was no keeping quiet that day about who He truly was! For this was the day that Jesus was presented to Israel as ‘Meshiach Nagid,’ their true and rightful King, just as Daniel had said it would be. But while the crowd is rejoicing, what is Jesus doing? Listen to what Luke says:

**Luke 19:41-44—“And when He drew near and saw the city, He wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’”**

They did recognize the time in which their King had come. Consider how despite the fact that more than five centuries earlier, God sent Gabriel with the message that specified to the day when the Messiah would be presented to Israel but they rejected Him.

**John 1:11-12—“He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”**

Pay attention that verse 26 says ‘after’ the 62 weeks, Messiah shall be cut off. The word ‘after’ is an important word. Sixty-nine of the prophetic weeks bring us to the presentation of Messiah to Israel. Yet within a week from His triumphal

entry into Jerusalem, Jesus is betrayed, condemned, and crucified. Daniel says that He is 'cut off' and has nothing.

**“Cut Off”** — *means to be executed and killed; used in the book of Leviticus to describe the penalty for broken law*

Verse 26 says He shall be cut off and shall have nothing, or cut off with nothing for Himself. He offered Himself as King to a nation that had been told for centuries of His coming. But instead of a diadem upon His brow, He was given a crown of thorns. Instead of a kingly scepter, they shoved a broken reed into His hands and mockingly paid homage to Him. Instead of being seated upon a throne, He was nailed to a cross. (see Psalm 22; Isaiah 53)

Other translations say that He will be cut off, but not for Himself. In other words, His death is for the sake of others. Israel rejected her Messiah, but it did not mean that God's redemptive plan would fail. It had to be this way for Christ to achieve the salvation of His bride, the church, which is overwhelmingly made up of Gentiles. This is precisely Paul's point in Romans 11, by the way.

## **2—What was UNFORESEEN to Daniel (9:26b)**

*“And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.”*

Up until this point, we have seen how God's program for Israel encompasses 490 prophetic years, and 483 of those have already passed—from a word that went out to rebuild Jerusalem to the presentation of Messiah to the nation of Israel. But what about the final seven years? After the 69 weeks, the Messiah is cut off and has nothing, but the 70th week doesn't begin. And what should stand out to

you as you read this prophecy is that there is a gap between the end of the 69th week and the start of the 70th week. The last week does not officially begin until a 'ruler' who is first mentioned in verse 26 makes a strong covenant with many for one week. Between the crucifixion and the last seven years is an unspecified amount of time, a time in which we are presently living. And it was totally unforeseen by the Old Testament prophets. (see Ephesians 3)

The prophets of the Old Testament didn't see things as we do now. We look at years coming one right after the other. When they were given a prophetic glimpse into the future, they saw all that God was going to do through Christ, but His first advent and second advent were merged together.

*illus. of mountain range in the distance*

We see this same type of thing happening in many of the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is the 'dual' aspect of prophecy that we have already seen in our study of Daniel. Consider Isaiah 9:6 as but one example:

**Isaiah 9:6—“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”**

When Jesus came the first time, was the government upon His shoulder? No, the government nailed Him to a cross. Yet when He comes the second time, He Himself will be the government. So in that prophecy, Isaiah sees the truth of the future, but there is a time gap. Consider another:

**Zechariah 9:9—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and**

**having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**

That was fulfilled to the letter. What about the next verse?

**Zechariah 9:10—“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations; His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”**

So there is an indeterminate time gap between verse 9 and verse 10 of Zechariah’s prophecy, just as there is between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy. When the 69th week came to an end, and Israel rejected her Messiah rather than receive Him, Israel was sidelined. Put on the bench. God would then begin to build His church, which was started in Acts 2 with the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

The Jews are God’s chosen instrument through whom the Messiah has come into the world. God promised Abraham that His descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the dust of the earth. He would have both physical and spiritual descendants. When Christ came into the world, He offered Himself to His people. It’s why Paul says the gospel was ‘to the Jew first.’

**John 1:11-12—“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”**

When Israel rejected its Messiah, He turned to the Gentiles and temporarily set aside His plan for Israel. That does not mean He is finished with Israel, however. (see Romans 11)

**David Jeremiah**—*“Dr. Louis Talbot, the founder of Talbot Seminary, said that one day he was on a train and all of a sudden they came to a stop. He asked the conductor what had happened and was told, ‘We’re on a sidetrack. The express is coming, and we had to get off so it could come through.’ Dr. Talbot said that’s exactly what happened to the people of Israel. They were on the main line, but they rejected their Messiah. So God placed them on the sideline as a nation. He calls out individuals, but the Gospel Express, which we know as the church, is going through. We are living now on that express, in the parenthesis of time before Israel gets back on the track.”*

And that will happen when Daniel’s seventieth week begins which is still yet in the future. Perhaps the clearest way to understand the whole prophecy is to see that verse 24 is a summary of what God will accomplish. Verse 25 gives us information about the first 69 of Daniel’s seventy weeks—the city of Jerusalem is rebuilt, and an Anointed One will come. Verse 26 gives us the picture of the time we are in now, as Israel is on a sidetrack. The Anointed One will be cut off and shall have nothing. The ‘people of the prince who is to come’ will destroy the city and the sanctuary, and it happened in 70 AD when Titus and the armies of Rome laid siege to Jerusalem, less than 40 years after the nation of Israel rejected Jesus Christ. (see Luke 21)

**Donald Campbell**—*“Titus Vespasian led four Roman legions to besiege and destroy Jerusalem...[he] ordered his soldiers to leave the temple intact, but Jesus had predicted to His disciples that ‘there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Matt. 24:2). It is said that when a Roman soldier, on impulse, threw a flaming torch through an archway of the temple, the rich tapestries caught fire. The building soon became a raging inferno; the decorative gold melted and ran down into the cracks of the stone*

*floors. When the remains cooled, the soldiers in their greed for wealth literally overturned the stones in search of the gold. The prophecy of Christ was grimly fulfilled.”*

The crucifixion of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem both happen ‘after’ the sixty-nine weeks, not during. So it would seem that the prophetic clock has been suspended as far as Israel is concerned. We live in a time unforeseen by the prophets of the Old Testament. However, it was clear to them that God had promised a kingdom to Israel and a throne upon which the Son of David would rule the nations. When would that come to pass? (see Acts 1:6-8)

### **3—What is still FUTURE to us (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. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”*

Something that you should have noticed in these verses is that two different ‘princes’ are mentioned. In verse 25, we read about an ‘Anointed One, a prince.’ Meshiach Nagid is the Hebrew expression, and it refers to Messiah the Ruler, the One who is rightful King of Israel. And He is mentioned again in verse 26 as the ‘Anointed One’ who is cut off. But also in verse 26 there is mention of the ‘prince’ who is to come, a ruler associated with the people who destroy the city and the sanctuary. This same ruler is mentioned in verse 27:

*“And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week...”*

The NIV translates it this way:

*“He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”*

This ‘prince who is to come’ makes a covenant with many for one week, which is the final week of Daniel’s prophecy. So verse 27 deals with the seventieth week, also known as the tribulation period. It describes the end of the age.

What exactly do we mean when we refer to ‘the tribulation period?’ It is the final seven-year period of earthly troubles that immediately precedes the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is the period of time associated with Daniel’s seventieth week, during which a coming ruler defiles the temple and lays waste to the city of Jerusalem. Scripture refers to this ‘prince’ with a variety of terms:

- the little horn (Dan. 7)
- the king with a bold face (Dan. 8)
- the man of sin (2 Thess. 2)
- the beast (Rev. 13)
- the antichrist (1 John 2)

According to the premillennial understanding of end times, the period described in Revelation 4-19 are events that take place during this time of tribulation. And according to Daniel 9:27, it will begin with a strong covenant that this ‘prince’ to come will make with many for one week. Since this is a prophecy that deals with Israel, Bible scholars see this as a covenant that this future world leader will make with the nation of Israel and perhaps her neighbors. Peace has been

something that Israel has not known since 70 AD, nor since her rebirth as a nation in 1948.

This future world leader makes a covenant with Israel, but watch what happens —“and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering.” Literally, in the middle of the week, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. Class, what is half of seven years? Three and a half years.

That is a significant detail, especially in light of:

**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.”**

**Revelation 13:5—“And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.”**

Three and a half years into Daniel’s seventieth week, or the tribulation period, this ruler will break his covenant and set up what verse 27 describes as an ‘abomination that makes desolate,’ or the ‘abomination of desolation.’

**“Abomination”**—*something that is disgusting, repulsive, and utterly abhorrent to God*

Three and a half years into the seventieth week, Antichrist will set up an abomination that causes desolation. Pattern from history shows that this will more than likely be himself demanding the world’s worship.

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4—“For that day will not come, unless the rebellion come first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,**

**who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”**

He will unleash unprecedented fury against Israel, resulting in what is known as the Great Tribulation. Jesus referred to this in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. And in both Matthew and Mark, He quotes directly from Daniel 9:27. Jesus had much to say about the future. In fact, He tells us more about what to anticipate in the future than anyone else. How so?

- Jesus referred to the future often in Scripture

He frequently made reference to future events in parables and extended teaching sections. He spoke of future truth to His disciples and made a point of telling those around Him what they could anticipate in the days ahead.

- Jesus rebuked people for not knowing about the future

He reprimanded people because they didn't recognize what was going on all around them. He once rebuked a crowd by saying that while they could read the clouds and tell when it was going to rain, although they could look at the winds blowing through their fields and decide when hot weather was approaching, somehow they were unable to discern the signs of the times. (Luke 12:56)

- Jesus related future truth to present situations

Whenever Jesus spoke of the future, He always connected it to the present. These prophetic passages are always undergirded with strong admonitions about how we are to live today. They have practical importance!

- Jesus revealed the future so we would be confident in Him

Knowing the prophetic blueprint of the future helps us live with present confidence. Rather than living with constant worry and speculation about the future, we can live with confidence in Christ who is in perfect control.

**John 16:33—“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

What about the church? Where does the church come in to play during Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks? Again, the church was unforeseen by Daniel. The church does not come in to view until that time between the 69th and 70th week. And at some point in the very near future, the church is going to be raptured before the tribulation begins.

I can’t help but believe that the preoccupation with so many stories in our day, whether it be movies and cinema, or conspiracy theories, or whatever—it all points to a lack of understanding of where we fit in when it comes to God’s great story. There is indeed an evil afoot in this world who seeks to dismantle all that is good. Man’s world has been under siege by a dragon, and that dragon has blinded man to his true condition. But there has been a Hero who has stepped onto the scene! And through His own death and resurrection, our Hero has broken the power of the dragon, emptied the grave of its threat, and has brought hope and security to the one who looks to Him in faith. One day, He will appear to rid the world of the dragon once and for all.

We long for the day when it will finally be said:

**Revelation 11:15—“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever!”**

What does all this mean for us today? It means it is time to take seriously the days in which we live. It really makes no difference if we are already in the last days, or if those days are still further ahead into the future. We're responsible to obey God's Word and wait for His Son from heaven, no matter how long His coming may still be. We don't need to know God's timetable. We don't need to know the exact moment the clock strikes midnight. We've got a mission to fulfill that involves sharing the gospel and making disciples, and we must all be ready when Christ appears. That way, no matter what is happening in the world around us, we know where we are going. That's why we can stand firm and take action. Such truth motivates us to live godly lives in anticipation of what is just around the corner.

**2 Peter 3:11-12—“What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming day of God.”**