

# Daniel's Prayer of Confession

📖 Daniel 9:1-19

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We have been studying the Book of Daniel and in particular the times of the Gentiles, which is a period of the four successive kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, during which time the nation Israel is under divine discipline for continual sin. We saw last week in Dan 8 that they would come under extreme persecution by a ruler who arose out of the Greek Empire named Antiochus Epiphanes IV, and that this ruler foreshadowed Israel's worst enemy to come, the anti-Christ. During that time Israel will confess their sin and call on the Son of Man to save them and He will return with great power and glory, defeat the anti-Christ, rescue Israel and establish His kingdom upon the planet.

In Daniel 9:1-2 we see the setting for Daniel's intercessory prayer of confession. **In the first year of Darius the son of Ahaseurus, of Median descent.** This **Darius** is the man we met in Daniel 5:31. His identity is hotly contested by critical scholars of the Book of Daniel. They say Daniel made a historical blunder at this point because they can't find any extrabiblical evidence for a **Darius of Median descent.** They say history only reports a Darius of Persian descent who began his rule several years later in 521 BC. That Darius was the son of Hystaspes, a Persian and not **Darius, the son of Ahaseurus,** a Mede. Several solutions by conservatives have been offered. The best is by John Whitcomb who pointed out that in the Babylonian Chronicles Cyrus the Persian sent one of his armies commanded by a man named Ugbaru to sack Babylon. This Ugbaru was the commander who diverted the Euphrates River from flowing into the city and led his armies through the water canals into the city and took Babylon without a fight. This Ugbaru died three weeks later and in his place Cyrus appointed a man by the similar name of Gubaru who governed Babylon for 14 years. He suggests that this Gubaru was also known as **Darius, the son of Ahaseurus, of Median descent.**

Since the sacking of Babylon occurred in 539 BC then the first year of this Darius' reign was 538 BC. So the events of Dan 9:1 occurred in 538 BC. Note in verse 1 that this Darius **was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans**—in other words, someone appointed him to the office of king and the one who did that was Cyrus the Persian. Cyrus was the greater king and ruled the greater territory of the Persian Empire whereas this man was appointed over the Babylonian portion of the empire as noted by the fact that it was **the kingdom of the Chaldeans.** The **Chaldeans** is another name for the Babylonians. And this is the kingdom that if you go back to

Daniel 6:1 you see that it seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom and over them three commissioners, of which Daniel was one. Then Daniel began to distinguish himself and so he was made second in the kingdom only to Darius himself. That is what caused the other commissioners to plot to destroy Daniel in the lion's den. So it is under the rule of this Darius in 538BC that the prayer and prophecy of this chapter took place.

Note verse 2, **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, 70 years.** Daniel had **Jeremiah's** scrolls and if you hold your place here and turn to Jer 25:11 and 29:10 you will see what exact passages in Jeremiah's scrolls Daniel observed. Jer 25:11, "This whole land (Israel) will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years." Daniel understood exactly what this meant. He lived it. He and his nation and all the nations around about had been utterly destroyed by the king of Babylon. And note that his land, Israel, would be in desolations for 70 years. So when did these desolations begin? 606BC.<sup>1</sup> Subtract 70 from 606 and what do you get? 536BC. And what year was it when Daniel observed Jeremiah's books? 538BC. So he was only two years away. Then look at Jer 29:10. "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.'" What place? The land of Israel. So there it is again, 70 years of captivity in Babylon. But what is added here is that there will be a restoration to the land. Jer 25:11 didn't say that. And then notice verse 11, the passage taken out of context by virtually every American Christian and misapplied to the USA. "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. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from the places where I have driven you," declares the LORD, "and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile." Did America go into exile to Babylon and all the nations? No. This has nothing to do with America. It's a promise to Israel in captivity after seventy years. Why seventy years? Because seventy is the number of years they did not allow the land to rest on the seventh year. It was a requirement under the Law of Moses that every 7<sup>th</sup> year the land was to rest and they had not done that 70 times and so seventy years were determined. And Daniel saw that after 70 years, verse 12, "Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you." That verse prompted Dan 9:3.

Note 9:3, **So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.** The words **I gave my attention to the Lord God** literally means he set his face toward the Lord God which is toward Jerusalem. So he's praying toward Jerusalem and there are two words used for prayer here. The first word **prayer** means "intercession." So this is an intercessory prayer. Daniel had been a leader of the people of Israel who were in captivity in Babylon and now in Medo-Persia and so he is going to intercede on behalf of his people. The second word for prayer is **supplication** and this word means "an entreaty with mercy." Mercy would be required because the nation deserved much more discipline than what God had given them in

Babylon. Actually their stay in Babylon was not that terrible. They were allowed to own property, they were allowed to run businesses, they had Daniel in the high governmental office to intercede on behalf of them to the king, and so while it was discipline it wasn't as terrible as it could have been; it certainly was not like Egypt had been centuries before. So Daniel is going to make intercessory requests to God that will require God's mercy to be answered. And you see he's quite serious about the prayer because he's **fasting** with **sackcloth** and **ashes**.

In verses 4-14 he confesses his sin and the sin of his nation. **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, 5we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6Moreover, 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.** Obviously, since this is a confession, the subject is sin, our sin, the nation's sin. Notice verse 5, **we have sinned...we committed iniquity...we acted wickedly, we turned aside...**verse 6, **we have not listened to Your servants the prophets.** The point is we are at fault. Daniel doesn't say those other people in my nation are at fault while I am so perfect. He includes himself, we are at fault and we justly deserve the discipline we are facing in captivity. So this is an example of confession. Confession is acknowledging your sin to God. It's not giving excuses, it's not promising to do better, it's frankly admitting you've rebelled against the Lord.

In verse 6 notice all the things God had graciously done to help them avoid divine discipline. He graciously sent them **prophets**, they spoke to the **kings**, the **princes**, the **fathers and all the people of the land**, they warned everybody, they pointed everybody back to the Law and said, return to the Law. But did they listen? No, they didn't listen to the prophets of God, they didn't listen to the word of God, instead they killed the prophets and tore up the word of God and threw it in the fire. It's bad.

But if you notice how he started off the prayer in verse 4 you see a key. **Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments.** The mention of the covenant-keeping God is essential to Israel not being wiped completely off the planet. The **great and awesome God** is a covenant-making and covenant keeping God and we know there are two great covenants God made with the nation Israel. On one hand the Abrahamic Covenant where God promises ultimate blessing and on the other hand the Mosaic Covenant where God promised blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. The problem is how will Israel ever get to the ultimate blessing if the nation continues in sin? They can't. That's why the verse says He **keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments.** Well, obviously the believers are going to enter into final blessing but how is one generation of Israel ever going to **love Him and keep His commandments** with sinful hearts? Well, God is going to have to give them a new heart. What you're seeing in verse 4 is that ultimate blessing will only come upon the remnant of Israel that is given a new heart. Well, how are they going to get a new heart? A new

covenant that replaces the old covenant. The new covenant is a few chapters later in Jeremiah, just what Daniel was reading. Jeremiah 31:33, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." That's the only way the nation Israel will be able to love Him and keep His commandments - with a new heart. But the time God will pour out His Spirit upon them so that they will confess and receive a new heart is when they are in great distress and the anti-Christ is reigning, the little horn of the fourth beast, the one foreshadowed by Antiochus, who grows great and deceives Israel and makes a treaty with Israel and then turns on Israel and enters the temple and makes himself out to be God, committing the abomination of desolation and persecuting Israel. At that time, He will pour out His Spirit on the nation Israel and they will confess and call on Him. Hos 5:15, "I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." So I see Daniel's confession here as anticipatory of the future nation Israel's confession in the tribulation when He pours out His Spirit on them and they are given a new heart and they are praying a confession to Him. Then they will love Him and obey Him and they will enjoy the ultimate blessing in the kingdom of God. So verse 4 shows that while God promised Israel ultimate blessing under the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant He also promised blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience under the terms of the Mosaic. And the only way to ultimate blessing is for God to replace the Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant so that they are given a new heart that will love and obey.

But Daniel is anticipatory of this and he is confessing on behalf of the nation. And notice how it must be done in verse 7: in confession involves putting sin up against the **righteousness** of God, that's how we know what sin is, we put it beside God's righteousness and then we look at ourselves and we say, yuck. **Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day.** Note the stark contrast. In confession there is a stark contrast between us and God. We have violated His righteousness and then you see how nasty we really are. God is righteous but we are in **open shame** says Daniel. Shame came about in Scripture because of the fall of man and it came to express our nakedness before God. Remember how Adam said, we were naked so we hid? Adam was ashamed. We hide because we are ashamed of something. But unlike Adam Daniel is admitting we can't hide our shame, we are openly naked before You. We can't hide from You. Then he says, **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.** There's the cause of the exile right there, Daniel sees it, what is the cause? **Unfaithful deeds**, but the Hebrew means "treacherous deeds." Sin is treacherous, we try to hide it but it's all laid open before the Lord, we can't hide from Him. And we can see Daniel has restoration of the entire nation on his mind because he mentions Judah the southern kingdom and Israel the northern kingdom, all those who are nearby and those far away in all the countries in which who have driven them? God. This is divine discipline and Daniel is looking and hoping for the ultimate blessing in the kingdom, what we call the millennial kingdom and he's representatively confessing the entire nation's sin.

Verse 8, a principle of confession. **Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.** Confession must be made to the one against whom the sin was committed; you don't sin against the pope, you don't sin against me, you sin against God. David aced it in his confession of Ps 51, "Against You and You only have I sinned." Daniel aced it too. God is the only one we sin against because God is the standard by which sin is measured. As verse 7 indicates, **Righteousness belongs to you, O Lord.** It doesn't belong to any creature so you don't confess to any creature, you confess to God, the one against whom the sin is committed.

Now Daniel is very adamant in his confession, which is a perfectly good thing, but he's confused. He's been reading the books of Jeremiah and it says 70 years until restoration to the land. But in the previous vision he saw Israel under great persecution at the hands of a Greek ruler. So how can this be? That's the confusion. But hey, says Daniel, I don't understand how it all works out but I know that God is God and I know there's nothing too hard for God and so he's confessing his sin and the sin of His nation and hoping for restoration to the kingdom. Verse 9, **To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 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.** We haven't done the word of God, we haven't listened to the prophets but God is compassionate and He forgives. It's a forgiveness not based on anything we have done but on His compassion alone!

Verse 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.** More statements of guilt, he says this is written in the law of Moses, it was written in Deut 28 all that God would curse them with if they transgressed. And they did transgress. All of them transgressed. No one ever obeyed the law perfectly. Everyone blew it, Moses blew it, David blew it, Daniel blew it. They all blew it. The believing remnant recognized they blew it. The rest of the nation will recognize it in the future tribulation when they're so hot under the collar they can't stand it anymore and at that time God will pour out His Spirit on them and the nation will say Isa 53, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." They'll all confess guilt, here it's just Daniel, but he's anticipating what's coming.

Verse 12, **He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity;** again, this prayer cannot be understood apart from Deut 28. That chapter spells out the cursings for disobedience and the one they were facing is the last one, military defeat and exile to foreign nations. God **has confirmed His words** meaning He did exactly what He said He would do. He finishes the verse with concern for Jerusalem. **For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem,** he speaks of the desolations of Jerusalem by Babylon, verse 2. And you'll observe throughout Daniel's concern is all those things that have a special place in God's plan: Jerusalem, God's city, Israel, God's people, the concern in chapters 8-12 is Israel, Israel, Israel and only the nations as they touch Israel.

There is nothing about the Church. Everyone who rejects the pre-trib rapture gets the Church in here. This isn't about the Church. This is all about Israel, Israel's city Jerusalem and the Gentile nations that Israel is suffering discipline under.

Verse 13, **As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.** In other words, Daniel recognizes that the only way to restoration in the kingdom is for a sufficient portion of the nation to turn from iniquity. He says **we have not sought the favor of the LORD by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to truth.** Daniel did, maybe a few others, but the whole nation did not. Notice that the way of seeking **the favor of the Lord** is by **turning from iniquity and giving attention to truth.** The nation was not doing that. I know many people who are not doing that. They want blessing but they do not turn from iniquity and give attention to truth in the word of God. But the only way to get the favor of God is to turn from iniquity and give attention to truth.

Verse 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.** The **calamity** was looked upon by Daniel as having been stored up for centuries and finally brought upon them at the proper time. And He admits once more that this calamity was justly deserved. God had not done anything wrong, we were the ones who did wrong.

Now up to this point in verses 4-14 it has all been confession, confession, confession, acknowledging the nation's sin before God. Now he moves forward to his requests of forgiveness and restoration in verses 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...** he's recounting God's work in history, what God had done for them at the Exodus and how God's name or reputation became well-known to all the surrounding people because of His great work. You might think of Rahab who said that her people in Jericho feared YHWH because of what He had done to the Egyptians at the Red Sea. God's reputation for mighty deliverances was established at the Exodus and Daniel is calling them up, recounting history so that God might do such a mighty deliverance once more, this time from captivity and taking them into the kingdom of God. It's been 70 years, let's get the ball rolling.

He says again at the end of verse 15, **we have sinned, we have been wicked,** it's more confession. Just to be clear, the basis of the restoration has nothing to do with us but everything to do with God's compassion and mercy. Verse 16, **O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts,** that is, if the discipline we have received in captivity is sufficient according to Your **righteousness, 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.** Over and over notice how he says it's ultimately about the restoration of Your things; Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain Mt Zion, Your

people, Israel, it's all associated with things that belong to you that remain in desolations. Your reputation is tied to these things so Your reputation is being damaged as long as they remain in desolation. So let Your anger and Your wrath be turned away from us for Your own name's sake. That's the argument Daniel is making, not for our sake but for Your sake. And a principle of prayer is that all our prayers should ultimately be for His sake and not our sake. It is a commonly stated error that prayer is for us. No, prayer is for God, or should be, and therefore we ought always to amend our prayers with words such as "for Your sake" or "for your names' sake" meaning for Your own reputation, not for mine.

Verse 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.** It's very interesting he asks God to **listen to the prayer** because Jeremiah had written in 11:14 that God commanded the Jews not to pray during the captivity to Babylon because God would not listen to their prayers, the exile was already decided. However, now that Babylon had been defeated by Medo-Persia and Darius the Mede was in his first year and the 70 years had about expired He asks God to listen to the prayer of **Your servant** Daniel and **for Your sake...let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary**, that's the Jerusalem Temple. It was in destruction. It's where your name is attached Lord so restore it for Your own sake.

Verse 18, another principle of prayer, see if you can find it; **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.** What's the principle? It's embedded in the statement about no merit of our own, **we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own.** They had no merits upon which to base their prayers and God doesn't answer prayers on the basis of any merit in us. God doesn't owe you anything and God doesn't owe me anything. We have no merit and He's not interested in us offering prayers on the basis of how good we've been. God doesn't do for you because you've done for Him. God does for you because He has compassion on you, a poor miserable sinner. It's tucked right at the end of the verse, He only answers prayer on the basis of His **great compassion.**

Verse 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.** The verbs are rapidly uttered indicating the earnest desire of Daniel. **O Lord, hear;** God hadn't been hearing these prayers for 68 years, so **Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive,** when we confess God forgives, Daniel prayed on behalf of the nation but he is not a sufficient part of the nation to get national forgiveness. **O Lord, listen and take action!** Do something about our condition but do it **For Your own sake**, the theme that rings in our ears every time we confess, do these things for Yourself Lord. Daniel says, **because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.** God's reputation was tied to the condition of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, so if they were restored from desolations it would restore His reputation. Do it for **Your own sake!**

Alright, verse 20, **While 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 in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.**

Daniel was apparently interrupted there in verse 20 by an angel that was dispatched in verse 23 right when he began to pray in verse 4. Daniel was confused. He knew on one hand that Jeremiah said 70 years until restoration and he knew on the other hand that they still had to be persecuted by a future Greek ruler. God sent Gabriel to explain. The explanation is what comes next in Dan 9:24-27. What Gabriel essentially shows is that Jeremiah had two restorations in mind; this is a common feature of OT prophecy; two prophecies will be butted up against one another with thousands of years in between. But you can't see it until hindsight comes into play. The first one is a partial restoration after 70 years. That pertains to Judah only and relates to the rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel. That prophecy was fulfilled two years later by Cyrus who issued a decree to return and rebuild the Temple. The second one is a total restoration after 70 seven. It pertains to Judah and Israel and relates to the fulfillment of all covenant promises and prophecies in the kingdom of God. So Daniel gets some explanation and that's the subject of next weeks' lesson but for this week I suggest that the way you think of Daniel's prayer, when the time comes near to the end of the 70 sevens the remnant of Israel will pray a prayer like Daniel's and they will seek His favor by turning from their iniquity and to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah and they will confess their sin and Jesus will return with great kingdom blessing. Until that time there is no kingdom in any shape or form whatsoever. So Daniel's prayer is anticipatory of the kind of prayer a future nation of Israel will pray that will result in the kingdom coming from heaven to earth. And what did Jesus say in Matt 6:33? Pray in this way, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And so it will be.

Conclusions, what can we learn from Daniel's prayer? First, the reason for Israel's captivity is Israel's sins violating the Mosaic Covenant. This covenant outlined curses for disobedience and that is what Israel is currently facing, divine discipline. Daniel clearly recognizes that their calamity is due to God's discipline. Second, the purpose of God's discipline of Israel is to convict them of sin so they will confess and be restored to blessing. Daniel clearly recognizes the need to confess in order to be restored and enjoy ultimate blessing. Third, and here we come to the principles of prayer, I will mention four. First, prayer should avoid fatalism. What do I mean by fatalism? I mean the idea that whatever will be, will be, que sera, sera, so I just sit back and do nothing because God's already going to do whatever He's going to do. Daniel could have concluded that from reading Jeremiah. 70 years so all I have to do is sit on my buttkus and do nothing. But Daniel believed that God has conditioned some things on prayer and so be a prayer warrior like Daniel but to do that you need to avoid fatalism. Second, prayer should be motivated by God's faithfulness to His word. God is faithful to His promises and Daniel was



motivated to pray for restoration because God is faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant and will ultimately bring blessing to the remnant. So be motivated to pray on the basis of God's faithfulness to His word. Third, prayer should be based on God's grace and mercy. Daniel said, not because of any merit in us, but because of Your compassion. We should never base our prayers on the sense that we might have what God owes us because we followed His principles or taught His word. God does not owe us anything. And fourth, prayer should be for His name's sake. Ultimately what is at stake is God's reputation. Our reputation is inconsequential compared to His. If we're going in to prayer with the thought that my reputation is at stake here and I want God to improve my reputation, then we have the wrong focus. Our aim should be that God gets glory and God's purposes be met. We should never want a prayer to be answered that would not further His purposes. So every prayer should be amended with something like, "For Your name's sake" or "for Your glory."

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<sup>1</sup> Another view is the desolations of Jerusalem began in 597BC and still another view is 586BC. The 605BC view is best because of Daniel's near expectation in 538BC, despite the fact Jerusalem was only in desolations politically in 605BC and not militarily until 586BC.