

Daniel: A Prayer and a Promise-Keeper

Daniel 9

MPS God is our great promise-keeper; who by His decree to fulfill His Word comforts us with hope and strengthens us to serve Him until He returns to usher in His eternal Kingdom of peace.

OBJ Every person can understand how God as our promise-keeper comforts us with great hope and strengthens with His power by Three Words that FOCUS our lives.

READ Daniel 9:1-2

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—²in 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.

Daniel 9 begins about a decade later than where chapter 8 ended. The Babylonian empire has been overthrown by the Medo-Persian empire, and Darius is in his first year of rule. Daniel is studying the words of the prophet Jeremiah. He comes to Jeremiah 25 and 29, where the prophet mentions “seventy years”, and meditates on the prophet’s words to understand their meaning. Daniel is an aged man now, in his 80s, and has been in captivity for approximately sixty-six years. So when he reads of the seventy years, he recognizes how near the end of that timeline he now lives. This alone could be shocking to consider, a time he likely thought he would never see. [For Daniel in his study, he begins to see the “light at the end of the tunnel” for the end of Israel’s suffering, which motivates him to set his hope on the light of God and the promise of His Word.](#)

TRANS I bet this is NOT the way he saw that prayer being answered. Yet, he did not waver. Let’s look at his prayer.

READ Daniel 9:3-19

³Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

⁴I 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, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶We 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. ⁷To 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. ⁸To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. ⁹To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him ¹⁰and 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. ¹¹All 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. ¹²He 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. ¹³As 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. ¹⁴Therefore 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. ¹⁵And 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.

¹⁶“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. ¹⁷Now 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. ¹⁸O 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. ¹⁹O 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."

[.3] Daniel's study to understand God fueled a more intensifying seeking of the Lord with his whole being. "*Fasting and sackcloth and ashes*" tells us that it became all-consuming as he cries out and begs the Lord for deeper insight of understanding. This was not a one-off prayer, but a season by which his prayers were consumed by his study. And the understanding from his study produced a distinct way in which he lived his whole life.

This strikes me when I consider the timeline and know we are studying a prayer of Daniel; this is likely the prayer Daniel was praying when the satraps and other two high officials tricked Darius to have Daniel thrown in the lion's den.(6:10) This is the reason Daniel was unencumbered by their trickery, so that he returned to his house to pray. There was a "flickering light of hope" that had captivated his heart and mind in study that was far greater than any threat from the enemy. [Daniel was consumed in deep study and meditation on God's Word that produced a great prayer of confession and repentance, and that's what led to him being thrown in the lion's den.](#)

[.4-15] **When you read Daniel 9:4, you hear where Paul got Romans 8:28; they worshiped the same Lord!** Daniel's prayer begins in confession and repentance by appealing to God's covenant love and divine attributes and how they stand in contrast to Israel's sin. God is great and awesome, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments(.4). He is righteous(.7), merciful and forgiving(.9), He speaks to reveal Himself to His people(.10), and is faithful to His Word, even the curses written in the Law of Moses(.11). But against the attributes of God stand the wickedness and sin of His people who have turned aside from His commands(.5). His people live in open shame because they have not listened to Him. They are separated from the land of His promise, and His curse and oath are poured upon them because of their sin, which He has confirmed in telling them He is the one who brought the calamity upon them(.12). And in the midst of all the calamity, Daniel confesses that the people have not sought the Lord's favor or truth but multiplied their rebellion by further wickedness. The calamity shows the Lord's righteousness in judgment. [But Daniel calls to God as the one who saved His people from Egypt, appealing to His mighty hand to rescue once again for the glory of His Name.](#)

[.16-19] **Recognizing God's mighty hand to save turns Daniel's prayer.** He intercedes for God's anger and wrath to be turned away from Jerusalem and His people, and for Him to rescue them for the glory of His Name(.16). Daniel pleads for God to hear his prayer and show mercy, not simply to stop the suffering but for the glory of His Name. The glory of God is the all-consuming motive for Daniel's plea; "Lord, show the greatness of your Name and glory by saving your people." Show your mercy to your people because of your righteousness, not ours, and so that your sanctuary will be filled with your praises again. And with exclamation Daniel pleads(.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.*"

Daniel appeals to God for the glory of His Name. Daniel's appeal is not to show God how badly they are hurt or are suffering. He admits they deserve it all, and more! Daniel's appeal, rather, is for God to show the glory of His Name by displaying His mighty power for all to see, and for the glory of His Name to be restored in the praise and worship of His sanctuary. Daniel dials in to the heart of God in his prayer, and it proves powerful! Maybe Daniel is the very person James had in mind when he wrote (5:16), "*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*" [Daniel prayed for a healing that only God could bring, and God heard Him!](#)

TRANS Daniel is suddenly interrupted while praying.

READ Daniel 9:20-23

²⁰While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, ²¹while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. ²²He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. ²³At the



beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

Gabriel visits Daniel by “swift flight” while he is praying. He comes to give Daniel insight and understanding because when Daniel began his pleas for mercy a word went out that sent him to Daniel. Understand what the text is telling us here. This decree that sent Gabriel to Daniel was instantaneous to his cries and pleas. God was ready to act, but He waited to give his answer and greater understanding to Daniel until he asked for it. In the midst of our study of God’s sovereignty, do not miss this: [God’s Will will be done, but He has ordained to work through people in accomplishing His will on the earth. He waits and watches for those who desire to serve Him, and we must seek Him.](#)¹

TRANS The message Gabriel has for Daniel is not an easy one. Speaking of these last four verses, one scholar states, these are “the most difficult text in the book.”² Let’s see what we are dealing with here.

READ Daniel 9:24-27

²⁴“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. ²⁵Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. ²⁷And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

“Although Daniel’s prayer is easy to understand, God’s response of the seventy weeks is another matter.”³ Last week I said of Daniel 8 that it was the heaviest chapter in the book. Here in Daniel 9 we have what many consider the hardest chapter in the whole book, and some would say the whole Bible.⁴ What makes these verses so difficult and challenging is that the insight and understanding from Daniel’s prayer connects the prophecy of Jeremiah with the Revelation of the Apostle John, to determine the end of all things. **Without making any predictions, today I am going to tell you when the end will come.**

Allow me to make a brief comment to guide our understanding of these verses. In addition to literary genre, two rules of hermeneutics are important to remember here. First, context is king to clarify meaning. What Daniel has been writing about will help guide us to keep us on the right track. Second, as with any passage, less clear passages of Scripture should always be interpreted in light of clearer passages. Any meaning we attempt to draw from these verses cannot be allowed to lead in any direction we desire but must stay true to the text and not one’s preferences or presumptions. Therefore, while in a sermon, and not merely a study, I do not intend to outline the options. Rather, I will work from what I believe to be the best understanding.

Most scholars understand “seventy weeks” to be a time of 490 years.⁵ This time is divided into three periods, a seven week period, a sixty-two week period, and a final week period. The dominant position is that the word that went out was Cyrus’ decree in 538 B.C. The anointed priest is most likely Ezra, who arrived in Jerusalem in 458 B.C. (.25a) The sixty-two

¹ 2 Chronicles 16:9; Isaiah 6:8

² Sidney Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 285–286.

³ Sidney Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#), 285.

⁴ Sidney Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#), 285. Greidanus notes, “In A.D. 400, the brilliant church father Jerome simply listed nine conflicting opinions of “the great teachers of the church” and left it “to the reader’s judgment as to whose explanation ought to be followed.” That was long before rationalism, higher criticism, millenarianism, and dispensationalism added their various opinions. Today one is confronted with a mind-boggling variety of options and combinations of options.”

⁵ Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#), 293–294. Greidanus comments, “most commentators understand the “seventy weeks” as “seventy weeks of years,” that is, 490 years.”



weeks runs from this time until the Roman Empire occupation, during which all this we know Jerusalem experienced very troubled times. (.25b) That brings us to sixty-nine total weeks, with one final week remaining. The last, or seventieth, week, as described in verses 26-27, tells of many things taking place. But in essence, “It turns out that the final week God decreed extends from Jesus’ First Coming to his Second Coming.”⁶ In all of this, the point for this period in Daniel is that the 490 years, a calculation of $7 \times 10 \times 7$, represents a perfect period of time, followed by a complete period, leading to a final perfect time.⁷ The point is one not of chronology, but of apocalyptic prophecy; God’s perfect and complete work that occurs above only a measure of time that is passing. *The prophecy has begun, the “anointed one...cut off” is Jesus’ death on the cross, the desolator doing his work of abomination is the prince of darkness in the world now, but in the end, the desolator will be destroyed when Christ returns to consummate His eternal Kingdom.* Paul speaks of this time when he writes,

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:58

Here is the “when” of the end of all ends; when all things are subjected to Christ, and by the Father’s sovereign decree He sends for the end. We should not look for an end date to our suffering but see Christ’s suffering as the end of sin’s rule, and the beginning of God’s Kingdom’s glorious reign!

God’s answer through Gabriel provides a great comfort and encouragement for Daniel, but also for all who seek the Lord! Nothing is more satisfying for the Christ-follower than when God comforts us deeply by the hope of His promise and strengthens our gifts that He has given us to serve His Name. God is listening, and He longs to reveal Himself when we seek Him. Our focus now, though, should not be in calculation of time, but faithfulness in obedience to serve Him. *Gabriel’s insight was both a great comfort to Daniel and a great strength to motivate him with divine power to serve, very likely Daniel’s power to walk into the Lion’s den!*

God is our great promise-keeper; who by His decree to fulfill His Word comforts us with hope and strengthens us to serve Him until He returns to usher in His eternal Kingdom of peace.

TRANS For Christ-followers, the issue is not, “**Will He come?**” nor “**When will He come?**”, but “**How we live to seek and serve Jesus faithfully until He comes.**”

OBJ **Three Words FOCUS our lives in the comfort of God’s hope and strength of His power.**

1. PRAYER

There is much we could say about Daniel’s prayers, but it is most advantageous for us to understand not “How” Daniel prayed, but “what about Daniel’s prayer moved God.” We learned from chapter six that everyone knew Daniel was deeply devoted to his prayer life. But here we also learn that Daniel’s prayers were not just a reciting of what He needed from God; there is no personal intercession except as he is included as an Israelite in his confession. Daniel’s prayer is marked by a deep study and meditation on God’s Word. *The prayer God hears is always according to His Word.*

Daniel prays according to God’s covenant and commands, not His wishes and needs. How often do we miss God because our prayers have nothing to do with His will, but only our worries? We are commanded to cast our cares, worries, and anxieties on Him because He cares for us (Philippians 4:6), but they should not be the fullness of our prayer. Daniel’s prayer was according to God’s Word primarily in adoration of His attributes, and confessions to His commands. We often think of confession and repentance as our acknowledging to God what we have not done for Him, but that is not true at all. Confession and repentance acknowledges what God has done for us in our sin through the gospel, that He made a way to forgive and cleanse us, and we are trusting only in Him. The best way to know God’s will is to read it in His Word. If you want to know what God is going to do, look for His promises. If you want to know what you are supposed to do, listen to His

⁶ Greidanus, [Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons](#), 301.

⁷ Paul R. House, [Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. David G. Firth, vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 157. House comments, “Since seven and ten are symbols of full and complete amounts in the Bible, multiplying them together and multiplying by seventy simply means a very long and complete time (McComiskey 1985:18–45).”



commands. But Daniel also reminds us that in His covenants, commands, and His curses and oaths (Deuteronomy), **the promise God always keeps is the one He has made.**

One final quality of God in response to Daniel's prayer is important for us to see. Daniel trusted that God was listening to His prayers, and he was right. Gabriel came with a suddenness that surprised even Daniel. When we know God is listening, that He hears and cares, it changes the way we pray. Just be ready for when He arrives because the glory God reveals will always be far more inconceivably greater than you dared imagine. God is not slow in keeping His promises, nor stunted in hearing the prayers of His people, He works to answer our prayer far more than we even labor in praying them. **The answer God brings is always more glorious in completeness and abundance than you dared imagine.**

2. PRIORITY

Daniel shows us that instead of trying to be the answer for God's people, His priority was to seek God as the answer for His people. **And how did he do this? Daniel's priority was displayed in his daily devotion to the Lord.**

Our priority today is to faithfulness in serving above correctness in guessing. Over and over in the Scriptures, the Lord calls His followers to live ready for His return. And living ready means living faithful to Him every day until He comes. We don't know the day because we don't need to know the day. Here's what we do know; we are living in the seventieth week! **The priority of every Christ-follower every day until Jesus returns is this, to live ready by walking by faith in obedience to His Word.**

God's timing is perfect, but that can be really hard for us to understand. We don't get time; from the kid in the backseat asking, "how much longer?" ten minutes in to a ten-hour road trip, to a man in his forties who blows out his knee because he's still trying to play like he's in his twenties. We live like we've mastered time, like we can deny time, or like we can overcome the reality of its effects on us, but we never escape the effect of time.

God exercises perfect sovereignty over time. We recognize some of God's most beautiful work when he bends light, and the brilliance of colors bursts forth from it! But God's most glorious work is when he bends time. When His people needed more time to conquer the enemy, God said "okay". **And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Joshua 10:13** Parents "bend time" all the time, though not in the same sovereign way as God. When mom or dad tells a child, "Five more minutes and we're going to go.", that period of tick-tock has never measured 300 seconds! We think of time as "chronos", the "tick-tock" of the clock, from the rising of the sun to its setting, and this is ordained by God. But God operates in "kairos" for the march of His truth, and His timing advances unencumbered throughout eternity; **"at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."** Romans 5:6 We know Jesus' death was in God's perfect timing. We can trust His return will be as well! **God accomplishes His perfect will through the 'passing of' to the 'perfection of time to accomplish His sovereign will.**

The priority for the Christ-follower is that we live ready every day, so when the Bridegroom returns we are ready to meet Him. (Matthew 25:1-13) The way you live every day reveals whether your priority is focused on the Master's return. (Luke 19:11-27) When Jesus returns, our readiness for His return will not be determined by our knowing the moment He was coming but by how we lived before He arrived. "Five more minutes", the parents tells the child. "We're in the seventieth week", the Lord tells His children! **The Christ-follower's priority in the passing of days is to trust in God's sovereignty for the perfection unto the Day!**

3. PASSION

Daniel's prayer turned for one reason (.17-19), "for God's sake, for the fame of His Name". **What are you living for? What motivates you to get up in the morning and live the way you do? What role does your relationship with Jesus Christ serve in determining how you live your life?** There are any number of people who would be fine to see God's power and glory manifested if it happened to intersect their life, but they'll not be bothered by seeking it. That person will never see it. Gabriel is in no rush to get to them. God is waiting, but He will not be moved because they are not willing to seek Him and



participate in His glory being revealed in this world. [But for the One who lives their whole life to see the Lord move by the power of His mighty hand, God will not disappoint!](#)

TRANS I have learned, it's very often not the people one might at first think, nor, necessarily, those always talking about it. Daniel appealed to God for His mighty hand to save because his whole life had been given to spread the glory of God and the fame of His Name. Daniel got His answer swiftly from God because He consumed Himself with God's Word and seeking His truth, not because He had the best seats in the house for the show. We would see far more of God's glory in our life if we consumed our whole life with spreading the glory and fame of God's Name. [God's most potent answers to prayer arrive when the passion of our life for Him are poured out in seeking the glory of His Name! Until God is the passion of your whole life, your eyes will not be filled with the glory of the Lord.](#)

Passion is the factor that aligns and unites everything together. It is so potent that you can sense and see it in the one who has it. It's not just how strongly one feels about something, but how much one's whole life is given to it. Everyone is passionate about something. The question is, "[Is that which consumes your life worthy of your life?](#)" If you want to see the Lord move in power and might, you must know His promises, seek Him in prayer for His promises, serve to facilitate the ministry of His promises, share His promises, and live your whole life absolutely certain and resolutely confident that God is the One who keeps His promises. [Passion aligns our priorities and our prayers, so that our whole life is given to seeking the glory and fame of God's Name.](#)

[God is our great promise-keeper; who by His decree to fulfill His Word comforts us with hope and strengthens us to serve Him until He returns to usher in His eternal Kingdom of peace.](#)

