

## Week Thirty-six: Kingdom-sized Prayers - Daniel 9



### Overview

Isaiah expresses a truth about God that reverberates throughout the story of the Bible and distinguishes the Bible from all other religious writings: “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’”

(Is. 46:9-10). God speaks with

authority about future events—immediate future, distant future, and far distant future. God informs Adam and Eve of the immediate consequences of their sin and about a coming Redeemer who will crush the head of the serpent. He tells Noah about the flood that will arrive in one hundred years and destroy everything that has breath outside of the ark that He instructs him to build. He promises Abraham descendants as innumerable as the stars in the sky and the possession of a land in which he is currently a stranger. Throughout Deuteronomy God apprises Israel of a multitude of details concerning their future. He also raises up prophets through whom He reveals details about His glory, Israel’s captivity, the judgment of Israel and the Gentile nations, the coming Messiah, and many other specific events. Three of those prophets see far into the future to the end times (Zechariah, Ezekiel, and Daniel).

The prophet Jeremiah urges King Zedekiah, the residents of Jerusalem, and all of Judah to go willingly into the Babylonian captivity. He prophesies that God will bring them back to the land of promise after the land rests for seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12).

Daniel has now lived in Babylon for sixty-plus years; he has been elevated to high positions within the government, slandered by jealous peers, set up by his enemies, and thrown into and delivered from a hungry den of lions. Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9 demonstrates that Daniel has counted down the years until God fulfills His word to Jeremiah. This lesson focuses on the prayer that Daniel prays and the answer that God gives.

### **Lesson Objective:**

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will associate promises previously given by God through His prophets with the present political changes occurring in Babylon and the role intercession fulfills in bringing those changes about.

### **Key Truths**

*God fulfills every promise He has ever made, though often many years pass between the promise and the fulfillment.*

*Intercessory prayer plays an important role in preparing people to embrace the changes that the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth brings.*

## Lesson Outline

### 1. Daniel's Inspired Motivation - Daniel 9:1-2

Bible literacy and the overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom alert Daniel that the seventy-year captivity is nearly over. For the past sixty-six years Daniel has lived his life in light of God's promises to Jeremiah. He has watched the clock of captivity wind down. The downfall of the Babylonian kingdom alerts Daniel to intercede on behalf of those in captivity.

### 2. Daniel's Prayer of Confession - Daniel 9:3-15

With fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, Daniel sets his face toward the LORD and prays. He recognizes that God is a covenant keeper and that His people have broken covenant with God.

- *Daniel identifies himself with the sin of the people:*
  - "We have sinned and committed iniquity" (5)
  - "We have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments" (5)
  - "Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets" (6)
  - "We have sinned against You" (8)
  - "We have rebelled against Him" (9)
  - "We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us all by His servant the prophets" (10)

God sees and interacts with man individually and collectively as He works His plan throughout the ages.

- *Daniel assesses the character of God and the state of Israel.*
  - "Righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face" (7)
  - "To us belongs shame of face . . . to the LORD our God belong mercy and forgiveness" (8-9)
- *Daniel exalts the faithfulness of God to His people in spite of their disobedience to Him and their disregard for the Law of Moses.*

He underlines the importance of Bible literacy, of knowing Israel's history and God's dealings with them throughout their history: "As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us . . . we have not obeyed His voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name" (13-15).

### 3. Daniel's prayer of petition - Daniel 9:16-19

Daniel finishes his prayer by asking the LORD to turn away His anger and fury, to hear his prayer, forgive and to act for the sake of His great and glorious name. He prays with boldness, asking that the LORD not delay to act, because the city of God and the people of God "are called by Your name" (9:19).

#### **4. God answers Daniel's prayer and reveals His love for Daniel and Israel's future in three phases--immediate, distant, and far distant future - Daniel 9:24-27**

While Daniel prays, the Lord sends Gabriel to tell him of His great love for Daniel and to grant him understanding about Israel's future:

- Immediate future - Israel will be restored to the land.
- Distant future - Four hundred and ninety years represent the 70 missed Sabbath years. The Messiah will come and offer Himself as the atonement for man's sin once those years have passed (24).
- Far distant future - Gabriel reveals God's plans for Israel during the final seven years before the millennial reign of the Messiah (26-27).

Daniel experiences an intimacy with God that is rare and experienced only by the few who dare identify their sin so deeply and connect so desperately with God's heart for His people. The angel tells him that he is "greatly beloved" by God (9:23).

Over the next several years God grants Daniel further visions regarding the Gentile nations and their various roles in human history. These visions ought to compel succeeding generations to live intentional and prayerful lives.

**Application** - What does this lesson teach about God? Man? Sin? Redemption? *Spiritually astute people discern God's activity in the changes within the political realm and respond with prayer and intercession.*

*Understanding the history of God's interaction with His people and His promises regarding the future implores people to live prayerful and missional lives.*

*No man truly lives independently of the greater community. Daniel's "we" is the believer's "we" today.*

*God is always accomplishing His kingdom purposes, and the realization of this truth prevents people from wasting their lives on empty pursuits.*

*Living only with a "now" mentality prevents people from connecting the past with the present and the present with the future.*

*Kingdom-sized prayers include the confession of sin, the petition for God's activity and intervention, and the exaltation of His great name.*

#### **Summary**

*God speaks about future things so that man will trust Him and learn to live intentionally and prayerfully.*

*God acts in political affairs to accomplish His redemptive purposes.*

*God reveals His absolute sovereignty over all kings and kingdoms.*

#### **Discussion Questions**

How can believers today become men of prayer like Daniel? When did Daniel develop the habit of praying (Dan. 6:10)?

What motivated Daniel to begin praying for his nation?

What sins should believers today confess as they approach God? How can believers identify with their churches to confess corporate sin?