

DANIEL'S POWERFUL PRAYER

Daniel 9:1-23

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

When this chapter begins, the Babylonian Kingdom has just ended and Daniel has begun to live under the new rule of the Medo-Persians. Cyrus appointed Darius to rule over Babylon and the events of chapter nine occur during Darius' first year as king (538 BC). It appears that Darius had already chosen Daniel to be one of three presidents to assist him in ruling over 120 princes, but he had not yet been cast into the lions' den (Dan 6). Darius was impressed with Daniel's trustworthy and excellent spirit so he determined to place him over all the other officials. This is what caused the other two presidents and the princes to be jealous of Daniel so that they devised a scheme to get rid of Daniel by having him cast into the lions' den.

About thirteen years had elapsed since Daniel received the vision about the ram and male goat (Dan 8). Daniel knew from Jeremiah's prophecies that Israel's captivity in Babylon would be seventy years and the time was drawing near when those seventy years would be completed. With the anticipation that the end of this captivity was close, Daniel offered a heart rending prayer of penitence and petition for Israel's soon release from Babylon so they could return to Jerusalem (9:1-19). This prayer was offered in accordance to God's instructions given by Jeremiah (Jer 29:10-14). While Daniel was praying, God sent Gabriel to tell him that seventy "weeks" of years (a week of years is 7 years and 70 weeks of years is 490 years) were still needed before Israel would be ready for God's full blessing (9:24-27). Nevertheless, Daniel's prayer for Israel to be able to return to their homeland would soon be answered. It is expedient to learn how Daniel effectively prayed so that God would not only answer his prayer, but also give him a marvelous revelation of Israel's future.

The essential qualities of Daniel's life, which produced in him such a godly testimony, are brought to light in this chapter. Through this prayer, three aspects of Daniel's godly character are seen, which are the basis for the godly life of any believer.

DANIEL'S PENITENT PRAYER AND PLEA FOR GOD'S MERCY

I. Prophecy of Jeremiah – 9:1-2

9:1 –Darius the Mede became the king of Babylon in 538 B.C. Cyrus the Persian assigned Darius to be the ruler over the old Babylonian Empire that he had just defeated in 539 B.C. Thus Darius was "made king" by Cyrus to rule Babylon for him.

9:2 – Daniel knew from Jeremiah's prophecies that the length of Judah's captivity in Babylon was to be seventy years (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). He also knew that it was very near the time when God would fulfill His promise and deliver the Jews from Babylon. Daniel had been taken captive in 605 B.C. about 68 years earlier! Thus, Daniel determined to follow God's instructions to earnestly pray for the deliverance of his people according to Jeremiah 29:10-14. Daniel has left believers a model prayer for seeking God's blessings and receiving them. It is important to notice Daniel's determined search for God and His blessings (Dan 9:3; Jer 29:13-14), his humble and respectful attitude toward God (Dan 9:4, 7, 9) and his confession of sins against God (Dan 9:5-10).

II. Prayer of Daniel – 9:3-19

A. Recognition of Sin – 9:3-10 (Evidence of Repentance)

Daniel began his prayer of intercession with a humble and thorough confession of sin. He evidenced a repentant attitude by his view of himself (9: 3), his view of God (9: 4, 7, 9) and his view of sin (9: 5-10).

1. Attitude toward Himself – 9:3

9:3 – “I set my face unto the Lord God.” – he had an attitude of determination.

“To seek by prayer and supplications” – he had attitude of hope. In seeking the Lord he trusted Him for an answer to his prayers.

“Fasting” - his view of himself was also one of deep concern which was shown by his fasting. In fasting, he subordinated his personal desires to those of God.

“Sackcloth and ashes” – he also showed an attitude of grief and humility by wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on himself. In that culture these were signs of sorrow for one’s sin.

These are the attitudes that made Daniel a successful intercessor in his prayer life. These attitudes need to be adopted by all believers who want God to hear and answer their prayers.

2. Attitude toward God – 9:4, 7, 9

9:4 – “My God” – Daniel had a warm and personal relationship with God. He was surrounded by heathen gods in Babylon, but he knew the true God personally and could call Him, “my God.” A personal relationship with God is necessary before one can successfully petition Him.

“LORD” (*Yahweh*) – his outlook toward God was one of dependence when he used the name. *Yahweh* for God. This name was specifically the covenant name of God upon whom Israel was to depend for all of her blessings. Daniel was dependent upon the LORD to keep His covenant with Israel and to redeem them from captivity. Only in this chapter of Daniel is the name *Yahweh* (Jehovah) employed, and here it is employed no less than seven times.

“God” (*Elohim*) – Daniel showed he had confidence in God’s ability to answer his prayer when he called Him, *Elohim*, because that name emphasized His power and sovereignty. When Daniel prayed to *Elohim*, he thought of the power He had and was confident that his prayers for Israel would be accomplished.

“Lord” (*Adonai*) – Daniel had the attitude of submission to God when he addressed Him as “Lord.” This name stresses God’s authority. Daniel expected his prayers to be answered because he put himself under the authority of the Lord and was willing for Him to do whatever He wished.

“The great and dreadful God” - Daniel spoke of God’s greatness by acknowledging Him to be “dreadful,” or better, to be “awesome.”

“Keeping the covenant” – Daniel was speaking of God’s faithfulness because he believed God would keep the unconditional promises that He made to Abraham and David.

“Mercy” – Daniel emphasized God’s love when he spoke of His “mercy”. This word has the concept of special favor. God’s love is given especially “to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.” (cf Jn 14:21).

9:7 – “Righteousness belongeth unto thee” - when speaking about his sin, Daniel spoke of God’s righteousness. Daniel was ashamed of his sin and the sin of his people when he came before the righteousness of God, who had never sinned. Nevertheless, he came because God had invited sinners to come and ask for His deliverance from sin (Jer 29:12-14).

9:9 – “Mercies and forgivenesses” – Daniel came to God, who has mercy and forgiveness for rebellion. What a great God we serve!! This was the attitude of Daniel toward God as he began his great prayer.

3. Attitude toward Sin – 9:5-10

9:5-10 – “We,” “our,” “us” - Daniel’s attitude toward sin was evidenced in three ways. First, Daniel identified himself with his nation and their sin. He believed he was as guilty and as responsible as the rest of his countrymen in their departure from God’s law.

9:5 6 – Second , Daniel did not generalize about sin, but he was specific about it. In 9:5 he names five kinds of sin for which he and his people were guilty.

“Sin” – means to fall short; to miss the mark (cf. Jud. 20:16, “miss”).

“Iniquity” – it has the idea of crookedness; that which is not straight.

“Wickedness” – it has the concept of confusion, wavering and restlessness (cf. Isa. 57:20-21).

“Rebellion” – it always speaks of defying God’s authority.

“Departing” – it means to fall away from God.

Daniel was also specific about sin in another way: he named two great sins for which he and his people were guilty. One, they had not obeyed the Law (9:5), and two, they had not listened to God’s prophets that tried to get them to repent (9:6). Daniel was very clear about the manner of their sin when he came to ask God for deliverance.

9:7-8 – Third, Daniel was shamed by these sins. The King James Version translates this word “confusion.” The shame of their faces was contrasted with the righteousness of God. Daniel offered no excuses. This shame was made even more plain by the contrast of God’s “mercies and forgivenesses” with their rebellion. God would have shown mercy and forgiveness many times, but they would not listen and obey the message of the prophets that God had sent. Everyone was guilty.

B. Remembrance of Past Judgments – 9:11-14 (Experience of Judgment)

9:11-14 – Having expressed repentance for the sins which he and his people had committed against God, Daniel then rehearsed the past judgments against his nation. They had been warned by Moses (Lev. 26:14ff; Deut. 28:15ff) that continued disobedience to God’s law would bring the dispersion of their nation among the nations of the world. God had warned them about His judgment (“curse”) for 900 years before He exercised His pledge of punishment (“oath”) to send them into captivity. Daniel confirmed this in his prayer (9:11). But even though this judgment was hard, Daniel admitted that it had not brought about any real change of heart. It had done virtually no good. The Jews still had not repented of their iniquities, nor desired to understand God’s Word (9:13). They did not listen when Moses spoke and they did not learn when God punished. As a result, it was right of the Lord to act and to bring about that judgment which He had pledged. This is the meaning of the phrase “watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us” (9:14). God was watchful over His Word to perform it (Jer. 1:12; cf. 31:28; 44:27), being faithful to His promises of both the blessings and the cursings.

C. Request for Deliverance – 9:15-19 (Entreaty for Forgiveness)

9:15-19 – Finally, Daniel made his request and entreated the Lord to bring the captivity of His people to an end. He appealed to the Lord on three counts.

9:15 – “Brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt” – Daniel appealed first to **God’s redemption** that He had brought upon Israel when He delivered her from Egypt under Moses’ leadership. Since God had delivered Israel from Egypt in the past, Daniel entreated God to deliver Judah from Babylon now.

9:16-17 – “Thy city Jerusalem” . . . “thy holy mountain” . . . “thy sanctuary” . . . – Daniel’s second appeal was based on **God’s ownership** of Israel. He asked God to rescue His people and His possessions from the enemy. He continues this thought in His final appeal in v. 19: “for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”

9:18 – “We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies” – the third basis for Daniel’s appeal is not based on anything good in them, but totally on **God’s goodness**, i.e., His mercies. Daniel was not asking for justice because that would mean continued captivity; but he was asking for mercy because that was the only basis for the deliverance of Judah from Babylon.

9:19 – “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not” – Daniel’s prayer concluded with a series of urgent entreaties. He asked God to hear his prayer, to forgive their sin, to deliver them from captivity and do it now. He wanted God to restore His people without delay according to the promise He gave to Jeremiah. Daniel’s prayer was a bold request, but it was a proper prayer because it was based on God’s promises in Jer 29:12-14.

This ends one of the most remarkable prayers of the Bible. It had immediate results. It appears that within about one year the first group of Jews returned to their homeland in order to rebuild the Temple of God in Jerusalem. But not only did God answer Daniel’s prayer, He gave him a startling revelation about the future program of God because Israel was not yet ready for all of God’s blessings which He wanted to give them (Dan 9:24).

III. Presence of Gabriel – 9:20-23

9:20-23 – While Daniel was yet praying, Gabriel, who had appeared to him before (8:15-16), came again to Daniel. It was about the time of the evening sacrifice, one of Daniel’s regular times of prayer (cf. Study Notes on 6:10). Daniel had been praying about the 70 years of captivity of Israel, but Gabriel had come to make known to him a plan of God far surpassing the 70-year dispersion. This vision concerned another period of time involving “70 weeks,” that is, 70 weeks of years, which amounts to 490 years. This is the subject of the next lesson.