

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Time of the Messiah

by Dan Trygg

“Seventy weeks are decreed about (‘upon’) your people and your holy city, to bring the rebellion to an end, to put a stop to sin, to make atonement for injustice, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. (lit., ‘holy of holies’). 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 (‘sevens’) 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.” Daniel 9:24-27

As we looked at prophecy in Genesis, and the first part of Exodus, we saw that God made future declarations and promises over and over again to the men and women in the biblical narrative. In Exodus 23:20f, He repeated the promise that He will give to the Israelites the land of Canaan. He will give them victory over those who oppose them. In Leviticus 26, Yahweh laid out ahead of time the blessings for them, if they would obey Him, and the curses that would come upon them, if they disobey. These are repeated in Deuteronomy 27,28. The future history of Israel is clearly set forth in these passages. These prophetic declarations were referred back to repeatedly in the outworking of events throughout the remainder of the OT history.

In Numbers 11, when the Israelites complain about the manna, Yahweh told Moses that He would give the people enough meat to eat for an entire month. Moses was shocked, because the number of the congregation was well over two million people! Moses said, “Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered for them?” The Lord responded, “Is Yahweh’s power limited? **Now you shall see whether My word will come true, or not.**” That night, Yahweh caused the wind to bring quail from the sea, and they landed in and around the camp, for a distance of about 20 miles in circumference, ...a fluttering, squirming mass of exhausted quail three feet deep! **God’s prophetic word came true, ...exactly as He had said!**

However, when the people refused to go up to take possession of the land of promise (Num. 14), God predicted that all the men would die in the wilderness, as they wandered about because of their disobedience, for the next 38 years. Only Joshua and Caleb would survive, of that generation, to lead the nation into the land. This, too, literally came to pass. When the people rebelled, and they were attacked by poisonous snakes, Moses was instructed to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole. He prophesied that anyone who had been bitten by a poisonous snake, if he or she would believe God’s prophetic word, and go to look upon the bronze serpent, he or she would be healed (Num. 21). **As we have seen before, God presented a future conditional offer. Those who believed and obeyed, received the blessing He had spoken of beforehand. God’s word came to pass, just as He had promised.**

The context of the revelation in Daniel 9 is important. Daniel had read of another prophecy, ...a word from Yahweh given to Jeremiah the prophet in 605 B.C., the first year of king Nebuchadnezzar. This prophecy is found in Jeremiah 25:1-11, and 29:1-10. Daniel read Jeremiah’s prophecy in “the first year of Darius the Mede”, which was in 538 B.C., some 67 years after Jeremiah’s prophecy. (Nebuchadnezzar, as the crown prince, had already besieged Jerusalem the previous year. Daniel, his friends, and others “of the royal family and the nobles” had been brought to Babylon in 606 B.C.) **Notice Daniel’s response. He believed the word given to Jeremiah, and began to pray for its fulfillment.**

In Jeremiah 25, Yahweh indicated that **He had been appealing to the people of Judah for 23 years, through Jeremiah and “all His servants the prophets”, again and again.** He was calling them to turn from their evil ways, and their pursuit of other gods, so that they would be able to remain in the land, and avoid the judgment of God. **They refused to listen to the prophets, however. They did not believe, nor did they obey,** so Yahweh determined to send Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to defeat them, destroy the land, and desolate it. The survivors would be brought to Babylon as slaves, and serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. After that time, God would free His people, judge the nation of Babylon, and eventually make it an everlasting desolation.

Daniel gave himself to praying for his people. He confessed their sins, ...not just his own personal sins, but also the sins of his countrymen and his ancestors. **He confessed that they had been unfaithful, and had broken the covenant God had made with them,** when He had delivered them from bondage to the Egyptians. **He identified how their actions had brought about the curse that had been prophesied by Moses. Yahweh was just and righteous to fulfill His word, and to do to them as He had said, because of their unfaithfulness.** The shame, judgment and the desolation to

the land was their own fault. It was a testimony of their disobedience. **Then, Daniel began to intercede**, and to ask God to turn His anger away from them. **He asked Yahweh to remember His covenant, and turn His face toward Jerusalem, and to forgive them. He asked God to restore the land, the city and His people to their homeland.** He asked Yahweh to do this, not because of any merit that *they* had, ...but **for the sake of His great name!**

It was while he was praying *these very words* that the angel Gabriel came to him, in order to give Daniel understanding regarding future events. There is a lot packed into the next four verses! Let's see what we can *unpack*.

“Seventy weeks (‘sevens’) have been decreed for (or, ‘upon’) your people and your city...” Seventy weeks? What does that mean? 490 days? Most scholars take this to mean 70 weeks of *years*, or 490 years. This is not nailed down specifically. Note that **there are a number of things that will take place in these 70 weeks. Notice that the focus is the nation of Israel, and the holy city, Jerusalem.** The 70 weeks has to do with them, and what will happen through them.

“...to bring the rebellion to an end, to put a stop to sin, to make atonement for iniquity...” These three phrases are all about sin. The first phrase seems to talk about the attitude of rebellion, of breaking a trust. It is an attitude of defiance and revolt. Another translational option there is to “bring rebellion to completion”, much like in Genesis 15:16, where “the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full.” The second phrase is to “seal-up sin” or “to finish sin”. The third phrase means “to cover or atone for what is crooked”, or the Septuagint Greek translation (LXX) is “to propitiate unrighteousness”. The atonement (*kaphar* in Hebrew) would have brought to mind a sacrificial satisfaction.

“...to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies.” These three phrases speak of the accomplishment of a redemptive work. The atoning work causes an everlasting righteousness that fulfills the prophetic vision, and the holy of holies itself is anointed and “gladdened” (LXX). The prophetic plan of God is “completed”. Atonement for sin, transformation of the heart, and movement into the holy of holies itself with joy. Radical, mind-blowing images for Daniel!

“...from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks (‘sevens’) and sixty-two weeks...”. There are three possible decrees, mentioned in Ezra/Nehemiah. They are: (1.) the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C. (Ezr. 1:1-4) that gave permission for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple; (2.) the permission/decreed of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. given to Ezra (Ezr. 7:6,7), which included the authority to restore the city and rebuild the walls (Ezr. 9:9); and, (3.) the order given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes in 445 B. C. to rebuild the city, its walls and gates (Neh. 2:1-9). If these seven sevens and sixty-two sevens refer to years, then sixty-nine “sevens” would be 483 years. Obviously, Messiah the Prince did not come in conjunction with the first or third decree. The first would be too early (55 B. C.), and the third would be too late (38 A.D.). No one of any messianic claim or consequence appeared at these times. **When one adds 483 years to the second decree, however, the one given to Ezra in 457 B.C., the end result is 26 or 27 A.D., the exact time when Jesus was baptized and began His public ministry! Messiah the Prince showed up exactly 483 years after that decree!** We can confirm that date from John 2:20. Jesus’ opponents mention that the Temple had been under construction for 46 years. We know that Herod began construction in “the 18th year of his reign”, according to the Jewish historian, Josephus. This would be 20-19 B.C. When you add 46 years to that, you come out to 26 or 27 A.D., the same time period as the prophecy from Daniel 9.

“...it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.” Clearly, this refers to the city.

“...Then... the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing...” This was fulfilled by Jesus’ crucifixion. He had no heir, no estate, and even His disciples scattered. He had nothing, ...at least nothing that was visible.

“...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.” Daniel was praying about God *restoring* the city, ...and the angel tells him not only will it be rebuilt, but also destroyed *again!* The word for “prince” can refer to a ruler or leader, not specifically a so-called “prince”. Jerusalem has been attacked 52 times, besieged 23 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, and totally destroyed at least twice. The first destruction was at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. It was totally destroyed again by the Romans in 70 A.D. It has been partially destroyed at least 40 times. Often the city was rebuilt on the ruins of the previous buildings. In some places, the rubble is over 60 feet deep! (*Wikipedia* article, and *Got Questions* query). Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the Temple in 168 B.C., had the Torah scrolls burned, put a stop to the sacrifice to Yahweh, and installed an altar to Zeus, offering a pig on the altar. In 63 B.C., the Roman general, Pompey, entered the Temple, and his soldiers killed the priests who were offering sacrifices. In 70 A.D. the city and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans, and even the stones were pushed off the Temple mount, so that there would be no visible remnant of the original building. (Jesus had spoken of this in Matthew 24:1,2.) According to the prophet Zechariah, the city will yet be attacked by all nations, at the end of the age. It will be captured and partially sacked, ...and then Yahweh will come against the invaders. He will descend on the Mount of Olives, and will destroy all those who oppose Him (Zech. 14). According to Daniel 9:27, **“...a complete destruction, one that is decreed, [will be] poured out on the one who makes desolate.”** God will have the last word. He will bring the Messiah right on time. He is in control, and He will put a stop to those who oppose Him.