

## Daniel 9:1-19

### "The Prophet's Prayer"

Daniel Ch 9 is deservedly one of the most famous, most significant Ch's (in all of scripture) pertaining to biblical prophecy. Because you find in Daniel 9 a "road map" (if you will), an outline *for* biblical prophecy. It also offers a timeline, speaking forth one of the most incredibly fulfilled prophecies (might I say to you) down to the exact *day* ever uttered in the Word of God... All that exciting stuff we'll get to - next time ☺.

As for today we will make our way through another famous portion of this particular Ch. Daniel Ch 9 contains the prophet's prayer. & All too often the *prayer* of Daniel isn't really focused on; it becomes overshadowed by the *prophecy* of Daniel. **But if you were to think through perhaps a "top 10 prayers" list in your bible, I don't care who you are, if you know your bible at all this prayer in Daniel 9 will be on that list & probably higher up in the ranks! The purpose & preparation & passion & power in Daniel's prayer is worthy of our time, our consideration & if we're wise we'll find application for our own lives.**

As I said Daniel Ch 9 contains one of the most spectacular prophecies ever uttered in God's Word. But let's not forget that what's before us today is the *prayer* that paved the way for that prophecy!

### Vs 1-2

Let me draw out of this a quick observation & application for you. I want you to see here that Daniel was reading his bible. Specifically, the scroll (or book) of Jeremiah. & As he read God's *Word*, he came to understand God's *will*. Did you see that there? He came to realize that God was going to keep the nation of Judah in captivity for 70 yrs because he read the prophecy that had been uttered, written & recorded by Jeremiah the prophet.

Now there's plenty we're going to talk about right here but what I want you to understand right off the bat is that if you want to know God's *will*, you *need* to be reading Gods' *word*. Daniel may've been a prophet, but he was still a pupil. He was a seer, yet he was a student of scripture.

Listen, we're told in the very 1<sup>st</sup> Vs that this happened in the 1<sup>st</sup> yr of Dairus the Mede. What he's telling you is that it's been over a decade since his last vision. God had revealed to him that the Medes & the Persians were going to conquer the Babylonian Empire & he's living *in that era at this point*. But by way of deduction we know that, that means he's in his 80's right now! He's been in captivity some 66 yrs! Here's my point. He's been one to honor God, walk w/God, be used of God & glorify God his entire life.

Yet at 80+ he still finds it necessary to read his bible. How much more do you & I need to be in our bibles? If anyone had a godly walk dialed in, it was Daniel...

& Listen, I know God can do anything, but I just want you to pick up on a general pattern that we find in scripture & that is this. Those whom God uses greatly, place great priority on His word. God can use you whether you ever spend time in your bible or not, but the odds are not in our favor for Him to use us beyond what we might call the “marginal” if we won’t take the time to prioritize His word. “God, I really want *You* to use *me*, I just don’t really want to spend any of *my time* with *You*.” It probably won’t happen. The people whom God will use, will be people of His word.

Daniel was a student of the word. Which (as we will see) led him to be a person of prayer. The people God uses (again if you pick up on the pattern) are people of prayer. **People who want to know the heart of God and spend time in confession before God & in communion w/God. Let’s not forget that it was early during Darius’ reign that Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den (Ch 6) for praying. Perhaps this was one of the prayers that he made that got him arrested... we don’t know.**

But I wanna hammer on this point for just a minute so humor me if it seems obvious to you. I think it’s worth picking up on the fact that Daniel was reading a passage of predictive prophesy & he *understood it*. The reason I think it’s worth emphasizing is because there are no small # people who believe that the nature of predictive prophesy is beyond our grasp & not worth wrestling with... Daniel didn’t believe that. **Now I realize that there are at times nuances of prophetic passages that can be difficult or maybe understood after they’re fulfilled & seen in retrospect. But as it pertains to the vast majority of prophetic passages, God didn’t give them to us in order to “Wow” us with the fact that He can share something we don’t understand. That’s no difficult dilemma for God. He gives us His word so that we might understand it & act accordingly, appropriately to it.**

Daniel, basically approached the word in an “inductive” way. We speak of studying the bible “inductively” around here because that’s what we do. We follow a basic pattern of “observation, interpretation, application.” I want you to realize, that’s essentially what Daniel was doing here. He was reading through Jeremiah, he *observed* what it said, *interpreted* what it said & made a personal application on the *basis* of what it said.

What passage was he reading? Could’ve been a couple. Let’s look at them. Leave the book of Daniel, turning to the left (1/8”-1/4”) to **Jeremiah 25** (Vs 8-11). We could begin in Vs 1 (God reviewing their rebellion & refusal to repent) but we’ll pick it up in Vs 8.

Look now in Ch 29... In Babylon there were some false prophets among the captives of Judah saying that God was about to deliver them. Jeremiah was writing to say, "Hey, don't listen to those guys, don't pack your bags, build houses, you're going to be there awhile." Look again @ Vs 8-14.

How many of you have heard Jer 29:11 before? "For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord..." Now you know its direct interpretation & application. Though there is certainly application in there for all believers (God's heart is to give us a future & a hope in J.C.) it was written to those in captivity in Babylon. God was saying, "I'm not going to forsake you, I'm going to fulfill My word to you & bring you back home."

However; it wasn't going to be soon, it would be 70 yrs. Why 70 yrs? The short of it is that God had told them when He brought them into the land that they were to work the land for 6 yrs & on the 7<sup>th</sup> yr they were to let it lie fallow. He promised to provide enough in the 6<sup>th</sup> yr to sustain them through the 7<sup>th</sup>, but the land was to have a Sabbath yr's rest. For 490 yrs they had been in the land & not 1 time did they honor God's word in allowing the land to rest. They owed the land 70 yrs rest (1 yr out of every 7 of neglect) & God was seeing to it... So they were taken into captivity because of their sin/idolatry, rebellion & refusal to repent. The duration of their time there was connected to their neglect of the land...

Ok. Daniel was reading (& notice he didn't spiritualize the 70 yrs to mean some indefinite, symbolic, unknowable, spiritual rhetoric), God had determined 70 yrs & he started doing the math...

Listen, he took what he read as the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God! He never read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 but he obviously believed the truth it contains. Paul told Timothy, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*<sup>1</sup> Daniel read the word, believed the word, & acted upon the word.

In Jer 29:12-13 God had said that after the 70 yrs they would call upon Him, He would listen to them & they would seek for Him & find Him when they searched for Him w/all their heart... then God would bring them back from their captivity. Daniel does the math, he realizes they're just a couple yrs away from that mark & so he determines to do what God said they should do, call upon Him, & seek Him w/all his heart...

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Ti 3:16-17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Btw, you might note that God's punishment had a purpose (it always does), it was to restore them, to help them see the futility of their idolatry & turn their hearts back to Him. God's discipline in our lives is always seeking to turn our heart back to Him, restoration & reconciliation is always the goal.

### Vs 3

So check this out. Daniel just read that God was going to accomplish 70 yrs of captivity. How did that impact him? "Well, Que Sera Sera! Whatever will be, will be, let's just rest in God's sovereignty."? No way! Listen the sovereign promises of God don't in anyway *exclude* the priority of prayer, they *invite* the priority of prayer! When Daniel discovered God's promise, it didn't create passivity, but passion, he became immediately proactive in his prayer life!

God help us to have proactive prayer lives! There was still a couple yrs, but that didn't stop Daniel, he began to intercede immediately, to call upon God to fulfill His purpose & His promise. Listen, we know it's God's heart to see people saved, so do we just trust He'll do what He'll do? **Or do we pray, "O God pour out Your Spirit, bring conviction of sin, save those who are straying!" We know He wants to increase His kingdom, but are we praying, "God, give us boldness to be the witnesses You've called us to be, to invite people unashamedly to 'come & see' that they might come to know You, being born again & growing in You."**

Listen, God declared His plan, but Jeremiah made a prophecy, Daniel made a prayer & king Cyrus would make a proclamation to set the captives free! He works His will through people like you & me... & I love this because everyone can pray.

**Let's not be confused so as to think that Daniel was historically, uniquely qualified for a ministry of intercession. He wasn't of a priestly lineage, he wasn't in ministry vocationally. It's not like he carried his business card around, "prophet of God" like Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Elijah.** Daniel was a high ranking bureaucrat, he had a government job. He had much more on his plate than we do, but he prioritized prayer & God honored it. If you want to see God do great things in your life, or in your church, or in this city... prioritize prayer, intercede for such things.

**& Notice, Daniel even prepared himself to pray. He says, "I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer." How many of you realize that it's important to "prepare our hearts" when we pray? Why? Because a heart that's not right w/God simply utters pious words, not prayer.**

God is looking to your heart, & mine as well. Write it down, read it later, Lev 26:4-45. Perhaps you recall these words, *"...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."*<sup>2</sup> This was the position Daniel's heart. He set his face, gave full attention to what he was doing...

He fasted, wore sackcloth & covered himself in ashes. Why? What was that about? In fasting he was denying his flesh (the physical) that he might focus on the spiritual. Sackcloth & ashes are outward emblems of inward humiliation & mourning, a broken & contrite heart. He wasn't about to approach God on the basis of his great merits, but rather God's great mercy. He wasn't seeking to *perfect* his heart through these things, but to *prepare* his heart for prayer. His position physically was demonstrating that he was humbling his heart inwardly.

He was persuaded of the principle, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." In the book of James we read, *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."*<sup>3</sup> This was Daniel's posture in prayer, one of humility & repentance in the sight of a pure & holy & righteous God.

#### Vs 4-6

Daniel began where we all do well to begin, by recognizing the greatness & the goodness of God. He says, "O God, *You are great & awesome, You keep Your word & show mercy to those who love You & keep Your commandments.*"

I'm just going to tell you where Daniel is headed w/this. The things that have happened to Israel aren't on God, they're on *Israel*. God hasn't sought for a loophole to get out of doing what He said, He's promised blessing, He's promised mercy. The problem isn't in God, it's in Israel! Even so w/you & me! Listen, when there's Divine discipline upon our lives, the problem isn't in God, it's in us! God is great & awesome, He *keeps* His word, the problem is we don't keep His word.

I love the fact that Vs 4 links love & obedience together. He says, "God keeps His covenant & mercy w/those who love Him, & who keep His commandments." What does love for God look like in your life (in a practical way)?

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Ch 7:14-15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jas 4:8-10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It looks like obedience to His word. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."**<sup>4</sup> God honors those who honor Him! We want God to honor us, reward us, regardless if we honor/obey Him or not... It doesn't work that way.

When we sin, we should expect the ramifications of said sin to visit us. The problem isn't in God, it's in us! Daniel begins by praising God, recognizing His goodness, His justness, His righteousness. Then he moves into confession...

He says, "We have sinned, committed iniquity, we've done wickedly & rebelled..." God help us to pray w/such transparency, he doesn't make excuses, he doesn't say, "Well, God *they* did this, & *they* did that..." He's not pointing fingers, though he may not have done those things personally, he recognizes Israel's sin nationally of which he is a part of...

What I'm saying is that there isn't a strand of pride running through his prayer, there's compassion. He sees his own sinfulness in the light of God's holiness, he doesn't elevate himself over anyone else. This is how we can pray for our nation, our church, our families. "God *You* are faithful, *we* have failed." & It's not to paint some "beat yourself up" image. But a simple, honest acknowledgment of who God *is* & who we're not.

He carries on, "We've departed from Your precepts, & Your judgments. We've not heeded Your prophets; kings, princes & common people alike, we've all turned our back on You & the righteous instruction of Your word."

### Vs 7-15

Wow... This man knew how to pray! "O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us... shame of face." Catch the flow here. "God, You are great & awesome, You are faithful, You are merciful, You are righteous. But we have done wickedly, acted rebelliously, we've acted pridefully in abandoning Your word therefore we have been become sinful, scattered, & covered w/shame..."

Sin always brings shame, it always separates us from God & there are no exceptions. What's the answer? Confession. Individually, as a body & nationally. We don't need a trillion dollar stimulus package injected into our economy. We need to confess our sin & humble ourselves in the sight of God... **1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** "O God, righteousness belongs to You! But to us shame of face! We've cast You out of our schools, out of our government, we've turned our back on Your word! We've sinned against You O God, therefore we've reaped the fruit of our own ways... The problem isn't in You God, it's in us!"

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [In 14:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Daniel didn't spend his time *complaining*, he got busy *confessing*! & Not in vague generalities, but specifically, in humility.

In Vs 13 he says, "All this disaster has come upon us (just as You said it would), yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God that we might turn from our iniquities & understand Your truth." It comes up occasionally & here we see it again; we can sin even in *prayerlessness*...

Sin isn't only found in *doing* wrong, but also in *not doing* right. (Write these down, look them up later 1 Sam 12:23, James 4:17) When we sense trials or difficulties, it should drive us to prayer... If it doesn't that should alarm us to the coldness/calloused-ness of heart that has set in. Our hearts should be desiring to turn *toward* the Lord, not walk independently *of* the Lord.

### Vs 16-19

Family; what's the "take home" from these last few Vs we're thinking through today? Underline it, root it in your heart, it's found in Vs 18. "We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies..."

& Daniel's prayer was consumed w/the glory of God. He wasn't asking God to act simply so they could be released, but so that God might be glorified, that His work might be done & His word fulfilled. "God You were glorified in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, do it again! Fulfill Your word & deliver Your people from Babylon."

There were many things that they were in need of as a nation, but it was all summed up in this, (Vs 18) "Cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary..." We might think of 100 things we need from God, but we can sum it all up in 1 request, "God cause Your face to shine upon us..."

& Notice again, "Not for my sake, not even for Israel's sake, but for the sake of Your glory!" Not that it's wrong to pray for your needs, we're invited to let our requests be made known to God, but we should have a passion for the glory of God, that's greater than our own needs...

Daniel never heard the words, "In Jesus name", but it's how he prayed nonetheless... Not coming to God on the basis of his own merit, but on the basis of God's mercy, in true humility. It can be subtle... the thought that perhaps God will do something for you because after all, you've read your bible, you gave your tithe, made an offering & served in the church... "O God, I've done all this, now will You ...." We might never say it out loud, but that's the position of our heart...

Why should God hear? Why should God forgive? Why should God listen & act? It won't be because of the goodness that's in us, but because of the grace & the mercy *in* Him & the glory it brings *to* Him... Isn't God good? Let's make our prayer before Him now & ask Him to seal these things w/in our hearts...

### Prayer Points:

God You are good! Great & awesome! Righteousness belongs to You & the righteousness in us is *of* You, for truly in us (that is in our flesh) there is no good thing that dwells. But we're grateful for Your mercy, for Your grace & Your love. & We're asking that You would renew our hearts, restore our relationship w/You, increase our burden for the lost, pour Your Spirit out in this place, set a fire in our hearts & cleanse Your bride... for Your name's sake & for Your great glory.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, it is by grace we're saved, through faith. That means if you want God to save you, you have to humble yourself before Him. Jesus loves you, shed His blood for you & will cleanse you of all your sin, trust in Him today, repent of your sin, turn from it & come to Christ today.