

Christ Foretold by the Prophet Daniel

Daniel 9:24-27

From John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1843), Vol. II, 214-224, emphasis added; English updated.

In explaining Biblical prophecy Calvin's intention was always to speak cautiously, because He was very desirous of being silent on all points except those which are useful and necessary to be known. In lecture fifty, John Calvin explained how Daniel foretold the coming of Christ, of whom both kings and priests under the law were a type and figure. The angel called Christ a leader, as He far surpassed all others, whether kings or priests. The seventy weeks of Daniel begin with the Persian monarchy, and they do not terminate until the baptism of Christ, when He openly commenced His work of satisfying the requirements of the office assigned Him by His Father.

The seven weeks refers to the times of the monarchy of Cyrus and that of Darius. This is evident from the history of the Maccabees, as well as from the testimony of the evangelist John; and we may collect the same conclusion from the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, as the building of the Temple was interrupted during forty-six years. Cyrus permitted the people to build the Temple; the foundations were laid when Cyrus went out to the war in Scythia; the Jews were then compelled to cease their labors, and his successor Cambyses was hostile to this people. Hence the Jews say, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" (John 2:20). They strive to deride Christ because He had said, "Destroy this Temple, and I will rebuild it in three days, as it was then a common expression, and had been handed down from their fathers, that the Temple had occupied this period in its construction. If you add the three years during which the foundations were laid, we shall then have forty-nine years (7 x 7), or the seven weeks of years.

The sixty-two weeks should be explained as the approximately 434 years (62 x 7) from the reign of Darius to the baptism of Christ. Whatever is the correct conclusion, we find about 480 years between the time of Darius and the death of Christ.

The end of the seventy weeks will occur when Christ openly assumes the office of king over His people, by collecting them from that miserable and horrible dispersion under which they had been so long ground down.

LECTURE FIFTY-ONE

Daniel 9:24-25 "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, *there shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times."

In yesterday's Lecture I explained my views of the seventy weeks. I now return to the words of the Prophet, on which I touched but briefly. He first says, *Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city*. By these words he implies first, the Israelites should be under the care and protection of God until the arrival of Christ; and next, **Christ would come before the completion of the seventy years**. The angel

announces these two points, to assure the faithful of God's perpetual remembrance of His covenant, and to sustain them in the midst of all their anxieties and distresses.

A remarkable passage now follows concerning the office of Christ. **The angel foretells what they were to expect from Christ.**

The remission of sins by Christ (expiation) foretold

First of all, he announces **remission of sins**; for he points this out by the form of expression, *to prohibit* or close up *wickedness*, *to seal up sinfulness*, and *to expiate iniquity*. It does not surprise us to find the angel using many phrases in a matter of such importance. Such repetition in the language seems to us superfluous, but the knowledge of salvation is comprehended under this head.

We are thus informed how **God is reconciled to us by gratuitous pardon**, and this is the reason why the angel insists on this subject by so many words (Luke 1:77). But we must remember what I said the day before yesterday—there is a tacit contrast between the remission now offered to us under the Gospel, and that formerly offered to the fathers under the Law.

From the creation of the world no one could call upon God with a tranquil mind and with sure confidence, unless by relying on the hope of pardon. For we know the door of mercy to be closed against us all through our being deservedly under God's wrath. Hence, unless the doctrine of gratuitous [free, unearned] remission of sins shone forth, we should enjoy no liberty of calling upon God, and all hope of salvation would be at the same time extinct. It follows, therefore, the fathers under the Law had this benefit in common with us, namely, a certain persuasion of God's being propitious to them, and of His pardoning their transgressions.

The New Covenant Church surpasses the Old Covenant Church in several ways.

What, then, is the meaning of the phrase, Christ [the Messiah] at His advent [coming] will seal up sins and expiate iniquities? Here, as I have said, **a difference is shown between the condition of the old and the new Church**. The fathers indeed had hopes of remission of their sins, but their condition was inferior to ours in two respects. Their teaching was not so plain as ours, nor were their promises so full and steadfast.

We excel them also in another respect. God bears witness to us that He is our Father, and so we flee to Him with the utmost freedom and fearlessness; and, in addition to this, Christ has already reconciled us to the Father by His blood (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). Thus we are superior to them, not only in our instruction, but in effect and completeness, since **at this day God not only promises us the pardon of our sins, but testifies and affirms their entire blotting out and becoming abolished through the sacrifice of Christ His Son**. This difference is openly denoted by the angel when he says, *Sins should be closed up and sealed, and iniquities also expiated* when Christ came. Hence we stated previously how something better was promised than the fathers experienced before the manifestation of Christ.

We here perceive the sense in which Christ *shut up sins, and sealed wickedness, and expiated iniquity*; for He not only introduced the doctrine of gratuitous pardon, and promised that God would be entreated by the people, through His desire to pardon their iniquity, but **He really accomplished whatever was needful to reconcile men to God**. He poured forth His blood by which He blotted out our sins; He also offered Himself as

an expiatory victim, and satisfied God by the sacrifice of His death, so as entirely to absolve us from guilt.

. . . the angel here teaches us indirectly how **all the expiations under the law were only figurative, and nothing but shadows of the future**; for, had sins been then really expiated, there would have been no need of the coming of Christ. As, therefore, expiation was suspended until the manifestation of Christ, there never was any true expiation under the law, but all its ceremonies were but shadowy representations.

Christ is our righteousness, and we are justified by faith alone in Him alone. He is the ultimate atonement for sin, and His cross work satisfies the just wrath of Almighty God.

He afterwards adds, *To bring in eternal righteousness*. This righteousness depends on the expiation. For how could God reckon the faithful just, or impute righteousness to them, as Paul informs us, unless by covering and burying their sins, or purging them in the blood of Christ? (Romans 4:11). Is not God Himself appeased by the sacrifice of His Son?

Double imputation foretold: Christ expiated our sins, as our sins were transferred to His account. His eternal righteousness is transferred to our account, when we are justified by faith alone in Him.

These phrases, then, must be united, *Iniquity shall be expiated, and eternal righteousness brought manifestly forward.*

Our righteousness is an alien righteousness—it is outside of us, apart from us, completely the righteousness of Christ.

No righteousness will ever be found in mortal man, unless He obtain it from Christ; and if we use great accuracy of expression, righteousness cannot exist in us otherwise than through that gratuitous [free, unearned] pardon which we obtain through the sacrifice of Christ.

Meanwhile, Scripture purposely unites together remission of sins and righteousness, as also Paul says, Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25). His death procured satisfaction for us, so that we should not always remain guilty, nor be subject to the condemnation of eternal death, and then by His resurrection He procured righteousness for us, and also acquired eternal life.

The reason why the Prophet here treats justice as perpetual or “of the ages,” is this: the fathers under the Law were compelled to please God by daily sacrifices. There would have been no necessity for repeating sacrifices, as the Apostle admonishes us, if there had been any inherent virtue in a single sacrifice to appease the Almighty (Hebrews 10:1). But since all the rites of the law tended to the same purpose of foreshadowing Christ, as the one and perpetual victim for reconciling men to God, daily sacrifices must necessarily be offered. From which it follows, as we formerly said, these satisfactions were plainly insufficient for procuring righteousness.

Jesus Christ is the alone sufficient Savior of men.

Therefore Christ alone brought in eternal righteousness—His death alone sufficed for expiating all transgressions. For Christ suffered, not only to satisfy for our sins, but

He sets before us His own death in which we should acquiesce. Hence this eternal justice depends on the enduring effect of the death of Christ, since the blood of Christ flowed as it were before God, and while we are daily purged and cleansed from our pollution, God is also daily appeased for us. We observe, then, how righteousness was not completely revealed under the law, but is now set before us under the Gospel.

The old covenant promises regarding the Messiah are all fulfilled in Christ.

It follows, *To seal up the vision and the prophecy*. This clause may have two senses, because, as I said before, Christ sealed up all visions and prophecies, for they are all yes and amen in Him, as Paul says (2 Corinthians 1:20). As, therefore, **God's promises were all satisfied and fulfilled in Christ for the salvation of the faithful**, so with propriety the angel affirms of His advent, *It shall seal up the vision and the prophecy*. This is one sense.

Scripture is sufficient; the canon is closed. Prophecies have ceased, as we are living now in the last days.

The other sense is, the vision shall be sealed in the sense of its ceasing, as if the angel had said, Christ shall put an end to prophecies, because our spiritual position differs from that of the fathers. For God formerly spoke in many ways, as the Church had to pass through a variety of conflicting states and circumstances. But **when Christ was manifested, we arrive at the close of prophetic times**. Hence His advent is called the fullness of times (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1); and elsewhere Paul says, we have arrived at the last days (1 Corinthians 10:11), **since we are waiting for the second advent of Christ, and we have no need of fresh prophecies as formerly**.

Then [under the old covenant, before Christ came] all things were very obscure, and God governed His people under the dark shadow of a cloud. Our condition is in these days different. Hence we are not surprised at the angel pronouncing *all the visions and prophecies sealed up*; for the law and the prophets were until John, but from that time the kingdom of God began to be promulgated; that is, God appeared much more clearly than before (Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16). The very name of vision implies something obscure and doubtful. But **now Christ, the Sun of righteousness, has shone on us, and we are in meridian brightness**; the Law appears only like a candle in the government of our life, because **Christ points out to us in full splendor the way of salvation**. Without doubt, the angel here wished us to distinguish between the obscure teaching of the Law, with its ancient figures, and the open light of the Gospel. Besides, the name "prophecy" is taken as well for the prophetic office as for the predictions delivered.

Christ fulfills the old covenant. Christ is the Tabernacle. He is the Most Holy Place.

He afterwards adds, *To anoint the Holy of Holies*. The angel here alludes to the rite of consecration which was observed under the Law; for the tabernacle with its appendages was consecrated by anointing. It is here shown how the perfect and truly spiritual anointing was put off until the advent of Christ. He is Himself properly and deservedly called **the Holy One of holy ones, or the Tabernacle of God**, because **His body was really the temple of deity, and holiness must be sought from Him** (Colossians 2:9).

The Prophet here reminds us of the anointing of the sanctuary under the Law being only a figure; but in Christ we have the true exhibition of the reality, although He was not

visibly anointed with oil, but spiritually, when the Spirit of God rested on Him with all His gifts.

Wherefore He says (John 17:19), For their sakes I sanctify Myself. It now follows, *You shall know and understand, from the going forth of a word (or decree) for the bringing back of the people and the building of Jerusalem, until Christ the Leader, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and the people shall return (or be brought back) and the street shall be built, and the wall (or trench) and that too, in the narrow interval of the times. . . .*

As we have already said, the time which had been fixed beforehand for the perfect state of the Church is divided. In the first place, he puts **seven weeks** [approximately 49 years] by themselves; he then adds sixty-two weeks [approximately 434 years], and leaves one, of which we shall afterwards speak. He immediately explains why he separates the seven weeks from the rest, rendering every other interpreter unnecessary.

Next, as to the going forth of the edict, we have stated how inadmissible is any interpretation but the first decree of Cyrus, which permitted the people freely to return to their country. For the seven weeks which make up forty-nine years clearly prove this assertion. From the beginning of the Persian monarchy to the reign of Darius the son of Hystaspes, the hostility of all the neighboring nations to the Jews is notorious, especially in interrupting the building of their temple and city. Although the people had free permission to return to their country, yet they were there harassed by hostilities, and were almost induced to repine at this mark of God's favor. A great part of them preferred their former exile to a harassing and perplexing life spent among their most cruel foes. This is the reason why the angel informs them of the seven weeks to elapse after the people should be brought back, for they must not expect to spend their life in peace, and build their city and temple without any inconvenience; for he announces the occurrence of this event *in the narrowness of the time. . . .*

We know what glowing predictions the prophets uttered concerning the happy state of the Church after its return; but the reality was far different from this, and the faithful might have been quite drowned in despair unless the angel had raised their spirits by this prophecy. We thus perceive the great utility of this admonition, and at the same time it may be applied as a practical example to ourselves. Although God's loving-kindness to us was wonderful, when the pure Gospel emerged out of that dreadful darkness in which it had been buried for so many ages, yet we still experience the troubled aspect of affairs. The impious still ceaselessly and furiously oppose the miserable Church by both the sword and the virulence of their tongues. Domestic enemies use clandestine arts in their schemes to subvert our edifice; wicked men destroy all order, and interpose many obstacles to impede our progress. But God still wishes in these days to build His spiritual temple *amidst the anxieties of the times*; the faithful have still to hold the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other, as we find it in the book of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 4:17), because the building of the Church must still be united with many contests. It afterwards follows—

Daniel 9:26

"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and until the end of the war desolations are determined."

Here Daniel treats of **the sixty-two weeks which elapsed between the sixth year of Darius and the baptism of Christ, when the Gospel began to be promulgated**, but at the same time he does not neglect the seven weeks of which he had been speaking. For they comprehend the space of time which intervened between the Persian monarchy and the second edict which again granted liberty to the people after the death of Cambyses.

After the sixty-two weeks which should succeed the seven former ones, *Messiah shall be cut off*, says he. **Here the angel predicts the death of Christ.** . . .

Therefore the angel speaks of the only Mediator, as in the former verse he had said, *until Christ the Leader.* . . . The angel means that Christ should then be manifest to undertake the government of His people; or, in other words, until Messiah shall appear and commence His reign.

Surely, as he had formerly treated of those singular marks of God's favor, by which the new Church was to surpass the old, we cannot understand the passage otherwise than of Christ alone, of whom the priests and kings under the Law were equally a type. The angel, then, here asserts, *Christ should die*, and at the same time he specifies the kind of death by saying, *nothing shall remain to Him*. This short clause may be taken in various senses, yet I do not hesitate to represent the angel's meaning to be this — Christ should so die as to be entirely reduced to nothing. . . . The genuine sense, I have no doubt, is as follows — the death of Christ should be without any attractiveness or loveliness, as Isaiah says (Isaiah 53:2). In truth, the angel informs us of the ignominious character of Christ's death, as if He should vanish from the sight of men through lack of comeliness [attractiveness / handsomeness]. *Nothing, therefore, shall remain to Him*, says he; and the obvious reason is, because men would think Him utterly abolished.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 foretold.

He now adds, *The leader of the coming people shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*. Here the angel inserts what rather concerns the end of the chapter, as he will afterwards return to Christ. He here mentions what should happen at Christ's death, and purposely interrupts the order of the narrative to show that **their impiety would not escape punishment**, as they not only rejected the Christ of God, but slew Him and endeavored to blot out His remembrance from the world. And although the angel had special reference to the faithful alone, still unbelievers required to be admonished with the view of rendering them without excuse.

We are well aware of the supineness and brutality of this people, as displayed in their putting Christ to death; for this event occasioned a triumph for the priests and the whole people. Hence these points ought to be joined together. But the angel consulted the interests of the faithful, as they would be greatly shocked at the death of Christ, which we have alluded to, and also at His ignominy and rejection. As this was a method of perishing so very horrible in the opinion of mankind, the minds of all the pious might utterly despond unless the angel had come to their relief. Hence he proposes a suitable remedy, *The leader of the coming people shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*; as if he had said, There is no encouragement for the unbelievers to please and flatter themselves, because Christ was reduced to nothing after a carnal sense; **vengeance shall instantly overtake them**; *the leader of the coming people shall destroy both the city and the sanctuary*.

He names *a coming leader*, to prevent the unbelievers from resting secure through self-flattery, as if God would not instantly stretch forth His hand to avenge Himself upon them. **Although the Roman army which should destroy the city and sanctuary did not immediately appear, yet the Prophet assures them of the arrival of a leader with an army which should occasion the destruction of both the city and the sanctuary.** Without the slightest doubt, he here signifies that **God would inflict dreadful vengeance upon the Jews for their murder of His Christ.** . . . [This prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70.]

As far as we are concerned, we gather with sufficient clearness from the passage how the angel touched briefly upon the future slaughter of the city and the destruction of the Temple, lest the faithful should be overwhelmed with trials in consequence of Christ's death, and lest the unbelievers should be hardened through this occurrence. The prophet foretold that a leader would come with his army to destroy the city, and utterly overthrow the Temple.

He afterwards adds, *Its end shall be in a deluge*. Here the angel removes all hope from the Jews, whose obstinacy might lead them to expect some advantage in their favor, for we are already aware of their great stupidity when in a state of desperation. Lest the faithful should indulge in the same feelings with the apostates and rebellious, he says, *The end of the leader, Titus, should be in a deluge*; meaning, he should overthrow the city and national polity, and utterly put an end to the priesthood and the race, while all God's favors would at the same time be withdrawn. In this sense *his end should be in a deluge*. Lastly, *at the end of the war a most decisive desolation.* . . . Two points are to be noticed here: first, all hope is to be taken from the Jews, as they must be taught the necessity for their perishing; and secondly, a reason is ascribed for this, namely, the determination of the Almighty and His inviolable decree.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, as You did formerly appear to Daniel Your holy servant, and to the other prophets, and by their doctrine did render Your glory conspicuous to us at this day, that we may reverently approach and behold it. When we have become entirely devoted to You, may those mysteries which it has pleased You to offer by means of their hand and labors, receive from us due estimation. May we be cast down in ourselves and be raised by hope and faith towards heaven; when prostrate before Your face, may we so conduct ourselves in the world, as in the interval to become free from all the depraved desires and passions of the flesh, and dwell mentally in heaven. Then at length may we be withdrawn from this earthly warfare, and arrive at that celestial rest which You have prepared for us, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.