

Daniel Prays For His People Part 2

Daniel 9:8-19

Introduction

This chapter may very well be the greatest chapter in the Book of Daniel. It begins with Daniel's deep dive into Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the judgment and restoration of the people of Israel to the land (vv.1-2). The chapter continues with Daniel's prayer of intercession (vv.3-19) which leads to the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (vv.20-27).

Philip Newell in his commentary on Daniel wrote; "This chapter contains the true basis for a right understanding of the Book of Revelation, and of all other unfulfilled prophecy; we will see that it is the key also to Daniel's own understanding of his previous visions" (p.129).

Bible teachers and students will often rush to the end of the chapter and neglect the rich lessons Daniel teaches us about intercessory prayer. The meaning and revelation of the visions given by the angel includes a sweet evaluation—"you are greatly beloved" (v.23).

This endearment is rich. Both Daniel and John share this endearment and entrusted with the visions of the future. Both had lives marked by purity and prayer. Both were subjected to tribulation and persecution. Both were given glimpses into Christ's comings.

In Daniel's prayer we see a review of Israel's sin and suffering (vv.3-14) and a request by Daniel for God's people **to experience forgiveness of sin and restoration to the land** (vv.15-19).

What motivates Daniel's prayer? There seems to be several things; Daniel loves the Lord and loves God's people. Daniel's prayer is prompted by his study of prophecy (vv.1-2) but Daniel genuinely wants God to be honored and glorified (vv.17;19). Carlo Caretto was right when he wrote; "It is love which gives things their value. It makes sense of the difficulty of spending hours and hours on one's knees praying whilst so many men need looking after in the world."

Rebellion and sin and disobedience of God's people had taken an awful toll. We make choices. Those choices have consequences. And sometimes the consequences are severe. But sometimes we are given an opportunity to make a new choice. A healthy choice. A God-honoring choice. We can abandon our disobedience and rebellion and trust God's grace and mercy; forgiveness and love. We can cooperate with God in His plan for our future. A future where we walk with God in humility and submission. A future where we can love the Lord and love each other. A future where we participate as God's agents for good instead of agents of evil. In Daniel's prayer we see elements of determination, concentration, resolve (v.3); fasting, humility, adoration or worship, confession, petition and supplication (vv.4-7).

John Bunyan famously said; "You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."

The Prophet's Prayerful Confession (vv. 8-11)

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Daniel 9:8(NKJV)8“O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

Daniel's prayer considers God's punishment. The Lord had sent numerous prophets over hundreds of years with warning after warning (v.6). How long would God's patience postpone punishment? The word translated sin here means treachery, unfaithfulness, breach of trust. This is the same word (sinned) used for Achan's transgression in the book of Joshua (7:1; 22:31).

There are those who teach that repetition in prayer is bad or not helpful. There is a kind of rote repetition the Bible condemns. Do not use vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7). The Bible encourages persistent prayer but discourages vain repetitions. Why does Daniel repeat this prayer (see v.7)? It would seem Daniel is emphasizing a point. The repetition is not meant to insult God but rather to communicate Daniel's real belief that the circumstances of God's people over their sin was profound and urgent. When Daniel includes kings, princes and fathers it means that no one is exempt from guilt.

No one is blameless, guiltless, spotless. All are liable before God. There is none righteousness no not one. Daniel's prayer dwells on the character of God, and the commandments of God; the covenant with God and God's compassion (v.9).

9To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.

Daniel's prayer turns from thoughts of punishment to prayers of pity.

The Lord is the source of compassion and kindness. Only God can deliver us from our sin. Only God can ultimately help. The Lord is the God of infinite mercy and forgiveness. Daniel thanks God for these qualities of character. The God of Daniel is just and merciful. The reluctant prophet Jonah said, "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness" (Jonah 4:2).

10We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets.

Daniel appeals to God's character (v.9) and God's commandments (vv.10-14). What does Daniel pray? Daniel prays in the presence of God the demands of the Law of Moses! These were given in Exodus 20:1-10. These were divided into five commandments that reveal man's duty to God followed by five laws that reveal man's duty to fellow man.

11Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.

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The Law transgressed brought curses. Daniel uses another word to translate “sinned” (v.11). This word means to transgress the boundary or cross the line or go beyond.

It would appear there is a line a boundary that cannot be crossed without horrible consequences.

We see the list of transgressions: disobedience to the voice of the Lord our God; failure to walk in his Laws; denying that God’s servants the prophets had given them accurate information and instruction (v.10).

The word curse (v.11) literally means “to bind with a curse”. In our culture there is a legal concept called breach of contract. When a person fails to live up to his or her agreement the other party can call on legal powers to enforce the terms of the contract. **A curse is the opposite of a blessing! What exactly does a curse do? It wishes or desires ill or injury. God cursed the serpent and the ground after the sin of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:14;17).** Jeremiah in despair cursed the man who brought news of his birth (Jeremiah 20:14-15). Just how serious is God’s covenant with His people? There is the threat of curse on anyone who violates the terms of the agreement. Paul taught that Jesus Christ became “a curse” for us, so that we might be freed from the curses of the Law (Galatians 3:13).

Hannah Hurnard describes an intercessor this way; “An intercessor means one who is in such vital contact with God and with his fellowmen that he is like a live wire closing the gap between the saving power of God and the sinful men who have been cut off from that power.”

The Prophet’s Sincere Supplication (vv.12-14)

12And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem.

How has God confirmed His words? Long after Moses was dead God sent prophets to warn the people! God warned about sin and judgment. Isaiah preached with unmatched passion and eloquence. Amos spelled out the judgment using cold hard logic. Hosea with a broken heart wept tears. Habakkuk wrestled with the problem and Jeremiah weeps as well. Ezekiel resorted to signs to shock them into understanding. But the people remained deaf—unchanged—refusing to forsake sin and embrace the Lord.

We warn our loved ones. We pray for our loved ones.

13“As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.

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What is Daniel praying? The Lord warned that continual disobedience would result in a curse. God's patience ran out. The evil God warned about has come upon us. Where is this written in the Law of Moses? Why Deuteronomy 28:36.

“He will exile you and the king you will choose, to a nation to whom neither you nor your ancestors gave a second thought; and while in exile you shall worship gods of wood and stone! (v.37) You will become an object of horror, a proverb and a byword among the nations, for the Lord will thrust you away” (TLB).

In Deuteronomy chapters 27-28 Moses delivers his third sermon. He commands that an altar be built on Mount Ebal and to write the laws of God on it (chapter 27:1-8). Six tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim and pronounce a blessing over Israel for obeying the Law. The other six tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal and pronounce a curse for disobeying the Law. The curses for disobedience included those who manufactured idols; despised parents, moved boundary markers, leading the blind astray, failure to exercise mercy to foreigners, orphans or widows; those who committed incest; bestiality, those who commit murder or paid others to murder. Failure to keep the Law. In chapter 28 Moses outlined those failures; destruction in the land; disease, plague, drought, dust storms, defeat in war, infertility, constant fear and frustration and enslavement of their children. After destruction in the land would come dispersion from the land—exile (28:36-37; 48-68).

14Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice.

Daniel admits God keeps His Word. If the children of Israel listened and obeyed God's word they would experience blessings; ample security; healthy children large flocks and herds. If they disobeyed they would be surrounded by enemies; enslaved, disbursed among the nations and become an object of horror and mockery. **There was only one safe place for the people of Israel. In their land—obeying God.**

The Prophet's Plea (vv.15-19)

15And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly!

16“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us.

17Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate.

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180 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 do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.

190 Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

Here we find three great pleadings:

1. Daniel remembers how the Mighty God acted on behalf of Israel in the past (v.15).
2. Daniel prays and provides a testimonial to God’s character (vv.16 &18).
3. Daniel prays with a real burden for the honor and glory of God above all else (vv.17 &19).

Daniel has prayed based on God’s character and commands but now remembers God’s covenant (v.15). Daniel remembers the Exodus (v.15) and the Exile (vv.16-17). For the Jew the Exodus was proof that God’s power is unmatched. It was God’s hand that humbled the major superpower in the world Egypt. **The same God that forced His will on Egypt could force His will on Persia. The Jews must return to the Land.**

The Lord saved Israel and brought them out of the bondage of Egypt. God had a plan. The Lord needed a willing people to cooperate with that plan (v.15). Daniel confesses his sin and the sin of his people. And then Daniel’s prayer turns to the Holy city—Jerusalem. Jerusalem the place where God’s plan would come into sharp focus. Jerusalem was in ruins (v.17). Daniel prays that God’s favor (cause your face to shine on Your sanctuary).

The sanctuary is empty. The Temple destroyed. But there is something about that place and that Temple. What did the Temple represent? The place where God dwells. The place where God could meet His people and His people meet their God. This was the place of worship and sacrifice.

The Temple. But what did the people of God do? They provoked God. They provoked God from the time of Solomon to the time of Zedekiah. They provoked God to anger by constant, persistent, idolatry and apostasy. **The people of God preferred the pagan gods, became addicted to moral depravity and political insanity. God’s answer was Babylon. He allowed the Temple to be destroyed and the nation carried away.**

Daniel begs God to hear his cry (v.18). Daniel begs God to see the people’s desolations and the empty city (v.18). Daniel bases his supplications not on the basis of his righteous deeds or the goodness or faithfulness or obedience of the people in Captivity but exclusively on the basis of God’s mercy (v.18). Daniel prays listen and forgive! Listen and act!

Do not delay for your own sake for your city and for your people (v.19).

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When we think of the elements of Daniel's intercessory prayer we must also bring in the element of a kind of shameless persistence. Do you remember the story in the New Testament of the man who knocked on his neighbor's door in the dead of the night (see Luke 11:5-8)? It was the parable that Jesus offered when he said "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1-8).

What does Daniel know? The wonderful Lord God has promised to end Israel's captivity. The wonderful Lord God has promised to return His people to their land. The wonderful Lord will return the Jews to the land to rebuild The Temple (see Jeremiah 29:10-14; 30:10-24). In Isaiah 44:28 God promised Cyrus (the Persian King) would allow the Jews to rebuild and restore the city of Jerusalem. Daniel takes these promises and turns them into believing prayers (see also Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9).

What makes Daniel's prayer persuasive? **God does what He does because of who He is. The Lord God is Holy, Wise, loving. He is too holy to permit sin. He is too wise to make mistakes. He is too loving to be unkind. And He is too powerful to be stopped.**

Conclusion

We are not told the month or day of Daniel's prayer. But in many ways it resembles the prayer of the High Priest offered once a year on the Day of Atonement. Daniel was a descendant of Judah and could not occupy that role. For almost 70 years the people of Israel were without a Temple; without a High Priest, without an altar; without a blood sacrifice.

Daniel's ministry of intercession; adoration, confession, supplication and petition is suddenly interrupted by an angel with a message. There is news from heaven.

"In every prayer an angel waits for us, since every prayer changes the one who prays" (Dorthy Soelle).

"Jesus Christ carries on intercession for us in heaven; the Holy Ghost carries on intercession in us on earth; and we saints have to carry on intercession for all men" (Oswald Chambers).

Would you like to pray like Daniel? Do you have a personal relationship with God like Daniel? Do you have faith like Daniel? Will you worship like Daniel? Are you willing to pray based on God's character; and God's commandments and God's covenant with His people? Are you willing to discover and believe in God's compassion? Don't be surprised if an angel shows up.