

PRAYING TO A MERCIFUL GOD

Prayers during COVID-19 #2: Daniel 9

July 26, 2020



Introduction

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed

Daniel 9:3-4

1)

2)

3)

4)

Preparing for confession

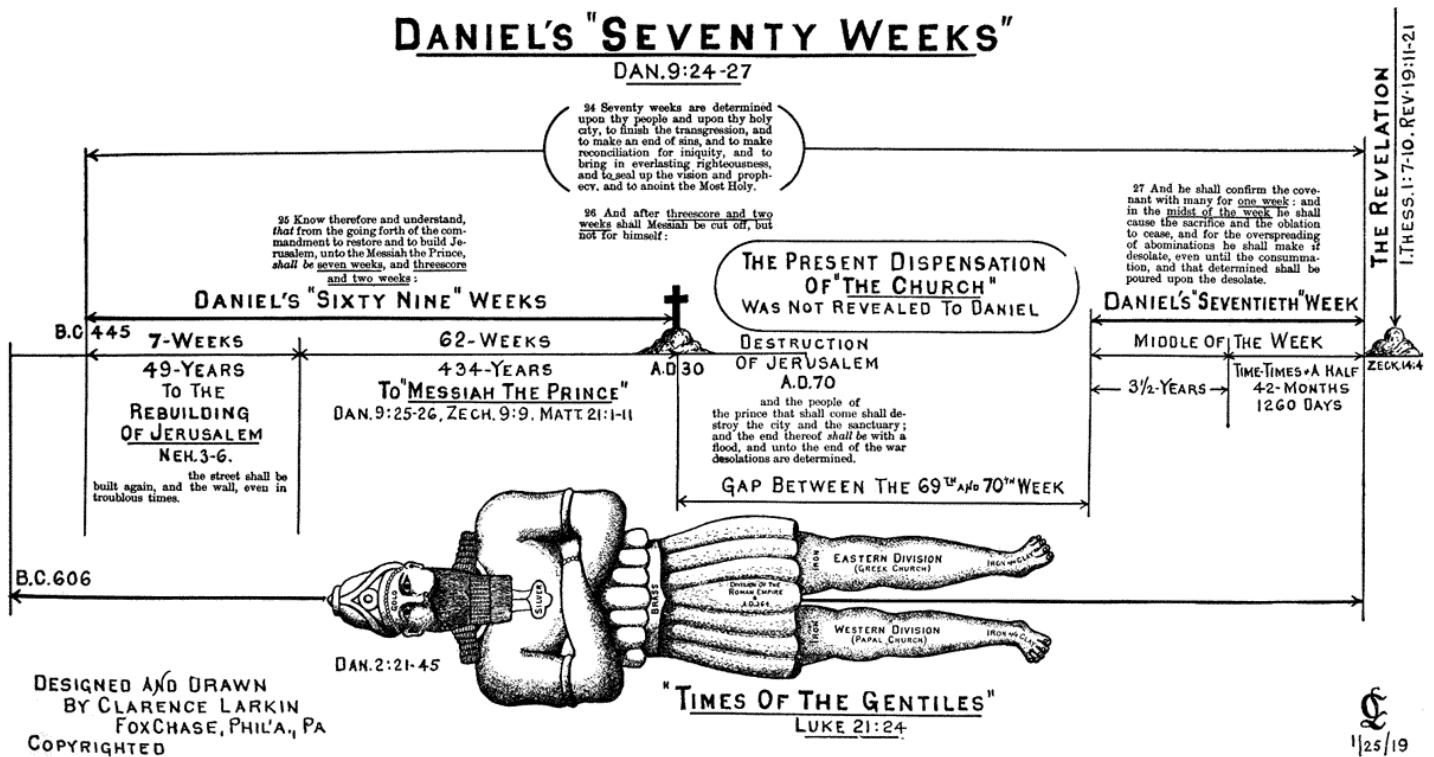
In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. ³ So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed . . .

Daniel 9:1-3 (with reference to Jeremiah 29:10-14 and Isaiah 44:14-45:25, the Cyrus chronicles)

- 1) I learn something important about Scripture:

- 2) I learn something important about God's redemption timing:

- 3) I learn something important about revival and restoration:



Praying to an awesome God

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. ⁶We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

⁷“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. ⁸We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you. ⁹The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; ¹⁰we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.

“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. ¹²You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. ¹⁴The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

¹⁵“Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. ¹⁶Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

¹⁷“Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. ¹⁹Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

Daniel 9:4-19

- 1) Confession is a reflection on God’s character

- 2) Confession is a discipline of agreeing with God’s word

- 3) Confession is a response to God’s faithfulness

- 4) Confession is a discipline of faith

Prayers being heard

²⁰ While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill—²¹ while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. ²² He instructed me and said to me, “Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. ²³ As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore

Daniel 9:20-23

1) Prayer works in the heavenly realm → Gabriel, “word went out” [Ephesians 6]

2) insight and understanding

3) You are really loved, you are forgiven, you are

Resources for further studies of Daniel’s prayer

Vern Poythress has a helpful study at <https://frame-poythress.org/hermeneutical-factors-in-determining-the-beginning-of-the-seventy-weeks-daniel-925/>

Steven Coles’ “When God Seems Distant” at <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-13-when-god-seems-distant>

Spurgeon’s “The Dawn of Revival” at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-dawn-of-revival-speedily-answered/#flipbook/> and “A Pattern for Pleaders” at https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/sermons/3484.cfm

ThirdMill has an introduction to Daniel at <https://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp?file=41807>

John Piper’s “How to Pray for a Desolate Church” at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-to-pray-for-a-desolate-church>

Derek Thomas has a short article at <https://www.reformation21.org/counterpoints/derek-thomashow-long-o-lord.php>

Bob Deffinbaugh has a helpful sermon on Daniel 9 at <https://bible.org/seriespage/10-daniel-s-prayer-and-gabriel-s-proclamation-daniel-91-27>

Gleason Archer has a good commentary on Daniel in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* series, Vol. 7 (Zondervan, 1985)

Login Duncan’s sermon at https://thirdmill.org/magazine/article.asp/link/jl_duncan%5Ejl_duncan.Dan.09.html/at/The%20Prayer%20of%20Daniel

Daniel's Prayer and Gabriel's Proclamation (Daniel 9:1-27)

Bob Deffinbaugh

Introduction

A friend and neighbor called recently to say she had suffered a stroke in one eye. When I went to see her, she asked me to have a cup of coffee. As she poured from the coffee pot, we both noticed the coffee was missing the cup. The stroke had taken my friend's vision from one eye, seriously affecting her perception.

God gave us the sight of two eyes so that we might have depth perception. When one eye is lost, depth perception is greatly diminished. In photography, this is called "depth of field." When under certain conditions, an object is photographed with the background out of focus and fuzzy, we say it has no "depth of field." Under different conditions, a picture may be taken with a clear, sharp background and with good "depth of field."

Men who live independently of God, go about their lives one-eyed, able to only see what is immediately before them. They have no "depth of field." It is easy to understand the "now generation;" they cannot see beyond the present. Prophecy puts present-day living in the context of future certainties. Prophecy is God's way of giving the Christian "depth of field."

In the ninth chapter of Daniel, Daniel concludes that the 70-year period of Israel's captivity is virtually over, and that return of Jews to their own land is imminent. With this hope, Daniel begins to pray for himself and his people. His prayer of confession and petition is answered, but certainly not in a way Daniel would have expected. God sent Gabriel, His angel, to give Daniel understanding and insight into the vision he had received, enabling him to see the near future in perspective. God wanted Daniel to understand the relationship between Israel's soon return to the land and the rebuilding of the temple—in the light of God's promise to restore His people and establish His kingdom on the earth. God wanted Daniel to know that Israel's imminent return to the land was not the coming of the kingdom of God.

Chapter 9 is a truly rich portion of Scripture. Daniel's prayer is a model worthy of our study, our meditation, and our imitation. Gabriel's appearance and announcement provides Daniel and his reader with an increasing level of understanding of the vision God had previously revealed. Verses 24-27 begin to spell out future events in detail rather than with vague, mysterious symbols. While all may not agree on the meaning of these verses, all Christians would agree they provide very specific information concerning the last times. For the first time in Daniel's prophecy, the suffering and death of Messiah is introduced.

These inspired words of prophecy speak of the days to come. They also speak of the coming Messiah, through whom God will provide the forgiveness of sins and bring to earth the kingdom of God. They speak of the hope which lies ahead for every believer. They speak of those future certainties which put present events in perspective.

The Structure of the Text

Three major divisions comprise this ninth chapter of Daniel: the introduction in verses 1-3; Daniel's prayer in verses 4-19; and the appearance and announcement of Gabriel in verses 20-27. The chapter may be outlined as follows:

- (1) The setting Verses 1-3
- (2) Daniel's prayer Verses 4-19
 - Daniel's prayer of confession Verses 4-15
 - Daniel's prayer of petition Verses 16-19
- (3) Gabriel's arrival and announcement Verses 20-27
 - Gabriel's arrival Verses 20-23
 - Gabriel's announcement Verses 24-27

The Setting (9:1-3)

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 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. 3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

Daniel tells us the events of this chapter occur during the “first year of Darius.” This is a significant time indicator. It means that Belshazzar has already died, the Babylonian empire has ended, and the Medo-Persian empire has now taken its place (see chapter 5). Daniel’s words inform us that the events of [Daniel 9](#) must have taken place at least 12 years after he received his second vision in chapter 8. It also means the events of this chapter occur at a time very near that described in [Daniel 6](#), as Daniel was rising to power and prominence and as his peers were arranging to bring about Daniel’s evening in the den of lions.

Could it be that the intrigue of Daniel’s peers in chapter 6, which abused the law to prohibit the practice of Daniel’s faith and led to his persecution, was but a foretaste of the things revealed to Daniel concerning the last days in chapter 9? Could it also be that Daniel’s prayers toward Jerusalem three times a day in chapter 6, which he would not cease to pray, were like his prayer in chapter 9?

Daniel was very conscious of the time because of the prophetic implications. When God created the nation Israel and brought them out of Egypt, He gave them His law and made a covenant with them. He promised to bless His people if they kept His covenant and curse them if they rejected and disobeyed. A part of the curse was the threat of captivity in a foreign land. A part of His promise was Israel’s restoration, if they repented and once again kept His covenant:

27 ‘Yet if in spite of this, you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, 28 then I will act with wrathful hostility against you; and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins.... 32 ‘And I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled over it. 33 ‘You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste. 34 ‘Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. 35 ‘All the days of {its} desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it ... 38 ‘But you will perish among the nations, and your enemies’ land will consume you. 39 ‘So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away with them. 40 ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me— 41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies— or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. 43 ‘For the land shall be abandoned by them, and shall make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, shall be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. 44 ‘Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. 45 ‘But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord” ([Leviticus 26:27-28](#), [32-35](#), [38-45](#); cf. also [Deuteronomy 28:63-66](#); [30:1-10](#); [31:16-18](#)).

Understanding the covenant God made with Israel, and God’s warning that the Israelites would disobey and be taken captive by foreign nations, Solomon anticipated a time when the Jewish captives would turn toward Jerusalem in prayer, expressing the very same kind of prayer recorded in [Daniel 9](#):

46 “When they sin against Thee (for there is no man who does not sin) and Thou art angry with them and dost deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near; 47 if they take thought in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and make supplication to Thee in the land of those who have taken them captive, saying, ‘We have sinned and have committed iniquity, we have

acted wickedly'; 48 if they return to Thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and pray to Thee toward their land which Thou hast given to their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name; 49 then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, 50 and forgive Thy people who have sinned against Thee and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against Thee, and make them objects of compassion before those who have taken them captive, that they may have compassion on them 51 (for they are Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou hast brought forth from Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace), 52 that Thine eyes may be open to the supplication of Thy servant and to the supplication of Thy people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to Thee. 53 "For Thou hast separated them from all the peoples of the earth as Thine inheritance, as Thou didst speak through Moses Thy servant, when Thou didst bring our fathers forth from Egypt, O Lord God" ([1 Kings 8:46-53](#)).

The inspired historical account of 2 Chronicles describes the very events God had prophetically foretold:

15 And the Lord, the God of their fathers, sent {word} to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; 16 but they {continually} mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy. 17 Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave {them} all into his hand. 18 And all the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought {them} all to Babylon. 19 Then they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its fortified buildings with fire, and destroyed all its valuable articles. 20 And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete. 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah—the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also {put it} in writing, saying, 23 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!'" ([2 Chronicles 36:15-23](#)).

Specifically, we are informed in the first verses of chapter 9 that Daniel's prayer in our text was the result of an observation Daniel had made concerning one of Jeremiah's prophecies. Jeremiah had warned the Jews for years that God's judgment was coming in the form of the Babylonian captivity. When it came, the false prophets tried to assure the people it would not be for long. Jeremiah warned that the length of Judah's captivity would be 70 years. After the 70 years of captivity ended, two things would happen: first, the Babylonians would be punished for their severity toward the Jews, and second, the Jews would return to Israel where they would rebuild the temple.

1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2 which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3 "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. 4 "And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear, 5 saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the Lord has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; 6 and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.' 7 "Yet you have not listened to Me," declares the Lord, "in order that you might provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm. 8 "Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words, 9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the Lord, 'and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants,

and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them a horror, and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10 ‘Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 ‘And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 ‘Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the Lord, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. 13 ‘And I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations. 14 ‘(For many nations and great kings shall make slaves of them, even them; and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands)’” ([Jeremiah 25:1-14](#); see also 29:1-14; [Zechariah 1:12-17](#)).

Until now, Daniel could not pray the prayer of chapter 9, for God had commanded the Jews not to pray for Israel (see [Jeremiah 7:16](#); [11:14](#); [14:11](#)). God had warned the Jews judgment was coming, a warning they ignored. Now, Babylonian captivity was inevitable, irreversible, and non-negotiable. Thus, the Jews were not to pray for Israel but for their captors ([Jeremiah 29:7](#)).

But here in chapter 9 in the first year of Darius, the period of divine judgment had ended. Babylon had been judged, and the time for the return of the Jews was drawing near. Now Daniel could pray for his people. He commits himself to pray faithfully, devoting himself to the task.

Is this not amazing? At the very time Daniel devotes himself to this high spiritual calling of prayer, supplication, and fasting on behalf of his people, he also makes significant advancement in his secular ministry of civil service:

1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge of the whole kingdom, 2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom ([Dan. 6:1-3](#)).

Imagine! Daniel did not set aside his devotion to his job, even though he devoted himself to prayer for his people. Intense prayer for the return and restoration of his people did not require a lack of faithfulness to his job and to the king. With the hope of Israel’s return to their land so bright, we might have expected Daniel to resign his job or at least lag in diligence. He did neither, but remained faithful to his employer and faithful to his God. By remaining faithful to his employer, Daniel remained faithful to His God.

Verses 1-3 have set the scene. With the death of Belshazzar came the end of the Babylonian empire. The rise of Darius to power commenced the Medo-Persian empire. Daniel realizes that the time of Israel’s chastening has ended, and the time for the Jews’ return to the land of Israel is imminent. So he begins to pray for the restoration of the nation Israel. His prayer, recorded in verses 4-19, may be typical of the prayers he faithfully offered up three times a day.

Daniel’s Prayer of Confession (9:4-15)

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, 5 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. 7 “Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which Thou hast driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against Thee. 8 “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. 9 “To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Thy law and turned aside, not obeying Thy voice; so the

curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. 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. 13 “As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth. 14 “Therefore, the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. 15 “And now, O Lord our God, who hast brought Thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and hast made a name for Thyself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked (emphasis mine).

While a fuller exposition of the riches of this text is not possible here, we shall seek to highlight the main features of this portion of Daniel’s prayer.

(1) These verses are the expression of Daniel’s repentance and confession of sin, for himself and for his fellow-Jews. Daniel minimizes neither his sin nor the sin of his fellow-Jews. He uses a wide variety of expressions to describe sin in its various manifestations. In verse 5, Daniel says they have “sinned,” “committed iniquity,” “acted wickedly,” “rebelled,” and “turned aside from God’s commandments and ordinances.” In verse 6, he adds that “we have not listened ... to the prophets.” In verse 7, Daniel refers to Israel’s “unfaithful deeds.” Israel’s bondage in Babylon is the consequence of her sin. Daniel’s confession mirrors the words of [2 Chronicles 36:15-16](#) (see above).

(2) The Word of God, as spoken by the prophets and recorded in the Holy Scriptures, is the standard by which Daniel’s sins, and those of his fellow-Israelites, are identified. Just as many terms were employed to describe Israel’s sins, many different terms are used in reference to divine revelation. God gave Israel His “commandments” (verse 4), His “commandments and ordinances” (verse 5), He spoke through the “prophets” (verse 6), “His teachings” (verse 10), His “Law” (verse 11), and the “Law of Moses” (verses 11, 13). God’s revelation was His “truth” (verse 13).

(3) Daniel understands Israel’s Babylonian captivity as the curse which has come upon the Jews because they broke God’s covenant made with them at Mount Sinai (verse 11).

(4) Israel’s sins are seen in contrast to the character of God. Daniel’s consciousness of his own sins, and those of his fellow-Israelites, was the result of his deep sense of the majesty of God as seen by His divine attributes. Consider his prayer: God is “great and awesome,” who “keeps His covenant and lovingkindness” (verse 4). God is not just “righteous in all He has done” (verse 14); “righteousness,” “compassion,” and “forgiveness” “*belong* to Him” (verses 7, 9). It is one thing to be righteous, forgiving, and compassionate; it is quite another to own these qualities. Owning them means they can only be obtained from God. These qualities are under His control.

(5) Daniel’s confession of sin is precisely what is required of Israel in order to be forgiven and restored.

40 “If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me— 41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies— or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land” ([Leviticus 26:40-42](#); see also [1 Kings 8:46-48](#)).

Daniel’s Prayer of Petition (9:16-19)

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.”

Beginning at verse 16, a change is evident in Daniel’s prayer. Consider the following observations which summarize this change and its implications.

(1) Daniel’s prayer in verses 16-19 moves from the confession of verses 4-15 to petition. In the earlier verses of Daniel’s prayer, Daniel asked for nothing. He acknowledged his sins and those of his people. He was agreeing with God’s Word and the righteousness of the judgment He had brought upon the Jews through the instrument of the nation of Babylon.

(2) Daniel’s request is according to God’s promises in Scripture. Daniel understood that the 70 years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah had been fulfilled and that now Israel could be restored. Just as Daniel’s confession fulfilled the Old Testament requirements for restoration, so did Daniel’s petition. He asked for that which God had promised through the Law and the Prophets.¹⁰¹

(3) Daniel’s petition is God-centered. At least 19 times, reference is made to God, while man is referenced approximately 11 times. Somehow, whether in confession or in petition, we always seem to find a way to make our prayers man-centered. In confession, we focus on *our* sins, while *Daniel focuses on God’s righteousness*. In petition, we focus on *our* needs, while *Daniel focuses on God’s purposes and His glory*.

(4) Daniel’s petitions are made in accordance with God’s character. Daniel has already acknowledged that God acted consistently with His character when He disciplined Israel by giving them over to the Babylonians. Now, Daniel appeals to God to act in accordance with His mercy and compassion, and His love for His people and His chosen place.

(5) Daniel’s request is for God to act in His own best interest and glory. An alarming tendency exists in Christian circles (often in contemporary Christian music) of thinking of God as being “there for me.” The fact is we are “here for Him.” He is using all creation, all mankind, for His glory. This includes both the salvation of His elect and the condemnation of the rest. Daniel’s petition is not for God to act in the way that best “meets man’s needs” (as perceived by man), but rather for God to act in His own best interest. When we act in our own best interest, it is almost always at the expense of others. But *when God acts in His own best interest, it is always for the good of His own* (see [Romans 8:28](#)). Daniel therefore petitions God to act for His sake (verses 17, 19). I wonder how radical would be the change in our prayer life if we petitioned God as Daniel has done.

(6) Daniel’s request is for grace, mercy, and compassion. Daniel realizes that Israel’s return, restoration, and future blessings are contingent upon God’s forgiveness. In this prayer, as it must have been in all of Daniel’s prayers and should be in all our prayers, sinful men cannot ask for anything but grace and mercy. Daniel’s petition is not on the basis of any merit of their own that he beseeches God to answer (verse 18). Some today would think this particular situation surely justifies a “name it and claim it” approach to God’s promises. Daniel did not think so. He did not *claim* anything. He *pleaded* for mercy, as any sinner should and must do.

(7) Daniel’s request is for more than what God is going to accomplish in the Jewish Babylonian captives’ return to their land. In the Old Testament Law and in the prophets, God promised to establish His eternal kingdom, a kingdom in which men would be perfectly restored, and in which righteousness would dwell. The promise of Israel’s return to the land of Canaan and the assurance that the temple would be rebuilt must have raised Daniel’s hopes that the end of this 70 year period of divine judgment meant the soon coming of the kingdom of God to the earth. This was not to be the case, and the appearance and announcement of Gabriel was meant to make this clear.

The Appearance of Gabriel (9:20-23)

20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 And he gave me instruction and talked with

me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23 "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision."

Gabriel's appearance interrupted Daniel who was still praying. With this fact and in the angel's own words, Gabriel's appearance and announcement was in answer to Daniel's prayers. There is a clear link between Daniel's prayer and Gabriel's prophetic announcement.

More than this, I believe there is a very clear connection between the arrival and announcement of Gabriel in chapter 9 and the vision Daniel received in chapter 8, even though it happened 12 or more years earlier. Gabriel appears by name in both chapters (8 and 9) and here only.¹⁰² The focus of both chapters 8 and 9 is on Israel, the last days, the opposition of the "little horn," and the "suffering of the saints."

When Daniel received his vision of the "ram" and the "goat" in chapter 8, he could not understand it. Gabriel was instructed to explain the vision to Daniel, but even after he had done so, the vision was still a mystery to him. The closing words of chapter 8 underscore this: *Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it (Daniel 8:27).*

When Gabriel appears in chapter 9, it is a number of years later. Gabriel's first appearance came rather early in the reign of Belshazzar. Gabriel's second appearance to Daniel came after the death of Belshazzar (see chapter 5) and in the first year of the reign of Darius. Gabriel's first appearance to Daniel came in the actual vision with Gabriel standing near to Daniel. During his second appearance, Gabriel did not come as a part of any vision. He informed Daniel that he had been instructed to come to give him "insight with understanding" (9:22), so that he could "gain understanding of the vision" (9:23).

What vision? What vision was Gabriel's appearance and announcement going to help Daniel to understand? No new vision is given to Daniel in chapter 9. Therefore, the vision Gabriel came to further explain and clarify was the vision of chapter 8. Daniel told us he did not understand it after Gabriel's first explanation (8:27). Now we are told that Gabriel has come to give Daniel insight to understand it. It is therefore now necessary for Daniel to understand the vision which eluded him for 12 years; Gabriel appears a second time to give a more complete explanation of its meaning.

The Announcement of Gabriel (9:24-27)

24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. 25 "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "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. 27 "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."

Years earlier, when Daniel experienced the vision of the ram and the goat (chapter 8), the meaning of this prophecy remained a mystery, even though Gabriel had given Daniel an explanation. Now, in light of the end of the 70 years of captivity, the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, and the soon return of the Jews to Israel, the meaning of this vision became more important. We are told three times in chapter 8, that the vision pertains to the end times (8:17, 19, 26). The return of the captive Jews to their own land was not a part of the events of the end times. The return and restoration of Israel was not the commencement of the kingdom of God. And so Gabriel's announcement to Daniel focuses on the vision of chapter 8 to show that the events in the near future were not to be viewed as the beginning of the end.

Daniel's attention was fixed on the period of 70 years which came to an end with the overthrow of the Babylonian empire. Gabriel speaks not of these 70 years but of 70 weeks.¹⁰³ Would Daniel and others think it was but a 70 year wait for the promised kingdom? It was 70 times 7. If 490 years must pass before some of the promises pertaining to the kingdom were fulfilled, then no one should confuse Israel's soon return to their land to be the commencement of the kingdom.

The timing of the kingdom needed clarification, but also the nature of the kingdom, especially the prerequisites for it, needed further explanation. The kingdom of God would indeed commence, but not with the return to the land of Israel, nor with the building of the temple. It would not even begin with the repentance of the nation Israel. Before the kingdom of God could come to the earth, there must be a solution to the great human dilemma of sin.

In verse 24, Gabriel informed Daniel that 70 weeks had been decreed "to finish the transgression," "to make an end of sin," "to make atonement for iniquity," and "to bring in everlasting righteousness." In his prayer, recorded in verses 4-19, Daniel confessed his sins and those of his people. But confession did not remove these sins nor produce the righteousness required for men to live in the presence of a holy God. Gabriel let Daniel know that after the passing of 490 years, the spiritual foundation for the kingdom of God would be laid. This foundation was the removal of sin and the provision of everlasting righteousness.

Verses 25-27 introduce the two main players and the major events which bring about the end of sin, of human kingdoms, and bring in everlasting righteousness and the kingdom of God. The imminent issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem would be a milestone in Jewish history. It would not commence the kingdom of God, but it would begin the count down for the commencement of that kingdom. After 483 years (62 weeks plus 7 weeks), the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt, not with ease but in times of distress. At this time, the promised Messiah will be "cut off" and apparently left with nothing. All hope of His becoming the King appears to be shattered with His being "cut off."

Another prince will arise, the counterpart of the Messiah. While the Messiah-Prince is "cut off" and His ascent to the throne of the kingdom seems thwarted, the other "prince" appears to prevail and to possess the earth and its peoples. The holy city and the sanctuary (the temple) will be destroyed by followers of this "prince." The holy place seems to come to an end much like that of the Messiah. Like a flood, the destruction and desolation of the city and the temple come upon it. There is a time of war, and desolation is inevitable.

The "prince" then makes a firm covenant with the masses for "a week" (or 7 years). This covenant seems to put men at ease and give them a false sense of confidence and security. In the middle of this time period, however, the "prince" breaks his covenant, putting a stop to the regular sacrifices and offerings. This prince comes "on the wing of abominations" and makes everything he comes into contact with desolate. He will bring about destruction. This destruction comes about by divine permission because it is a part of the divine plan.

In the fewest words possible, Daniel speaks of the sudden destruction of this evil prince. It is a destruction that has been divinely decreed. It is a complete destruction. The "one who makes desolate" is suddenly destroyed.

Conclusion

What Gabriel has to say in these few verses is not really new. It is but a further explanation of the vision Daniel received in chapter 8. Both [Daniel 8](#) and [Daniel 9:24-27](#) speak of the same events related to the last days, the end.

Gabriel is the interpreter in chapters 8 and 9. In both chapters, events concerning the end time are described—the same events. The little horn of chapter 8 is the "prince" of chapter 9, who concentrates his attention on the "beautiful land" of Israel (8:9) and who opposes and destroys some of the "host of heaven" (8:10) and the "holy people" (8:24; 9:24). He is the one who opposes even the Messiah, the Prince of princes, and by means of whom the Messiah is "cut off" (8:25; 9:25-26). He is also the one who "removes the regular sacrifice" (8:12), who puts a stop to "sacrifice and grain offering" (9:27). In the end, he is "broken without human agency" (8:25), as this one who makes desolate is suddenly and completely destroyed (9:27).¹⁰⁴

The end times and the coming of God's eternal kingdom were not imminent for Daniel or his fellow-Israelites. Certain necessary events had to precede the coming of the kingdom, and these things were not to take place for many years. Sin had to be atoned for and put away. Righteousness had to be provided for those who would enter into God's kingdom. This was to happen many years in the future through the substitutionary death of the Messiah, who would bear our sins on the cross of Calvary. In order for the Messiah to die, He would have to be opposed and even appear to have lost the struggle. Only after this preparatory work could God's kingdom come to the earth for His people.

In addition to this, God's purpose of bringing the good news of salvation to the Gentiles would have to be fulfilled. During the past 2,000 years, the gospel has been proclaimed, and many Gentiles have come to faith in Jesus as the Savior. Soon, when those Gentiles whom God has chosen have been saved, the times of the Gentiles will end, and the events of the last days will commence, leading up to the defeat of God's foes and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.

Are you ready for the King to come to the earth? Will you stand in the day of judgment? If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior, your Messiah, then you will not fear His coming; you will welcome Him as King. Because Jesus has already paid the penalty for sin and provided the righteousness God requires, all who are in Him by faith do not dread but look forward to His return.

Daniel's prayer provides a marvelous model for all who would repent and turn to God for salvation. His prayer begins with a recognition of the perfections and holiness of God and a recognition of our own sinfulness. It recognizes God is just in punishing us for our sins. It comes to God not on the basis of our own deeds or righteousness, but on the basis of His character and His covenant. He is merciful and compassionate, so we may come to Him for mercy and grace. He is also the One who has instituted a new covenant through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. All who come to Him for mercy, grace, and salvation through Christ He will not turn away or cast out. There is no other way to come to God and enter into His kingdom. Even the godly man Daniel knew this to be the way.

Just as our Lord suffered in order to enter into His glory, we are called to suffer for His sake before we enter into the glory of His kingdom. There will be persecution and opposition and difficult days ahead. We should not only expect these times, but we should stand firm and endure them. One of the reasons the last days are recorded in Scripture is to let the saints know what to expect so that we might look to Him for the ability to endure. May God give us the grace we need to be faithful in the difficult days ahead.

Chapter 9: Questions and Answers

(1) What is the structure of [Daniel 9](#)? Where does the emphasis of the chapter fall?

Verses 1-3 give us the setting for the events of the chapter; verses 4-19 record the prayer of Daniel; verses 20-27 are an account of Gabriel's arrival and his announcement of things to come.

The emphasis of this chapter falls on Daniel's prayer (16 verses), while a lesser emphasis is on the prophecy Daniel received (4 verses).

We should recognize that while more attention is given to Daniel's prayer, the prophecy of verses 24-27 is one of the key Old Testament messianic prophecies. In these four verses, very specific details are given covering the period from Daniel's day until the day of the Lord.

(2) What is the setting for [Daniel 9](#)?

The events of [Daniel 9](#) take place in the "first year of Darius" (verse 1). From chapter 5, we know that the end of the Babylonian kingdom has come to an end with the death of Belshazzar, and that Darius is the first king of the Medo-Persian empire. From chapter 6, we know that Daniel was looked on with favor by Darius and that he was on his way to the top of the administration with this king. We would also assume that Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 is typical of the kind of prayer he would not cease making toward Jerusalem, which resulted in his being cast into the den of lions.

(3) What is the basis for Daniel's prayer in chapter 9?

Daniel's prayer is occasioned by two major factors: (1) the prophecy of Jeremiah that the Jews would be held captive in Babylon for 70 years, and (2) Daniel's awareness that this time of judgment had come to a close. While God had forbidden prayer for Israel's blessing during the time of her judgment (see [Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11](#)), now that her time of judgment was over, Daniel could pray for the return, restoration, and blessing of his people.

The Old Testament Scriptures also provided Daniel with instruction concerning the content of his prayer. The Law of Moses foretold Israel's disobedience and her foreign bondage. God also promised to restore His people if they repented of their sins and returned to Him in faith and obedience (See [Leviticus 26:27-28](#), 32-35, 38-45; [Deuteronomy 28:63-66; 30:1-10; 31:16-18](#)). Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple also spoke of Israel's future repentance and prayer from the place of their captivity, as they prayed toward Jerusalem and the temple ([1 Kings 8:46-53](#)). Jeremiah indicated that when the 70 years of divine judgment was completed, He would punish Babylon and restore His people ([Jeremiah 25:1-14](#)). It was on the basis of this and other Old Testament revelation that Daniel prayed.

(4) What are the major elements of Daniel's prayer in chapter 9?

Daniel's prayer falls into two major categories: confession (verses 4-15) and petition (verses 16-19). The prayer of confession focused on the character of God, contrasting it with the sinfulness of Daniel and the nation Israel. The prayer of petition is again rooted in the character of God—His grace, mercy, compassion, and faithfulness to His covenant—and in spite of the sinfulness of the Israelites. Daniel made it clear that his petition was not based upon any merit on the part of the Jews. He beseeches God to act in His own best interest.

(5) What relationship is there between the prophecy of [Daniel 9:24-27](#) and previous visions and prophecies in Daniel?

I understand the prophecies in Daniel (and the rest of the Scriptures) to be revealed progressively. This means that as one proceeds through the prophecies of Daniel, each adds to what had been revealed by the previous prophecies. Nebuchadnezzar's vision in [Daniel 2](#) broadly describes the four major Gentile kingdoms up to the coming of Messiah (the stone), who destroys earthly kingdoms and establishes the eternal kingdom of God. Daniel's vision of the four beasts in chapter 7 is a revelation concerning the same four kingdoms as symbolized by the four portions of the statue in chapter 2. The emphasis in this chapter falls more on the final Gentile kingdom and the eternal kingdom which follows. The vision in chapter 8 dwells on the second and third kingdoms of the previous visions. The "horns" of chapters 7 and 8 begin an emphasis on a king with great power with satanic characteristics, who opposes God, the Messiah, the people of God, and the holy place. He will apparently succeed for a time, but will suddenly be destroyed before the coming of Christ and the establishment of the eternal kingdom.

I understand the revelation of [Daniel 9:24-27](#) to be a further explanation and clarification of the vision in chapter 8. Even after Gabriel explained the vision to Daniel, he did not understand its meaning (8:27). A number of years later, Gabriel returned in response to Daniel's prayer to make the meaning of this vision clear to him. Since Gabriel told Daniel he had been sent to help him gain understanding of "the vision" (9:23) and there is no vision described in chapter 9, I understand the "vision" to be that of chapter 8. [Daniel 9:24-27](#) therefore gives further insight into the "little horn" of chapter 8, who opposes (and even appears to defeat) the Messiah. These verses also give some very specific prophecies concerning the time and circumstances of the Messiah's first coming.

(6) In the context of Daniel's life and the history of the Jews, what message did this prophecy have for the Jews of Daniel's day?

The appearance and announcement of Gabriel, recorded in chapter 9, came in the "first year of Darius" (verse 1). The end of the Chaldean or Babylonian empire has come, and the time for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem is imminent. To prevent any misconceptions that this return is the commencement of God's eternal kingdom, God gives this revelation to Daniel through Gabriel, indicating that the "new" Jerusalem will not be the final "New Jerusalem" and that the temple to be rebuilt will also be destroyed. The message, in short, is that

the Jews should not see the promised kingdom as imminent, and that not only much time but much suffering will precede it.

(7) How does prophecy help to change our perspective?

We are to live in the present in the light of God’s promises for the future (see [Hebrews 11](#)). Present circumstances often appear to contradict the promises of God concerning the future. While the release of the Jews from their captivity was a joyous occasion, it was not the commencement of the kingdom of God. And while the 70 years of suffering in Babylon was coming to an end, there was still much suffering ahead for the people of God. Present prosperity and ease is not a promise there will be no more suffering, just as present suffering does not negate the future promised blessings of God. Prophecy helps us to view the present in light of the future, which God has planned and promised and which will surely come to pass. Our understanding of the future helps us to see the present, passing things of life in the light of that which is eternal, that which we see now in the light of what God says about the future.

(Footnote 4) Overlapping of Chapters 8 and 9:

Daniel 8	Daniel 9
The “little horn” (8:12-14, 22- 25)	The “prince who is to come” (v. 26)
Gabriel is the interpreter (v. 16)	Gabriel explains the vision (v. 21)
Concerns events of the end time(vv. 7,19,26)	Events bring matters to conclusion (v. 24)
Opposes the “Prince of princes”	Messiah the Prince will be cut off (vv. 25-26)
Removes regular sacrifice (v. 12)	Stops sacrifice and grain offering (v. 27) “People of prince” destroy Jerusalem and the sanctuary (v. 26)
Destroys many (vv. 24, 25)	Destruction, abominations, desolation (v. 27)
Horn broken without human agency (v. 25)	Complete destruction poured out on him (v. 27)

101 See, for example, [Deuteronomy 30:1-10](#) and [1 Kings 8:46-53](#).

102 Daniel makes a point of telling us in chapter 9 that this Gabriel who appeared to Daniel in chapter 9 was the very same person who appeared to him in chapter 8 (see 9:21).

103 Literally, the expression is “seventy sevens.” Bible students differ as to the exact meaning of this expression, but many understand it to refer to 70 periods of 7 years, or 490 years, which some have shown exactly corresponds to the time when our Lord presented Himself as Messiah to the nation Israel in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

104 The overlapping of chapters 8 and 9 is summarized in a chart at the end of this lesson.