

A Better Hope

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[0 : 00] Well, please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel. If you're just joining us for the first time or the first time in a while, we are nine or ten weeks now into our series through the book of Daniel.

And what we tend to do is work our way through books of the Bible. And so this morning we have come to Daniel chapter 9 and verses 20 through 27.

And here's my disclaimer, is this is one of the most difficult, one of the most mysterious, one of the most debated, at times one of the most divisive passages of Scripture.

And you get to enjoy me struggling through it this morning. But what I pray is that we would be encouraged by the truths that we hear from God's Word this morning.

If you didn't bring a Bible, that's okay. We have a few Bibles there in front of you. And I don't know who planned this as we go through these 77s in Daniel chapter 9, but this can be found, our passage can be found on page 700 of those few Bibles there in front of you this morning.

[1 : 04] But let's turn there now, Daniel 9, 20 through 27. And when you found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.

He made me to understand speaking with me, saying, O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your pleas for mercy, a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved.

Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision. Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, 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 profit, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem, to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks.

Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.

[2 : 40] 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.

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.

This is God's holy word. Let's pray once more. Father, this is a difficult text, and we pray, Lord, I pray for wisdom.

We pray for understanding. And if nothing else this morning, may Christ and the gospel be clear. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. What is your hope?

A few years ago, Amanda and I planned to take the boys to their first theme park. And we had been to a few different fairs and kind of pop-up carnival-type rides before, but we had never before spent an entire day at a theme park.

[3 : 50] And so we planned it all out. We bought the tickets. We'd even shown the boys some YouTube videos of rides that they could ride when they got there. And when we finally got there and got inside the park, I asked one of them, well, how many, excuse me, what ride would you like to ride first?

And one of them looked up at me, I'll never forget, and he asked me, well, how many can we do? And it was a fair question because all that they had reference for before that moment was a ride or

two here and there, cheap parents who don't want to buy too many fair and carnival rides for them to enjoy.

They had no point of reference for a full day at the theme park getting to do whatever in the world they wanted to do. And so I'll never forget that conversation, that dawning realization on his face when he looked up and I got to explain to them, no, no, no, no, no.

You have full access all day long to ride as much as you want, whatever you want to do. In that moment, they had their hopes expanded.

They were being brought to an even greater experience of joy and delight than what they had previously thought was possible.

[5 : 03] We're here in our passage this morning in a similar way. I believe that this is what God is doing for Daniel. Daniel, you remember from last week and the week before, he has been praying and hoping and anticipating this return from exile into the promised land.

Seventy years was the time that was almost up. Jeremiah had prophesied seventy years. The return was getting closer. And so we saw last week that Daniel prayed and he confessed and he sought the mercy of God to bring the people back to the land.

And here in verses 20 and 23, God answers. Gabriel comes again to assure Daniel of God's love for him, to give him insight and understanding.

And then what he shows Daniel is that, yes, 70 years is almost up. Everything that you're waiting for is about to happen, but that's not your ultimate hope.

I have something even better in store for you. This passage is an expansion of Daniel's hope. So my prayer for us as we look into this difficult text this morning is that we would fix our hope on the promises made to Daniel here in these verses.

[6 : 25] So we'll take a look here at Daniel 9, verses 20 through 27. And we're going to see this in three parts this morning. I try to make it easy for you to follow along. Three parts this morning.

If you're taking notes, this will be our outline. We're going to see the promise in verse 24. What is it that's being promised here? What is that better hope? We're going to see the process in verse 25. How is it going to happen? And then we're going to see the price in verses 26 and 27. What is it going to cost?

First, what is the promise? Look there to verse 24 with me. Verse 24 serves as sort of the summary for the whole message.

This is the main point. Gabriel says, 70 weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city. 70 weeks, the word literally there in the original is 77s.

[7 : 20] 77s. We'll get there to that in just a minute. But again, you remember Daniel's hope was in these 70 years. Right? A return from exile.

And God answers this prayer by expanding that hope. Not just what God can do in 70 years, but in 77s.

Let's look at what God promises. God makes six glorious promises here and what he will do in these 77s. Listen to this. Listen to this. God says, I will finish transgression.

All evil, all sin, all rebellion will cease. All the transgression that got you here into exile in the first place will be gone.

Done with. No more. I will put an end to sin. All sin will be totally wiped away from my people for good. As far as east is from the west.

[8 : 22] So far will I remove your sin from you. Sin will be totally done. All the effects of sin will be totally peeled back. Can you imagine that? I will atone for iniquity.

I'm not only ending your sin. I'm going to pay for it. Full atonement. Which means full reconciliation with God.

Full appeasement of God's wrath against sin. And I will do all of this. But not only this. Guess what? I will bring in everlasting righteousness. So they're not just cleaned up for a moment until they leave and then they go sin again the next hour.

Everlasting forever. Everlasting forever. They're covered in this forever righteousness that cannot be removed. Cannot be stained. Cannot be lost. Cannot be tainted. This cycle of sin and judgment. Sin and judgment. Sin and judgment. Will be done. You will be righteous forever. I will seal up both vision and profit. Why? Because everything they've looked forward to will be fulfilled.

[9 : 25] They're no longer needed. Lastly, I will anoint a most holy place. Literally, a most holy one. In other words, not a place, but a person will be anointed.

Well, who is that? It's the Messiah. Messiah. The Messiah. The anointed one. You cannot read this promise. This list of six glorious promises as a Christian and miss what's being held out here for us. Can you? This is the work of Christ. These are the promises of the new covenant in his blood. This is what the gospel of Jesus Christ has purchased for all of his people.

God is laying out a plan of a much greater, much more glorious hope than a simple return from exile. This is the hope of the gospel.

You know, if you've been with us for some time and you wonder why in the world we talk about the gospel so much. And why in the world we make such a big deal about the gospel. What makes the gospel such good news?

[10:32] Well, here it is. The gospel is the good news that all of these promises that God made to Daniel are available to you can be had right now through faith in the Messiah.

Do you want to have your sins forgiven? Put your faith in Christ. Do you want everlasting righteousness that can't be messed up? Put your faith in Christ.

You receive perfect righteousness. His perfect righteousness. You want to be sure and certain that your sins are no longer counted against you, but they are paid in full? Come to Christ.

That's the gospel. These promises that God is making here are available to you now through faith in Christ. You cannot dream up a better hope than this.

Christ, the anointed one, has come and has fulfilled every word that the prophets have spoken about him. And all of these promises, all of them, are available to you right now by the grace of God to be received by faith.

[11:39] That is a glorious hope, church. And here, God holds this out for Daniel as if to say, I love you, I hear your heart, I will answer your prayers, I will fulfill my word.

Yes, I will bring you back to the promised land. But Daniel, that is not even a fraction of what I have planned for you. You want to go back to the promised land, that's fine.

But Daniel, I'm promising you a new Eden. A better Eden that you can't ruin with your sin. You want to come out of your exile, that's good. But don't forget, your true exile didn't begin in 597.

It began all the way back in Genesis chapter 3. You want freedom from your slavery? Well, guess what, Daniel? Your true slavery isn't slavery to the Babylonians.

It's slavery to sin. And your ultimate hope is not the promised land. It's the promised Messiah.

These promises, no sin, no judgment, no transgression, no more separation between God and man, everlasting righteousness.

[12:50] These are the promises of the new covenant. And again, this is where context is so helpful for us. Because you remember, last week, Treg drew this out for us.

Daniel has been reading his Bible and he's been reflecting on two passages in particular, in Jeremiah and in Deuteronomy. You remember this from last week? He had read about the 70 years in Jeremiah 25.

But it's as if God says, Keep on reading to the better promises of Jeremiah 31. I will put my law within them. I will write it on their hearts.

I will be their God. They shall be my people. No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. He had read about the blessings and the curses of the covenant in Deuteronomy chapter 29. But it's as if God says, Keep on reading to the better hope of Deuteronomy chapter 30, where it says, The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

[14:09] These are the promises of the gospel. And God says, Daniel, look there. Put your hope there. That is your ultimate hope.

But how will it happen? What's the process? This is our second point this morning. Look with me to verse 25. We'll see the process. You know, A reasonable question for Daniel might have been, When?

When? And Gabriel, amazingly, he answers that question, doesn't he? Except he doesn't say, Next Thursday at 12 o'clock. What does he say? He says, Seventy sevens.

Seventy sevens. What in the world are we talking about here? Seventy sevens. Well, we're not told what these sevens are. In our translation, the ESV, it says 70 weeks.

But again, what it literally says there is 77s. We are not told if these are sevens of years, or months, or days, or weeks, or if they're more theologically oriented than chronologically oriented.

[15:14] It is really not clear. All I know is I don't talk this way. And when somebody asks me what time our service starts, I don't measure in sevens. I don't say 10 sevens, 11 sevens.

It's just not how we speak. But clearly, what we could say is, is these 77s, whatever they are, they're divided into three blocks of time.

Seven, 62, and one. Verse 25, it says literally, it says, from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until the coming of Messiah Prince, there will be seven sevens and 62 sevens.

The first seven, it seems to be exactly what Daniel was praying for. A word was going to be sent forth to rebuild Jerusalem.

This is good news for Daniel. This is what he's been hoping in. And we see, again, as we look back in the pages of history, if we look back to 2 Chronicles chapter 36, that's exactly what happened.

[16:21] Cyrus makes a decree in 539, 538 B.C. to go, again, begin this rebuilding effort in Jerusalem. Now, I believe that Cyrus' decree is both the end of Jeremiah's 70 years and the beginning of Daniel's 77s.

And again, this would be a huge relief for Daniel, wouldn't it? The city and the temple and with it, everything that he had hoped for and longed for was about to be rebuilt, even though, of course, he says it would be in a troubled time.

And we see that story told for us in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But again, that's not where the story ends, is it? The Bible doesn't end with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The city and the temple will be rebuilt and it will remain for 62 more sevens. But, that temple and that city aren't the end of the story.

They aren't the point of the story. What's the point? All of this is leading us forwards, pointing us forwards to what will happen after those 62.

[17:37] What's going to happen? The Messiah will come. The Messiah will come. God is orienting Daniel towards the coming of this promised Messiah.

And what will he do when he comes? He will purchase all of these glorious covenant promises in verse 24. For all of his people. 69 sevens until the coming of the anointed Messiah.

And that is the point. So God says, look there. Pay attention here. Look to these promises. This is where your attention needs to be. Seven sevens to get you back to the land.

Then 62 more sevens until Messiah. That's where your focus needs to be. Like a kid on the way to a theme park on a road trip. He ought to be asking, well, are we there yet?

Are we there yet? Are we there yet? When will Messiah come? How long are 69 sevens? And here, here we have to decide whether we understand these chronologically or theologically.

[18:43] In other words, are all these sevens meant to tell Daniel when he's coming exactly or what he's accomplishing exactly. And cards on the table, okay, I believe that it is the latter.

Some, who I love and respect, take this to mean years. And they understand these sevens to be expressing a precise time in years.

And so, seven sevens is 49 years and 62 sevens is 434 years and altogether, 70 sevens is 490 calendar years.

But there's several reasons why I don't think that that's the best way to understand this. For one, again, there's nothing in the text to make me think we have to understand it that way.

Seven sevens is what it says. It doesn't say seven sevens of years. On top of that, there really aren't any great calculations that get us from a proclamation to build Jerusalem and then to the Messiah in 483 years, although some get close but not exact and you do have to do some gymnastics to get there.

[19:57] But the biggest problem for me is what in the world do you do with that last seven?

Because you and I both know it's been a little bit more than seven years since Jesus walked the earth, hasn't it?

Going on almost 2,000 years now, in fact. Here's where in the name of literal interpretation, my friends, who again, I respect and love, they say, well, there must be a gap between the 69th and the 70th seven and that's a gap that's lasted for almost 2,000 years now and it's a gap that as hard as I look, I just, it's nowhere to be found in this passage.

So all of this leads me to think that there is theological weight to these 70-7s.

So what is it? Well, we hear, we hear seven and almost automatically, immediately, our mind should think of perfection and completion and Sabbath rest, right?

But there's one more place in particular that I want us to look and if you turn there, it's fine, you can turn there, you can write it down to flip there later but I want you to turn to the book of Leviticus and this is why you don't skip Leviticus in your annual reading plan.

[21 : 16] I know that's the widow maker of our annual Bible reading plans but really, there's some good stuff. Leviticus chapter 25 and I'm just going to focus here on verses 8 through 12. Leviticus 25, 8 through 12.

This chapter is about the jubilee year in Israel.

Once they were to enter the promised land, they were told to count, listen to this, seven weeks of years. Seven times seven years.

So that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you 49 years and then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month.

On the day of atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land and you shall consecrate that fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.

[22 : 15] It shall be a jubilee for you when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you.

In it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines for it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.

Now think about this with me. That would be a glorious celebration, wouldn't it? 49 years of anticipation and then the trumpet sounds. The slaves are freed.

The land is renewed. The curse is peeled back. Daniel is looking at 77s. These 77s are 10 times that great jubilee celebration.

10 being a number of perfect completion. In other words, what God has planned with these 77s is the ultimate jubilee.

[23 : 15] The ultimate Sabbath rest. The ultimate deliverance from exile when the Messiah comes in to bring in all the promises of the new covenant.

In other words, church, we are in the final seven. The Messiah has come, has inaugurated the kingdom of God.

We belong to it in Christ and so now we await its final consummation at the sound of the final trumpet blast. The jubilee of jubilees at the return of Christ.

There's much more to be said there than we have time to say it. Let's move on. How will these promises be secured? How will these promises be secured?

What will it cost? Let's look there to verses 26 and 27 and here we see the price that will be paid to secure this covenant.

[24 : 18] Gabriel says within this final seven which again began with the arrival of Christ he says two key events will happen.

Two key events will happen. Look there with me to verses 26 and 27 and it's my understanding that these two verses they run parallel to each other.

This is key for our understanding this passage. This will really help us get what's happening. It's not A, B, C, D it's A, B, A, B okay? It's not 1, 2, 3, 4 it's 1, 2 generally and then 1, 2 a little bit more specifically.

This is classic Hebrew parallelism. Verse 26 is a little bit more general verse 27 is a little bit more specific but they are speaking about the same thing.

So let's look two key events what are they? They are the death of the Messiah and the end of the temple. The death of the Messiah and the end of the temple.

[25 : 20] So let me read them again look there with me to verse 26. He says after the 62 weeks an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.

Death of the Messiah 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 end of the temple. That's the general picture. Get more specific verse 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 an offering death of the Messiah and on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator end of the temple.

First event after 62 weeks God says this Messiah prince will be cut off and have nothing.

This is shocking language. The Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. The language here is describing a brutal death.

[26 : 33] This is the death of a lawbreaker. This is death penalty language but interestingly enough it's the same language that's used to make or to cut a covenant.

In other words all of these promises of verse 24 forgiveness of sin everlasting righteousness these covenant blessings are given freely to God's people but they cost something infinitely precious.

They are secured by the cutting off the death of the Messiah to come. The Messiah is the one who shall make a strong covenant with many by his death.

Just as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53 verse 8 what does he say? He was cut off out of the land of the living stricken for the transgression of my people.

His death wasn't a defeat for the Messiah was it? Far from it. It's through this death that he secures or makes certain or makes strong a covenant for many.

[27 : 45] Isaiah 53 again verse 11 out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied by his knowledge shall he the righteous one my servant make the many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities.

God has been promising Daniel this new covenant and he reminds Daniel this is your hope but how will it be accomplished? At great cost.

What does Jesus himself say as he pours the wine into the cup and passes it from disciple to disciple to disciple what does he say? This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins in order to secure the covenant everlasting righteousness true sabbath rest atonement for sins God himself will pay the price and the son of God will be cut off for many and in doing so look what happens look what happens the Messiah will put an end to sacrifice and offering can you imagine Daniel trying to understand all of this and trying to wrap his mind around all of this Daniel is a faithful Jew he's built his whole life around this sacrificial system this system of law and sacrifice his whole life has been oriented towards the temple and temple worship and getting back to the land he couldn't wait to get back to the land and get back to the temple and now

God reminds him Daniel there's an even better hope than that ahead of you the fulfillment of the temple the fulfillment of the sacrifices the fulfillment of the offerings that's coming in the Messiah Daniel might ask well what does that mean for the temple what does that mean for the sacrifices and here's the answer it means they are null and void the death of Jesus Christ the anointed Messiah is the end of God honoring sacrifice it is the end of God honoring temple worship why because the ultimate purpose of the temple has been fulfilled the ultimate purpose of this whole system of sacrifice and offering was to point forward towards him and now that he's come all of these shadows and pointers can go away their purpose is finished he has offered himself as a perfect sacrifice once and for all we don't need any more sacrifice praise

God he is the true temple we don't ever need to have another temple again praise God in fact now that the Messiah has come any idea of returning going back returning to temple worship and sacrifices is an idolatrous abomination in the sight of God there is a new covenant to enjoy when this Messiah was cut off you remember what happened in the temple the curtain of the temple was torn in two which means now you and I and anyone else Jew or Gentile alike are welcomed into the presence of God by the blood of his eternal covenant all of this of course would have been a lot for Daniel to process it's a lot for us to process this morning but to sear that truth into

[31 : 54] Daniel's mind God shows him a second event this temple and this city that you can't wait to get back to will once more be destroyed and as we look back in the pages of history again in 80 70 sure enough Titus Vespasianus and the Romans came and completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem demolished the sanctuary and it wasn't just a passing invasion like it was with Antiochus no not one stone was left on top of the other exactly as Jesus had told his disciples in Matthew 24 forgiveness of sins full atonement everlasting righteousness church what did it cost God to purchase these covenant promises for you it cost the suffering and the death of the son of God he was cut off so that everything that he has earned might be given to his people purely by the grace of

God through faith free of charge but think about this what did it cost Daniel and his people it cost everything that they based their identity on everything that they held sacred everything that they used to put their hope in they had to let that old hope go to grab a hold of a better hope what will it cost you Christian to follow Christ it will cost you everything else you might base your identity on it will cost you everything else that you hold sacred apart from Christ it will cost you everything else

you used to put your hope in that's what it will cost I wonder what that is for you I don't know if anybody exemplified this lesson more than the apostle Paul he was the ideal Jew he had it all going he had reason to boast in the flesh it was Paul but what does he say in the book of Philippians circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrews as to the law of Pharisee as to zeal a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law blameless but when he came to know the Lord what happened he left it all behind to grab hold of a better hope whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord church there is no greater hope than Jesus Christ there is no greater joy than knowing him there is no greater freedom than knowing that your sins have been paid in full and that you have received by the grace of God the everlasting righteousness of Christ to know I am forgiven he has come he has died in my place and not only this he has risen and he is coming again to usher in our ultimate hope and I will enjoy him forever there is no greater hope than the hope of the gospel is this your hope is this your hope God has promised this God has purchased this for you at great cost church do not settle for anything less let's pray Lord there is no greater hope than the hope of the gospel and I praise you we praise you father for these glorious promises that you have made no more sin no more transgression no more no more idolatry in our heart perfect righteousness full atonement for our sin peace with God through the blood of your son father we praise you for this if there are any here joining us this morning who don't know the Lord we pray you would change that right now and draw them to faith in Christ and father for this place with our hearts filled with thankfulness for who you are and what you have done we pray in Jesus name amen