

Sermon: The Prophecy

Text: Daniel 9:20-27

Discussion Questions:

The list of heartaches that have come from this Covid-19 pandemic is long. We grieve with those who are dealing with the loss of loved ones. We pray for those currently suffering from the virus. We support first responders who are on the front lines of caring and protecting. Our hearts go out to those in hospitals and care facilities who are unable to receive any visitors in their time of great need—as well as the family members who are unable to be with their loved ones.

I have to say, though, that perhaps the greatest psychological trauma in all of this is the uncertainty. We have absolutely no idea when all of this will end. One government official says one thing, and a minute later another says something completely opposite. One person says we'll begin "getting back to normal" in a month—and another says that this will last "for years." It's maddening. Uncertainty leads to frustration, which can ultimately lead to depression and despair.

- Has this been true for you? Have you found yourself getting frustrated due to the lack of certainty in the midst of all of this? Is it pushing you toward depression and despair?
- Why do you think we struggle so much when there isn't a clear sense of what's next?
- Let's just pretend for the sake of conversation that the announcement was made with absolute certainty that as of July 1st, everything returns to normal (I'm not saying I think this should happen—I just want you to think about how you would feel about it). How would having this very clear "light at the end of the tunnel" change your outlook?

Think about all of this in light of the word HOPE. It is so very hard to have hope in the midst of uncertainty. Conversely, being certain of an "end date"—even if it's at a point in time in the future—has the effect of producing hope.

Take, for example, how difficult the night can be when you're sick and miserable. You can't sleep and you can't get comfortable. You look at the clock, and it says 2pm. You look again, and it's only 2:20pm. Time passes so slowly. What do you find yourself longing for? We all know the answer. Morning! Sunrise! Somehow, having the sun come up makes such a huge difference. And KNOWING that the sun will rise gives us hope. It gives us a definite point in time in the future that we can look forward to.

This morning we are taking a closer look at Daniel chapter 9. The chapter begins with Daniel reading a prophecy from the Book of Jeremiah (vv. 1-2). This prophecy states that after 70 years, God will bring an end to the Jewish captivity, and allow the people to begin returning to Jerusalem. Knowing this gives Daniel great HOPE! It prompts Daniel to pray with confidence that God will act. The final 8 verses in this chapter magnify our hope a hundred times! They describe with incredible detail how Jesus will come to this earth not once—but twice.

- Does knowing that God's Word can be trusted—and being certain of the return of Jesus to this earth—give you hope? Does it help eliminate uncertainty?

Examination:

- Read **Daniel 9:20-23**

- It is in the midst of Daniel's prayer that God dispatches the messenger angel Gabriel to go to Daniel and answer his prayer. What do you make of that?
 - Do you think God truly listens to everything we pray?
 - Do you think prayer causes God to act?
 - Do you think God answers every prayer that we pray?
 - Why do you think God sent Gabriel to answer Daniel's prayer? Do you think God still sends angels to answer some of our prayers?
- Gabriel tells Daniel that he is "highly esteemed." What do you think that means? Do you believe that Gabriel would say the same thing to you? Do you think that God "esteems you" highly, and loves you dearly?
- Read **Daniel 9:24-27**
 - These four verses are power-packed! A "seven" (v. 24) is the same thing as the term "Week of Years." It was a common Jewish phrase that meant seven literal years. It comes from God's commandment in **Leviticus 25:3-4**. Read these two verses in Leviticus, and discuss what this "Week of years" meant.
 - Who and where do these 70 "sevens" pertain to?
 - What six things happen at the end of the 70th "seven"? (v. 24) Have any of these things six things happened yet?
 - Read **Nehemiah 2:1-6**. This is the record of the Medo-Persian king Artaxerxes giving the command to Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. History tells us that this command was given on March 14, 445BC. How does what we read in Nehemiah 2 relate to Daniel 9:25?
 - If a "seven" is a period of 7 years—how many years are seven "sevens"? How many years are sixty-two "sevens"? How many years are they combined?
 - Some very smart people have "done the math," and have calculated that 483 years from March 14, 445BC bring us to the date of April 6, 32AD—which is the exact date that many believe Palm Sunday took place. Do you believe this to be true? Do you believe that the prophecy that God gave to Daniel through Gabriel was referring to the specific date that Jesus would be anointed as the King of the Jews? If not, then what DO you believe this is referring to?
 - How was the Anointed One put to death? What does it mean that he "had nothing"? (v. 26)
 - The prophecy shifts in verse 26 and in verse 27 to "the end." It's here that we find the very last "seven." What are some of the details that we find happening in this last seven year period of time? What have you been taught about this?
 - Who do you think the "he" is that is described in this verse?
 - The point I make in my sermon about verse 27 is the fact that in the end, God destroys His enemies? What enemies does God destroy? Does this give you hope—knowing that no matter what happens in this world, God wins?

Application:

In the midst of all of the uncertainty surrounding this global pandemic, take some time to thank God that HE is truly in control. Calm your troubled heart with the peace that comes from trusting that no matter what happens in this world, we can trust Jesus to take care of us.