

• *Daniel pleads with God – not because of Israel's righteousness but God's mercy*

As Daniel prays, he knows God's word has proved entirely reliable^{□1}. The people thought that God would never act against Judah's sin, but he did^{□2}. He exactly and precisely fulfilled the warnings that were to be found in the earlier Scripture. The people were slow to respond to chastening^{□3}; ¹⁴*Yahweh was ready to bring the disaster upon us...* Daniel is ready to acknowledge the lessons that are to be learned. God does indeed keep the threats as well as the promises of his word. The people should have seen it before. Daniel is certainly ready to see it now! Daniel pleads the relationship Israel has with God. God redeemed the nation and linked his reputation with his people^{□4}. Daniel pleads that God will now turn around the situation of the nation. He prays that God's anger might now be withdrawn^{□5}. Then he gets to his precise request: 'Look with favour on your desolate sanctuary', he pleads^{□6}. It is not that he prays because of their righteousness. He wants only mercy^{□7}. 'Yahweh, please listen!' he pleads^{□8}.

□1 9:11

□2 9:12

□3 9:13

□4 9:15

□5 9:16

□6 9:17

□7 9:18

□8 9:19

• *At the point where Daniel was exhausted the answer came!*

Suddenly God answers Daniel's prayer! Gabriel the archangel comes^{□1}. *The being I had seen in the vision that I had previously, approached me – says Daniel – at the time of the evening sacrifice when I was tired and weary.*^a At the point where Daniel was exhausted the answer came! He has come to help Daniel^{□2}, at the time of the evening sacrifice. This makes it clear that prayer is being answered on the basis of a sacrifice for sin^{□3}.

□1 9:20-21

□2 9:22

□3 9:23

• *Gabriel's revelation to Daniel*

The angel says, ²³*At the beginning of your supplications a word came forth and I have come to declare it because you are precious to God. So pay heed to this matter and understand this vision.* In Daniel 9:24–27 we have Gabriel's revelation to Daniel.

• *Daniel 9:24-27 – difficult verses*

Daniel 9:24–27 has received centuries of detailed study. These verses are among the most difficult passages of the Bible. Yet despite their difficulty entire systems of prophetic interpretation have been built simply on these few lines. For example the theory that the 'rapture' will be seven years before the second coming of Jesus is built upon an interpretation of these words; yet that particular interpretation of Daniel 9 is at best uncertain, and is – I believe – certainly mistaken.

• *Verse 24 an overview*
• *25-27 details*

We must look at these four verses slowly and carefully, trying not to twist them and (as best as we can) taking them in an honest and straightforward manner. **Consider verse 24.** This gives us an overview of Gabriel's entire prediction. First verse 24 gives us the whole picture; then verses 25–27 come back and spell out some further details. It begins: '*Seventy sets of seven have been decreed for your people and for your holy city, to...*' The second Hebrew word of the sentence really does mean 'a set of seven' (as in the New Living Translation). It is often translated 'week' but it does not mean 'a week of seven days'. It does not refer to days at all. And it certainly does not refer to 'days-standing-for-years'. Translations that have something like 'God has ordered four hundred and ninety years' (the New Century Version) are not accurate at that point. The Hebrew has no mention of days or years whatsoever.

• *Seventy sets of seven have been decreed for your people*

'Seventy times seven' is a traditional phrase of the ancient near east meaning a complete amount or a very large amount. A Babylonian who felt he had sinned badly could say that he had sinned 'seventy times seven';^b and Jesus' command that we should forgive 'seventy times seven'^{□1} used the same kind of symbolical language. **So verse 24a means, it would seem, that at the end of a complete and lengthy period, salvation will come to Jerusalem.**

□1
Matthew 18:22

• *The nature of salvation described*

The next words can be laid out as follows (in six pairs). It continues: '*Seventy sets of seven have been decreed...*

to restrain transgression
to securely bring an end to sin
to make atonement for iniquity
to bring in everlasting righteousness
to seal up vision and prophecy
and to anoint a most holy one.'

This tells us more of the nature of the salvation that is coming at the end of this complete-but-lengthy period.

Salvation involves

1. 'Restraining transgression'

2. 'Bringing sin to an end'

3. 'Making atonement for iniquity'

4. 'Bringing in everlasting righteousness'

5. 'Sealing up vision and prophecy'

6. 'Anointing a most holy one'

• A long way ahead of Daniel's time a Saviour came to Jerusalem to bring world-wide salvation

1. Salvation involves 'restraining transgression'. Something is to take place at the end of the age (from Daniel's viewpoint) which will strike a death-blow at sin and finish its power. When salvation comes in its fullness God's people will die to the power of sin. Sin will be stripped of its right to rule.

2. Salvation involves 'bringing sin to an end'. The power and rule of sin which had caused so much devastation in Israel will receive a death-blow. Someone is coming and something is to happen that will destroy sin. The Hebrew word means 'seal'. It has the idea of 'lock up securely'.

3. Salvation involves 'making atonement for iniquity'. The word here is the word that would be used about a priest offering a sacrifice for sin. A sacrifice for sin will be offered, and the result will be that sin may be pardoned. We notice three words for sin here. 'Transgression' here means rebelliousness. 'Sin' means 'missing the standard of what God requires'. 'Iniquity' means twistedness, perverseness. At the end of a lengthy period God will do something in Jerusalem which will deal with the worst problem of the human race: human sinfulness.

4. Salvation involves 'bringing in everlasting righteousness'. The positive effect of the sin-bearing work that will take place at the end of the 'seventy sevens' leads to a kingdom of righteousness.

5. Salvation involves 'sealing up vision and prophecy'. Something will take place that will fulfil everything that has been predicted in the various visions and prophecies given to God's people by his servants the prophets.

6. Salvation involves 'anointing a most holy one'. This is sometimes taken to mean a holy **place**, and it is sometimes taken to mean a holy **person**. I prefer the former. Daniel is told about a new temple. However, I believe the new temple is not simply a building. It is the newly consecrated people of God who come into being at the time of God's salvation in Jerusalem. In Christian language, salvation involves 'anointing a most holy people' – the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Daniel is concerned about the purpose of God which seems to be entirely held up by the Babylonian exile. But salvation is on its way. It is a long way ahead – seventy times seven! – but it will come. God's promise to bring world-wide salvation through events that will take place in Jerusalem is to be fulfilled. We who live thousands of years later know that God was true to his word. A long way ahead of Daniel's time – seventy times seven! – a Saviour came to Jerusalem, died upon a cross, rose from the dead, poured out the Spirit, offered a gospel of grace in every corner of Israel, destroyed Jerusalem – and then arranged for his gospel to go to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Notes

a. The Hebrew probably means 'when I was wearied with weariness'. Hebrew *y- 'p* ('be weary') is as I see it not to be taken as a form of '*w-p* ('fly'). The phrase probably does not mean (as sometimes thought) 'fly with flight' (that is, fly swiftly). It refers to Daniel not Gabriel.

b. For details, see K.H. Rengstorf's data concerning 'seven' and 'seventy' in art. hepta, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 628, 631.



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