



The Book of Daniel – Thriving in Babylon

Part 6 – Daniel’s Prayer and the Seventy Weeks

Bible Study Passage:

Daniel 9:1-27

Key Verse:

Daniel 9:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ 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 pleas before You based on any merits of our own, but based on Your great compassion.

In chapter nine of the book of Daniel, Daniel records his prayer for the Jewish people in exile across the world. At the time of writing, the Jews had been in exile in Babylon and other countries for decades. However, Daniel indicates at the beginning of the chapter they will soon be returning home. As such, Daniel brings a petition before God and turns his face towards Him.

Daniel believes in the promises of God as recorded by His prophets, and His plea is a model of prayer for all believers to emulate. He acknowledges who God is, His awesome righteousness and lovingkindness for His people. He confesses his sin and the sins of his people Israel, how they have willingly chosen to rebel and have justly faced consequences.



In response to Daniel's faithfulness, the angel Gabriel is sent by God to provide a prophecy that foretells the Messiah's coming. He also predicts the final seven years of natural history, a time of great tribulation.

BELONG

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

- How is everyone's week going? Any life updates?
 - What is something the group can be praying about?
 - What is something the group can praise this week?
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- What does prayer look like in your life? What is your prayer life supposed to look like?
 - What is your perception of God in relation to yourself? Do you recognize Him for who He truly is? Do you recognize yourself for who you truly are before Him?
 - Do you think the Bible *really* predicts the future? Has the Bible undeniably predicted things that have actually come to pass?



BELIEVE

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

The Prayer of Daniel

1. Pray → Acknowledging Who God Is

Daniel 9:4 (NASB)

⁴I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, and said, “Oh, Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and faithfulness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

Daniel’s prayer starts by acknowledging who God is. The Lord is great and awesome, worthy of reverence, but who’s unparalleled glory can be frightening. When Isaiah received a vision of God in his throne room in heaven, his only response was to fall on his knees and declare his own inadequacy before the holiness of his Lord.

In America today, we have lost this sense of God’s greatness. The word *awesome* gets thrown around a lot in our culture but consider its actual dictionary definition. According to the Oxford dictionary, the word *awesome* means “extremely impressive or daunting; inspiring great admiration, apprehension, or fear.” When something is truly *awesome*, it shouldn’t make us stand up and cheer. It should make us sit back and cover our mouths in disbelief at the great immensity of the thing witnessed. That was the posture of Isaiah, and it should be ours as well.

The Lord keeps his covenant and faithfulness. He never breaks his promises, he never leaves, and he never gives up. The covenant that God established with His people Israel had been broken by them in their disobedience. He promised to bless and prosper their nation if they would submit to His rule and follow His law, yet they rejected Him and turned aside, each to their own way. As a result, God has turned His face from them for a time, allowing them to go into exile. Doesn’t that sound like America today?

Yet despite our faithlessness, God remains faithful. Even in their exile, God watched over His people and prepared to bring them home. 35-50% of all marriages end in divorce; that is unfaithful. But for God, divorce of His people is never an option. He will never throw aside His people Israel, nor will He leave behind those who follow His Son



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Jesus today. God is holy and has a standard; our recognition of who He is should encourage us to live it out. And who He is should allow us to see how serious it is.

2. Pray → Confessing Who We Are

Daniel 9:5-6 (NASB)

⁵we have sinned, we have done wrong, and 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 leaders, our fathers, and all the people of the land.

Daniel confesses that he is a sinner; moreover, he confesses that his people the Jews are sinners who have turned away from the Lord. God revealed His law to His people through the Scriptures, yet they knowingly and willingly rebelled. The commandments and ordinances laid out in God's law were not optional; the Jews were obligated to obey them if they wished to receive God's favor. Their exile, the consequence of their disobedience, they only had themselves to blame for.

Notice Daniel's repetition in describing the sinfulness of his people Israel. Everyone is guilty of trespass: their kings, their leaders, even their own fathers! For generations, the Jews have indulged in wickedness. God brought before them prophets to convict them of sin and encourage them to turn away and seek forgiveness. Instead, the Jews murdered the prophets of God. This long and twisted history of the Jewish people in Daniel's time demonstrated that sin wasn't just something they *did*. This was who they *are*.

The Jews were sinners by their very nature, and so are we. Sin isn't just a bad habit, or a broken mindset, that we must overcome. We often ask God to provide us with strength and courage to overcome sin; certainly not a bad request, but far from a proper solution to our problem. If sin is fundamentally our identity, we cannot escape it by our own power. We are under the *wrath* of God because of our sin; doing *better* will not settle the debt we have accumulated. We are completely deserving of Hell and eternal damnation, and nothing *we do* can stop that.

The law of Moses anticipated the Jewish exile. The law was clear that if the Jews disobeyed the covenant, they would be forced out of their land. The consequences of sin are that certain; it is quite literally pre-written by God to come to pass. When we die, we will stand before God and give account of our sin. What hope is there then?

Daniel's prayer calls out for mercy. Because God is who He is, He will answer a sincere prayer for forgiveness. Those who trust in God's promises must repent of their sin, recognizing it for what it is, and turning from it towards God. He will through His own



power give us a new heart and a new spirit, changing us from the inside out. He has redeemed us from our sin through His Son Jesus' death and resurrection.

3. Pray → Recognizing Why God Acts

Daniel 9:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸ 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 pleas before You based on any merits of our own, but based on Your great compassion. ¹⁹ Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

Daniel recognizes that God acts for His own glory. As sinners, there is nothing we can offer God that would make us worthy or deserving of His help. Daniel does not appeal to God on the basis of his or his people's own merit, but rather the very character of the Lord. The Lord *is* great and awesome. The Lord *is* a forgiver of sin. And most importantly, the Lord *is* compassionate. God will come to the aid of His people Israel because that is the kind of God He is and that is what He has promised His people He will do. He does not enjoy their suffering in exile; His justice simply demands it. But God's heart for His people is that they would be restored to a right relationship with Him.

In their exile, the Jews are mocked by the nations. Daniel's cry recognizes the sorry state of the Jewish people doesn't just affect them; it affects how people see God. Israel is God's chosen representative, and so their failure reflects on His character. As such, Daniel wants His Lord above all else to be glorified. Because His God is so great, He wants the world to see it. God cannot allow His name to suffer dishonor amongst the nations. He simply cannot allow the world to think that He is anything less than who He is. Daniel's heart is for his people Israel, their safety, and their restoration. But Daniel also desires for God to be recognized for His greatness as He rightly deserves.



The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

1. What is Accomplished in these Seventy Weeks?

Daniel 9:24 (NASB)

²⁴ “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the wrongdoing, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

In response to Daniel's prayer, the Lord sends the angel Gabriel before him to provide a prophecy about the future. God's promises are never ending, and they are better than we can possibly imagine.

In Daniel's prophecy, one day represents one year. So, one week represents seven years. There are seventy weeks that are prophesied by Gabriel, meaning 490 years in total. During these 490 years, God will accomplish six things:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. to finish wrongdoing | 4. to bring in everlasting righteousness |
| 2. to make an end of sin | 5. to seal up vision and prophecy |
| 3. to make atonement for guilt | 6. to anoint the Most Holy Place |
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The first set pertains to the redemption from sin. God will judge sin with finality and provide atonement for the sin of all people. The Jews were familiar with the practice of blood sacrifice for atonement from sin. Every year, the high priest would make an offering before God to cleanse their people from their iniquity. However, the yearly sacrifices were never sufficient to pay their sin debt before God. The Lord will make a once-for-all sacrifice that will satisfy the debt and allow for our guilt to be remitted. Today, we know that God has accomplished this promise by sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross.

The second set of promises pertains to the final defeat of evil and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness for all time. God promises that a day will come when evil and the presence of sin itself will be completely eradicated. Visions and prophecy will be *sealed* up because in this future time, all of God's promises will be fulfilled and brought to pass. No more revelation will be needed because there will be nothing left to anticipate. The perfect world we long for will be present on earth. At the center of this



kingdom yet to come is a temple where the people of God will forever worship Him. The Most Holy Place that Daniel speaks of is this eternal temple. As believers, we still wait for the second set of promises to be fulfilled with Jesus' second coming.

These six promises are what the seventy weeks of Daniel are all about. God has provided a timeline whereby He will accomplish what He has set out to do.

2. Seven Weeks, Sixty-Two Weeks, and One Week

Daniel 9:25-27 (NASB)

...from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, *with* streets and moat, even in times of distress. ²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary... ²⁷ And he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* the one who makes desolate, until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, gushes forth on the one who makes desolate."

Gabriel provides specific details about the seventy weeks timeline. This is of course one interpretation of the prophecy, and there are other possibilities, but I will provide here how most Bible scholars traditionally view it. There will be a period of seven weeks (49 years) followed by a period of sixty-two weeks (434 years). In total, sixty-nine weeks (483 years) will pass between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah appears. This prophecy is insanely accurate!

In the year 444 BC, Persian king Artaxerxes decreed that the Jews would be allowed to return home to restore Jerusalem. This project was led by Nehemiah whose task was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. After forty-nine years, Nehemiah's task was very possibly complete, and the Old Testament canon was likely closed with the writing of the book of Malachi. After 483 years, the date would be 33 AD. Miraculously, this is the year Jesus was cut off by being executed on a Roman cross. The exact timing of Jesus' first coming was accurately predicted by Scripture hundreds of years beforehand.

There is still one week (7 years) left remaining in the prophecy. This seven-year period is a time that is yet to pass, the final seven years of natural history before Jesus returns to establish the kingdom. Daniel's prophecy foresees a time where the nation of Israel will make a covenant with a man the Bible refers to as the Antichrist for seven years. For the first half (3.5 years) things will be relatively peaceful, and the Jews will be permitted to worship their God and perform sacrifices.



However, in the middle of the seven years, the Antichrist will break the covenant of peace, and attack Israel, cutting off the Jewish people from their temple, and scattering them across the nations. Daniel's prophecy says that God will permit the Antichrist to wreak havoc on the world, but once the other 3.5 years have passed, God will bring forth His own destruction, killing the Antichrist for good. Because Jesus has already come, we have nothing to fear of the Antichrist. We have assurance that the victory is ours through Jesus Christ our savior.

BECOME

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

- What is Daniel's model of prayer?
 - Why should we acknowledge who God is?
 - Why should we confess who we are?
 - Why should we recognize why God acts?
- Explain the seventy-weeks of Daniel.
 - What is the meaning of the sixty-nine weeks? What does it predict? Was it accurate?
 - What is the meaning of the final week?
 - Why is this last week significant?
 - Should Christians fear it?