



EXCURSUS ON PRAYER

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PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 9:20-27

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“*Daniel’s confessional prayer illustrates the continued importance...*”

Chapter nine continues with Daniel’s apocalyptic visions. This one occurred during the first year reign of Darius the Mede. As discussed earlier (chapter 6), this was just after Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon and this Darius (probably used as a title) who was a son of Xerxes (in Hebrew, Ahasuerus), was set up as temporary ruler of Babylon and the surrounding province. Some historians feel this Darius is another name for Cyrus himself, although the context and earlier chapters suggest otherwise (cf. Daniel 1:21; 5:30-31, especially Daniel 6:28). While historical records do not describe his short rule it provides for us a specific date of 539 BC (9:1, 5:31). This chapter is significant in that it ties in two themes. One is the overarching aspect of the Deuteronomic code and the other is the continued revelation of God’s salvation plan. The first is manifested in the form of Daniel’s confessional prayer, and the second is shown in the further unpeeling of the mystery of the end times, namely the “seventy-sevens.” In this narrative we will only examine the first section, Daniel’s confessional prayer.

CONFESSIONAL PRAYER

While most of the book of Daniel refers to God by the more general titles *El* or *Elohim* (Hebrew) and *Elah* (Aramaic), chapter 9 alone uses the covenant name *Yahweh*. This usage reveals the importance of this chapter for the Jews in exile especially God’s covenant with Israel as a whole. The Deuteronomic code was critical to Israel’s relationship with God. It described the conditions under which Israel was expected to function relative to God’s Law, prescribing specific blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 27-30). The relationship was one of suzerainty, that is, master over vassal, where stipulations are codified, tribute prescribed, and covenants ratified by a sacrificial meal (note Abraham’s covenant with God, Genesis 12:1-9, 15:6-21). Daniel’s confessional prayer illustrates the continued importance of that covenant despite the loss of land, temple, and potentially ethnic identity during their Babylonian exile. Notice the elements of Daniel’s prayer.

Daniel is concerned about the fulfillment of prophecy, specifically Jeremiah’s prediction that the exile will last only 70 years and all will be restored (Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10-14). Since the completion of that time was soon approaching, Daniel wanted to be assured that God would honor his promise. That would only be accomplished if Israel kept its side of the covenant by repenting and placing themselves at the mercy of God. So Daniel prays on

behalf of Israel, acknowledging their personal sin, the sins of their leaders, and God's righteousness in punishing them for what they alone deserved. Now he appeals to God's mercy (the God of Moses — *Yahweh*), who rescued them from bondage in Egypt and protected them in the wilderness. He calls upon God to restore Jerusalem and the temple, not because of their righteousness, but because of God's greatness, mercy, and promise. He concludes with a Kyrie: "*O Adonai, listen! O Adonai, forgive! O Adonai, hear and act!*"

EXCURSUS ON PRAYER

As referenced above, it is noteworthy that Daniel prays in the first person plural (we), combining both Israel and himself in his prayer of confession. We often see God's chosen leaders (prophets and kings) also take the role of priest or intercessor. Consider Abraham who pleaded with God on behalf of the city of Sodom (albeit mainly out of concern for his nephew, Lot, and his family; Gen. 18:16-33), or consider the prophet Samuel who continuously prayed for Israel (1 Samuel 7:5-6, 12:22-25), and consider Solomon who prayed fervently for the future of Israel at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:22-53). In the latter example God especially commends Solomon for his concern for the nation rather than himself. Contrast that with Hezekiah's selfish prayer for his own rule (2 Kings 20:12-19, 2 Chronicles 32:24-26, 31) and his own health (2 Kings 20; Isaiah 38:1-7). Although God answers his prayer and extends his life 15 years, he uses those years unwisely, boasting about his wealth and showing the Babylonians the Temple treasury (Isaiah 39:1-4). When it is revealed to him that his pride will be instrumental in the destruction of Jerusalem and the enslavement of his descendants, he is pleased that it won't happen in his lifetime (Isaiah 39:5-8). Which is to say, there are different kinds of prayers and different motives for offering them.

Prayer must proceed from faith (Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7), which is created by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3), who assists and guides in prayer (Romans 8:26). Faith excludes willful sin which invalidates prayer (Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9). That is, God does not hear or answer the prayers of the wicked or the unbeliever (Isaiah 1:15, 59:2-3); "*We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will*" (John 9:31).

In the Old Testament there are basically three Hebrew words for prayers. There is *tephillah* meaning intercession or supplication (see Psalms 17, 86, 90, 102, 142 prayer in general, request, or petition (cf. 1 Samuel 2:20; Esther 5:6, 7), and *todah* usually meaning thanksgiving or praise (e.g. Psalms 26:7; 42:5; Isaiah 51:3). In the New Testament Paul advises Timothy "*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people*" (1 Timothy 2:1). A popular mnemonic is the acrostic ACTS, which may be divided into "adoration" (expressing praise for God's goodness and greatness); "confession" (acknowledging our unworthiness and sin, seeking pardon and grace); "thanksgiving" (offering God gratitude for his blessing both spiritual and physical); and "supplication" (humble requests or petitions for needs, and intercessions for others). Supplication is from the Latin *supplicatus* (to kneel humbly). All prayers to God presuppose a believing and humble heart.

Most significantly, we have access to the ear of God through his only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, who paid for our trespasses and reconciled us to God the Father. Jesus said: "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*" (John 14:6). He also said: "*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it*" (John 14:13-14). However, it is qualified, as said earlier, by adherence to God's will: "*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him*" (1 Jn, 5:14-15 NIV).

In the first part of chapter 9 we see the importance that Daniel ascribed to prayer. It's not surprising when we remember his commitment when he was "caught" praying openly even on pain of death (6:10-12). However, here in chapter 9, we see Daniel's priestly intercessions on behalf of Israel. Perhaps this would inspire us to focus more on confessional and intercessory prayer than personal supplications befitting mainly our own needs and interests. Truly the best example is Jesus, who not only prayed unceasingly while on earth, but even now continually intercedes for us from heaven (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 9:20-27

Heavenly Father, your thoughts are higher than our thoughts; your ways higher than our ways. This is particularly true with apocalyptic passages. But one thing we do know and is clear, you have culminated all history in the life, death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus, for the salvation of all people for all time. Enable us to see, believe, and share that Gospel truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Prophecy is difficult and it is often not fully understood until it is fulfilled. What are some rules or guidelines for correct interpretation according to these passages:

Deuteronomy 18:21-22

2 Peter 1:20-21

1 Corinthians 14:4-6, 29-31

2. While Daniel was still praying what happened? (9:20-21)

What did Gabriel promise? (v. 22)

When did God decide to answer his prayer? (23a)

Why was God willing to answer? (23b)

When does God answer our prayer? (Isaiah 65:24, Daniel 10:12, Mark 11:24)

3. While Daniel wanted to know when the exile would end, the angel instead declared it will take longer to completely atone for sin.

How long? (24a)

In last week's lesson we learned that the rebuilding of the temple occurred in 516 BC. Again, how many years transpired between then and the exile in 586 BC?

If the angel was talking about another date or event (v.25) that occurred in 445 BC what rebuilding project was initiated then? (Nehemiah 2:1-18)

4. In verse 24 the angel speaks of sin and salvation. In regard to sin, what do these passages say about the angel's words: *"finish transgression, put an end to sin, and atone for wickedness"*?

John 19:30

Romans 6:10-11

Hebrews 2:17

5. In regard to salvation, what do these passages say about the angel's words, *"...bring in ever-lasting righteousness, to seal up vision...and to anoint the Most Holy"*?

Romans 10:4

Ephesians 1:7-10

Acts 4:27-28

6. The angel divided the 'seventy sevens' into three parts. Name the first two in verse 25 and what would happen.
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7. Some dispensationalists think if 7 weeks=49 years, plus 62 weeks=434 years, the total would be 483 years. Starting at 445 BC (assuming the Jewish lunar month is 30 days or 360 days in a year), then $483 \times 360 / 365 - 445$ would work out to 31.38, a date around 32 AD.

What happened around 30-32 AD? (Matthew 16:21, Luke 24:6-8)

8. In Daniel 9:26 it says the Messiah will be *'cut off'* (KJV). What is meant in these passages?

Isaiah 53:8

Zechariah 12:10

Psalms 22:16-18

9. What is meant by *"have nothing"* when the anointed is cut off? (9:26 ESV)
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What did Jesus lose materially? (Matthew 27:35)

What did he lose relationally? (John 16:31-32)

What did he lose most importantly? (Matthew 27:46)

Why? (Isaiah 53:5, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 8:9)

10. Describe what *“the ruler who will come [after the anointed one]”* will do. (26b)
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Many identify this tyrant as Titus Vespasian who desecrated the temple in 70 AD. By what name did the angel call him back in Daniel 7:8, and what would he do? (7:21, 25)

What recurring phrase refers to this horror? (9:27, 11:31, 12:11)

- 11 The prophecy says within the period of a “week” (7 years?) what devastating abominations would this ruler impose? (vv. 26b, 27)
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12. Some scholars believe there are two rulers (“he”) in verse 27, the first being the anointed one (27a), who ends the temple sacrifice by abolishing the need for sacrifice (Hebrews 10:11-14, 18). The second refers to the evil one (27c) who desecrates. Others claim it’s the same evil ruler who desecrates the altar and sacrifice then finally ends it in 70 AD. Read Daniel 9:26-27 in different versions and write your opinion whether verse 27 refers to one ruler or two.
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13. Although this wicked ruler would make this covenant of evil with “many” for a time, the Messiah will establish a new covenant with the faithful that will last how long? (Isaiah 55:3, Jeremiah 32:40, Ezekiel 37:26 NIV)
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14. Gabriel declares the scroll must remain sealed.
Under what circumstances can it be opened? (Daniel 12:4, 9-10)
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What seal had to be broken and why? (Matthew 27:62-66)

What is unsealed in Revelation 5:1-10 and how?

15. Given your study of Daniel 9 are you able to give a definitive explanation of ‘70 7s’?
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