

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Chapter 9 – Part 1

- *Daniel chapter 9 is another remarkable chapter in scripture. Some have called it “the greatest chapter in the book, and one of the greatest chapters of the entire Bible.” It is essentially found in two sections, one containing an amazing prayer of Daniel, and the other the answer to his prayer – one of the most important pieces of prophecy to understand end times.*
- *If you were making a list of scripture passages that included the top 10 prophecies in all scripture, this might very well top the list. If you were making a similar list of the top 10 scriptures on prayer, this would certainly be included.*
- *Because of the dual nature of this chapter we are going to divide it into those two sections. This first section will contain verses 1-19, the prayer of Daniel. Part 2 of this chapter study will contain the last eight verses of chapter 9, which contain the famously referenced “Daniel’s 70 weeks” (v. 24-27)*
- *When most study this chapter, their focus is on the prophecy of the “70 Weeks” (literally 70 sevens). While this is a very important prophetic message, it should not overshadow what can be learned from Daniel’s prayer. This is one of the reasons we are separating this study.*
- *Daniel has been reading the book of Jeremiah and understands that the period of ordained captivity is 70 years. That time is over, and Daniel wants to know what is next. He pleads for God to restore His glory to Jerusalem. We should also remember that Daniel has been shaken and disturbed by the visions and prophecies in chapters 7 and 8. He is concerned about the future of Israel.*



¹In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—²in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number

of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

- *“...first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans...”* God is very careful about providing secular dates to align His Word. Especially in this chapter this is important, as some amazing prophecies are linked to secular dates and decrees. This “Ahasuerus” is not the same as the one listed in the book of Esther, with the same name. He was born much later. The “lineage of the Medes” is to indicate that this Darius is Median, not the Persian king of the same name. This prayer and dream of Daniel’s happens in the first year after the fall of the Babylonian empire. He knows the time is near for the end of the captivity, and approaches God in prayer about this.
- *“...understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet...”* Daniel obviously had copies of at least some of the Old Testament writings. Babylon was a huge modern city, known for its technology and academics, so it is likely he had access to all of them. At any rate, he has been reading from the prophet Jeremiah, and understands that the captivity is now over. He wants to know what will happen next.

- ***“He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem ...”*** Daniel understands that God had decreed a 70-year period of captivity for the Jews. The date at this time is about 539-540 BC. He is probably around 83 to 90 years old now. He was captured and taken into captivity in the first siege of Jerusalem in 606 BC and was probably a teenager at the time. The seventy years is either over, or almost over, at this time.
- The **passages in Jeremiah** Daniel may have read include verse 25:11, a clear indication of a 70-year captivity: ***“And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”***
- He probably also read a few chapters past this place to some very familiar words: ***“For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.”*** (Jeremiah 29:10-14)

Now we come to the incredible prayer of Daniel, one of the most comprehensive in all scripture. In order to get the most out of this study, **read the prayer in its entirety now** (verses 3-19) before moving on in this study.

³Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. ⁴And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, ⁵“we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.

Throughout the book of Daniel, we see him as a man of prayer. He always prayed first. His life is a life of prayer. There is much to learn from this and the other prayers in this book. We will highlight the points we should remember from this remarkable prayer.

- ***“Then I set my face toward the Lord God...”*** Daniel has just been reading about the captivity in the Word of God, through the prophet Jeremiah. He understood many things, but still had many questions. The word “then” indicates that Daniel’s immediate next step was to seek God in this matter. We should also note here that Daniel set about this prayer with great purpose.

PRAYER POINT 1: When in question, ask God. Every time, for anything. Like Daniel, when we read something we don’t quite understand in His Word, God delights in revealing the answers to us through His Holy Spirit, our best teacher. And for all of life’s decisions, remember to seek His counsel first.

- ***“...to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes...”*** Daniel had a specific purpose in mind when he approached God. He had a request. He wanted to know Israel’s future now that the captivity was over. Also, he treated this very seriously and got himself in the right place with God first. He fasted and wore sackcloth and ashes (*a Jewish symbol of mourning, in this case, mourning over the sins of his people Israel, and humility*). Sackcloth is scratchy and unpleasant.



- The word used here for *prayer* (Hebrew, *t^ephillâh*) is literally “intercession.” Daniel would be interceding for his people in this prayer. The word for *supplications* (Hebrew, *tachănûnâh*) literally means “earnest prayer or entreaty.” God loves to “converse” with us throughout our days, but there are times when serious prayer requires serious preparation and the right attitude. For Daniel, the prayers for his people were serious and solemn, and required him to fast first, then to don the symbolic clothing of one in mourning.

PRAYER POINT 2: Be purposeful about prayer. Daniel planned for this prayer time through his fasting and wearing of sackcloth. This was no impromptu “arrow” prayer for him. It was also not a “rote” prayer, something memorized and repeated to God in ritual. Prayer is real, and with purpose. Daniel understood this. He took time to prepare and have purpose in his prayer.

PRAYER POINT 3: Approach God with the right attitude. Serious prayers or even just “conversation” we must never forget who God is. He is El Elyon, the Most High God. He is Sovereign. He is so much bigger and majestic than we can imagine. We cannot approach a holy God without the right covering (the blood of Jesus first) and the right attitude. In the case of specific intercession and prayers of pleading on our own behalf or for others, the added steps of fasting and other personal preparation may be helpful to get our attitudes right before Him.

- ***“...and made confession...we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments”*** When we pray, we come to the God of the Universe, the Most High God. There is none higher than He. Daniel began by making confession to God, of all the sins he knew of. Although we don’t hear it here, Daniel may have had his own personal sins he confessed. The ones he is most concerned about in this prayer are the sins of his people. He confessed those sins before God. Daniel did not say “they” in these confessions. He included himself in “we” and “our” found throughout this prayer. Daniel acknowledged that he and his people were not right with God, and he wanted to be right. He named the sins he was aware of, and covered the rest of them with the phrase “we have done wickedly and rebelled...” Sin is rebellion toward God. He labels each sin: iniquity, wickedness, rebellion, disobedience, and refusal to hear God’s prophets. Four times in the chapter (vv. 5, 8, 11, 15) Daniel acknowledges Israel’s sins, but always includes himself among them.

PRAYER POINT 4: Get right with God. Confession is a big part of this (point 3 above is the other part). Confession is not just about rattling off our long laundry list of sins. It is truly being sorrowful over those sins, regretting them “big time” and having a repentant heart. Our sins stand in the way of any requests we wish to make of God, and before He can hear us, we must be covered with the cleansing blood of His Son, available through repentant confession.

- ***“O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments,...”*** Daniel exalts and praises God here, recognizing His character as an awesome God, one who always keeps His promises, one who extends mercy to those who Love Him and keep His commandments. Daniel is praying, interceding for his people, and is essentially requesting that mercy for the Jews. It is likely that Daniel also read the book of Lamentations by Jeremiah, and these words in particular: ***“This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!” The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*** (Lamentations 3:21-26) We should also “recall to our minds” these words daily. They are excellent reminders during prayer.

PRAYER POINT 5: Understand who God is. It is important to completely understand the nature of the God we approach. He is a God of mercy, but He is also a God of justice (and wrath, if called for). He is awesome, beyond our comprehension. There is nothing impossible to Him, and He expects certain things of us. We must approach God with this understanding, and it is important to acknowledge this in our prayers. Praising Him and His attributes is an important part of prayer. Prayer is not just asking, it is telling our awesome God that we know Him and love Him.

PRAYER POINT 6: Serious prayer should involve sacrifice. Daniel fasted and denied himself food for this intercession. Fasting is a prayer concept found throughout the scriptures. Not all prayer requires fasting, though it is often useful for intercession. God also gives us the concept of the “sacrifice of praise.” Hebrews 13:15 states *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”* We can also call this praise a “thank offering.” In the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple, God’s people could only approach Him with an offering. Today we can approach Him because we are covered by the blood of the Eternal Sacrifice, Jesus Himself. But God also desires our sacrifice, which is our hearts, our thanks, our praises. Sacrifice implies denying ourselves, or bringing something of value to God. The thing He values most is our hearts, completely given to Him. The sacrifice of praise means that we deny ourselves any praise, and give it all to Him. It is indeed all about Him, not about us.

PRAYER POINT 7: Prayer is personal, and requires a personal relationship with God. Throughout the book of Daniel it is obvious that Daniel knows God well. He has a personal relationship with Him. Many people can’t believe that is possible. But it is, and it *must* be. That relationship for us, on this side of the cross, is through His Son, Yeshua. God knows us personally, and we need to know Him personally. That means a relationship. Daniel’s prayers were very personal.

⁶“Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. ⁷“O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.



- Daniel continues his intercession for himself and all Israel by **getting more specific in naming Israel’s sins.** They didn’t listen to God’s prophets. He also acknowledges that God is perfectly righteous in His judgment of Israel.
- *“O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day...”* Daniel **contrasts God and the people, a broken relationship.** He says God is righteous, and the people are shamed.
- Verse 7 pretty much includes **all of Israel in this shameful condition** - those who are nearby him in Babylon, those who were driven off to far countries, those former inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel. This is a prayer for corporate forgiveness and corporate mercy.

⁸“O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. ⁹“To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. ¹⁰“We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. ¹¹“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.

- Daniel apparently feels compelled to **continue confessing the sins of his people**. He is overwhelmed and greatly sorrowed by these sins. He knows they are many. He knows they are grievous before a holy God. He knows they are responsible for the destruction of the Temple and the captivity in Babylon. He knows that God warned the people through the prophets. He is heavily weighted with the burden of these sins and desires to express them before God as much and as well as he can. He is also justifying God for His actions against Israel – for dispersing them and judging them guilty.
- *“...to us belongs shame of face... To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness...”* Daniel continues the comparison, the great gap between God and the Jews because of sin.
- **COMMENTARY: Prayer is not a gimmick by which we charm or coerce God into giving us what we want. Prayer is a sober-minded acknowledgment of our true situation before the Lord and an admission of our need for His divine help. Are you prepared to pray like Daniel?**

PRAYER POINT 8: Acknowledge, and “own” the truth of any given situation, or any given sin. In order to receive forgiveness for ourselves or others, we must understand, acknowledge and be accountable for our sins. We must understand, and show God that we know, that the relationship is broken and we are responsible for that. In the case of intercession for something other than forgiveness, the truth we must recognize and acknowledge is the fact that only God can do what we are asking. We need Him to intervene; we need Him to correct what is wrong because we can’t. We *need* His mercy, but we do not deserve it.

- *“...therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.”* Daniel understands that the plight of his people was the result of a prophecy (“the curse”) that God promised before they entered the Promised Land. He told them, through the final “sermons” of Moses, that He was bringing them into a land set aside for them. They had a choice to make. Obey Him and He would give them abundance and blessing. Disobey Him and He would remove them from the land and discipline them. These prophecies can be found in Deuteronomy 28. As Moses wrapped up these messages from God, he spoke the words that God gave him: *“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live...”* (Deuteronomy 30:19) At that time, the people did not choose life, and received exactly what God promised. However, Daniel also knew of God’s promise that if they returned to Him, He would return them to the land. This is the whole purpose in Daniel’s prayer.

¹²*“And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³“As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. ¹⁴“Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. ¹⁵“And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly!”*

- Daniel gets even more specific and distraught about the sins of Israel. He traces God’s attempts to warn the people, and mentions again the warnings in the Law of Moses. He again indicates that God is completely righteous in what He has done to Israel.

- *“...yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth...”* Daniel acknowledges that in spite of all the warnings, Israel has not sought God’s face and forgiveness. They have not gone to Him in prayer, or turned away from their sins. They have not fully understood and accepted His truths. God is righteous, but the people are not. Daniel is fervently acknowledging their sins, and is earnestly seeking God’s wisdom in this situation. He again contrasts the people’s sins with God’s faithfulness, making a mighty name for Himself by delivering His people out of Egypt.
- *“...we have sinned, we have done wickedly!”* You can almost hear the passion and anguish in Daniel’s voice as he pleads the case of his people before the Most High God. He is ashamed of all Israel, yet still proclaims the righteousness of God – the “rightness” of all He does. The contrast of God’s greatness opposed to the people’s sins runs throughout this impassioned prayer.

PRAYER POINT 9: Be honest and straightforward. We cannot hide anything from God. He sees our hearts and knows us better than we do. He knows more about any given situation than we do. He is fully aware of the truth. Daniel honestly and candidly admitted the sins of Israel before God, in a very emotional heartfelt way. Daniel’s grasp on reality is plain here, as well as his sorrow over it. This honesty and straightforward approach applies to both our confession, and to our requests. Don’t dance around the bush, and don’t apply generic requests. Pray specifically, confess specifically.

¹⁶*“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. ¹⁷“Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate.*

- After confession and ownership of sin, **Daniel now lays out his requests.** He asks God to turn His anger away from His city of Jerusalem. Because of the destruction to the city by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the people, Jerusalem was desolate, and a shame to the Jews in the eyes of everyone around them. That saddened and burdened Daniel, that the city of His



God was a reproach. Notice that Daniel’s first request is for God’s holiness and presence to shine once again in Jerusalem, so that the world might see His glory, and it would not shame Him. He does not first pray for the people. He prays that God’s city will not be a reproach to the people around it. He wants God’s reputation (His glory) restored!

PRAYER POINT 10: Desire that God is glorified. Whatever we pray for, we should also desire that through the answers, our God is glorified, that He is given the credit, that His reputation is known and increased in the world. Even when our sins are forgiven, God is glorified when we live repentant and obedient lives in this world. In a miraculous situation, in any answer to prayer when God delivers, He is glorified when the world knows of His mighty deeds. Glorifying God is our purpose here. It is interesting to note that the Greek word for “glory” is *doxa*, which has to do with revealing and knowing the reputation and character of someone. It is their honor or renown. When God is glorified, He is known for who He really is. His character and reputation are known. We should desire the world knows God, He is “glorified” through our prayer requests. Daniel’s first request was that God be glorified again in Israel and Jerusalem.

¹⁸“O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. ¹⁹“O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

- Daniel pleads for God to hear his prayer, to look upon the desolation of Jerusalem and to forgive Israel for its many sins against Him, not because they deserve it (they didn’t, and we don’t either), but **because He is merciful.**
- *“...for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies ...”* Daniel makes it very clear that he is asking God to hear and act not based on Israel’s repentance and turning back to God. At this point it seems clear that has not yet happened. Well, at least one in Israel did – Daniel. Perhaps there were others praying just as earnestly. However, Daniel does not indicate that all of Israel had turned back to God and away from their wickedness. He is asking for God to hear, not because of the people’s righteousness, but because He is merciful, His reputation is at stake! Daniel’s basis for his plea to God is because of WHO God is, not what his people have done.
- *“O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”* Daniel closes this powerful prayer in a very emotional appeal for God not to tarry or delay in answering. He knows the 70 years of captivity is over (he knows this from reading the word of God...something we should pay attention to!). Now he appeals to God not to delay in their restoration, and to the restoration of the glory of Jerusalem. His primary concern is seen in the phrase *“Your people are called by Your name.”* The Jews were shamed because of their situation as captives in Babylon and a destroyed capital city. The world laughed at them. Daniel is concerned about God’s reputation because of this. He wants God to act to restore His “good name” among the peoples of the world. This is seen in the words *“do not delay for your own sake...”* For Daniel, the forgiveness and restoration of his people is forever linked with the glory of his God. THAT is his primary concern.
- **COMMENTARY: Prayer is the only force that has penetrated outer space to the throne of God. Sir Isaac Newton said that he could take up a telescope and look at the nearest star, but he could put down the telescope, get down on his knees and penetrate the outer heavens to the very throne of God. Prayer for Daniel was a real exercise of soul in spiritual travail. Such prayer is arduous work. It requires effort and endurance.**

In part 2 of this chapter, we will see that Daniel’s powerful prayer received a very quick answer!

