

XV. Daniel in Biblical Perspective
“With Daniel and the School of Prayer”

Daniel 9:1-19

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Before we look at our text in Daniel 9 for this study, I want to make a couple of points. The book of Daniel, very appropriately should be divided up into two parts. The first being the Memoirs of Daniel that is his life experiences where he has lived at least through four kings and through two kingdoms, the Babylonian Kingdom and the Medo-Persian Kingdom. He is being used as one of God’s instruments to send the people back. In other words, Daniel is there from the first deportation of Israel to the Babylonian captivity through their returning back under Cyrus, more specifically under Darius, when they would be sent back. The second section of the book of Daniel is the visions that are given to Daniel. We have seen two visions of Daniel.

The first six chapters took us all the way to the Medo-Persian Empire with the destruction of Babylon and the institution of the Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus. In these chapters we learned like Daniel what it means to be in the world but not of the world and how you can be faithful to God’s Word yet connect to the society without being conformed to it. Daniel gave us a lot of lessons as well as some extraordinary pictures that point to the coming of Christ to redeem His people out of a fallen world.

Now we are in the section about the visions that are given to Daniel which are looking to the future. We had our first vision in Daniel 7 and this chapter looked at the scope of history going from the Babylonian Empire ahead to the Medo-Persian Empire. That vision was given in the years of Belshazzar which was still in the Babylonian Empire before the Medo-Persian Empire had arrived. What happens in the second section of Daniel is that we recycle back into the Babylonian chronology and in the times of Belshazzar. That vision pointed to the flow of history and how there will rise up out of the kingdoms of this world an anti-Christ who will use political, economic, and military power and it will be brought in opposition to the Lord through this picture of a little horn.

Then we went to Daniel 8 and we saw a second vision. The second vision also ended up with a little horn. This was toward the third year of Belshazzar’s reign where he is given another vision. This vision is saying that not only do I want you to see the scope of history where the Medo-Persian Empire is coming, then a Grecian Empire is coming, and then a Roman Empire, but then I want you to see the time of the end - not the time of the end of time but the time of the end of indignation. That vision pointed to another little horn and it’s a little horn that points further to the anti-Christ but this little horn will come about before the coming of Christ the first time. That little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, the one who will bring the abomination of desolation as he takes over. Antiochus Epiphanes is a descendant from the Grecian Empire after the death of Alexander the Great and the division and particularly the Seleucid division.

The Grecian Empire will be divided into four parts as Daniel 8 says, long before it ever happened. As it divides the one in the south and toward the east is the Seleucid Empire and a series of rulers will culminate in Antiochus Epiphanes, who will even call himself god, raise himself up against God, will profane the temple of God, kill the people of God and he becomes a type of the anti-Christ as he is one of the many anti-Christ that

point to the anti-Christ. It won't be until Antiochus Epiphanes is done away with by the hand of God after three and a half years, after he has put Zeus in the Holy of Holies that the end of the indignation of Israel will occur. That causes Daniel great concern because this is going to stretch on literally for hundreds of years while he is in this Babylonian captivity.

Daniel 8:27 says, *And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.* Daniel was the master of a wonderful, psychological ploy that all the counselors say don't do but Daniel did. I'm so glad Daniel did because I find this in my life as well. It's called the marvelous instrument of denial. Daniel is overcome by this vision and to know that the time of indignation against Israel is going to stretch on and on and on, all the way to this Antiochus Epiphanes, through the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, the downfall of the Grecian Empire and then beyond that. So he is appalled, sick but he gets up and goes to do his business. He gets up the next day and goes and does what he is supposed to do for the King. He is still responsible. He doesn't use his deep concerns as an excuse not to be faithful.

So what do you do when you have concerns after you have gotten the message like that? What do I do? I know what we need to do. We need to do what Daniel did. Daniel didn't just worry himself sick. Philippians 4:6 says, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* So Daniel decides to do two things. He goes to the Word and he goes to prayer. These are the things he decides to do to address these deep concerns of his heart. That is recorded for us in the book of Daniel. After this occurs we now move forward.

The first thing I want us to see in this study is the occasion of Daniel's prayer that is recorded for us in this text of Scripture. The occasion is given for us in Daniel 9:1, 2. It's the origin of Daniel's prayer. Daniel 9:1, 2 says *1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— 2 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.*

We want to work through this text and not just slide through it. Belshazzar has been done away with. Those who have been following our study know that on a night that Belshazzar had a big feast, hand writing came up on the wall that said "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN." Which interpreted means you have been found wanting in the balance and your life will be required of you tonight, Belshazzar. That has occurred. I'm trying to psychologically interpret Daniel but Daniel gets called in front of Belshazzar while a feast is going on, they are under assault by the Medo-Persians but Belshazzar is going to through a party in the face of all of that. The hand writing shows up on the wall and Daniel says, "Your life is going to be required of you." Everybody there is drunk and Belshazzar could have just turned around and killed him but have you ever wondered why Daniel was so brave? I know he's brave just because of what he has been through already, the lion's den and fiery furnace and all but now I think we can fill in some blanks.

So why is Daniel so brave? One of the reasons why is now we know not long before that he had been given a vision. The vision was that the Babylonian Empire was

coming to a conclusion and there is coming a Medo-Persian Empire. Then in the third year he has been given another vision about an anti-Christ and another vision of when the end of indignation is going to come. He has had two visions under Belshazzar and now comes the feast and the hand writing on the wall. Now what happens next? He is now in the reign of Cyrus and Cyrus has a subordinate king who is ruling over the Chaldean part of the Medo-Persian Empire. His name is Darius. In the first year of Darius, Daniel, remembering that vision back here that caused him so much trouble by troubling his soul, now goes to the Word and prayer. The Babylonians have been done away with and now we are in the Medo-Persian Empire where Darius is in control of the area of the Chaldeans. Daniel is still in a position of favor. In that year as Daniel's troubled soul continues to find rest he has gone to God's Word.

When he goes to God's Word he is going to find out something. Yes, the time of indignation is going to go for hundreds of years but the time of the desolation of Jerusalem is only going to go on 70 years. So the time of indignation where God is disciplining Israel is going to go on and on all the way through the Grecian Empire but the desolation of Jerusalem is going to end prior to this. That is the captivity is going to be over and the people who were brought into captivity will be allowed to go back to rebuild Jerusalem. When will they be allowed to do that? Jeremiah says 70 years.

I love to go to historical places and find out what happened right there. When I was in Israel this past March I had everybody bend over just to see how they would drink water out of Gideon's Springs to find out who was in my army or not. Then I just shared with them what happened there literally thousands of years ago at that spot. I just love to go back to a historical site and remember what happened right there.

Right now thousands of years ago Daniel's soul was troubled and he's realizing the time of indignation is going to go on, God's going to keep disciplining Israel but what about the desolation of Jerusalem? What will happen there? So one night Daniel said, "I think I'm going to turn to Jeremiah 25." Daniel was doing his personal Bible study during his quiet time early that morning. This is what he read. Jeremiah 25:8-14 says **8** *"Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, 9 behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10 Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. 13 I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. 14 For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands."*

So here He says I'm going to raise up the king of Babylon and he will be My instrument to discipline My people. Jerusalem will be a desolation and the people will be carried into captivity for 70 years. Now the time of indignation is going to continue all

the way through Antiochus Epiphanes but the desolation of Jerusalem will only last 70 years. God has promised it and prophesied it through Jeremiah, one of the prophets of the Babylonian exile. Let me make a qualifying statement here. Daniel didn't say let's turn to Jeremiah 25:11 because there wasn't a Jeremiah 25:11 during his time but there was a Jeremiah 25:11 it just wasn't called Jeremiah 25:11 yet. So you just read what Daniel read. When Daniel read this prophesied promise that God was going to bring His people back as soon as He destroyed the Babylonian Empire in 70 years with Darius (a Medo-Persian) ruling, so the Babylonian Empire is done away with, which was prophesied and what's next? It's the trip home. The 70 years are close. So what does Daniel then do?

Daniel begins a prayer in Daniel 9. I want us to look at the elements of Daniel's prayer here after Daniel got into God's Word. Daniel 9:3, 4 says **3** *Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* **4** *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.* The first element of Daniel's prayer is adoration. He subjects himself to sackcloth and ashes, humiliation of himself and then adoration of the Lord. Notice how he is fully focused upon the Lord. As he humiliated himself in fasting, sackcloth, and ashes he then prayed to the Lord his God and made confession. His confession is adoration. He adores the Lord, the great and awesome God. He is the God who is able to keep covenant. He is the God who has steadfast love and because of His love there are those who love Him. He loves those and those who love Him will keep His commandments. That's how he brings adoration in his prayer.

What is the second element of Daniel's prayer? The second element of his prayer is confession. His confession starts in Daniel 9:5 and he has already acknowledged he is a sinner engaged in humiliation. Daniel 9:5 says **5** *we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.* One might look at this and think why didn't he do some personal confession? He will and has done personal confession but the judgment upon Israel that has put them in 70 years of captivity was because they had together turned against the Lord. So Daniel, now on behalf of the people who have turned against the Lord, confesses the sins of the people as a people before the Lord. He says, "We have sinned, we have done wrong, acted wickedly, rebelled and turned aside from Your commandments."

He goes on to say in Daniel 9:6-11, **6** *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.* **7** *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.* **8** *To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.* **9** *To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him* **10** *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.* **11** *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.* When Moses wrote out the book of Deuteronomy, he said to the people, there will come a time you will turn away from the Lord and the Lord will

raise up a nation who is not His nation and He will use that nation to bring judgment against My people, but when you have turned I will bring you back into your land. What had been declared in the days of Moses has now come upon us.

Daniel 9:12-15 says **12** *He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, 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. 13* *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. 14* *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. 15* *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.*

I'd like to give you four things in that confession. The first thing in the confession of the unfaithfulness of God's people is the people have neglected God's Word. When I saw that in this text and wrote it down I confess to you a chill went over my soul. How many times in the mornings have I neglected His Word or on the Lord's Day neglected His Word? How many times have I looked to the wisdom of the world and not like Daniel looked to the Lord? When his heart was weary and overwhelmed he went to the Word. Daniel says here, "We have not done that, we are under Your discipline because we have neglected Your Word."

Secondly, the people have broken God's laws. Daniel says in the text that they have broken God's laws two ways. One they have broken God's laws by omitting obedience and two by committing transgressions. We call those sins of omission and sins of commission. We have not done what Your law calls us to do and we have transgressed what it forbids us to do. We have stepped over the line of Your law. We have disregarded it and disobeyed it by either not obeying it with sins of omission or by disobeying it with sins of commission.

Thirdly, the people have ignored the prophets and preachers that God sent to them with His Word. I'm not going to pick each verse apart because I'm going to sum up these three things in the confession by adding a fourth thing.

The fourth thing is every time he confesses something you can almost see it trigger in his mind the sinfulness of the sins and he goes back and confesses it again but this time with greater intensity, passion and clarity. In other words, he keeps confessing these three things – the neglecting of God's Word and His faithfulness, they have broken God's laws, neglected God's prophets and dishonored those God has sent to them. Daniel keeps going back and restating and repeating these things and each time he becomes more passionate, more intense and clearer each time in his confession. It wasn't enough for Daniel to simply say, "I've sinned against You, Lord and we're really sorry about that." He really begins passionately to identify it with repetitions of intensity and clarity.

That brings us to the third part of the prayer from adoration to confession and then finally to petition found in verses 16 - 19. Daniel 9:16-19 says **16** *"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. 17* *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, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 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. 19 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."

You can see the petitions being repeated with greater intensity and they basically are three fold. He petitions first of all for mercy in place of righteous judgment. He says You are right to judge us but O God please be merciful to us. What is mercy? It is when God withholds from us what we deserve. So he calls upon God for mercy and repeats that call. Secondly, he calls for grace. Grace is when God gives us what we don't deserve. He calls for mercy and then he asks for grace by saying, "O God grant us favor." That's the same word he is giving for grace. Give us grace. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. God, grant us grace like Noah. Grant us grace as You have in the past. Give us what we don't deserve while you withhold from us what we do deserve. Then thirdly, he says, "O God, minister to us according to our needs not according to what we deserve. Look upon us, see us desolate. Our needs are great. Minister to us according to our needs and not what our sins deserve."

Then here is his seal and he says it three different times – "Lord, it's Your city, not ours. We are Your people. We are called by Your Name. Act for Your Name by granting us mercy and grace." Did you see how it ended up? O Lord, pay attention, delay not for Your own sake, O God, because Your cities and Your people are called by Your Name." Hear, see, respond, we are Yours. O God preserve us that we might declare Your praise.

I want to give you some takeaways in conclusion. I'll tell you God's answer to this prayer in the next study which takes us to the end and that's the one everyone wants to know about in the book of Daniel – what are the 70 weeks? Gabriel will come with an answer of 70 weeks. So what can we learn about this prayer of Daniel. I have five takeaways. First of all, is the importance of engaging in prayer and the Word and that is an inseparable act. Here is Daniel in a time of great distress and what does he do? He goes to the Word and then he goes to prayer. Then he goes to prayer and then he goes to the Word. How was the first church in Jerusalem built? In Acts 1 they were in a prayer meeting. In Acts 2 they had a sermon. This is prayer and the Word. Remember in Acts 6 how the church was about to split because of the accusations of racial prejudice? They said, "You're not taking care of the Hellenistic widows just the Hebrew widows." They came up with a solution and we're going to be good elders but we're not going to neglect prayer and the Word so we will raise up some good deacons who can take care of the resources and the mercy ministry of the church so we can give attention to prayer and the Word. These are the top priorities of the church and the foundational building blocks of the church – prayer and the Word. In prayer you unlock the Word and when you come to the Word it drives you to prayer.

Daniel reads, "God, what about these desolations?" So he goes to the Word. He finds out from the Word, "I am going to bring an end to Babylon and after 70 years I'm going to bring My people back." There are no conditions on this. God just says this is an unconditional prophetic promise. Daniel says, "Hey Babylon's already gone. All those

kings have been killed and 70 years is just about up. We must be headed back. I'll just sit back until they bring me my visa." No, Daniel immediately goes to prayer. The Word drives him to prayer and basically what is his prayer? God, forgive us for what we have done to put judgment upon us, be merciful to us and this thing about taking us back, now God do it. So God has given you a promise for your children. I'll be a God to you and to your children after you. What do you do? You go pray, "God, do it. Forgive me for my iniquities. Renew a right spirit within me but now do what You promised." So when we see the promises of God as He tells us He'll make us effective or whatever He promises He'll do and hear the promises of God, the Word sends us to prayer and prayer sends us back to the Word. These are like Siamese twins. They are absolutely inseparable.

Here is what one of the great divines of the Puritans said. I'm just going to paraphrase what he said. After I read what he said this is what I wrote down. What a Christian is before God in the closet of prayer and the Word, on his knees, is what he is and no more than what he is in that closet. We are to be in prayer and the Word. It drives us before the throne and the throne of grace opens us our understanding of the Word. When we understand the Word we then call upon the throne of grace and say "O Lord, do it."

The second takeaway is prayer is worship and God centered. It said that when Daniel went to prayer he called out upon the Lord. He gave adoration for the character and the faithfulness of God. Then it says he set his face toward Jerusalem. He put his face toward the Lord Himself. This is God-centered prayer. This is not man-centered prayer. It has to do with our sins and our need of forgiveness but its God centered because he says God do this for Your own glory. Prayer is not only an element of worship but prayer is worship. God You are great and glorious. You have been faithful to Your Word. You have been faithful to Your people. You've shown mercy. Your steadfast love has gone from generation to generation. You have upheld Your people. So when he calls upon the Lord he acknowledges with humiliation His faithfulness but he lifts up with adoration God's faithfulness, our faithlessness but God's faithfulness.

The third takeaway is God's promises of grace never lead to passivity but to sacred activity and the most sacred activity possible is prayer because when you pray you just walked into the Holy of Holies. You just went to the throne. You can go at any time because the way has been sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus but when we hear God's promises of grace you do not prove that you believe in God's grace by living a sloppy life. Sometimes we think we don't have to worry about who we are associating ourselves with or what we're watching or what our heart gates open to because we believe in grace. That's just sloppy agape. When you hear the promises of grace you don't see sloppiness in Daniel. You see intensity, passion, sacred activity not sinful passivity. I know we rest in the Lord but resting in the Lord is not a call to passivity. It's a call to dependency and then utter devotion to that which God has given to us. There is nothing more sacred that He has given to us than prayer. We get so excited about our cell phones. God has had wireless for a long time. He paid the bill for you to use it at Calvary, so use it. By the way it doesn't drop out. It stays connected, just call upon Him.

The fourth takeaway is prayer packages not only the recognition of our faithlessness but also the acclamation of God's faithfulness. We have not been faithful before You, forgive us. Yet You have been faithful throughout all the years.

Fifthly and finally, prayer reveals our heart and declares our will before God. Aren't you glad that God says, "Come here and tell Me what's on your heart"? Prayer reveals our heart. Prayer declares our will. God, I want You to know about this in my heart and God would You do this? The purpose and blessing of prayer is not for me to reveal my heart, declare my will and get lined up with it but the blessing of prayer is after my heart has been revealed and my will has been declared then God will line me up with His heart and His will. Not my will be done, but Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven and Your Father's heart and will is pure, faithful and good for you and His glory. My will is always polluted with my sin. My heart is always distracted with myself. God's heart and will is what I desperately need to be lined up with. Come, there is His Word and here is the throne of grace. He is ready to receive you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this marvelous prayer of Daniel's. Thank You Father for its instructiveness and how it occurs at just the time it instructs us and it contains what we need for instruction. Lord, may we be in Your Word and may it lead us to the throne of grace. May the throne of grace lead us back to Your Word and Father, as we are led to the throne of grace we come with adoration for God, there is none like You. We come with confession for our sins our many. We have ignored Your Word. We have neglected Your prophets. We have transgressed Your law but O God we petition You. We make supplication, be merciful, be gracious for Your Name's sake I pray, Amen.