

Israel's Future, Part 3

Scripture: Daniel 9:26–27

Code: 27-26

INTRODUCTION

Israel remains at the center stage of redemptive history. Despite the many issues facing modern society our focus is constantly drawn to the Middle East and the nation of Israel--a country smaller than the state of New Jersey. Yet despite its importance, when a well-known Bible teacher was asked about the significance of the modern state of Israel not long ago, he replied, "It has utterly no significance at all because God is finished with Israel as of the crucifixion of their Messiah. "

The Bible, however, clearly affirms that God is not through with Israel.

A. God Has Promised Israel a Future

1. 1 Samuel 12:22--"The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake. " God will not forsake the Jewish people because His reputation is at stake. He bound Himself to Abraham by an unbreakable covenant (cf. Gen. 15) , and He will fulfill it.

2. Psalm 89:31-37--God said of Israel, "If they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love from [them], nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness--and I will not lie to David--that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky" (NIV).

3. Psalm 94:14--"The Lord will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance" (NIV).

4. Romans 11:1--Paul asked the rhetorical question, "Hath God cast away his people?" His immediate reply was, "God forbid. " In the Greek text Paul's answer (me genoito) carries the meaning "may it never be!"--the strongest negative declaration found in the New Testament.

5. Luke 21:24--In the Olivet discourse (recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) Jesus predicted that the time of Gentile dominion over the land of Israel--though lasting from the time of Babylon--would indeed end. That reaffirmed God's promise that the Jewish people would be restored to the enjoyment of covenant blessing (cf. Ezek. 36:24-27; Amos 9:11-15).

B. God Has Planned Israel's Preservation

We live at an incredible time in history. The Jewish people have survived the melting pot of history and are regathering in their own land. They have a reason to exist: God's purposes concerning them have been fulfilled for only sixty-nine weeks and there is one week left in God's plan (Dan. 9:24).

God's plan for history is being fulfilled in our own time.

REVIEW

I. PRAYER PRECEDING THE REVELATION (v. 20)

II. THE MESSENGER OF THE REVELATION (vv. 21-23)

III. THE CONTENT OF THE REVELATION (vv. 24-25)

A. God's Purpose in History (v. 24)

B. God's Timing in History (vv. 24-25)

LESSON

C. God's Future for Israel (vv. 26-27)

"After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end of it shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. "

1. Their treatment of Christ (v. 26a)

"After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. "

a) When it occurred

That verse is saying the Messiah would be cut off after sixty-two "weeks. " Since that period immediately follows the seven weeks mentioned in Daniel 9:25, this is talking about something that happens after a sixty-nine week period. Christ was crucified shortly after that period of time ended at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Since Christ was crucified after the end of the sixty-ninth week, but not during the seventieth week, there must be one week left of the seventy determined for Israel (Dan. 9:24). Verse 27 indicates that is when a coming prince known as the Antichrist "shall confirm the covenant with many. " Since that covenant has not yet been declared and nothing occurred in the seven years following Christ's triumphal entry that explains Daniel 9:26-27, there must be a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks--they do not occur as a continuous unit of time. Such gaps are common in biblical prophecy.

b) What it entailed

(1) They rejected His Person

The Hebrew verb translated "cut off" (karath) also means "to kill" or "destroy" (cf. Gen. 9:11; Deut. 20:20; Jer. 11:19). Daniel 9:26 is saying that the Messiah would be killed.

The Jewish people who knew their Bibles should never have concluded that "the preaching of the cross is . . . foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). But most of them at the time of Christ didn't understand their Messiah was to be executed, so the cross became "a stumbling block" (v. 23). Jesus had to reprimand His own disciples for their ignorance and explain what Scripture said on the matter (Luke 24:13-27).

Karath is used a number of times in the Old Testament to describe the execution of a criminal (Lev. 7:20; Ps. 37:9; Prov. 2:22). Daniel's usage of the term implies the Messiah would die a criminal's death--a prophecy so specific, it seems incomprehensible that when Jesus was presented in triumph in precise accord with Daniel's timetable but then crucified, the Jewish people would not immediately recognize who He was. They waited for centuries for their Messiah to come and then missed Him through hate and despite. And if it is argued that Daniel 9 is somewhat obscure and easily misunderstood, one need only turn to Psalm 22 (which describes the crucifixion in detail) or Isaiah 53 (which describes the suffering and death of the Messiah) to understand that the Old Testament clearly declares the Messiah would die.

(2) They denied Him His portion

The Messiah was to die, "but not for himself" (Dan. 9:26). That's a hard phrase to interpret, but it apparently means He would die with nothing for Himself. When Jesus died on the cross He received nothing that was due Him: no honor, respect, love, or acceptance. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:10-11). Instead He received what He didn't deserve: the sins of the world.

2. Their treatment by the people of the Antichrist (v. 26b)

"The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end of it shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. "

a) The Antichrist identified

"The prince that shall come" is opposite the one identified in Daniel 9:25 as the "Messiah, the Prince." This is the Antichrist (cf. 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7), who is also called the "little horn" (Dan. 7:8), the "king of fierce countenance" (8:23), the king who does "according to his will" (11:36), and "the man of sin . . . the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3).

b) The people identified

The phrase "the people of the prince that shall come" indicates that the Antichrist will be identified with a particular people. The book of Daniel identifies four Gentile world empires that would have a great impact on Israel: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (2:31-43; 7:1-8). According to those chapters the Roman Empire will be revived again as a ten-nation confederacy during the last days. Thus the people of the prince to come will have some connection with the Romans and a revived Roman Empire.

c) The persecution inflicted

Daniel predicted those people would "destroy the city and the sanctuary" (9:26). In A. D. 70--less than forty years after our Lord was crucified--that prophecy was fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The Antichrist will reign over a revived Roman Empire that will trouble Israel in a way similar to the first Roman Empire.

Daniel predicted that "the end of it shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (9:26). Until its final persecution by the Antichrist Israel has experienced a steady stream of desolations that began with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, while the rise of the Antichrist will commence a holocaust beyond any it has previously experienced. It will be like a flood

(cf. Rev. 12:15). That final desolation is vividly prefigured by the first Roman holocaust.

(1) As foretold by Christ

Jesus warned, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let them who are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them who are in the midst of it depart; and let not them that are in the countries enter into it. For those are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that nurse children, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-24). Jesus' prophecy is focused on the same event Daniel prophesied in Daniel 9:26: the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

(2) As fulfilled in history

Writing of the Roman conquest of Judea, archeological journalist Werner Keller said, "Old Israel, whose history no longer included the words and works of Jesus, the religious community of Jerusalem, which condemned and crucified Jesus, was extinguished in an inferno which is almost unparalleled in history--the so-called 'Jewish War' of A. D. 66-70" (The Bible as History [New York: Bantam Books, 1956], pp. 442-43).

(a) The Jewish revolt

The conflict had its origin in the Jewish people's hatred for the Roman presence in Judea. They hated Jesus because He refused to overthrow the Romans. As time went on protests against the Romans became more vocal. Groups of zealots and rebels began carrying weapons, and would seek out and slay Roman soldiers at night. Success brought increasing violence and popular support from the Jewish people, and open revolt broke out in May, A. D. 66. "The Roman garrison was overrun. Jerusalem fell into the hands of the rebels. The prohibition of the daily sacrifices to the emperor meant an open declaration of war against the Roman world empire. Tiny Jerusalem threw down the gauntlet at Rome's feet and challenged the great Imperium Romanum" (Keller, p. 443).

(b) The Roman conquest

The Roman Emperor Nero gave General Titus Flavius Vespasian, a hero in the Roman conquest of Britain, the task of subduing Israel. With three distinguished Roman legions and other support, he attacked Galilee in the north and subdued that region by October, A. D. 67.

Six thousand Jews from Galilee were sent as slaves to build the Corinthian canal. One prisoner was the Jewish general Josephus, who later became a historian and to whom we owe much of our knowledge concerning the conquest of Judea by the Romans. By the spring of A. D. 68 the countryside surrounding Jerusalem had been taken, and all that remained was the taking of Jerusalem itself.

"In the midst of the fighting news came which, for the time being, halted the campaign--Nero had committed suicide. Civil war broke out in Rome. Vespasian awaited developments . . . [and soon] became master of the Roman Empire. From Caesaria on the coast of Palestine where the news reached him, he embarked without delay for Rome, leaving his son Titus to finish the last act of the Jewish War" (Keller, p. 444).

Titus began the final assault on Jerusalem in the spring of A. D. 70. He had over 100 thousand soldiers facing a city with a population of at least 200 thousand, augmented by a large number of pilgrims who were present to celebrate the Passover. The city was subjected to artillery that threw massive stones against the walls, and was surrounded by a huge mound to prevent escape. Those who tried to escape or terrorize the enemy were frequently captured and crucified--often 500 were nailed to crosses on a given day. The forests around Jerusalem were completely destroyed to supply the wood necessary for battering rams, ramps, catapults, camp fires, ladders, and the many crosses that rose outside the city.

As time went on an unbearable stench arose from the dead bodies of those who had died in battle,

from starvation, or on the crosses surrounding Jerusalem. Before the end of the siege thousands of corpses were flung over the city walls by the survivors in Jerusalem. The famine in Jerusalem was severe. Josephus wrote that the famine "devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead, wheresoever their misery seized them. As for burying them, those that were sick themselves were not able to do it; and those that were hearty and well were deterred from doing it by the great multitude of those dead bodies, and by the uncertainty there was how soon they should die themselves; for many died as they were burying others" (Wars of the Jews, V. xii. 3).

Josephus said the misery of the city was incredible: "If so much as the shadow of any kind of food did any where appear, a war was commenced presently, and the dearest friends fell a fighting one with another about it, snatching from each other the most miserable supports of life. Nor would men believe that those who were dying had no food, but the robbers would search them when they were expiring, lest any one should have concealed food in their bosoms, and counterfeited dying; nay, these robbers gaped for want, and ran about stumbling and staggering along like mad dogs, and reeling against the doors of the houses like drunken men; they would also, in the great distress they were in, rush into the very same houses two or three times in one and the same day. Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable, that it obliged them to chew every thing, while they gathered such things as the most sordid animals would not touch, and endured to eat them; nor did they at length abstain from [belts] and shoes; and the very leather which belonged to their shields they pulled off and gnawed: the very wisps of old hay became food to some. . . . But why do I describe the shameless impudence that the famine brought on men in their eating inanimate things, while I am going to relate a matter of fact, the like to which no history relates, either among the Greeks or Barbarians? It is horrible to speak of it, and incredible when heard. I had indeed willingly omitted this calamity of ours, that I might not seem to deliver what is so portentous to posterity, but that I have innumerable witnesses to it in my own age; and besides, my country would have had little reason to thank me for suppressing the miseries that she underwent at this time" (VI. iii. 3). Josephus went on to tell what that terrible occurrence was: a mother killed, roasted, and ate her own child because of her hunger! By August of A. D. 70 the Romans had penetrated the city to the Temple, where they erected their banners and made sacrifices to their gods. Murder and plundering of the city followed. Josephus records that "the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand" (VI. ix. 3).

Persecution of the Jewish people continued after the war: in a single day 10,000 Jewish people lost their lives in Damascus. Others died as gladiators in the Roman games. Daniel prophesied that devastation would come as a flood (Dan. 9:26). Keller concluded that "the inexorable hand of destiny had drawn a line through Israel's part in the concert of nations" (p. 454).

(c) The Roman legacy

The history of the Jews since the Roman holocaust has been one of continual devastation. During the first and second crusades (attempts to recover Palestine by Europeans in 1096 and 1146) the crusaders were afraid that once Palestine was retaken, European Jews would reclaim their ancestral homeland. So during the overland trip to Palestine the crusaders slaughtered every community of Jews they came across. As a result the crusades--and Christianity, which is associated with the crusades--are distasteful reminders of past persecution to Jewish people in our day.

In 1290 Edward I ordered all Jewish people out of England. In France a similar order was issued in 1236, and in one small town three thousand Jewish people were trampled by horses. In 1348-49 (during the time of the Black Death in Europe) Jewish people were accused of poisoning wells and thus causing the outbreak of the bubonic plague. To save themselves many fled to Poland and

Russia.

In more modern times the unjust accusations against Captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was Jewish, gave evidence of anti-Semitic bias. In the terrible holocaust inflicted by Hitler prior and during World War II against those he considered undesirables, over six million Jews perished.

3. Their treatment by the Antichrist (v. 27)

"He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. "

The history of the Jewish people is a chronicle of persecution and desolation. Yet it has not ended--in the midst of persecution ninety thousand Jewish people reentered Palestine in 1914. By 1948 Israel was again chartered among the community of nations. This regathering of Israel is in preparation for the final week of Israel's history as declared in Daniel 9, when the Antichrist will come and make a covenant with the nation of Israel.

Bridging the Gap

There is a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27. During that gap Christ was crucified and the Temple destroyed--a period of approximately forty years. Scripture does not indicate the length of the gap, though we do know it will last until the Antichrist comes to confirm a covenant with Israel (v. 27). Its undetermined length ought not to trouble us: many prophecies in Scripture contain such gaps.

1. Isaiah 9:6--"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder. " While that prophecy speaks both of Christ's birth and right to govern, a gap exists between the two.

2. 1 Peter 1:10-11--A great period of time exists between the first and second comings of Christ--a period unperceived by the Old Testament prophets.

3. Luke 4:18-19--In those verses Jesus quoted the portion of Isaiah 61:1-2 that applies to His first advent, but not that which applies to His return as Judge. He recognized the gap between those two appearances.

4. Ephesians 3:9--That gap is identified as the Church Age, which Paul called "the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been hidden in God. " It's a historical parenthesis within the seventy weeks determined for Israel.

If the seventy weeks of Daniel were 490 consecutive years, there would be no question when our Lord would come again. But because it was intended to be of indeterminate length our Lord said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36; cf. Acts 1:7).

a) He will be welcomed as as a hero

The Antichrist will make a treaty with Israel for seven years and will at first be a great hero to them. Even now Israel is looking for support against pressure from the Arab states in the Middle East and continues to fear the potential threat of the Soviet Union to the north.

The only hope for Israel in this situation seems to be a confederated Europe. The United States is too far removed from Israel physically and too mercurial of will to be depended on. A reliable defense for Israel would have to be based on massive power quickly mobilized--the kind represented by a confederated Europe. Daniel predicted that out of that confederation would arise a "little horn" who would be the Antichrist (Dan. 7:8) and make a treaty to protect Israel.

b) He will protect Israel for a time

Ezekiel 38 predicts that Israel will feel so secure because of its protection by the Antichrist that her villages will be unwall--unprepared for war. Armies from the area occupied by the Soviet Union will descend to conquer Israel (vv. 1-12). But the Antichrist will prove to be a liar and his peace false. Daniel 9:27 says that "in the midst of the week [the seven-year period] he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. " For that to happen a Temple will have to exist in Jerusalem--the place where sacrifice and oblation would occur. I believe the Antichrist will assist the Jewish people in reestablishing their Temple. Their awe of his willingness and ability to do so may be why they sign a treaty with him.

Revelation 6:2 says the Antichrist will have a bow and will go forth "conquering, and to conquer. " He has a bow--but no arrows. That may indicate he will conquer more by statesmanship than force. He will have "a mouth speaking great things" (Dan. 7:8) , yet with an intimidating force at his back. He will be able to negotiate the right things for Israel: security, a temple, and the right to worship.

c) He will turn against Israel

The middle of the Antichrist's seven-year covenant with Israel marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The Antichrist will break the covenant and cause "the overspreading of abominations . . . [and] shall make [the Temple] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27). That future desolation was previewed in history by the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the Temple by slaughtering a pig on the altar and forcing the priests to eat pork. That brought on the Maccabean revolt (168-165 B. C.). But that was only a small sample of what the Antichrist will do, for he will bring "the overspreading of abominations. "

d) He will desecrate the Jewish Temple

Idolatry is an abomination, and Scripture reveals that the Antichrist will desecrate the Temple by setting up an idol of himself there.

(1) Revelation 13:4-15--"They worshiped the dragon [Satan] who gave power unto the beast [the Antichrist]; and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation]. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell on earth shall worship him. . . . And he hath power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. "

(2) 2 Thessalonians 2:4--The Antichrist will exalt "himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. "

(3) Revelation 17:16--The Antichrist "shall hate the harlot [the apostate church], and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. " The Antichrist will allow the

apostate church to exist alongside Israel for the first half of the tribulation, but at the beginning of the second half he will destroy it and begin persecuting Israel. Because he will--in Roman fashion--set himself up as a deity, there will be no religion left but the worship of the Antichrist. That will continue "until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27).

CONCLUSION

As bleak a picture as that is, history will not end with the worship of the Antichrist. Daniel 9:24 says that at the end of Israel's seventieth week God will "finish the transgression, and . . . make an end of sins. " That includes the destruction of the Antichrist. Then God will "make reconciliation for iniquity,. . . bring in everlasting righteousness, . . . seal up the vision and prophecy, and . . . anoint the most holy" (v. 24). That speaks of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:3).

It's an amazing thought that the future history of the world has been hidden "from the wise and prudent, . . . [yet] revealed . . . unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). We ought to be deeply grateful that God has given us the privilege of knowing His plans for the future.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Show how the Bible affirms that God is not through with Israel.
2. According to Daniel 9:26, what historic event happened after the sixty-ninth week of Daniel 9?
3. Why do we understand that there must be a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel 9?
4. What does the Hebrew verb karath in Daniel 9:26 tell us would happen to the Messiah?
5. What couldn't the Jewish people at the time of Christ understand about their Messiah? What did the cross therefore become for many of them (1 Cor. 1:23)?
6. What three Old Testament texts tell us the Messiah would die?
7. When Jesus died on the cross, what didn't He receive? What did He receive instead?
8. Identify "the prince that shall come" (Dan. 9:26).
9. What people will "the prince that shall come" (Dan. 9:26) be identified with?
10. What event does Jesus' prophecy in Luke 21:20-24 and Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9:26 focus on?

11. What caused the conflict between the Jews and Romans in A. D. 66-70?
12. Describe the course of the Jewish war with the Romans. What hardships did the inhabitants of Jerusalem endure? What was the final result of the war?
13. Why are the crusades distasteful reminders of past persecution to Jewish people in our day?
14. What is the present regathering of Israel in preparation for?
15. Explain the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27. Describe other such gaps reflected in Scripture.
16. What may lead the Jewish people to sign a treaty with the Antichrist?
17. What historical figure previewed the desolation that will be caused by the Antichrist?
18. How will the Antichrist desecrate the Temple during the Great Tribulation?

Pondering the Principles

1. Psalm 111 recalls God's great works. Verse 9 says, "He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever" (NIV). God made a covenant with Israel that can't be broken--when God says He will do something, He does it! Paul echoes that thought in Romans 8:38-39: "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus" (NIV). Nothing can thwart the promises of God or His faithfulness to them. Take time now to praise God for His sovereign power to fulfill all His promises.
2. God's plan for history may seem like one of those stories that ends with the familiar phrase, "And they lived happily ever after." As terrible as the tribulation will be, the rebellion of man against God under the Antichrist will be climaxed by "an end of sins" that establishes "everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24). With that kind of outcome, Christians ought to live lives that demonstrate an established hope and trust in God for the future--the kind described in Edward Mote's hymn "The Solid Rock":

My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

How does your life demonstrate what you're hoping for and trusting in?

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