**Read Daniel 9:20-27**

1. How was the sermon convicting, challenging, or comforting?

2. As God's representative, what is Gabriel's response to Daniel's heartfelt confession and plea for mercy? How does this shape you view of God grace?

3. Gabriel says in verse 23 that because Daniel is greatly loved he should consider the word and understand the vision. Why is it loving for God to teach us about the future?

4. Challenge. In verse 24, Gabriel states 6 things that are decreed about the seventy weeks regarding God's people and their holy city. What are they and what do you think they could refer to in terms of fulfillment? How does their fulfillment give you hope?

5. Verse 26 speaks of an anointed one who "shall be cut off and shall have nothing". Who do you think this refers to Biblically and why is that significant to the passage?

6. Using Bible helps, research some of the interpretations of what the seventy weeks, seven weeks, sixty two weeks, one week and half a week could mean? (See ESV study bible notes on next page)

7. Knowing that desolations are decreed is a dreadful thing. What hope do all Christians have regarding such growing darkness and how does that encourage you today?

**Prayer Focus:** Let's pray that we would grow in our trust of Christ's atonement and everlasting righteousness.

**9:24–27** There are many suggested interpretations of the seventy weeks (or “seventy sevens,” see ESV footnote), but there are three main views: (1) the passage refers to events surrounding Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.); (2) the 70 sevens are to be understood figuratively; and (3) the passage refers to events around the time of Christ. Most scholars understand the 70 “sevens” to be made up of 70 times seven years, or 490 years, but they apply these years to different periods of time. (See chart.) In any case, the important point is that God has appointed the amount of time, and thus his people should not lose heart.

(1) Those who hold the first view often understand the word to restore and build Jerusalem (v. 25) to allude to Jeremiah’s prophecy of the “seventy years of captivity” (Jer. 25:1, 11), which began in 605 B.C. (or some start at 586, when the Babylonians destroyed the temple) and extended to the cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabeus (164) or the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (164). These solutions give only an approximate fulfillment for the “seventy weeks” (since 490 years after 605 is 115 B.C., and 490 years after 586 is 96 B.C.). An objection to this view is that it is hard to see how the events around Antiochus IV could fulfill the purpose for the “seventy weeks” (such as, “to finish the transgression,” to make “an end to sin,” “to bring in everlasting righteousness”).

(2) Scholars who hold the second view believe the 490 years (7 + 62 + 1, each multiplied by seven years) to be symbolic periods of time ending in the first century A.D. Support for finding symbolism here comes from the mention of “seventy” in Dan. 9:2, and the connection of “seven” to the weekly Sabbath (Lev. 23:3), to the Feast of Weeks (Lev. 23:11–16, “seven weeks”), to the sabbatical year (Lev. 25:3–4, connected to discipline of the people in Lev. 26:34–35; 2 Chron. 36:21), and to the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:8, “seven weeks/Sabbaths of years”). These numbers can therefore imply God’s perfect appointment of time. One approach for this second view is simply to say that 70 × 7 symbolizes the ultimate in completeness, and no further specificity is implied. Another approach is to see three broad periods, with the first period of seven sevens extending from Cyrus’s decree allowing the Jews to return and build the temple (538 B.C.) to about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century (c. 458–433). Then the 62 weeks extends from about 400 B.C. to the advent of Christ. The last “seven” goes from the first advent of Christ to sometime after his death, but before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. An argument against this view is that the enumeration of 7 + 62 + 1 weeks seems to be intended to give a much more precise chronology rather than just a sequence of three periods of history. In addition, the purposes for the 70 weeks do not appear to be fulfilled in A.D. 70 (“to finish transgression,” “to put an end to sin,” and “to bring in everlasting righteousness”). Some interpreters who hold a symbolic view have suggested it refers to periods of time ending with Christ’s second coming, which would answer this last objection.

(3) The third view sees the “seventy sevens” as a literal period of 490 years, culminating around the time of Christ. But what starting date can be used for this? (a) The starting date for this period of time is not likely to be 538 B.C., when Cyrus gave permission for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:2–4), for that was not a decree to build the city, and 490 years from 538 yields 48 B.C., a date of no great significance. (b) One reasonable possibility is the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:12–26, which occurred in 458 B.C. (see note on Ezra 7:6–7). Though this decree still has much to do with provisions for the temple, it makes provision for “magistrates and judges” (Ezra 7:25) and thus assumes rebuilding of a city would take place. And 490 years after 458 B.C. is exactly A.D. 33, the most likely date of the crucifixion of Christ. (See article on The Date of Jesus’ Crucifixion.) (458 + 33 = 491, but one year must be subtracted since there was no year 0, so from 458 B.C. to A.D. 33 is exactly 490 years, or “seventy sevens.”) This calculation also fits Dan. 9:24, for Christ’s death accomplished the things mentioned there as what would be done in the 70 weeks: “to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Possibly a better understanding of this interpretation is that the 7 + 62 = 69 weeks in v. 25 brings us to A.D. 26, and some NT scholars think that Jesus began his ministry in A.D. 26 and died in 30. But v. 26 simply says, “After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing,” and in this interpretation Jesus’ death did occur shortly after the 62 weeks. (This understanding of the verse allows for Jesus’ death in either A.D. 30 or 33.) (c) A third possibility for the start of the 490 years is 445 B.C., when Artaxerxes gave letters to Nehemiah authorizing him to rebuild the wall and to build a home in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:5–8; cf. Neh. 2:1 for the date, 13 years after Ezra 7:7). But 490 years after 445 B.C. gives A.D. 46, a date well beyond the crucifixion of Christ. An alternative to this view is to see Christ’s death occurring in the sixty-ninth week, which would be A.D. 39, but that is still too late. However, some interpreters argue that a “year” in this prophecy should be calculated at 12 months × 30 days = 360 days (cf. Dan. 12:7, 11; Rev. 11:2; 12:6). On that basis, 69 “weeks” of such years equals 483 years of 360 days, and that comes out to A.D. 32 or 33, depending on whether Artaxerxes’ letter in Neh. 2:5–8 is dated 445 or 444 B.C. It is difficult to decide among these alternatives.

An additional question is whether Daniel’s prophecy allows for a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Dispensational interpreters understand Dan. 9:26 to allow for the entire church age, and v. 27 to describe the seventieth week, which includes the seven-year great tribulation and the appearance of the Antichrist. Dispensationalists argue that Daniel’s vision appears to be dealing primarily with the events regarding the nation of Israel, not the Gentiles. Other interpreters have thought that no such gap is implied by Daniel’s words.

There are many difficulties in deciding between these interpretations, which also involve questions of the proper approach to interpreting biblical prophecy. In all of this it is crucial not to miss Daniel’s message for his audience, namely, that God has allotted the amount of time for these events, and therefore his people should trust and endure.