

“Countdown to Redemption”
(Daniel 9:24-27)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We’ve seen that the Babylonian Exile was a time of preparation for the coming of the Messiah:
 - a. The Lord used it to strip the idols away from His people and turn them back to the true worship of God so that witness would be there to prepare them for Christ.
 - b. He removed what remained of the glory of the Old Covenant to make way for the New: the line of David, the Temple, the Ark of the Covenant and the Two Tables of stone, the Urim and Thummim, and the fire of God.
 - c. And He dispersed His people throughout the world, strategically placing them so that He might prepare the nations to receive His Son, not only through the Scriptures they carried, but through the line of communication this would create from Palestine to the remotest parts of the Roman Empire. When Jesus came, whatever He did, or whatever was done to Him, would quickly become known everywhere.
2. Let’s not forget what this means for us.
 - a. The Lord would have us remove the worthless and offensive things of the world from our lives so that we can serve Him more earnestly.
 - (i) As long as we are tied to the world, the Lord won’t be able to use us.
 - (ii) But if we purge our lives of the things that quench, grieve and offend the Holy Spirit and use the means that encourage His work in our hearts, we will be spiritually strong and capable of carrying out His plan.
 - (iii) If we don’t remove them, the Lord will remove them from us.
 - b. It means that the Lord has made us part of a glorious New Covenant with the precious blessings of forgiveness and heaven.
 - (i) What could be more valuable than this?
 - (ii) The Lord doesn’t ask us to serve Him for nothing: He has given us a priceless gift to move our hearts.
 - c. Finally, it reminds us that we should be working to get His Gospel out.
 - (i) It’s His intention that the Gospel reach all the nations.
 - (ii) There are still many countries – our own included – that need to hear it; so let’s do what we can to help in that work.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, we see our Lord continue to prepare for His coming during the Exile.
 - a. First, in the appearances He made in His preincarnate state.

- b. And second, in the prophecies He gave regarding His coming.
- 2. Let's look at one of these appearances and one of these prophecies to see something of what He was showing them.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider one of Christ's appearances before He was born into the world that shows us something of what He was coming to do: namely, to redeem us.
 - 1. Daniel, as you know, was one of the prophets of the Babylonian Exile.
 - a. While he was still a youth, he was taken from Jerusalem in the first captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, and he lived through the seventy year exile in Babylon.
 - b. We know that he lived through at least one of the political revolutions we saw earlier, since when he died, the dominant world power was Persia.
 - c. Daniel lived to experience quite a number of things:
 - (i) He was one of the youths Nebuchadnezzar chose to serve in his court.
 - (ii) He was the one the Lord used to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statute and the great tree.
 - (iii) He was the one who interpreted the message written on the wall by the hand that appeared seemingly out of nowhere.
 - (iv) He was the one the Lord preserved through a night in the lion's den because he wouldn't compromise his duty in prayer to God.
 - (v) He was the one the Lord gave visions regarding the future four kingdoms.
 - (vi) And he was the one to whom the Lord revealed when His Son would come.
 - (vii) The Lord chose to use Daniel; but he was chosen for these purposes because he was useable: we should be encouraged and exhorted by this example to make ourselves as useable to the Lord as possible.
 - 2. Besides these things, Daniel also recorded an appearance of Christ.
 - a. After Nebuchadnezzar had his dream of that great statute made of four metals – himself being the head of gold – he decided to build a golden image.
 - (i) We don't know exactly what image he used, but it was very likely an image of Nebuchadnezzar himself.
 - (ii) We know this idol was large – about 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide.
 - (iii) We know why he built it – so that everyone in his kingdom would worship it – anyone who refused would have to face a horrible death, being burned alive in a furnace.
 - (iv) And we know that there were only three (apparently Daniel was not among those present at this time), who refused to bow down to this idol: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.
 - (a) These were the three Jewish youths who were taken to Babylon at the same time as Daniel.
 - (b) They were the only ones not willing to compromise their obedience in order to save their lives, as Daniel later also would not be when he was thrown into the lions' den.

- (c) What a wonderful example of a life without compromise: it's those who remain steadfast and honor the Lord that the Lord Himself will honor, as we'll see.
- (v) The fact that they refused to worship this idol angered the king, especially since he had extended to them two opportunities.
 - (a) And so he had the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. It was so hot that the guards who threw them in were killed instantly when they approached it.
 - (b) But after the three were cast in, not only were they unharmed in the furnace, a fourth Person had joined them.
 - (c) Nebuchadnezzar said, "Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!" (Dan. 3:25).
 - (d) This fourth man could have been an angel sent to protect them; but it was more likely the Angel of the Lord – an appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ before He became a man.
 - (e) This is very likely the case, especially when we consider what this One in the furnace had come to do: to rescue three of His children from the king's wrath.
- b. What a marvelous picture this is of what Jesus Christ came to do for us.
 - (i) First, this shows us that He is with us when we go through trials, especially when those trials come as the result of serving Him.
 - (a) When we stand up for Him by His grace, He stands up for us – to protect and defend us.
 - (b) We are never alone when we do what's right and suffer for it: the Great Shepherd is with us watching over our souls.
 - (ii) Second, it's a picture of what He came to do: to redeem us.
 - (a) Because we had sinned against the King of Heaven by turning from Him to idols, we were condemned to the fiery furnace of His wrath – to hell – just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were condemned by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - (b) But Christ came to deliver us from the fiery furnace, just as He had delivered them, but our deliverance was much greater.
 - (1) Nebuchadnezzar's furnace was merely a fire that could burn the body for a short time.
 - (2) God's furnace is a much more excruciating fire that burns both soul and body forever.
 - (3) This is what Christ endured for us – in our place – when He took to Himself our guilt and suffered in our place on the cross.
 - (d) This is what Christ went through for you this morning, if you are trusting in Him. He has delivered you from the fire of God's wrath.

- (e) But this is what you will suffer for eternity if you refuse His free gift of grace and mercy – not just for your refusal, but for all of your sins.
- (f) Don't leave here this morning without trusting Christ to save you.

B. Second, let's consider one of the most remarkable prophecies regarding when He would come to go through this furnace of God's wrath to redeem us.

1. This is the "countdown" to His arrival: the seventy weeks of Daniel.
 - a. Later in Daniel's life, when he realized that the seventy years of captivity was just about over, he set his heart to seek the Lord (9:1-3).
 - b. In response, the Lord sent Gabriel with a message, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. 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 and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 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. 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" (Dan. 9:24-27).
 - c. In this passage, we see several things:
 - (i) A time frame of 70 weeks (v. 24).
 - (ii) When the weeks begin: with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25).
 - (iii) When Messiah comes: after the 69th week (v. 25).
 - (iv) What will happen in the middle of the 70th week: Messiah will be cut off (vv. 26-27).
 - (v) And what takes place following the 70 weeks: the Temple is destroyed (vv. 26-27).
 - d. We're not going to look at everything in this text, since we'll be examining it in the near future in our Sunday School, but we do want to see that this prophecy predicts the exact year Messiah would come.
 - (i) The seventy weeks are 70 sets of seven years (490 years), which begin with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem; 69 weeks – or 483 years – later, Messiah would come.
 - (ii) In 457 BC, Artaxerxes issued a decree allowing Ezra to return to reestablish Israel's national polity and law, which paved the way for Nehemiah to return in 445 to rebuild the walls.
 - (iii) 483 years after that decree (ca. 26 AD), Jesus began His ministry.
 - (a) He was born in about 3 BC.

- (b) He began His ministry when he was about 30 years of age: ca. 26-7 AD. When He did, He said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).
 - (c) His earthly ministry lasted about 3 and a half years, then He was crucified about 30 AD, in the middle of the 70th week.
2. The appearance of Christ in the fiery furnace shows us what Christ came to do; the prophecy of the 70 weeks tells us when He would do it.
 - a. In the middle of the 70th week, He would establish a covenant that would put an end to the sacrifice and grain offering of the Old Covenant, at least with regard to its efficacy.
 - b. This was when He descended into the fiery furnace on the cross, suffering God’s full wrath for us, providing a sacrifice that made all the animal sacrifices obsolete.
 - c. This was signified by the tearing of the veil – when He yielded up His spirit, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom, showing the Old Covenant Ceremonial system had been fulfilled and was now set aside.
 - d. This was the day we were saved, and it was predicted at least 486 years before it happened.

III. Application.

- A. The fact that the Lord revealed these things some 490 years before the events took place, again gives us evidence – really it proves – that the Bible is God’s Word.
 1. Only God can tell us what will happen in the future; He told us what would happen in the Bible and it came to pass just as He said; therefore the Bible must be His Word.
 2. Because it is, you must believe it, and you must trust and submit to what it tells you if you are to be safe.
- B. What it tells you is that Christ came to suffer God’s wrath for those who would trust Him.
 1. It also tells you that to receive this free gift of salvation from hell, there’s something you must do: you must trust the Lord to save you and then follow Him for the rest of your life.
 2. Have you heard what He says to you and have you trusted in Jesus to save you? If not, do so now; otherwise, you are not safe.
 3. This evening, we’ll look at more reasons why you should trust in Jesus and follow Him, so do try to make it back. Let’s pray.