



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for April 27, 2008
Released on Wednesday, April 30, 2008**

"Praying for the People: Intercession in Crisis"

Lesson: Daniel 9:1–7, 17–19.

Read: Daniel 9:1–27.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 130.

Background Scripture: Daniel 9.

Times: 539 B.C.

Place: Babylon

GOLDEN TEXT: "O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake" (Daniel 9:17).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT: Daniel 9

1In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

2In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

5We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

6Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

7O LORD, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

9To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

10Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

11Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

12And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

13As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

14Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

15And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16O LORD, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

17Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

18O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

19O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

20And whiles 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 for the holy mountain of my God;

21Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

22And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

23At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

24Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

25Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to analyze the prayer of Daniel concerning the end of Babylonian Captivity and the encouraging answer God gave him.

Principle: to realize that our Sovereign God controls events and carries out His perfect will.

Application: to trust in the Lord to fulfill His prophecies according to His own calendar.

INTRODUCTION

Learning How to Pray

We know that prayer is central to healthy faith. The New Testament instructs us to pray (example: Romans 12:12). It also provides examples of people who made prayer a priority. Jesus left the crowds to speak to His heavenly Father (Matthew 14:23). The apostles were committed to prayer (Acts 6:4), as was the earliest church (Acts 2:42).

Sometimes, however, we are curious about what people actually said while praying because we find ourselves wondering about what to say when we pray. Jesus' model prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) and unity prayer (John 17:20–26) are great places to start. Luke 22:42 and Acts 1:24; 7:59 provide more examples of the specific content of prayers in the New Testament. But the nature of those particular prayers, given the situations in which they were offered, may leave us hungering for even more insight.

The Old Testament is extremely helpful in this regard. The book of Psalms contains a rich supply of prayers that cover a wide range of topics and situations. In addition, the narrative portions of the Old Testament contain many lengthy prayers. By studying how our ancestors in faith prayed through their situations, we can learn how to pray in the situations we face.

Think about Daniel's situation. In his lifetime, Daniel had seen God begin to fulfill His promises for His people, but this fulfillment caused Daniel to be confused. Part of the confusion and distress concerned the length of time involved in fulfillment, as we shall see. Many of us experience the same thing in our lives and the lives of our churches—things just (to our understanding) take too long!

So how do we go about praying when we long for God to intervene and "hurry up" to finish the good work He began in our lives? Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 is a helpful place to start.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Daniel, a Jew, served as a captive in the king's palace in a foreign land. Daniel spent most of his life there, from about 606 BC (Daniel 1:1) until at least 538 BC (1:21). More than one foreign ruler esteemed him highly (2:46–48; 5:29; 6:1, 2). More importantly, Daniel was highly esteemed by God (9:23; 10:11, 19).

Daniel 1–6 focuses on key events in the lives of four Jewish men who remained faithful to God while exiled in Babylon. Daniel 7–12 focuses on the future from Daniel's perspective, particularly how God was to restore His people after subduing those who had oppressed them. We are concerned with how Daniel responded to the plight of his people and how his prayer can teach us to pray.

QUESTIONS

Cause for Concern (Daniel 9:1-3).

1. From what source did Daniel discover some information that caught his attention (Daniel 9:1)?

Historical records indicate that Darius the Mede was probably appointed chief administrator over Babylon by Cyrus the Persian around 539 B.C. By then Daniel

had been in Babylon for over sixty-five years and was probably well into his eighties. It was during the first year of the reign of Darius that Daniel came to an understanding of something he found in the writings of Jeremiah. The term “books” in Daniel 9:2 refers to Scripture containing the prophecies of Jeremiah, which are here attested as the very words of the Lord to him.

From these scrolls of Jeremiah, Daniel learned that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years, during which the people would serve the king of Babylon. Following that time, God would deal with Babylon for her iniquity, and the people of Judah would be allowed to begin returning to their homeland. Daniel found this information in Jeremiah 25:11–12 and 29:10–14. The latter text explains that God still had a future hope in mind for Israel in spite of the desolation He would allow to come upon them. His thoughts for them were for peace, not evil.

God had also said that when the people cried out to Him in prayer at that time, seeking and searching for Him, He would listen and respond (Jer. 29:12–14). This was all the motivation Daniel needed to drive him to earnest prayer.

2. What did Daniel learn, and why did it inspire him to pray fervently (v. 3)?

What drove Daniel to pray was his realization that the prophesied seventy years was almost completed. John Walvoord has given this insightful information: “The implication is that Daniel had now come into the full comprehension of Jeremiah’s prediction and realized that the seventy years prophesied had about run their course. The time of the vision recorded in Daniel 9 was 538 B.C., about 67 years after Jerusalem had first been captured and Daniel carried off to Babylon (605 B.C.)” (*Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Moody).

The sincerity of Daniel is seen in his own description of how he had sought the Lord by pleading with Him in prayer, fasting, wearing sackcloth, and covering himself with ashes. We get a clear picture of him purposely turning away from everything else that might be a distraction and concentrating on approaching God in prayer. The word “supplications” indicates earnest entreaties. Fasting, sackcloth, and ashes were all evidences of mourning, either in grief or in repentance, both of which were true of Daniel at this time.

Confession of Sin (Daniel 9:4-7)

3. What did Daniel acknowledge about God (v. 4)?

It was confession, in fact, that Daniel expressed first [in his sincere prayer to God]. His approach was to describe God’s holy character. Only after that did he express his concerns. He referred to God as “great and dreadful” (Dan. 9:4), indicating that He most certainly should be feared for what He might do when we disobey Him. We do not need to live in a state of constant fright, like those who serve false gods, but neither should we take lightly the fact that God is holy and righteous. We should not limit the fear of God to mean only some vague idea of mere respect.

Daniel knew that God keeps His promises and extends mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. The problem was with the people of Israel, not with God.

4. Are there ever times when you approach God with less than proper reverence? How do you keep this from happening?

As we pray, we must never forget the one to whom we are praying. We are guilty of being flippant in our prayers when we fail to approach God with the reverence He is due or with the awe we should feel.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 reminds us that when all is said and done the end of all things is to “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Arrogance is seen when we demand things of God instead of seeking His will. Psalm 63:1–5 reveals that our greatest longing should be for the Lord’s presence in our lives. This kind of prayer leads us to seek to glorify God and not to exalt self.

5. What were the things Daniel said his people were guilty of doing in straying from the Lord (vs. 5,6)?

Scripture attributes no incident of sin to Daniel, and he is one of very few so exempted. But he identified himself with his sinful people by using the pronoun “we” in this confession. There is a fourfold expression of how far God’s people had strayed from Him. Daniel confessed, “We have sinned,” meaning that they had strayed from what is right. God’s standards of righteousness had been ignored. Daniel confessed, “[We] have committed iniquity,” meaning they had been crooked and perverse. He confessed, “[We] have done wickedly,” indicating willfully evil living. Instead of being holy, God’s people were guilty and worthy of condemnation. Finally, Daniel confessed, “[We] have rebelled.” The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines the verb “rebel” as to “resist authority, control, or convention.”

God’s people had refused to acknowledge and obey His authority over them. This happened because they had distracted themselves from a proper focus on God’s commandments and His standards of justice.

They had also ignored God’s calls for them to repent. Daniel stated that they had ignored the prophets whom God had specifically sent to them in order to turn them back to Him. Furthermore, the prophets warned every level of society: kings and princes, as well as the common people. The term “our fathers” in Daniel 9:6 extends the guilt to many generations, not merely the one taken into captivity. The fact that God had warned them repeatedly makes the magnitude of their sin even greater. Israel had simply refused to listen to those who had been sent by God.

6. How did Daniel contrast God with His people?

Because of their refusal to listen, Daniel now contrasted the unfaithfulness of the people with the righteousness of God. While God is wholly righteous, the actions of the people made them shameful.

The Hebrew word translated “confusion” in Daniel 9:7 is *bosheth*, and it means “shame.” It is an all-encompassing word that includes the feeling of shame, the condition of shame, and the cause of shame. Whether the people realized it or not, they were shameful in the sight of God, who is righteous. The reason was “we have sinned against thee” (v. 8). Their living had been treacherous, unfaithful, and in total rebellion against what God intended for them. Again Daniel included himself; they were all guilty.

Petition for Help (Daniel 9:17-19)

7. What could Daniel not offer to God as he prayed for Israel? What did he rely on instead (vs. 17,18)?

Verses 8–16 (not in today’s text) offer Daniel’s lengthy recounting of the sins of God’s people. The wrap-up of the prayer is verses 17–19. These two segments build upon one another in ways that involve repetition.

Daniel asked God to listen to him and hear his requests, to open His eyes and look at them. And this time too it was because wicked people had triumphed over God’s people. Daniel asked God to take note of the terrible condition of desolation in Jerusalem and then listen to what Daniel requested from Him. At the same time, he recognized that he had no righteous deeds of the people to offer in support of his requests. He was asking, rather, because God is merciful. He is willing to forgive and restore.

8. What encouraging lesson can we learn about God's forgiveness?

The encouraging lesson that we can learn about God's forgiveness is that we too can stop and confess our sins and claim God's forgiveness. First John 1:9 tells us that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." With that cleansing comes the restoration we need after we have sinned.

From Daniel 9:4, David A. Hamburg summarizes Daniel's "made my confession" statement in the following way. "A legitimate confession is one that says the same thing about a wrong deed that God says. The God of righteousness is never swayed or impressed by any of the clever "spins" men try to put on their sin in order to avoid judgment.

9. How can we tell that Daniel was intent on getting God to listen (v. 19)?

Daniel concludes his prayer with a sense of urgency as he entreats God four times. He asks God to *hear, forgive, and act, doing these quickly (defer not)*. He was pleading with God to not delay or wait until a future time. Daniel understood that after seventy years there was to be a restoration in Jerusalem, so he pleaded with God to act as prophesied.

10. For whose sake was Daniel praying?

To increase the intensity of his request, Daniel reminded God that it was for His own sake that this restoration should take place. It was also, however, for the sake of the city of Jerusalem and for the sake of those who were known to be God's people. Only good would come when God acted on His promises. Disgrace and evil would come if He delayed any longer. Daniel's prayer was according to God's own will.

CONCLUSION

Daniel's Prayer Answered

While Daniel was still praying, God sent the angel Gabriel to answer the prayer (Daniel 9:20-27). Gabriel informed Daniel that he was greatly, beloved. We should strive before God to be able was greatly, beloved. We should strive before God to be able have the same words spoken of us. Certainly Daniel's great concern for God's honor, and for his people, must have been part of the reason he was so dearly loved of God.

Gabriel told Daniel that God's people were to be restored after "seventy weeks." Seventy weeks meant, literally, seventy units of seven, or seventy times seven. Almost "all expositors,' ancient and modern, have seen this as signifying seventy units, each composed seven years, making a total of 490 years.

Six things dealing with sin and righteousness would be accomplished during the 490 years. The first three are negative, and the final three positive: (1) To finish the transgression has reference to rebellion against God; (2) To make an end of sins could quite naturally in this context refer to sin being put away during the Messiah's reign; (3) To make reconciliation for iniquity speaks of an atonement for sin on the basis of some sacrifice. This was no doubt fulfilled in Christ's own sacrificial death on the cross; (4) To bring in everlasting righteousness. With sin taken care of (in the first three statements), righteousness can now be a reality. This will be applied to Israel at Christ's glorious second coming at the conclusion of the Tribulation Period and will usher in the predicted righteous government of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:7; 11:3-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6); (5) To seal up the vision and prophecy. There will come a time when all visions and prophecy will be fulfilled or consummated, and thus will no longer have a function. There are yet, of course many prophecies that must still be fulfilled; and (6) To anoint the most Holy. The most natural usage would be a

reference to the anointing of a future temple when Messiah's reign will be inaugurated with righteousness. Such a temple is predicted in Ezekiel 40-48, which will commemorate Christ's death, on the cross.

Daniel's Prayer Applied

We are to remind ourselves, as Daniel did, that God's purposes for us are not complete. Though the power of sin was defeated on the cross, it still rears its ugly head in our lives. Christ is the fulfillment of our hope, but we await a day to experience the fullness that God has in store for us in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Until then, we can follow Daniel's lead in prayer. We draw near to God not only in speech but also in action. Fasting and signs of contrition can help as we own up to individual and corporate sins, confessing them to God and one another. We must renounce all thoughts of entitlement, as if God were obligated to answer our prayers to our liking. We must commit ourselves to Him and remain true to His purpose for us in this world, for it is the Christian who bears the name of Christ. We were saved not for comfort or pleasure, but for God's mission for the church.

Daniel prayed like this, and God answered him. Let us pray likewise.

PRACTICAL POINTS

We cannot understand our own times if we do not understand the Bible (Dan. 9:1—2).

Prayer is not merely mouthing requests; it is seeking the Lord and His will (v. 3). The key to genuine, heartfelt confession is understanding exactly who God is and what He is like (v. 4).

Although our sins might harm others, they all are offenses against Him (v. 5—7). The goal of all our prayers should be to honor the Lord, not to make life easier for ourselves (v. 17—19).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Petition God humbly and urgently.

PRAYER

O God who hears our prayer, teach us to pray like Daniel. Like him, we are often baffled by Your timing. We cannot see the big picture, and we get hung up on the details. Please give us the faith to wait for You. We confess to You our sins, we submit to You our unworthiness, and we call upon Your mercy. Hear us when we pray, for Your name's sake and for the sake of Your world, in Jesus' name, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Next week's lesson comes from Haggai, one of the minor prophecy books that is often neglected. It was in the second year of the reign of Darius that Haggai was told by God to tell Jewish leaders back in Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. It is suggested that you read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah to get background details for the ministry of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

May 4th's lesson is titled, "Setting Priorities: First Things First." The lesson text is Haggai 1:1—4, 7—10, and 12—15. You should read Ezra 5 and Haggai 1 in preparation for this lesson. The devotional reading is Psalm 84:1—4. The time is 520 B.C., and the place is Jerusalem. *Good studying!*

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

Kimbley Y. Baker-Richardson

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