

# “THE PRAYER OF DANIEL”

## Daniel 9:1-19

This is an important chapter. The first part of it contains Daniel’s prayer. The second part of it contains a powerful prophecy. Arno C. Gaebelin, a careful scholar who spent much of his life studying and comparing prophetic portions of the Bible, wrote:

The prophetic message Gabriel brought from the throne of God to Daniel is perhaps the most important not only in the Book of Daniel, but in the whole Bible. The clear understanding of it is indispensable to every reader of God’s Word, who wants to know God’s purposes concerning the future. In the few verses which contain the words of Gabriel, events relating to Jewish future history are predicted. The return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the rebuilding of the city in time of distress, the coming of Christ in humiliation, his death, the destruction of the temple and the city by the Romans, the desolations and wars which were to follow, all this is prewritten in this great prophecy. The final end of the time of the Gentiles, the great eventful week of seven years is revealed in the last verse.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel spent much time looking into the prophetic meanings of bears, rams, goats, lions, leopards, and horns. Daniel’s head must have been spinning. How could he make sense of all of this? What should he do? I’ll tell you what he did. **(1) He studied the Bible (2) he prayed.**<sup>2</sup> We would do well to follow his example when we face confusing and complex situations.

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 96.

<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 96.

This important chapter contains a record of the prophet's prayer on behalf of the covenant people, Israel, and God's response to that prayer. Primarily for this reason the covenant name, Yahweh, appears in this chapter (7 times), although it is not found elsewhere in the book.<sup>3</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

**Daniel 9:1–2... In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2 in 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.***

The time stamp in these verses is important. Daniel was probably carried away to Babylon in a partial deportation of the people that took place in **605 b.c.**, that is, about nineteen years before the city's final destruction in **586 b.c.** The vision of this chapter dates from the first year of Darius the Mede, which we can establish from extrabiblical sources as being **538 b.c.** This was only forty-eight years after the destruction of the city. But since Jeremiah had spoken of the people *serving* the king of Babylon for seventy years, Daniel probably counted the seventy-year period of captivity from the time of his own deportation; and if that is the case, then sixty-seven years out of the total seventy years had gone by. The termination of the captivity was only three years away. Daniel was over eighty years old at this time. He would not return to Jerusalem. But the assurance that his people would go back and that the city would soon be rebuilt must have been a great comfort to him.<sup>4</sup>

The "*Books*" were the sacred Hebrew writings available in Daniel's day of which the prophecy of Jeremiah was a part. Daniel believed that the sacred Scriptures, in this case the prophecies of Jeremiah, were the very words of God delivered

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [Daniel](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 239.

<sup>4</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Daniel: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 97.

to the world through the prophet God had called.<sup>5</sup> Daniel dug into the Word of God to find answers to the dilemma of the captivity of God's people. In particular, he studied Jeremiah's prophecy feverishly.

**Jeremiah 25:11–12...** "This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. **12** "Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.'"

**Jeremiah 29:10–12...** "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. **11** 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. **12** 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.'"

I want you to see that Daniel believed in the reality of biblical prophecy. Jeremiah had foretold the end of the exilic period seventy years in advance, and Daniel fully expected this prophecy to be fulfilled. He was now an old man, probably in his 80's. Yet, his eyes must have lit up when he saw this prophecy. **For 67 years he had lived in exile, so there were about 3 years remaining before God would fulfill His promise.**

This section of Daniel contains one of the most remarkable prayers in the whole Bible. It is a model prayer for how God's people should pray for a nation. But even more, it is a model for how God's people should pray for a desolate and rebellious community of faith. This passage shows God's prophet confessing and interceding for God's sinful people!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [Daniel](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 241.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [Exalting Jesus in Daniel](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 108.

**Daniel 9:3... So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.***

Daniel didn't just utter a few insincere words of prayer before falling asleep at night. He prayed fervently to the Lord with a determined heart. "*I gave my attention*" literally reads, "*I set my face*" to the Lord God. Daniel determined to look to God in prayer until the Lord gave him an answer. His appeal was directed toward "the Lord [*'ădōnāy*] God." The name [*'ădōnāy*] means "owner, ruler, or sovereign" and identifies Yahweh as the owner and ruler of the universe. Not only was he able to hear Daniel's prayer, but he had the power to direct the affairs of world history in order to answer his prayer.<sup>7</sup>

Do you see that word "*seek*?" It speaks of passion. Daniel was gripped by the desperate desire for revival among God's people.

**Let me tell you this old prophet of God was more powerful on his knees than Darius was on his throne.**

Martin Luther, the great reformer, stated. . .

**"God does nothing but in answer to prayer!"**

So, Daniel focused his mind and his energy on seeking God through prayer. Prayer became his priority! How committed was he? Notice the reference to "*fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.*" He took off his royal robe and put on a rough burlap-like garment. Then, he took some ashes and spread them over his head. They indicated his deep sense of mourning and grief over the sin of the people of God. He meant business with God. On top of that, he refused to eat. That time was devoted to prayer. The word "*supplications*" pictures earnestly requesting the God of heaven to answer specific prayers.

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [\*Daniel\*](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 242.

Daniel was 100% dependent on God. When you pray do you come before God as a humble servant? Do you pray with passion? Are you specific and biblical in your requests? Piper wrote:

**Daniel's prayer begins with the Bible and it is saturated with the Bible. Phrase after phrase comes right out of Scripture. There are allusions to Leviticus (26:40) and Deuteronomy (28:64) and Exodus (34:6) and Psalms (44:14) and Jeremiah (25:11). The prayer brims with a biblical view of reality, because it brims with the Bible.** ("How to Pray for a Desolate Church")

Again, Piper wrote: **"Where the mind isn't brimming with the Bible, the heart is not generally brimming with prayer."** ("How to Pray for a Desolate Church," 1992)

## **ADORATION**

**Daniel 9:4... I 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...."**

**"LORD"** is the translation of the Hebrew ["Yahweh"], the covenant name of Israel's God. Although this name emphasizes the personal nature of the prayer, primarily it seems to have been chosen because this was a petition offered on behalf of the Jewish people. Yahweh was about to be asked to keep the covenant promises he had made to Israel.<sup>8</sup>

Daniel addressed Yahweh as **"my God"**—the basis upon which he was able to approach the Lord with his requests. Specifying Yahweh as "my God" also emphasizes that Daniel rejected the false idols of Babylon; his God was

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [\*Daniel\*](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 243–244.

Yahweh.<sup>9</sup> Genuine prayer mushrooms out of a deep, abiding relationship with the God of heaven. Daniel knew His God, and he worshiped Him faithfully. Just look at the attributes of God he mentions in verse 4...

**“The great and awesome God”** — He knew how powerful God was. No doubt he worshiped God as Creator and He entered into His presence with great reverence.

**“Who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments”** — Here he expresses his respect for God’s faithfulness in dealing with His covenant people. Listen, God is faithful!

**“Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord”** (vs. 7,14)—Daniel acknowledges that God never makes a mistake. He is a perfect judge!

**“To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness”** (9, 18)—Daniel knows there is hope because of the compassionate and forgiving character of God Himself! Do you want your prayer life to grow? You must read your Bible so that you can know God with an ever deepening level of intimacy.

## CONFESSION

Six different aspects of Israel’s sin are set forth in vv. 5–6. Israel had...

- “sinned”—to miss the mark
- “committed iniquity”—to bend or twist
- “acted wickedly”
- “rebelled”
- “turned aside”
- “have not listened” to Yahweh’s prophets.

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [\*Daniel\*](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 244.

What an indictment against God's covenant people. Probably no greater humiliation could come upon a nation than that of being conquered by a foreign power and having its citizens expelled from the homeland **(9:7)**.<sup>10</sup>

**Daniel 9:5–14...** we 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; **10** (10-11 comparable to verses 5-6) nor 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. **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.

This prayer is a model for believers today as they approach God. After a brief introduction, it proceeds with adoration of the Lord (v. 4b). It is then followed by confession of personal and national sin (vv. 5–14), and it concludes with the

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [Daniel](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 246.

prophet's petition (vv. 15–19). Here is the proper order, for only after the Lord is praised and sin confessed is the believer qualified to offer requests to the holy God.<sup>11</sup>

How did we ever get the idea that as believers we are exempt from the need to confess our sins to God? (1 Jn. 1:9; Pro. 28:13) No wonder we operate at such a low level of spiritual power!

**In this prayer, Daniel associates himself with the sins of his people 32 times.**

Notice this about Daniel—he was not only willing to confess His sins he was also willing to forsake them (repentance). Forsaking sin and confessing sin go hand-in-hand. If you are not willing to forsake your sin, there is no need to confess your sin!

## PETITION

God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to fulfill His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Without a doubt, this enhanced the Lord's reputation among the nations. Now, in spite of Israel's sin, Daniel pled with God to remember these promises and to reestablish the nation of Israel in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Daniel 9:15–19...** “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. 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.

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [Daniel](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 243.



**In verse 16, Daniel prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem; in verse 17, he prayed for the rebuilding of the temple.** Daniel was asking that the temple be rebuilt for the Lord's sake. Not only was the destroyed temple a disgrace for Yahweh's people but for Yahweh himself. The nations would think that Israel's God was weak and insignificant if he was unable to protect his own sanctuary.<sup>12</sup>

**Daniel 9:18-19... "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."**

Daniel asked the Lord to listen intently to the prophet's prayer. He then asked the Lord to "open" his eyes and observe the plight of the Jewish people and the condition of Jerusalem.

In verse 19, the prayer reaches a passionate crescendo as the prophet concludes with short staccato-like sentences reflecting the emotion that filled his heart. God is addressed "O Lord" three times in this verse, emphasizing his sovereign power and ability to answer this prayer.<sup>13</sup> Daniel's prayer was based on his desire for the mercy of the Lord and for the glory of the Lord!

One problem in our praying is that we are so self-centered we have no time to be God-centered. What would happen to us if we got caught up in the fact that we bear the name of our dear Lord. We are CHRISTIANS. This should influence our conduct, our words, our values, and it should fill us with passion for God's glory! David Jeremiah wrote . . .

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [\*Daniel\*](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 249.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen R. Miller, [\*Daniel\*](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 249.

**“Prayer is coming to the Word of God, discerning what God is doing, finding out His will, and then praying that He will help us focus our attention so that we are right smack in the middle of His will.”**