

STUDY NOTES  
**DANIEL 9**

**ALPHA  
+**  
**OMEGA**

DANIEL 7 - 12



# Daniel 9

*There is an extended amount of material provided in the background to the questions in this Study. The goal is not to overwhelm, but rather to transform. We do not need to comprehend every detail of the content of Daniel 9, but we should ask God to change us through what we do learn. Surround this study with prayer and he will bless us with revelation through his Word so that we might press on with confidence in our walk of faith, both personally and in our church.*

When Christians pray they are invited into the throne room of God, where the Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, the Spirit interceding for us as we come before the Lord of Heaven and earth who is always ready to listen. When we enter into his presence of Christ on the last day we will discover that prayer was a gift for this life, to strengthen and sustain us until we enter into God's everlasting Kingdom.

Daniel was a man of prayer (Daniel 6:10). It was an expression of his deep and enduring trust in the living God, no matter what circumstances he faced. In chapter 9 we find his prayers take on a new dimension as he prays on behalf of God's exiled people, coming before the Lord who is righteous and at the same time forgiving and merciful (Daniel 9:9). If you've ever doubted the reality and power of prayer, then this chapter will bring refreshment and renewal to your relationship with the Lord.

## **When Daniel Prays (vv 1-3)**

In the first year of Darius<sup>1</sup> son of the Mede Xerxes who was ruler of Babylon (v 1) Daniel reflects on Jeremiah's prophecy of Israel's exile lasting 70 years (v 2 cf. Jeremiah 29:10-14) and turns to the Lord in prayer and petition, with fasting, wearing sackcloth and ashes.

It is a lesson well learnt that reading the scriptures is the best platform for prayer. They remind us that coming before the Lord of Heaven and Earth must always be done in the light of his already fulfilled promises. Prayer is both the sobering yet assuring gift of grace that God is sovereign over our world and our lives and that we may seek him with a humble confidence (Hebrews 10:19-21).

## **Why Daniel Prays (vv 4-14)**

Daniel confesses Israel's sins on behalf of the people, acknowledging the covenantal relationship that has been constantly compromised through the generations, turning away from the words of God spoken through the prophets (v 6). The exile is a matter of shame because of their unfaithfulness and sinfulness in the light of God's righteousness, yet Daniel also recognises God as merciful and forgiving (v 10). The unprecedented (v 12) judgment upon Israel is a fulfilment of God's righteous promises in the law of Moses (v 13).

Daniel's prayer on behalf of his people reminds us that when we come before Lord we can make no claim but to seek the Lord's mercy as sinners (Luke 18:9-14). On the one hand we must recognise the grief we have brought him through our disinterest and dismissal of his word, and pause to take stock of our hearts before him. Preparation for confession should always be surrounded by the blessing and assurance that may be found in his promises.

We should not miss the corporate dimension of our sin, as much as the personal or individual. We need to avoid the Pharisaical attitude that says 'thank God I am not like the others' (Luke 18:11-12). A church with a

---

<sup>1</sup> Some contention is made about the identity of Darius. It was Cyrus (not Darius, who ruled some 20 years later) that permitted the return to Jerusalem by the exiles. Either Cyrus also went by the name Darius, or another Darius was a contemporary of Cyrus in leadership at the time.

humble and repentant heart can become a great blessing to the world when together its people immerse themselves in the mercy and forgiveness God grants to us through the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3).

### **What Daniel Prays (vv 15-19)**

Daniel acknowledges God's mighty name in salvation and in keeping with his righteous acts requests that his anger and wrath be turned away from Jerusalem and the scorn it has borne for the sins of Israel (v 16). He seeks the Lord to look with favour on the desolate sanctuary and the city that bears his Name (v 17). The request is made in the name of God's mercy and righteousness, seeking the Lord to listen, forgive and not to delay, because the city and its people bear the Lord's name (v 19).

So often we approach prayer with the expectation of what God might do for us. While Daniel makes clear his request, the order of his petition here is essential. He comes before God on the basis of what he has already done (v 15). We should also not miss that his prayers were for his people rather than himself. The restoration of the temple and Jerusalem was something he would neither see nor participate in, yet he knew there was a future for God's people beyond exile, and committed to pray for their eternal well being.

### **How God Answers (vv 20-27)**

Often we wish God would be more immediate in his answer to our prayers, or clearer about the outcomes. Yet when we are serious with ourselves we know we would be completely overwhelmed if he came to us personally to reveal next steps in our walk of faith. In God's kindness he has already revealed that we have a future that is fixed, a father who is compassionate (Psalm 145:8), a son who is our brother (Hebrews 2:12), and the Spirit who is our comfort and guide (John 16:13).

The Lord's answer through his servant Gabriel is both unique yet unifying. We should not expect God to communicate in this manner with us because we have the presence of the Holy Spirit directing us into the truth of God's Word. Yet the experience of Daniel is a message for the faithful of all generations.

The temptation with apocalyptic language is to get lost in the detail, yet if we do so we will easily miss the overarching blessing of the Lord's response to Daniel's prayer. Life in exile is coming to an end. The future God has in mind is fixed and the outcome cannot be changed. Though there will be times of trouble, the time is coming when we will no longer be in battle with ourselves or the world around us. God's plans and purposes for his people of an eternal future in his Kingdom gathered around the king cannot be changed.

The detail that follows is a humble explanation of the revelation given to Daniel. We should not be overly consumed by the content, but grateful that the Lord has an end for his people that sustains us as we encounter life in a sinful and broken world.

As the esteemed Daniel is praying Gabriel comes in response to provide understanding (vv 22) in an (apocalyptic, lit. *revelatory*) vision which has the following parts, centred around symbolic periods of time known as 'sevens':

#### **Seventy 'Sevens'**

In v 24 seventy 'sevens' are decreed in which the following will be achieved:

- a. complete and atone for the transgressions of the holy people and city;
- b. bring in everlasting righteousness;
- c. seal up vision and prophecy;
- d. anoint the most Holy Place.

Daniel is being told that while the time in exile is coming to a conclusion, God's act of rescue and salvation will not be complete until the passing of seventy 'sevens', and that this period will be marked by a time of trouble.

Gabriel is predicting the work of Christ on the cross as the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation. It would deal with transgression, make available everlasting righteousness, fulfil God's prophetic promises, and re-establish the temple in his own body (Hebrews 9:1 1-2). While Daniel sought rescue from Babylonian rule and the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem, the answer given revealed that the ultimate restoration would be a rescue from sin's penalty and restoration through entry to the Kingdom of God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

### **Seven 'Sevens' & Sixty Two 'Sevens'**

In v 25 there will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'sevens' covering the time the word goes out to restore Jerusalem, until the anointed Ruler comes. But the rebuild will come in times of trouble and after the sixty-two 'sevens' the Anointed one will be put to death and have nothing. Gabriel here moves from the overarching work of the Messiah to a series of events that will take place in the lead up to his coming.

The seven 'sevens' (v 25) represents the lead up to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem by the Anointed One who makes it possible. This figure could be referring to:

- a. Cyrus (Is 45:1) who made the proclamation that the Jews could return to Jerusalem;
- b. Joshua, the High Priest at the time of the rebuild (Haggai 1-2);
- c. Zerubbabel, who led the rebuilding project

The sixty two 'sevens' (vv 25-26) represent the troublesome period of the restoration. The temple never reaches its former glory which becomes symbolic of the nation. At the time of Christ Israel remains under the control of a foreign power. The death of an anointed one marks the conclusion of the period of sixty-two 'sevens'. The people of a ruler will come and destroy the city and sanctuary (again), with war continuing to the end and desolation once again occurring.

### **A Final 'Seven'**

V 27 describes what takes place following the death of the anointed one and speaks of a final 'seven'. The ruler will declare a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the set of 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and suffering, setting up at the temple an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed comes to him. The historical figure who best fits this picture is Titus in the destruction of the temple in AD 70<sup>2</sup>.

V 27 has variations in the footnotes of most bibles, suggesting it is not straightforward to interpret the verse's meaning. If the destruction of the temple in the first half of the final 'seven' aligns with the period associated with the Jesus' earthly ministry culminating in his death and resurrection, the concluding phrase of the verse may well be the second half of the 'seven', describing the period of persecution until the final victory at Jesus' return.

---

<sup>2</sup> Jesus references the event in Matthew 24:15.

## **The Work of Christ**

Though Daniel could not have known it, the 'swift' answer to his prayer was the work of the cross. And so it is with us. There we discover that the Lord of Heaven and Earth becomes one of us, so that we might become one with him. Not only are we forgiven by his goodness and mercy, but we set for an eternal future that cannot be changed. While we might choose to come before God on our knees, he calls us to lift our sights and look forward to the heavenly city, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

# Getting Started

1. What is the value of beginning our prayers with reflection on God's word?
2. What would be the value of including confession in our prayers?

## Into the text

### Read Jeremiah 25:8-11 & 29:10-14

3. Daniel's prayer is prompted by his reading of the prophet Jeremiah. Why were his people in Babylon and what had God promised to do after 70 years?

### Read Daniel 9:1-14

4. Identify what the prayer reveals about the character of God.
5. Identify what the prayer reveals about the character of God's people.
6. In v 8 Daniel identifies shame as the experience of all of God's people, no matter what their position or place. How does he explain that this should be dealt with in the prayer so that God's people would know there was a way forward?
7. What can we learn from Daniel's attitude in prayer to assist our own prayers?
8. Which is more important? To pray personally, or together as the people of God?

### Read Daniel 9:15-27

Gabriel reveals to Daniel that the time of exile will come to an end for God's people, and the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple will take place. The day of forgiveness and restoration would come as God had promised. Indeed God revealed to Daniel that there was an end to the ages and dominions of this world which would make way for the final coming of God's Kingdom.

9. Daniel would never return to Jerusalem, nor see the answer to his prayers in his lifetime. How do you imagine the explanation would have been a comfort to him?
10. Do you regularly pray for outcomes that are beyond your circumstances, and perhaps beyond your lifetime? What is the benefit of dwelling on God's eternal plans for salvation in our prayers?

## Takeaway

11. "Jesus knows our needs before we ask him, so I don't bother praying." (see Matthew 6:8).

Reflect/Discuss.

12. In what ways does the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:8-13) parallel the message of Daniel 9?

13. Pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.