

# Daniel

Leon L. Combs, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D.

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## Chapter Nine

### Dan 9:1-3

*In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans-- (2) in the first year of his reign, 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, seventy years. (3) So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.*

Remember that Darius is likely an official title as discussed earlier. Daniel built his prayer life upon the Word of God. Jeremiah had been dead for only a couple of decades and his writings had not yet been approved by some council as an official part of the Old Testament Canon. Yet Daniel recognized their importance and he certainly had been reading:

- Jer 25:11-13 *'This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (12) 'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. (13) 'I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.*
- 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.*

It is also likely that Daniel knew of the writings of Isaiah regarding Cyrus:

- Isa 44:28 *"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"*
- Isa 45:1-2 *Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: (2) "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars.*
- Isa 45:4 *"For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me.*
- Isa 45:13 *"I have aroused him in righteousness And I will make all his ways smooth; He will build My city and will let My exiles go free, Without any payment or reward," says the LORD of hosts.*

Daniel had seen Cyrus take over Babylon so he must have been extremely excited as he was witnessing prophecy come true. The year is about 537 B.C. and he was captured in 606 B.C. so the seventy years is almost over. Daniel would then have been praying for God to now make His promises come true regarding setting free the Hebrew exiles so that they could return to the

Promised Land. He prayed in sackcloth, ashes, and fasting as was the custom of the Jews in devout prayer. The purpose is to demonstrate total dependence upon God and not for others to see. We are told that Jesus often fasted and in the early church many fasted.

### **Dan 9:4-8**

*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, (5) we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. (6) "Moreover, 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. (7) "Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day--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. (8) "Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.*

This great prayer of Daniel can be seen to consist of three parts. One part contains a confession of Daniel's and the people's sin (9:4-11). Second he writes of his acknowledgment that it is because of this sin that the judgments of God came upon them (9:11-14). Third he shifts to plead for God's mercy (9:15-19). Also notice how Daniel uses the first person plural pronoun in most of his prayer. Daniel prays to God without making any excuses for their gross disobedience. He takes responsibility for all of their transgressions and clearly states that righteousness only belongs to Him. Daniel writes as a spokesman for the nation and gives God the glory for being trustworthy regarding His covenants toward those who love Him and keep His commandments. Since they have not displayed a loyal love for God and have not kept His commandments they can only claim open shame toward them since they have sinned against Him. He names specific sins rather than just generally stating they had sinned. We also should be specific when we pray about our sins. Remember that the Bible does not list a single sin of Daniel and we read in chapter six how the other administrators tried to find some fault with him but could not find any fault: *Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.* (Dan 6:4) Daniel knew the holiness of God and he understood his own nature so he was able to state that he did indeed sin even if nobody else could find a fault with him.

### **Dan 9:9-10**

*"To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; (10) 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.*

I started a new section here because prior to these verses Daniel had been praying to God in the first person. Now he changes as though he is praying through an intermediary as he refers to God in the third person. I am sure that Daniel had a reason for this shift but I am not certain what it was. Sometimes preachers tend to shift in their prayers from praying to God and preaching so this may be involved as this was written in Hebrew for the Jewish people. Perhaps he is

“preaching” to his recipients as he tries to make them understand as well as he does that they have all sinned and God is just to bring about this sending of His people into exile. Note that he does still continue to use the first person plural pronoun “we” as he identifies with the Jewish nation in their sin before God.

#### **Dan 9:11-14**

*"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. (12) "Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. (13) "As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. (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.*

Again Daniel includes himself in the sins of Israel as he is acting as a representative of Israel before holy God. He refers to the Law of Moses as God’s servant (Deut 28-32) and states that “we” have sinned against Him. To Daniel it was more important for God to maintain His integrity that would include punishment for Israel than for His guilty people to forego their punishment. The prophetic writings above clearly promise punishment for God’s people if they do not obey Him and it would certainly not be appropriate for God to forego His punishment of the people. Who would believe anything God had to say if He did not keep His word? God brought about the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the removal of His people from their ancestral land to vindicate His holiness and to demonstrate to the world the sanctity of His moral law.

Is an application of this use of “we” appropriate for Christians today as we look about at how Christians sin today? I think it depends upon the context of our prayers. Certainly a Christian today could pray toward God in a similar way as here regarding the actions of the church. Note that even righteous Daniel was included in the punishment of the nation Israel. Today there are many Christians who are obeying God and worshiping Him properly. But the state of the church in general seems similar to that of Israel at this time of Daniel. It seems to me that we can then use the “we” as did Daniel in regard to the actions of the church in general. False doctrines such as prosperity theology with its emphasis on man rather than on God permeate the church today. Many churches accept practicing homosexuals into membership and even in leadership positions. Gay marriage is being accepted in many churches. Self-actualization rather than sanctification before God has been emphasized since the early 1960’s. Certainly the church is deserving of punishment from God for its actions over the last 2000 years and certainly in the last 30 years or so. So if we are praying as a representative of the church then it is appropriate to use the collective “we” even if individually we have not been guilty of those particular sins. But when we go before God as a child of God and being “in Christ” with double imputation having been carried out on our behalf, we then should go in prayer as a saint and not as a sinner (one who practices sin).

Certainly God is justified to exile the church today just as He did Israel earlier.

**Dan 9:15-19**

*"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--we have sinned, we have been wicked. (16) "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, 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. (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. (18) "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. (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."*

Daniel now begins to pray that God will restore the land and His people to truly reflect His holiness. He clearly states that “we” have sinned and that a restoration is not needed because of their obedience but because of His holiness. He states that God’s people have become a reproach to the world around them. To the world it seems that they have been victorious over Yahweh by the actions of Nebuchadnezzar’s troops and so their many gods are victorious. To let His face shine on the desolate sanctuary would mean for God to bless it again with a restoration so that the world could see that indeed God is still sovereign. He ends this section by giving the reason for God to restore the city and the people because they are called by His name.

A similar statement could be made today regarding the church. The world is looking at the church as weak regarding its own past doctrines, and it is looking at the church to put aside those doctrines that do not exalt man and to put man at the center. It is because of the sin of the church that the world does not exalt the God of the Bible. We then should pray that “we” have sinned and because of that sin we need God to act to restore the church to the glory intended as reflected in the great prayer of Jesus (John 17).

**Dan 9:20-24**

*Now 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, (21) while 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. (22) He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. (23) "At 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. (24) "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.*

It did not take God long to answer this prayer of Daniel as he confessed both his sin and the sin of his people Israel. The holy mountain of God is symbolic of the entire “government” of God that includes the land, the temple, and the people of God. Perhaps if some leaders of the church today would pray as Daniel did that God would act quickly also on behalf of the church. Stating that “the man Gabriel” came to him does not mean a human but the same angel that had appeared to him previously. Angels usually appeared in the form of a man to speak to men:

- Luke 24:4 *While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;*
- Act 1:10 *And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.*

The KJV gives a bit different translation for verse 21: *Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.* (Dan 9:21) Some commentators have assumed that Gabriel had wings so that he could fly but that is not the sense of the verse. The NAS version translation above conveys the meaning more clearly in that God caused Gabriel to come quickly to the aid of Daniel. The mode of travel of Gabriel is not the issue. Note that the angel also came at the time of the evening sacrifice (about three o’clock in the afternoon) for that was the time when devout Jews would be making supplication and praise to God even though there was no altar available for a sacrifice.

Gabriel then announces to Daniel that he had come to give him instruction and insight with understanding. In verse 23 Daniel records Gabriel has saying that he had been highly regarded in heavenly places that reflects again on the righteousness of Daniel. He tells Daniel that he must highly regard the message and that he is purposed to be given understanding of the vision. God is very eager to answer our prayers and may even begin the answer before we finish our prayer. Gabriel then begins to expound upon the meaning so that Daniel will appreciate how God is going to end the years of discipline and hardship for captive Israel. He tells Daniel that seventy “weeks” have been decreed for the fulfilling of some goals. Notice in verse 24 Daniel gives six goals for God’s exile of His people to Babylon and for Jerusalem to be achieved during that time period:

- Finish transgression
- Put an end to sin
- Atone for wickedness
- Bring in everlasting righteousness
- Seal up vision and prophecy
- Anoint the most holy

Perhaps God will bring about the same six goals for the church if some righteous man will pray appropriately for it.

### **Dan 9:25-27**

*"So you are to know and discern that 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 plaza 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. And its end will come with a flood;*

*even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (27) "And he will make a firm 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 one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."*

My translation states seven “weeks” and sixty-two “weeks” but this is misleading for the Hebrew word translated weeks actually means some group of seven something and other translations write this as seven “sevens” and sixty-two “sevens”. If the meaning is truly weeks the prophecy is meaningless for nothing happened during those periods of actual weeks (49 days and 434 days). Most interpreters are also agreed that the meaning is seven groups of seven years and sixty-two groups of seven years and we will use “heptads” as this is discussed. Thus the first time period is 49 years and the second time period is 434 years for a total of 483 years. In verse 27 there seems to be another time period given of one group of seven or seven years for a total of 490 years. Gabriel did tell Daniel in verse 24 that seventy “weeks” had been set aside for achieving those goals. But an accurate understanding will require a specific understanding for each goal, especially the last one.

An interpretation of these times depends upon the starting point (*terminus a quo*) for the dating and several possibilities have been attempted. The question then is “what is the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem of verse 25”? The date of that decree will be the starting point of the time interval of a total of 490 years. The completion of the building of Jerusalem will then be 49 years after the starting date. One possible choice for this starting date is the first decree of Cyrus the Great:

- 2Chron 36:23 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!'"
- Ezra 1:2-4 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (3) 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. (4) 'Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'"

Both of these verses merely discuss building the temple so this will not fit within the requirements of verse 25.

The position taken by J. Vernon McGee is the decree of Artaxerxes in the twentieth year of his reign (Neh 2:1-8) issued in the month Nisan 445 B.C. The first seven weeks takes us to 397 B.C. and to Malachi and the end of the OT as these were troublous times. The next 434 years brings us to the Messiah using a Jewish year of 360 days he arrives at 483 years or 69 sevens. At this

time Jesus rode into Jerusalem as He publically offered Himself as the Messiah. Between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week the Messiah will be cut off as He is crucified and Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed in 70 A.D. The final “week” (the seventieth) he takes to be in the future that is yet unfulfilled.

Another possibility is the decree issued to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:12-26). This decree involved rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem (Ezra 9:9) and thus would fit with verse 25. There were considerable problems with the rebuilding of the wall and Nehemiah was disappointed when he determined no progress in 446 B.C. Taking the starting date to be 457 B.C. and counting forward 49 years brings us to 408 B.C. within which the city, walls, and moat were finished. Going forward 62 heptads (434 years) brings us to A.D. 26. But really this would be A.D. 27 since a year has to be added when crossing over zero (1 B.C. to 1 A.D.). Since the generally accepted date for the crucifixion of Jesus is 30 A.D., this date of the start of His ministry is remarkably exact. This leaves three years from His baptism until His crucifixion and resurrection, which is also generally accepted. Verse 26 is then fulfilled in A.D. 27 when “after the sixty-two heptads the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing”. Gabriel did not specify a time period when he said the cutting off would be **after** the sixty-two heptads. History informs us that it was three years after the sixty-two heptads that the Messiah was crucified.

The second part of verse 26 states that the people of the prince to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary but here also he does not tell the time interval. History informs us that this event could be the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans under Titus in A.D. 70 that was 40 years after Calvary or 43 years after the end of the sixty-ninth “week”. Forty-three years is six heptads for a total of 75 heptads that exceeds the 70 of verse 24 to achieve the six goals. But the last goal could be the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ for a total of 70 heptads. Gabriel only tells Daniel that from the issuing of the decree until the coming of the Messiah will be 69 heptads and we have seen a remarkable prophecy for the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ in A.D. 27. The dating from that point is vague for Gabriel only says “after the 62 heptads” without being specific. He says the end will come like a flood and that certainly was symbolic of what happened when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. There was also a huge war with millions of people killed and blood flowed like a flood.

Verse 27 presents some problems for it is not clear when in the sequence of years this event occurs. Some people take this last seven years to be the time from the resurrection of Jesus until the establishment of the early church. Other interpreters take this last “week” to be the great tribulation after some long time period. Ordinary interpretive techniques informs us that the “he” of verse 27 is the same person mentioned previously (the prince of the people to come) and that would be the Roman ruler Titus from history. However neither of these interpretations informs us regarding the middle of the week unless the “he” is the antichrist of Revelation 13 and not Titus. The firm covenant could be a peace time between warring nations and dispensationalists take this to be a time of peace developed by the antichrist that he will invalidate in the middle of the period. I conclude this chapter with:

*Deut 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."*