



## Daniel 9.1-23

The year 539 BC was a momentous one. Daniel had served in the court of the Babylonian king ever since the first captives were taken (605 B.C.) and had witnessed Babylon's fall to the Persians (Daniel 5.30-31). But to Daniel that year wasn't important merely because one empire had fallen and another had risen in its place, but because he understood the time had come for the captivity of his people to end. Even though Daniel would have been considered righteous, he recognized that God's justice had come as result of the peoples' sins. Thus, he offered a prayer of confession, a prayer that can teach us much about confessing our iniquities.

### ***Setting of Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9.1-3 NASB95)***

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

- As we noted at the conclusion of Daniel 5 and the beginning of Daniel 6, this Darius could have been the regional ruler over Babylon, or this could have been another name for Cyrus. In favor of Darius being the regional governor is the fact that Cyrus is mentioned by name in Daniel 10.1. However, we cannot be certain.
- The year would have been 539 B.C.

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

- Daniel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, knew him to be a prophet and searched his writings (see 1Peter 1.10-12).
- God declared through Jeremiah that the Jews would remain in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 25.11-12; 29.10).
- From the time when Daniel was taken captive (605 B.C.) to the first year of Cyrus' rule over Babylon (539 B.C.) was not quite 70 years, so it could be that 70 was used simply because it was a round number.
- However, we will note a greater significance of the 70 years when we examine vss. 24-27.

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

- Remember that captivity was a specific punishment for covenant unfaithfulness (Leviticus 26.33-34).
- But that same covenant stated that if the people confessed their sins, God would restore them to the land (Leviticus 26.40-42; see also 1 Kings 8.46-53).
- “when Daniel begins to pray in 9:4, we immediately see that it is a prayer of repentance and confession of sin on behalf of the whole nation, and that it was intended to meet the specific legal terms of the covenant and thus trigger the restoration of the nation.” (Phil Roberts, 1986 Florida College Lectures).

***Daniel contrasts the unfaithfulness of the people with the faithfulness of God (Daniel 9.4-10 NASB95)***

4I 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,

5we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.

6“Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

7“Righteousness belongs to You, 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 You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.

8“Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

9“To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

10nor 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.

**Note the contrasts in this passage:**

1. Vss. 4-6

- Description of God:
  - » Lord: the term Yahweh, one associated with God’s covenant faithfulness, is used 7 times in this prayer, but nowhere else in the book.
  - » He’s the “great and awesome God”, a description often associated

with His mighty acts (see vs. 15)

» He keeps His covenant... (see Deuteronomy 7.9)

- Israel:

- » They sinned, committed iniquity and acted wickedly (note 1Kings 8.47)

- » They rebelled by turning aside from His commandments, thus breaking covenant

- » They did not listen to His prophets (cf. 2Chron. 36.16)

## 2. Vss. 7-8

- Righteousness belongs to God. Even His driving the people out was an act of righteousness in keeping with the covenant (see Leviticus 26.31-39).
- Open shame belonged to the people because of their sins and “unfaithful deeds”

## 3. Vss. 9-10

- Compassion and forgiveness belong to God, also a part of His covenant faithfulness.
- Yet, Israel had rebelled and did not obey His voice.

**The point:** If ever our transgressions seem to us, we should view them in light of God's holiness and covenant faithfulness!

### ***Daniel acknowledges the righteousness of God in punishing Israel (Daniel 9.11-14 NASB95)***

11“Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your 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 Your 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.

- Israel had broken the covenant by turning aside from God's law (vs. 11)

- God poured the curse on them, even as He declared in the law of Moses (vss. 11-13; Leviticus 26.14-39; Deuteronomy 28.15-68)
- Israel could have sought the Lord's favor by turning from their iniquity and following His truth, but they refused (vs. 13).
- Thus, the Lord is "righteous with respect to all His deeds..." (vs. 14).

***Daniel appeals to God's righteousness for forgiveness (Daniel 9.15-16 NASB95)***

15 "And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked.

16 "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us.

- First, Daniel acknowledges how God had delivered His people once before (vs. 15). Perhaps the point was that if the Lord had done this once, He could certainly do it once more.
- Daniel then confesses the sins and wicked behaviors of the people again (vs. 15).
- He then asks the Lord to turn His anger and wrath away from Jerusalem (vs. 16)
- Because this would be in accordance with God's righteousness (vs. 16)
  - » He was righteous by bringing calamity on them (vs. 14)
  - » And the same righteous nature of God would result in His confirming His word to restore the people!
  - » This was the reason why Daniel was praying (vss. 1-3)

***Daniel prayed for more than forgiveness, but for a restored relationship with God (Daniel 9.17-19 NASB95)***

17 "So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

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 are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.

19 "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own

sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

- Aaron was to bless Israel by praying that the Lord would "make His face shine on you" (see Numbers 6.24-26)
- Daniel was praying that not only would the guilt of their sins be removed, but that they would experience the true blessing of God shining His face on His people, hearing them and seeing them!
- And the ultimate result would be God's glory (vs. 19)
  - » Moses entreated God on the basis of His name (Exodus 32.11-13)
  - » Hezekiah prayed that God would deliver Judah from the Assyrians so that the earth would know He is God (2Kings 19.19)
  - » God promised that He would redeem His people not on their own merit, but for His own name's sake (Ezekiel 36.20-23)
  - » Daniel now prays that God would forgive and take action not because of any merits they possessed, but because they are called by His name!

### ***The Lord answered immediately! (Daniel 9.20-23 NASB95)***

20Now 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,

21while 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.

22He 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.

- We will discuss God's answer in our next lesson (the 70 weeks, vss. 24-27).
- However, we should not the speed with which God responded.
  - » In vss. 20-21 we read twice that Gabriel came to Daniel while he was still praying! Gabriel even says that he was sent "at the beginning of your supplications" (vs. 23).
  - » When one is truly penitent and confesses his sins, he has assurance that God forgives (1John 1.9). He forgives because He is faithful to His covenant.
- Fact is, He probably forgives before the prayer is even finished!