

“Why We Believe in an Optimistic Future, Part 3”
(Daniel 9:24-27; vv. 1-27)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation. So far we’ve seen two reasons to be optimistic about the future:

1. First, that Jesus is now reigning.
 - a. His reign isn’t going to begin in the future
 - b. When He comes the second time,
 - c. His reign began after He died, was raised,
 - d. And ascended into heaven.
 - e. That was His coronation day.
 - f. He is right now in complete control
 - g. Of everything that happens in this world.
2. It comes second from the promise the Father made Him: “Sit at My right hand until I make all your enemies a footstool for your feet.”
 - a. The Father has promised to subdue
 - (i) Every one of Jesus’ enemies under His feet
 - (ii) Before He returns.
 - b. He bound Satan at His first coming,
 - (i) So that He could plunder his house,
 - (ii) And that’s what He’s been doing
 - (iii) For the past almost 2000 years.
 - c. Since the last enemy – which is death –
 - (i) Will be defeated at His Second Coming –
 - (ii) When He comes to raise the dead –
 - (iii) All the others will be subdued before He comes again.
 - d. That should make a significant impact on this world –
 - (i) The Bible tells us that it will.
 - (ii) This should make us optimistic.

B. Preview.

1. But with all this, there are still those who would disagree –
 - a. Not that we can be optimistic about the distant future.
 - (i) Thankfully, every Christian is optimistic about that.
 - (ii) We all believe Jesus wins in the end,
 - (iii) The New Heavens and Earth will come,
 - (iv) And we will be blessed forever with our Lord Jesus
 - (v) In that newly recreated paradise.
 - b. The disagreement has more to do

- (i) With what we can expect on this earth
 - (ii) Before Jesus returns.
- c. How can the subduing of His enemies
 - (i) Bring in a glorious change in this world
 - (ii) If there are things that stand in the way?
- d. What do they believe is standing in the way? Two things:
 - (i) The Bible seems to indicate that there are some very serious troubles ahead for the church and the world.
 - (ii) It also seems to indicate that Jesus can return for His church at any time.
- e. How can we expect the church
 - (i) To experience a “golden age”
 - (ii) If either of these is true?
- 2. Let’s begin by considering the first:
 - a. How we expect a golden age,
 - b. When the Bible seems to indicate
 - c. That there are serious troubles ahead for the church and the world?
 - d. Let’s consider:
 - (i) First, what passages seem to indicate difficult times are ahead for us.
 - (ii) But second, why these warnings don’t rule out a golden age.

II. Sermon.

A. First, there are certain passages that tell us we should expect tribulation

1. Simply because we are followers of Christ.

- a. “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me” (John 15:18-21).
- b. “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:10-12).
- c. “Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:10-12).

- d. “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

2. How can we reconcile these with a golden age?

- a. This last verse gives us the key:
 - (i) This has been true and will continue to be true
 - (a) As long as the Kingdom of Darkness
 - (b) Exerts as much power as it does in the world.
 - (ii) But let’s not forget that Jesus has overcome the world –
 - (a) He defeated the devil on the cross,
 - (b) And is plundering His house.
 - (iii) As the kingdom of heaven advances,
 - (a) As it fills the earth,
 - (b) As His enemies are systematically defeated,
 - (c) The persecution should decline.
- b. Yes, there was persecution ahead of them
 - (i) And there still is ahead of us,
 - (a) But that doesn’t mean the situation couldn’t radically change
 - (b) And there could be worldwide peace.
 - (ii) The Lord could bring this overnight, if that’s what He wanted to do.
 - (iii) There’s no lack of power on His part,
 - (iv) There’s just the question of what He’s planned.
- c. But the point is,
 - (i) The fact that there must be persecution
 - (ii) During the present time the kingdom of darkness
 - (iii) Has a greater grip on the world,
 - (iv) Is no argument that as the kingdom of God advances
 - (v) That things could not radically change.

B. But of course there is another group of passages

- 1. That seems to indicate that terrible times are ahead
 - a. For us and for the world:
 - b. Passages such as Daniel 9, the Olivet Discourse,
 - c. And the Book of Revelation.
- 2. As much as I’d like to try to cover
 - a. All of these in one sitting,
 - b. It’s just too much,
 - c. So let’s focus our remaining time
 - d. On just the first: Daniel 9:24-27.

3. There's two things we need to consider at the outset:
 - a. It's not so much the 70 weeks in general that present a problem,
But the 70th week in particular.
 - b. And this 70th week
 - (i) Doesn't so much present a problem
 - (ii) To the Amillennialist or the Postmillennialist,
 - (iii) But it does to the Dispensationalist.
 - (iv) Since we're all affected by Dispensationalism
 - (a) To one degree or another,
 - (b) Let's take a look at this passage.
4. Dispensationalism teaches regarding the 70 weeks of Daniel (9:24-27).
 - a. That Jesus will come before the 1000 year millennium (Premillennialism),
 - (i) And that when He does,
 - (ii) He will set up a Jewish kingdom on earth.
 - b. But before that happens,
 - (i) He will return seven years earlier
 - (ii) To rapture His church out of this world,
 - (iii) And to begin the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy –
 - (iv) A seven year period of severe tribulation for the world.
 - c. They believe this is what Jesus was also describing
 - (i) In the Olivet Discourse,
 - (ii) And the Book of Revelation.
 - (iii) Actually, this is partly true –
 - (iv) As we'll see –
 - (v) Only it isn't referring to the future,
 - (vi) But to the past.
 - d. Now, if Dispensationalism is right,
 - (i) There are perilous times ahead for the church,
 - (ii) And therefore not a great deal of optimism.
 - e. What I want us to consider is that
 - (i) These things have already happened
 - (ii) And so they don't present any obstacle
 - (iii) To a glorious future.
5. Let's consider the 70 weeks of Daniel from another perspective.
 - a. When Daniel, in Babylon, realized the 70 years of Jeremiah were fulfilled,
 - (i) And that the time of Jerusalem's desolation was over,
 - (ii) He began to seek the Lord
 - (iii) To know when He would restore Jerusalem.

- b. The Lord answered by sending Gabriel
 - (i) Who revealed that the Lord had a plan
 - (ii) He would enact over a period of 70 weeks.
- c. These weeks we understand to be weeks of years –
 - (i) One week being 7 years,
 - (ii) So that 70 weeks would be 490 years.
 - (iii) Within that time,
 - (a) Jerusalem would be rebuilt,
 - (b) Messiah would come,
 - (c) And He would complete His work
 - (d) Bringing salvation to His people.
- d. These weeks would begin
 - (i) With the issuing of a decree
 - (ii) To restore and rebuild Jerusalem.
 - (iii) And they would end with the completion of Messiah's work.
- e. That decree was issued by Artaxerxes in 457 BC,
 - (i) And were completed in 30 AD
 - (ii) When Jesus laid down His life
 - (iii) To take it up again,
 - (iv) To fulfill the Scriptures.
- f. It's really the last week that's in question.
 - (i) Gabriel says, "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" (vv. 26-27).
 - (ii) Dispensationalists believe this means
 - (a) That Messiah would be cut off
 - (b) Just at the end of sixty-nine of these weeks –
 - (1) There is an initial seven weeks,
 - (2) Followed by the sixty-two weeks,
 - (3) Making this after sixty-nine weeks.
 - (c) In their opinion, this leaves the seventieth week
 - (d) Yet to be fulfilled for the nation of Israel.
 - (iii) But notice verse 27: He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week. What week is this referring to?

- (a) The seventieth week
 - (b) Which follows the sixty-nine weeks.
- (iv) Who is making this covenant?
- (a) Dispensationalists believe it is the Antichrist –
 - (1) That the Antichrist will come to power,
 - (2) And make a covenant with the Jews
 - (3) That will allow them to rebuild their temple.
 - (b) But who is it really?
 - (1) It's actually the Christ, the Messiah who does this.
 - (2) The closest antecedent to the pronoun "he"
 - (3) Is the prince who is to come.
 - (4) Who is this?
 - (5) It's Messiah the Prince mentioned in verse 25.
- (v) What does He do in the middle of the 70th week?
- (a) He puts an end to sacrifice and grain offering.
 - (b) Dispensationists believe it's then
 - (1) The Antichrist turns against the Jews
 - (2) Breaks his covenant with them
 - (3) And ushers in the Great Tribulation.
 - (c) But what's really going on here?
 - (1) The person who made the covenant is the Messiah.
 - (2) He's the One who put an end to sacrifice and grain offering
 - (3) By dying on the cross
 - (A) "To make atonement for iniquity,
 - (B) To bring in everlasting righteousness,
 - (C) To seal up vision and prophecy
 - (D) And to anoint the most holy" (v. 24).
 - (4) This was also vividly illustrated
 - (5) By the tearing of the veil from top to bottom.
 - (d) And when did this happen? In 30 AD.
- g. Gabriel also tells Daniel
- (i) What will happen next,
 - (ii) Though not in the seventieth week: "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" (v. 27).
 - (iii) He is talking about the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
 - (a) Notice verse 26, "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary."
 - (b) The prince to come was Messiah.

- (c) The people of the Prince was the Roman army.
 - (1) The Lord often used foreign armies
 - (2) To carry out His judgments.
- h. My point is simply this,
 - (i) What Gabriel speaks of here
 - (a) Happened in the past –
 - (b) The 70th week has already been fulfilled –
 - (c) And so it doesn't stand in the way
 - (d) Of an optimistic future.
 - (ii) Jesus is reigning now –
 - (a) He's in complete control of everything
 - (b) That happens in this world.
 - (iii) His enemies are being subdued under His feet now
 - (a) Through the Gospel
 - (b) And by His rod of iron.
 - (iv) The distant future is going to be glorious –
 - Because He will bring His plan to fruition.
 - (v) But the immediate future may be glorious as well –
 - As this work of subjection continues.
 - (vi) Let's draw encouragement from this
 - (a) To give ourselves more to promote this glorious kingdom
 - (b) As we were admonished last week by Jonathan Edwards,
 - (c) Who wrote, "It is the manner of God to keep his church on earth in hope of a still more glorious state: and so their prayers are enlivened, when they pray that the interest of religion may be promoted, and God's kingdom may come. . . . It is a great encouragement to such endeavors, to think that such times are coming, wherein Christianity shall prevail over all enemies" (MS 351).
 - (d) May the Lord graciously do so. Amen.