



*The Most High  
God rules over  
the kingdoms of  
the world and  
appoints anyone  
he desires to  
rule over them.*

*(Dan 5:21b NLT)*

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# Introduction to Daniel Chapter 9

- In the *first* part of Daniel chapter 9 (vss.1-19), which we will be covering today, we have a record of Daniel's prayer given on behalf of the God's *covenant people*, Israel.
- This is probably the reason that the *covenant name*, Yahweh (translated as "*LORD*" in our English bibles), which is not found *anywhere else* in the book of Daniel, appears *seven times* in this chapter.
- Daniel's prayer for his people is one of the truly *great prayers* in the Bible.
- No doubt, this prayer could, in many ways, serve as an excellent example for *us* as *we* come before God's throne of grace.
- In the latter part of chapter 9, which I plan to cover next time, we will see God's *response* to the prayer of Daniel.
- In that portion, Daniel receives what the Angel Gabriel refers to in v. 23 as a "*vision*".
- But unlike the *previous* two visions, Daniel does not see rams and goats or animals rising out of a sea. Instead, Daniel is given a timetable for the coming of Messiah in a period of time that is referred to in the vision as "*seventy weeks*".



# Daniel's Prayer of Confession on Behalf of Israel (9:1-19)

*9:1 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom--<sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.<sup>3</sup> So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.*

# Daniel's Prayer of Confession on Behalf of Israel (9:1-19)

*9:4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, <sup>5</sup> we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. <sup>6</sup> We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup> "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame--the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.*

# Daniel's Prayer of Confession on Behalf of Israel (9:1-19)

*9:8 O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. 9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; 10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. "Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. 12 You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.*

# Daniel's Prayer of Confession on Behalf of Israel (9:1-19)

*9:13 Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. <sup>14</sup> The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him. <sup>15</sup> “Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong.*



# Daniel's Prayer of Confession on Behalf of Israel (9:1-19)

*9:16 O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us. <sup>17</sup> "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. <sup>18</sup> Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. <sup>19</sup> O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name." (NIV)*

<sup>9:1</sup> *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, **who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans**-- (ESV)*

- As is typical of the book of Daniel, the chapter begins with a chronological note.
- We are told here that the content of this chapter was written in the first year of Darius, “*who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans*”
- This Darius had forcibly replaced Belshazzar on the throne and was likely a subordinate ruler of Cyrus of Persia.
- Darius’s first year (539 B.C.) was also the year in which the Persians defeated the Babylonians, whose empire (under Nebuchadnezzar) had defeated and exiled the Jews some decades earlier.
- Darius’s first year as king of Babylon would have coincided with the first year of Cyrus as the great king of the Persian empire – also the year that the decree was given to allow some of the Jews to return to their homeland.
- Daniel’s prayer *seems* to have taken place in *anticipation* of this decree.



<sup>9:2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in *the books* the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. (ESV)

- In the first year of Darius's reign, Daniel came to understand an important truth as he searched "*the books*."
- The "*books*" (or "Scriptures" as the NIV translates it) were the sacred Hebrew writings available in Daniel's day – which ***included*** what ***we*** know as the book of Jeremiah.
- Daniel's statement, "*according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet*", is a strong affirmation of verbal inspiration.
- It shows that Daniel believed that the sacred Scriptures, in this case the prophecies of Jeremiah, were the very words of God delivered to the world through a human instrument.

<sup>9:2</sup> *in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.* (ESV)

- In his reading of the book of Jeremiah, Daniel discovered “*the number of years that... must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem*” – that is, the number of years Jerusalem would lie in ruins before the Jews would be allowed to return and rebuild the city.
- The prophet Jeremiah had predicted that Judah would go **into captivity** to Babylon, but that after “*seventy years*” they would be allowed to **return** to the land (cf. Jer 25:11–12; 29:10).
- Jeremiah’s first prophecy of this seventy-year exile was delivered in 605 B.C. (cf. Jer 25:11–12 with 25:1), when Daniel was a young teenage boy.
- Since 605 B.C. was the year when the first captives were taken to Babylon (including Daniel and his friends), the year that Judah came under Babylonian domination, and the year the prophecy was first given, it is reasonable to assume that Jeremiah intended this as the beginning date for the seventy-year captivity period.

*9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. (ESV)*

- We know **historically** that Cyrus issued the decree releasing the Jews from Babylonian captivity in 539 B.C., and the Jewish exiles returned shortly thereafter.
- As Daniel studied Jeremiah's prophecy, he came to realize that the "*seventy years*" of captivity were now drawing to a close (605 minus 539 = 66 years).
- This passage illustrates that Daniel believed in the reality of predictive prophecy.
- Jeremiah had foretold the end of the Babylonian captivity seventy years in advance, and Daniel fully expected this prophecy to be fulfilled.
- Daniel did not "symbolize" these seventy years but took the prophecy literally.
- In doing so, he was setting an example for believers today as they study prophecies of future events.



<sup>9:3</sup> *Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* (ESV)

- “*I turned my face to the Lord God*” – Daniel prayed **fervently** to the Lord.
- Daniel was determined to **look** to God in prayer until the Lord gave him an answer.
- His appeal was directed toward “*the Lord [’ădōnāy] God.*”
- The Hebrew word *’ădōnāy* means “owner, ruler, or sovereign” and identifies Yahweh as the sovereign ruler of the universe.
- Not only was the Lord able to **hear** Daniel’s prayer, but he had the sovereign power to **answer** Daniel’s prayer.
- “*fasting*” demonstrated Daniel’s deep concern to God.
- Being clothed in “*sackcloth*” (coarse, rough cloth) and sitting in “*ashes*” were expressions of humility that commonly accompanied fasting (cf. Esth 4:1–3).

9:4 I prayed to *the LORD* my God and made confession, saying, "O *Lord*, the great and awesome God, *who keeps covenant* and *steadfast love* with *those who love him* and *keep his commandments*... (ESV)

- Daniel begins his prayer to "*the LORD*" (Yahweh), addressing him as "*Lord*" ('*ādōnāy* = "owner, ruler, or sovereign") and calling him the "*great and awesome God*."<sup>1</sup>
- "*awesome*" comes from a Hebrew root that means "to fear," and thus the word means "one who inspires fear."<sup>1</sup>
- God's greatness and power should produce awe and wonder as frail human beings survey his works.<sup>1</sup>
- "*who keeps covenant*" – God is faithful to remember His promises made toward His chosen ones.<sup>2</sup>
- "*steadfast love*" (*hesed*) – By keeping the covenant God manifests lovingkindness to "*those who love him*".<sup>2</sup>
- This love for God is exhibited by those who "*keep his commandments*".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Miller, Stephen R., *Daniel*, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (pp. 243–245)

<sup>2</sup> Young, Edward J.; *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*; (p. 185)

<sup>9:5</sup> *we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.* (ESV)

- Daniel uses a variety of words and phrases to acknowledge that the Jewish people have been guilty of all kinds of sin:
  - “*we have sinned*”
  - “*done wrong*”
  - “*acted wickedly*”
  - “*rebelled*”
  - “*turning aside from your commandments and rules*”
- In all this confession of sin, Daniel, who had lived most of his life in Babylon and was now an old man, by using the pronoun “*we*”, identified ***himself*** with his people.
- This is ***remarkable*** when we consider how pure Daniel was in character.
- As an old hymn once put it: “*And they who fain would serve Thee best, are conscious most of wrong within.*”



<sup>9:6</sup> We have not listened to your *servants the prophets*, who spoke in your name to *our kings, our princes, and our fathers*, and to *all the people of the land*. (ESV)

- Yahweh had graciously sent his “*servants the prophets*” to exhort the people of Israel and their leaders to repent of their sin, but they refused to listen.
- Not all turned from the Lord, of course.
- The prophets themselves were faithful, and others like Daniel and his friends remained true to the Lord.
- Nevertheless, the nation as a whole – “*our kings, our princes, and our fathers... [ancestors], and ... all the people of the land*” —had turned their backs on God.

<sup>9:7</sup> To you, O Lord, belongs *righteousness*, but to us *open shame*, *as at this day*, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. <sup>8</sup> To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. (ESV)

- God's perfect "*righteousness*" is manifested in all His dealings with Israel.<sup>1</sup>
- In sending to them His prophets, warning them of sin, and particularly, in sending them into exile as a punishment, God is vindicated as right.<sup>1</sup>
- But the sinful people now experience "*open shame*" in their present circumstances ("*as at this day*"), because they know their punishment is well deserved.<sup>1</sup>
- At this point Daniel's confession indicts *all* who belong to God's people, not according to their difference in rank and station, but rather according to their *geographical* locations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Young, Edward J.; The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary; (p. 186)

<sup>2</sup> Leupold, H. C.; *Exposition of Daniel* (1949); (pp. 385–386)

<sup>9:7</sup> To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of *Judah*, to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and to all Israel, those who *are near* and those who *are far away*, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. <sup>8</sup> To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. (ESV)

- Those who enjoyed the advantage of living in “*Judah*” or in “*Jerusalem*” are as guilty as those who were less fortunately located ***elsewhere*** in Israel. <sup>2</sup>
- Daniel reflects, in particular, on that experience which put Israelites to shame in a very special sense – the ***dispersion*** resulting from the captivity, which the Lord, their God, had caused them to undergo so that some “*are near*” while others “*are far away*”. <sup>2</sup>
- In either case they were still “*in all the lands to which*” the LORD had “*driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against*” their God. <sup>2</sup>
- Verse 8 repeats the thought of the previous verse, for emphasis. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Young, Edward J.; The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary; (p. 186)

<sup>2</sup> Leupold, H. C.; *Exposition of Daniel* (1949); (pp. 385–386)



<sup>9:9</sup> To the Lord our God belong *mercy and forgiveness*, for we have *rebelled* against him <sup>10</sup> and *have not obeyed* the voice of the LORD our God by walking in *his laws*, which he set before us by his servants the *prophets*. <sup>11</sup> All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the *curse and oath* that are written in the *Law of Moses* the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. (ESV)

- In the Hebrew “*mercy and forgiveness*” are plurals emphasizing God’s great and ***manifold*** “mercies” and his ***abundant*** forgiveness.
- Even though Israel had “*rebelled*” against him, there was yet hope because the sovereign Lord is “merciful” and “forgiving.”
- Israel had been disobedient to Yahweh and refused to keep the “*laws*” delivered to the nation through his “*prophets*”. They had turned their backs on the Lord.
- Because Israel had forsaken God’s law, they had experienced the “*curse and oath*” (or as the NIV translates it: “*curses and sworn judgments*”) threatened by “*the Law of Moses*”.

*9:9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him <sup>10</sup> and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the **curse and oath** that are written in **the Law of Moses** the servant of God have been **poured out** upon us, because we have sinned against him. (ESV)*

- What was this “*curse and oath*”? It was “*curses and sworn judgments*” spoken of in “*the Law of Moses*” for breaking the covenant.
- Hundreds of years earlier it had been written in the “*Law of Moses*” as a warning to Israel to remain faithful to the covenant.
- In Deut 28:15ff the contents of this curse are recorded.
- It included poor crops, infertility, disease, lack of rain, defeat before enemies, and the most terrible penalty of all, expulsion from the land of Canaan.
- Daniel concludes here that these curses had been “*poured out*” on Israel because of its sin against God.
- By the way, notice that Daniel identifies Moses as the author of the Law, something liberal scholars like to question (Google “Documentary hypothesis”).

<sup>9:12</sup> *He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against **us** and against **our rulers** who ruled us, by bringing upon us a **great calamity**. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. (ESV)*

- Yahweh had promised judgment upon all Israel (“**us**” and “**our rulers**”) if they broke his covenant.
- Now the predicted “**great calamity**,” the present exile, had come.
- As the Israelites considered their plight, they were reminded that God does not lie.
- Daniel’s statement regarding the uniqueness of Jerusalem’s destruction strikes some as surprising.
- Certainly, other nations had gone into captivity, and other cities and temples had been destroyed.
- Other nations had experienced defeat and deportation, but their gods were idols of lifeless wood, stone, and metal (cf. Ps 135:15–17; Isa 44:9ff.).
- Now the people of the **true** God were in exile, and **his** city and temple were in ruins.
- Truly nothing like this had ever happened in history.



9:13 *As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has **come upon us**; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.* (ESV)

- Daniel confesses that despite Moses' warnings, all this calamity has "*come upon us*".
- He has lived through the era when Moses' words became frightening realities.
- Perhaps worse still, the people have not **learned** from these times.
- Leviticus 26:40-45, Deuteronomy 30:1-10 and 1 Kings 8:46-53 state that God will **restore** the people when they **confess** their sins (Lev. 26:40), return to God (Deut. 30:2).
- Jeremiah 29:12-14 promises that restoration will follow true, heartfelt seeking of God.
- But so far, the people have not pleaded to the face of their God; they have not turned from iniquity.
- Therefore, they have not shown signs of "*gaining insight*" from God's "*truth*".

<sup>9:14</sup> Therefore the LORD has *kept ready* the *calamity* and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our *God is righteous* in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. <sup>15</sup> And now, O Lord our God, who *brought* your people *out of the land of Egypt* with a mighty hand, and have made a *name* for yourself, as at this day, we *have sinned*, we have *done wickedly*. (ESV)

- Given this level of covenant infidelity and unwillingness to learn, God has “*kept ready*” the “*calamity*” they continue to experience.
- He keeps using it as a tool of instruction and “*God is righteous*” to do so.
- Daniel desires for God to change things. Therefore, he confesses that he and his fellow Israelites “*have sinned*” and “*done wickedly*”.
- Nonetheless, he says, Yahweh remains our God, and Israel remains his people, the ones he “*brought... out of the land of Egypt*” and thus made a “*name*” for himself.
- As Moses did in Exodus 32:11-14 in the aftermath of the golden calf debacle, Daniel prays based on God’s covenant fidelity and character (“*name*”) shown to all nations by his relationship with Israel.
- As Jeremiah 29:10–14 urges, Daniel prays, seeks God and turns from sin.
- Daniel obeys the words in Jeremiah’s scroll, for he has ***cultivated*** the ***habit*** of obeying God’s Word (see 1:8-16).

<sup>9:16</sup> "O Lord, *according to all your righteous acts*, let your anger and your wrath turn away from *your city Jerusalem, your holy hill*, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and *your people have become a byword among all who are around us*. (ESV)

- Here Daniel declares that the **basis** of his plea was the **righteousness of God** ("according to all your righteous acts").
- The point he makes is that justice has been served. Israel has been punished for their sins, and now it would be right ("just") for God to restore the nation (cf. Isa 40:2; Lev 26:41).
- Daniel **reminds** Yahweh of Jerusalem's relationship to him ("*your city Jerusalem, your holy hill*") and urges him to act for the sake of his own glory and honor.
- The prophet quickly acknowledged that although Jerusalem was Yahweh's special city, its desolation was due to **Israel's** sin, **not** to any flaw in the character of Yahweh or a lack of power on his part.
- Because of sin both Jerusalem and the Jewish people had become "*a byword*" (an object of scorn) to all the surrounding nations.
- Because Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Jews had been scattered, other nations looked down upon them as an insignificant people.



<sup>9:17</sup> Now therefore, O our God, *listen* to the *prayer* of *your servant* and to his *pleas for mercy*, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your *face to shine* upon your *sanctuary, which is desolate*. (ESV)

- In the previous verse, Daniel prayed for a restoration of Yahweh's **city**, Jerusalem; here he requested the rebuilding of Yahweh's "*sanctuary*", the temple.
- Daniel pleaded with Yahweh to "*listen*" his "*prayer*" and his "*pleas for mercy*".
- The Lord was entreated to cause his "*face to shine* on his "*sanctuary, which is desolate*" in Jerusalem.
- 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.

9:18 O my God, *incline your ear* and *hear*. *Open your eyes* and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our *righteousness*, but because of your *great mercy*. (ESV)

- Now Daniel passionately pleads with God to “*incline your ear*” and “*hear*” his request.
- God was being asked to listen intently to the prophet’s prayer (and possibly also to the insulting words being spoken about Yahweh by the heathen).
- The Lord was then implored to “*open*” his eyes and observe the plight of the Jewish people and the condition of Jerusalem.
- These requests were not based on the “*righteousness*” the Jewish people, because they had none.
- Daniel’s appeal to the heavenly judge is predicated upon the “*great mercy*” of God.

9:19 *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.*" (ESV)

- Here the prayer reaches a ***passionate crescendo*** as Daniel concludes with short staccatolike 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.
- Daniel pleaded with the Lord to "*hear,*" "*forgive,*" "*pay attention,*" and "*act.*"
- God was being entreated to direct his attention to the Jews' situation and to ***do*** something about it.
- Quick action was requested ("*delay not*") because the Lord's own reputation was at stake.
- Each day that Jerusalem lay in ruins and the Jewish people were in exile brought more shame to Israel's God.
- Therefore Daniel reminded him again that "*your city and your people are called by your name.*"



# Class Discussion Time

- In our text today, we see Daniel confessing *on behalf of* the people of Israel.
- He, no doubt, does this because passages like Leviticus 26:40-45, Deuteronomy 30:1-10 and 1 Kings 8:46-53 state that when the people of Israel have been disciplined for their disobedience, God will restore the people when they confess their sins (Lev. 26:40), and return to God (Deut. 30:2).
- Could this idea be applied today by Christians confessing sin on behalf of *our* nation? Or does this uniquely apply to Israel in its covenant relationship with God?

# Class Discussion Time

- What do you think about the way Daniel “makes a case” for God to forgive his people, arguing that it is in God’s best interest to do so because the shame that his people are experiencing will cause ***God himself*** to be thought less of by the nations of the world if Israel were to continue to suffer in this way, since they are ***his*** people?
- Do you see any other principles that Daniel works from in making his case before God that might be applicable for us to keep in mind as we pray to God?
- For example, acknowledging that we are sinful and have no right to expect God’s forgiveness and so instead we appeal to his mercy and lovingkindness.