

Daniel Prepares to Receive the Vision of the Seventy Weeks

Daniel 9:1-23

Daniel 9:1-23 - *"In 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—² in 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.³ Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.⁴ And 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.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.*

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.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!*

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.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."*

²⁰ Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. ²² And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision...”

Background Notes

Daniel’s prophecy of 70 “sevens” in Daniel 9 has been called “the backbone of Bible prophecy.” Here we are given a prophetic schedule or timetable of events that would take place in reference to the nation of Israel, all the way from soon after Daniel’s time to the second coming of Christ.

In the first portion of Daniel 9 we have the account of Daniel’s activities before he received this important prophecy. Verse 1 tells us that the prophecy came to Daniel in the first year of Darius the Mede – that would be in 538BC, soon after the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and the Persians. Daniel knew that Jeremiah had prophesied that the captivity of the Jews in Babylon would last for seventy years: “*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*”(v2). Here is the prophecy from Jeremiah 25:11-12: “*And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² ‘Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation.’*”

On the basis of Jeremiah’s prophecy, Daniel began to pray to the Lord concerning Jerusalem and concerning the House of the Lord which had been destroyed, and concerning God’s future plans for His people.

Doctrinal Points

1. Daniel believed in a literal interpretation of Scripture.

When Daniel read in Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Jewish people would be in captivity in Babylon for seventy years and then God would bring the Babylonian Empire to an end, Daniel interpreted this Scripture in a **literal** way. He didn’t believe that the seventy years of Jeremiah’s prophecy represented seventy days or seven hundred years, but **seventy literal years**. That was what the Hebrew word meant, and there was nothing about the context to indicate that it should mean anything other than seventy **literal** years. And this prophecy of Jeremiah was indeed fulfilled in a literal way.

Daniel believed in a literal interpretation of Scripture, and so should we! Miracles and all! When we read in Exodus 20:11, for example, that “*in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them,*” we should not depart from a literal interpretation of this Scripture just because present day science says it couldn’t happen. When

Moses wrote this Scripture, Exodus 20:11, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, what did he intend to teach? Did he intend to mean six geological ages or six solar days? You know the answer! And when the children of Israel heard Moses speak the words of Exodus 20:11, did they understand Moses to be talking about some “Big Bang Theory” of creation and ensuing millions of years of evolution, or did they understand him to mean a literal six day creation week in which God created everything? Again, you know the answer!

Let’s be like Moses and Daniel and the other writers of scripture... Daniel believed in a **literal** interpretation of Scripture.

2. Daniel prayed on the authoritative foundation of Scripture.

In verses 4-19, notice that Daniel prayed on the basis of the authority of the Word of God. Daniel acknowledged that the nation had been rightly judged for its sin, because God’s Word clearly declared that He would have to judge Israel if they departed from His ways and practiced idolatry and immorality. But Daniel also knew that God’s Word taught that the Lord’s relationship with His people was a relationship of loyal love and compassion and covenant, and God’s loyal love was not based on any merit of the part of the nation Israel.

Daniel also knew from God’s Word that the glory of God was the bottom line. So Daniel continued to pray on these foundational truths of Scripture, as we see in verses 16-19: *“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. 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.”*

As Daniel prayed on the truth of Scripture, so should we. Our prayers should reflect that God is holy and must judge sin. Our prayers should reflect that the bottom line is God’s glory and not our glory. Our prayers should reflect that God is gracious and forgives the repentant sinner. Daniel is a good role model for us in his praying. Daniel prayed on the authoritative foundation of scripture.

3. Daniel received an insightful understanding of Scripture.

Verses 20-23: *“Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. ²² And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision...”*

We see in these verses that even before Daniel finished his prayer, the answer was on the way. It reminds us of Isaiah 65:24, *“It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.”* The angel Gabriel, once again, was sent forth from God’s presence to provide an answer to Daniel’s prayer of confession and concern. Remember, Gabriel brought the interpretation of Daniel’s previous vision in Daniel 8.

The phrase, “the man Gabriel” doesn’t mean that the archangel Gabriel became incarnate. No, but rather that he appear in humanlike form. He came at the time of the evening sacrifice – that would have been about three p.m. All morning and evening sacrifices had come to an end after the Babylonians destroyed the Jewish temple, but the pious Jews still prayed at these times.

Notice Gabriel’s mission in verse 22: *“And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.”* As Daniel received insight of God’s plans and programs for Israel, as we’ll see in the last section of this chapter, so we will be given insight into Scripture if we ask the Lord for understanding. The Lord doesn’t send out Gabriel to give interpretations to us these days because he doesn’t have to. Why? Because we believers have the Holy Spirit indwelling within us to give insight and understanding of Scripture.

Do we ever pray for insight and understanding of God’s Word? Or do we only pray about our health, our family and friends, and our possessions? Let’s be more like Daniel! Daniel received an insightful understanding of Scripture.

Practical Application

Don’t be surprised if praying tires you out!

Verse 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.”*

Why was Daniel extremely weary? Because he was praying and fasting with extreme concern for God’s people.

Let’s face it, prayer is work! Prayer can tire you out – and that doesn’t mean that you’re praying the wrong way. If anything, that means you’re praying the right way! In Colossians 4:12 we read that *“Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.”* And we know that the apostle Paul spent much time “laboring” in prayer for fellow believers and for the spiritual condition and welfare for the churches he had planted.

So it’s a biblical principle. Real, earnest prayer is hard work! Don’t be surprised if praying tires you out!