

Daniel's Prayer And Prophecy Of 70 Weeks: Part I

(Daniel 9:1-19)

Intro: This morning we turn to Daniel chapter 9, believed by many to be one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. Daniel 9 contains the record of Daniel's prayer for Israel's restoration (vv. 1-19), and God's response to that prayer with the prophecy of 70 Weeks (vv. 20-27). As we shall see, Daniel's prayer on behalf of the Jewish people, leads to God's provision of the prophecy of 70 Weeks. A prophecy outlining God's divine timetable of 490 years for His people Israel, commencing with the issuing of Artaxerxes' decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem given in 445 B.C., to the return of Jesus Christ to establish His Millennial Kingdom on this earth.

Structure of the passage: Verses 1-2 provide the circumstances for Daniel's prayer; verses 3-19 record the content of Daniel's prayer; and verses 20-27 record God's response to Daniel's prayer, in which He sends the angel Gabriel to reveal the prophecy of 70 Weeks to Daniel.

As in previous lessons, because of the limited time we have this morning, we will only be able to consider Daniel's prayer in verses 1-19. We will reserve the exposition of Daniel's prophecy of 70 Weeks in verses 20-27 for next Sunday morning. Look with me at the circumstances for Daniel's prayer (vv. 1-3).

I. Daniel's Prayer (Dan. 9:1-19)

A. The circumstances for Daniel's prayer (vv. 1-3)

1. Historical setting (v. 1)

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—

Verse 1 informs us that the events recorded in Daniel 9 took place in the first year of Darius the Mede. The date would have been 538 B.C., one year after Babylon fell to the combined forces of Medo-Persia in 539 B.C. Daniel would have been in his mid-eighties by now. Notice that *Darius was made king*, and thus Darius cannot be another name for Cyrus, as some scholars contend. History records that Darius was made king over Babylon and the provinces along the Mediterranean Sea by Cyrus the Great, king of Persia.

2. Daniel's reading of Jeremiah 25:10-11; 29:10-14

2 In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Daniel let's us know that in the first year of Darius' reign he was reading what the LORD had revealed to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the extent of Israel's desolations. According to Jeremiah 25:1-11—Jerusalem would be captured by the Babylonians, the temple and the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the inhabitants would be taken captive to Babylon for seventy years.

Jeremiah's prophecy of Israel's destruction and subsequent seventy-year captivity began in 605 B.C. Daniel was just a boy at the time, but he would never forget how King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, and deported him and several thousand others to Babylon. As he read Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel realized that his peoples' time of divine judgment was drawing to a close. This discovery sent Daniel to his knees in prayer.

It should be noted that following his conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C., Cyrus issued a royal decree permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of their God, and to resettle their land (Ezra 1). This event would have also figured into Daniel's excitement over Israel's deliverance.

B. The contents of Daniel's prayer (9:3-19)

1. Daniel's confession of sin (vv. 3-15)

3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

Daniel gave himself over, he literally "set his face," to pray that God would fulfill His word through Jeremiah to restore His people. Daniel determined to come before God in prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, and to remain there until the LORD answered his request. **Fasting** demonstrated Daniel's deep concern, and the fact that he was going to forgo food to spend all of his free

time in God's presence. The putting on of *sackcloth* and sitting in *ashes* were outward expressions of deep mourning and grief.

Daniel's prayer contains elements of adoration, confession, and supplication. These elements of prayer serve as a model for believers today in our approach to God in prayer. Many use the acronym **ACTS** = Adoration; Confession; Thanksgiving; and Supplication. Daniel approaches God in Adoration (v. 4).

a. Adoration (v. 4)

4 And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,"

Daniel addresses God by His covenant name LORD, meaning Yahweh. This is the personal name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 6:2-8. It emphasizes His gracious and loving devotion to His people Israel. Daniel went on to address Yahweh as the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and shows loving-kindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Even though the people of Israel had been unfaithful, Daniel appeals to God based on His covenant promises to Abraham. The seventy years prescribed for Israel's discipline were drawing to a close. Daniel praises God for His compassion, and for not allowing His people to be afflicted forever.

b. Confession of sin (vv. 5-15)

Daniel, knowing that confession of sin was a requisite to restoration, devotes the majority of his prayer to confession. He confesses not only Israel's sin, but his own sin as well. Daniel, like Joseph, had no sin recorded against him. However, as members of Adam's fallen race they were both sinners, as are all of us. As Paul affirms in Rom. 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The point is, they are remembered for their righteous service to God. The essence of Daniel's confession is recorded in verses 5-6, 11-12, and 14.

vv. 5-6—We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. ⁶ “Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land.

To sin means, “*to miss the mark*,” to fall short of God’s standard. God had graciously sent prophet after prophet to turn His people from their sinful ways, but they would not heed their admonitions to repent and return to the Lord their God.

vv. 11-12—“Indeed all Israel had transgressed God’s law and turned aside, not obeying His voice; so the curses written in the law of Moses (Deut. 28:15-68), had been poured out on the people of Israel. **12** “Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem.”

v. 14—Therefore, the calamity the LORD God had warned the Israelites would come, He brought it on them; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds, which He has done. Daniel affirms that God’s righteous character demanded that He punish His people for unrelenting disobedience.

Daniel concludes his confession of sin in verse 15 by acknowledging that the people of Israel, who God had brought out of the land of Egypt in order to make a name for Himself, had sinned and been wicked from the very start, and continued in sin to that very day.

c. Supplication (vv. 16-19)

After confessing his own sins and those of his fellow Jews, Daniel appeals to God in verses 16-19 to answer him for His own sake. That is, he called on God to restore Israel and the city of Jerusalem for His own sake and not anyone else’s.

16 “O Lord, in accordance with all Thy righteous acts, let now Thine anger and Thy wrath turn away from Thy city Jerusalem,

Thy holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people have become a reproach to all those around us.

17 “So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications, *and for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary.* **18** “O my God, incline Thine ear and hear! Open Thine eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name; for we are not presenting our supplications before Thee on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Thy great compassion. **19** “*O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Thine own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.*”

Lessons gleaned from Daniel’s supplications:

First, Daniel’s supplications are based on God’s Word, and His promise to Jeremiah to restore His people after seventy years.

Unlike Daniel, our prayers are usually not based on God’s Word or promises, but focus on our own selfish desires. James says, “You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:2-3). John assures in 1 John 5:14-15 that if we ask anything according to God’s will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

We need to bring our prayer life into conformity with God’s will. God wants to use you and me to reach lost men and women with the good news of the salvation He has provided for anyone who will confess their sin and receive His Son, Jesus Christ, as Savior.

Second, Daniel’s requests are made in accordance with God’s holy character. Daniel initially acknowledged that God acted consistently with His righteous character when He disciplined Israel by giving them over to the Babylonian captivity in 605 B.C. Now, he appeals to God to act in accordance with His mercy and compassion, and His love for His people and His holy city, Jerusalem.

Third, Daniel focuses on God's purposes and His glory. Daniel calls on God to hear his prayer, to forgive His peoples' sin, to listen, and ***to take action for His own sake.*** Daniel was concerned that God's reputation would be damaged if He failed to free His people from captivity and return them to the land of Israel as He had promised. In most cases, when you or I petition God, it is for our own selfish needs. Unlike us, Daniel focused on God's purposes and His glory.

The story is told about Dwight L. Moody, who in 1872 attended an early morning service in Ireland. He heard a man sitting nearby quietly say, "The world has yet to see what God can do with, and for, and through, and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to God's will." Several years later Moody was seated in Charles Spurgeon's tabernacle in London, and heard Spurgeon use those same words in his message. Moody bowed his head and prayed, "By the power of the Holy Spirit, I will be that man."

God honored Dwight Moody with a ministry that, in spite of his human frailties and lack of formal education, has touched the lives of countless thousands upon thousands (Moody's story adapted from David Jeremiah, *The Handwriting On The Wall*, 183-4).

May God be pleased to help each of us develop a prayer life like Daniel's, and a desire to be used like Moody!

Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Song: *In Remembrance Of Me*—play as ushers pass out the elements