

## “An Easter Prayer” Daniel 9:1-23

3.31.24

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Freedom! Barabbas was set free. He didn't deserve it...but Jesus took his place. Now, we don't know if Barabbas ever surrendered his life and chose to follow Jesus, but we do know that Jesus became his substitute...and that's exactly what Jesus did for us when He died on a Roman cross 2000 years ago.

Today is the Sunday that we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...we celebrate the fact that Jesus conquered what man can't conquer: Death. Jesus conquered death because He is not just a man...He is God who became flesh and dwelled among us. He was born just like we were, and died...but, He didn't stay day. We can't do that. He did.

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Now listen to me...believing that fact and surrendering your life and following Jesus WILL SET YOU FREE...not because you're bound with ropes...but because you and I were born sinners and we can't escape the penalty of sin: eternal separation from God. And that's why Jesus came... He came on a rescue mission to save us and reconcile us to God, to bring us home to that promised land we call heaven.

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The prophet Daniel knew something about a promised land...a place that as a Hebrew, had been promised by God to his ancestors going all the way back to Abraham. A land that Daniel had been removed from and taken as a slave into captivity into a place called Babylon. Daniel was a teenager when all of this happened to him. His life changed forever. He never returned home, but his people would and Daniel knew this would take place because of the prophecies recorded by the prophet Jeremiah. Yet, in reading these prophecies, Daniel was grieved for his people because he was reminded why they had been hauled off to Babylon as slaves in the first place...and that's because of their rebellion...a rebellion that would lead to 70 years of punishment in a pagan land!

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Today, we're going to see Daniel's prayer for his people...one of the most heartfelt prayers in the Bible. Let's begin with the first two verses.

### **Daniel 9:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— <sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

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Now you'll remember, the book of Daniel is not written chronologically...so, here we are back in the days of Darius the Mede... It's 539 BC...the children of Israel are nearing the end of their time in Babylon, where they've spent almost 70 years. And Daniel knew about those 70 years from the writings of the prophet Jeremiah.

### **Jeremiah 25:11**

<sup>11</sup> This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

### **Jeremiah 29:10**

<sup>10</sup> “For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

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Now knowing all of this, leads Daniel to pray:

### **Daniel 9:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. <sup>4</sup> I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great

and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

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Let me ask you a question. After reading about Daniel's fervency...would someone describe you as a person of prayer? Daniel was constantly praying...praying for wisdom to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream back in chapter 2...praying three times a day...going against the edict of the government, and then praying in the lion's den in Daniel 6. He was a man of constant prayer, and we see that yet again.

So, how did he pray? With fasting and with sackcloth and ashes, as he acknowledged who God is... He called him "great and awesome God," and that can be translated as "dreadful." Meaning someone you don't trifle with...someone worthy of reverence and honor. Daniel is not flippant with God... He knows He's talking to the God of the universe...the One who created all things!

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Let me say this... As I sought to understand Daniel's prayer, this thought came to mind: If Daniel believed the writings of Jeremiah and he realized the people are soon to be coming out of their captivity, then why is he so greatly concerned and praying with sackcloth and ashes? What's he so worried about?

Well, he's worried about the trouble that's going to befall the nation even after they return to Israel. As Daniel reads Jeremiah's prophecies, he discovers that throughout the remainder of history and time, the nation of Israel will endure many trials and hardships. (As they are even now, today.) Daniel is so grieved about the troubles to come that he prays for God's mercy.

#### **Daniel 9:5-6**

<sup>5</sup>we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. <sup>6</sup>We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

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He confesses. He says: "We have sinned." He includes himself. What is confession? It's acknowledging to God what He already knows...we agree with God about our sin. Daniel, here, identifies himself with his ancestors who rebelled against God. And he, (like us going to the grocery store...makes a list...so he won't forget anything.) He gives a list:

- 1. We have sinned**
  - 2. Done wrong**
  - 3. Acted wickedly**
  - 4. Rebelled**
  - 5. Turned aside from your commandments and rules**
  - 6. Not listened to your prophets**
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Church, we, like Daniel, need to acknowledge our sin before God...list it out...come clean...yes, that can be gut-wrenching, but he already knows it. Satan wants us to live in guilt and condemnation...but, God wants us to come to Him so that He can clean us up. He's not waiting to beat you...He's waiting to hug you! Yes, Daniel's in anguish, even though he knows the people are soon to be going home...trouble awaits, so he prays. Now watch how Daniel describes God's righteousness, in contrast to their sinfulness.

#### **Daniel 9:7-14**

<sup>7</sup>To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. <sup>8</sup>To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers,

because we have sinned against you. <sup>9</sup> To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him <sup>10</sup> and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. <sup>12</sup> He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us,<sup>[a]</sup> by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.

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You know what struck me? Daniel made no excuses for his sins or the sins of the people. He owned it. How about us? The reason we don't confess our sins is because we don't want to admit we're wrong. We're excuse makers...I know I can be. I'm a pretty good defense attorney for why I'm right. There's no humility in that...and we can't come to God on a high horse...we've got to come on our knees!

No, Daniel doesn't go down the path of excuse-making... He owns the sin of his people, because he knows what the law is... You say: "The Law? What law?" As you're turning, I'll ask: Do you know what an "if, then statement" is? It's often used by computer programmers. If this happens, then you can conclude you will get this result. That's what we see in the Mosaic Law regarding the people of Israel and their obedience. Here comes the: "IF."

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#### **Deuteronomy 28:15-20**

<sup>15</sup> "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. <sup>16</sup> Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. <sup>17</sup> Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. <sup>18</sup> Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. <sup>19</sup> Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. <sup>20</sup> "The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.

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Here come the consequences of disobedience.

#### **Deuteronomy 28:64-68**

<sup>64</sup> "And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. <sup>65</sup> And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. <sup>66</sup> Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. <sup>67</sup> In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. <sup>68</sup> And the Lord will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer."

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**If you obey, then good. If you don't, then tragedy. Go back to Daniel 9.** You saw the mention of Egypt, and the reminder that it was God who delivered the people out of Egypt. Watch Daniel bring up Egypt in his prayer.

### **Daniel 9:15-18**

<sup>15</sup> And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. <sup>16</sup> “O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. <sup>17</sup> Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord,<sup>[b]</sup> make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. <sup>18</sup> O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.

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Can you feel the anguish and passion of Daniel's prayer? He asked for mercy, knowing what was coming because of the four-beast vision. Remember that?



Those beasts representing kingdoms that would ravish the world. Daniel was grieved by what he saw coming! You know we can look around at the world today and be tremendously grieved and downhearted about what we see coming. It's a tumultuous time in the world...but when has it not been tumultuous? Most of recorded history is marked by turmoil, wars, upheaval. And yet, through it all, God extends His goodness, His mercy and His righteousness to us. And today that comes to us by way of His Son Jesus. Because from the nation of Israel would come the Christ, the One who would pay our sin debt...so we could be set free...like Barabbas!

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Listen, to be set free, you must repent and confess your sin...just as Daniel showed us. Watch!

### **Daniel 9:19**

<sup>19</sup> O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

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DO IT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE... Please God: answer my prayer because of WHO YOU ARE and because of the fact that you promised to care for your people. Your name is at stake, Lord! Your holy hill, your city, your people...act because of your name and **for your own sake!** What a plea! Now get this! As soon as Daniel said, “Do it for your own sake,” BANG...an angel from heaven heads out to Daniel!

### **Daniel 9:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God. <sup>21</sup> while I was speaking in

prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.

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That would have been around 3 pm, (evening prayer). Gabriel came! Who is he? We know him is the messenger angel who would come and tell Joseph and Mary that Jesus was coming. Bang... Gabriel shows up in answer to Daniel's prayer and he's going to help Daniel understand what he's seeing...verse 22

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**Daniel 9:22-23**

<sup>22</sup> He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. <sup>23</sup> At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

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FOR YOU ARE GREATLY LOVED. And that's how you are on this Easter Sunday. Greatly loved! A love shown by God, the Father, who would allow His Son to be slaughtered on our behalf. "For God so loved the world, He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Remember last week:



How do you come to Jesus? Just like Daniel's prayer. **Stand w/me and repeat:**

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- **We have sinned**
  - **Done wrong**
  - **Acted wickedly**
  - **Rebelled**
  - **Turned aside from your commandments and rules**
  - **Not listened to your prophets**
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Be seated and bow with me...

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