

Daniel 9:24 (Part III)

Introduction

As you know, we've really slowed down in Daniel. Before this verse we were occasionally doing entire chapters in one message. Now we're spending four messages on a single verse. I gave a couple reasons for this last week, but what I want to add this week is that this little verse is packed with redemptive-historical significance. Maybe you know by now what we mean when we say that. You could say that our salvation has two parts to it. There's the subjective side of how we've experienced our salvation in the present and there's the objective side of how God has accomplished our salvation in history. These two things are so tightly interwoven that a Christian can't really ever talk about one without talking about the other. Nevertheless, I think it's possible for us to so emphasize the subjective, experiential side that we lose sight of the vast, redemptive-historical scope of our salvation. Here there really are endless vistas for us to explore the mighty deeds of God. It's so we can explore these vistas that we've slowed down here in verse 24. This morning, we're going to emphasize the redemptive-historical while not neglecting our own personal experience of this awesome redemption.

“Seventy sevens are decreed about your people and your holy city...”

to make an end of the transgression,

to SEAL up *sin*,

and to atone for *iniquity*,

to bring in everlasting righteousness,

to SEAL vision and prophet,

and to anoint a most holy.

Seventy sevens to accomplish all this – to bring in the true Jubilee and the true Sabbath rest of God's people. Two weeks ago we looked at the first matching pair of “negative” and “positive”: “to make an end of the transgression and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” In other words, seventy sevens until the constant covenant-breaking of God's covenant people will finally come to an end and be replaced with that everlasting righteousness of faithful covenant-keeping by *all* God's covenant people. And so, today, we see that the seventy sevens have been fulfilled. As a covenant people, *we are no longer* covenant-breakers, as Israel was under the Old Covenant, but covenant-keepers. And we remember that's not because we're better than they were. The blood of the covenant itself has now infallibly secured our repentance and faith in Christ until the end – thus making an end of the transgression and bringing in everlasting righteousness.

Last week, we looked at the next two “negatives”: “To seal up sin, and to atone for iniquity.” On the one hand, the rebellious covenant people needed to be transformed and recreated with a new covenant. On the other hand, even the believing remnant (even the “Daniel's” in Israel) still needed to have the guilt of their sin taken away. And so once again we see that the seventy sevens have been fulfilled. It's true that *we have* sinned, and that we *still* sin, but the guilt of all our sin—past, present, and future—*no longer* cries out for God's righteous judgment (as it still did in Daniel's case) because that judgment has *already* been poured out on the one who took all

our sins—past, present, and future—on Himself and then poured out His own soul unto death (Isa. 53:12).

- Hebrews 9:26 (cf. 10:1-2, 11-14) — [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages [the fulfillment of the seventy sevens] **to put away sin [seal up sin] by the sacrifice of himself** [atonement].

Now this morning we’re going to look at the “positive match” to Gabriel’s words about the sealing up of sin.

“Seventy sevens are decreed... to seal up sin... [and] to seal vision and prophet...”

I. How is this a good thing?

Notice how we have two things being sealed; on the one hand, “*sin*,” on the other hand, “*vision and prophet*.” So if the sealing of sin means that it’s shut up and hidden forever from view, then what does Gabriel mean by the “sealing” of “vision and prophet”? How do we see in this the mighty deeds of God in accomplishing our salvation?

Remember that the prophets were those who spoke the word of the Lord. That’s a wonderful thing, isn’t it? This is the miracle of divine revelation – of God speaking and making Himself and His will and His ways and His plans and purposes known to us. In the Old Testament, the *prophet* and his *vision* go together much like bread and butter go together (1 Sam. 3:1; Prov. 29:18; Jer. 18:18; Lam. 2:9, 14; Ezek. 7:26; Hos. 12:10; Mic. 3:6; Zech. 13:4; Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Ezek. 13; 22:28; Isa. 1:1; Obad. 1; Nah. 1:1).¹ So the “prophetic vision” (cf. NET; NLT) was God’s gracious *word* and *revelation* to His people. Even God’s revelations of judgment were gracious because they were warnings that He was never “obligated” to give (cf. Amos 3:1-8). So why should we be *glad* to hear that “vision and prophet” will be sealed? How in the world can this be a good thing?

II. What is this “sealing” about?

Once again, what we need to be picturing in our minds is a scroll or a letter or a document of some kind that’s been sealed. But this time, the emphasis is not on the *hiding* of something in a sealed book that can never again be opened (cf. Isa. 29:11; Rev. 5:3-5), but rather on the *authenticating* of a *completed* and *finished* work as true and genuine.

- Esther 8:10 (cf. 1 Kings 21:8; Jer. 32:10-14) — [Mordecai] wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king’s signet ring. Then he sent the letters...
- Nehemiah 9:38 — Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.

In each of these examples the seal authenticates what’s inside as true and genuine. And in each of these examples the seal also proves, by default, that what’s inside is a finished and completed

¹ The prophet’s *vision* could be a way of summing up not only *how* he received his revelations from God (miraculously by divine initiative), but also the message itself that the prophet spoke to the people (2 Chron. 32:32).

work. So what is it that authenticates the prophets and their visions? And when is it that the prophetic visions will no longer be needed because they've already served their purpose and are therefore finished and complete?

III. The unique ministry of OLD COVENANT “vision and prophet”

The first thing we have to understand is that what we're talking about here is *Old Covenant* “vision and prophet.” In other words, the “prophetic vision” that was special and unique to life under the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, “vision and prophet” were always very closely connected with the law. So listen to what the Lord said to Isaiah:

- Isaiah 8:19–20 (cf. Deut. 13:1-5) — When they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? . . . To the teaching and to the testimony! If they [the prophets] will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

Notice how the role of the prophets was not to say things that were novel and new but rather to keep on driving people back to the law – to the same place over and over and over again. We see this also in Proverbs 29:

- Proverbs 29:18 — Where there is no [prophetic] vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Very often, we can think that the role of the prophet was to “foretell” the future. Sometimes the role of the prophets has even been neatly divided into “foretelling” and “forthtelling.” But this is all very artificial. Whether they were foretelling or forthtelling, the role of the prophets was always the same: to warn and rebuke and comfort and encourage in light of the people's obedience or disobedience to the law – in light of the people's covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking.

So are you beginning to see how the Old Covenant prophets—like Elijah, and Elisha, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Hosea, and Joel, and Amos—they all had a very unique and special task because the Old Covenant people didn't yet have the Spirit? Because the law was not yet inscribed on their hearts, therefore the ministry of the prophets was necessary to keep pointing them back to the law by means of both warnings and promises.

- 2 Kings 17:13 — The LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”
- Zechariah 7:12 (cf. Neh. 9:26) — They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets.

If the warnings were especially for the covenant-breaking people as a whole, then the promises were especially for that faithful remnant that was hidden away inside the covenant people. One

day the remnant would no longer be just a remnant; one day they would inherit Messiah's kingdom as a brand new "nation" – as God's New Covenant people (cf. Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-8). So the prophets didn't just warn the faithless; they also encouraged the remnant to never grow weary and to never give up. They encouraged them to keep on waiting patiently for the promises when God's covenant people would be made new (cf. Mal. 4:1-3).

Can you see, now, how the calling of the prophet was shaped entirely by these Old Covenant realities – by the realities that God's Spirit was not yet poured out on *all* God's covenant people and God's law was not yet inscribed on the hearts of *all* God's covenant people. It's in light of these things that we can understand the terrible burdens and the heartaches of being a prophet in the days of the Old Covenant (cf. Ezek. 9:8; 11:13; Jer. 8:18-9:2; 12:1-4; 17:14-18).

IV. The calling of the Old Covenant prophet

- Isaiah 6:8–13 — I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.
- Ezekiel 3:4–11, 14 — He said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language... Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear or refuse to hear." ... The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me.
- Jeremiah 1:17–19 — Dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you."

- Jeremiah 20:7–9 — For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.
- Jeremiah 15:10, 16–18 (cf. 15:10-21) — Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land!... Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation. Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?

Do you have a feeling, now, for what it was to be a prophet under the Old Covenant? Would you have wanted the calling of a prophet on your life under the Old Covenant? In the end, God said that He would judge His sinful, covenant-breaking people by taking away from them the very thing they so despised and hated.

- Micah 3:6 (cf. Lam. 2:9, 14; Ezek. 7:26) — Therefore it shall be night to you, **without vision**, and darkness to you, without divination. **The sun shall go down on the prophets**, and the day shall be black over them.
- Amos 8:11–12 — “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

V. Longing for the day when Old Covenant “vision and prophet” are no longer necessary

The Old Covenant “vision and prophet” was necessary because the Old Covenant people were covenant-breakers – because they didn’t have the Holy Spirit within them or the Law of God written on their hearts. So can you identify with Moses, now, when he cries out:

- Numbers 11:29 — Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them [all]!

Think about that for a minute. If the Lord once put His Spirit upon all of His people—if they were all prophets, as it were—would there be a need any longer for the Old Covenant “vision and prophet”? And the answer is “No!” A Holy Spirit filled people would no longer need prophets constantly telling them and reminding them: “This is the way, walk in it.” Instead, we read this in Isaiah chapter thirty:

- Isaiah 30:20–22 — Your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, “Be gone!”

Can you see, now, how when God’s people are transformed by the New Covenant, the need for any continuing ministry of the Old Covenant prophets is done away with completely? So now fast-forward to the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all God’s people and God’s law was inscribed upon the hearts of all God’s people. The Apostle Peter explains:

- Acts 2:16–18 — This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and **your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions**, and your old men shall dream dreams; **even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.**”

Peter’s point isn’t that we should all be seeing visions and prophesying like the prophets of the Old Covenant. His point is the opposite. The “vision and prophet” of the Old Covenant are *no more* because *why?*—Because God has now poured out His Spirit upon all His people and written His law upon all their hearts just as Moses had wished for so long ago. Are you coming to see, now, the beauty and goodness of these words?—“Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city... to seal vision and prophet.” There are no more Elijah’s, or Jeremiah’s, or Ezekiel’s, or Daniel’s today because today we have all received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Listen to what the Apostle John says to us:

- 1 John 2:20, 26–27 — You have been **anointed** [with the Holy Spirit] by the Holy One [by Jesus; cf. Mk. 1:24; Lk. 1:35; Jn. 6:69; Acts 2:33], and you all have knowledge... I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you [hidden and secret knowledge outside of the true Gospel]. But as his **anointing** teaches you about everything [as it has been revealed in Scripture and the apostolic teaching], and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide [continue; remain] in him.

“Vision and prophet” have been sealed because we live now in the days when we’re all prophets, when we all dream dreams and see visions, from the least of us to the greatest. Which is just to say that we all have the Spirit who *is* now for each one of us that “word behind [us],” saying to us as we read the Scriptures and meditate on the Scriptures and hear the Scriptures read and taught, “This is the way, walk in it.” You can see, here, that the “way” is not which job, which school, which girl or guy, etc. It’s simply the way of daily, faithful obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Isaiah, the result of hearing that word behind us will be this: “Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, “Be gone!”

VI. Old Covenant “vision and prophet” fulfilled

The Apostle John writes that we’ve been anointed *by the Holy One* – by Jesus. It was Jesus who sent forth the Holy Spirit from heaven (cf. Jn. 3:34; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22).

- Acts 2:32–33 — This Jesus God raised up... Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *he* has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

It was Jesus who poured out the Holy Spirit on His New Covenant people, and now it's the Holy Spirit whose work is always to bear witness *to* and *about* Jesus (cf. Jn. 15:26; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rom. 8:9). Paul says that “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). So can you see, now, why the sealing of “prophet and vision” doesn't mean that the prophets are no longer relevant to us? They've been sealed only in the sense that they're now *complete* and *authenticated* by their fulfillment in the person of our Savior, Jesus Christ (cf. Deut. 18:21-22).² Jesus said:

- Matthew 5:17 — Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

When the prophets called God's people to keep the covenant and warned of coming judgment, they were ultimately prophesying about Jesus who would keep the covenant and endure God's judgment in the place of His people. So Paul writes:

- Romans 3:21–22 — But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, **although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it**— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

When the prophets promised the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of God's people and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were ultimately prophesying about Jesus. So Paul opens his letter to the Romans with these words:

- Romans 1:1–3 — Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus... set apart for the gospel of God, **which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures**, concerning his Son...

And Peter says:

- Acts 3:24 — All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.
- Acts 10:43 — *To [Jesus]* all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

“Vision and prophet” are now “sealed,” and yet we still open the prophets and read them today because without them we can never fully understand Christ who has brought them to their completion and who *is* their fulfillment (cf. Lk. 16:31; 18:31; 24:25–27; 24:44–47; Jn. 1:45; Acts 3:18; 13:27; 26:22–23; 28:23; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; 1 Pet. 1:10–11).

Conclusion

² The seal itself is revelatory and includes all New Covenant prophesy and vision and revelation.

Jesus said:

- Luke 16:16 (cf. Mat. 11:13-14 & Mal. 4:5) — The Law and the Prophets were *until* John; *since then* the good news of the kingdom of God is preached.

And so the Apostle Paul can write:

- 2 Corinthians 1:20 — All the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

In response to all God's promises finding their Yes in Jesus, are you daily uttering your Amen to God for his glory?

The angel Gabriel said to Daniel, "Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city... to seal up sin... [and] to seal vision and prophet." Do you see, now, how these two things go so wonderfully together? "Vision and prophet" have been sealed precisely *because* sin has also been sealed. And so we see, again, that the seventy sevens have been fulfilled. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on each one of us by our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is Himself the fulfillment of every prophetic vision.

- Hebrews 1:1-2 (cf. Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:19-22; 7:35-37) — Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.