

Daniel 9

Preliminary comments: Thank veterans... give honor to whom honor is due...

Sermon introduction:

Have you ever been in deep trouble as a result of your sin or someone else's sin?

Maybe you have experienced...

Intense relational conflict as a result of sin?

Financial problems?

Problems with your children?

Problems with your parents?

Serious health problems that were the result of bad choices?

Problems with your boss, coworkers, customers, a teacher, or the principal?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions than you can relate to Daniel.

It is the 6th century BC and Daniel and the Jews have been held captive in Babylon for nearly 70 years. Why are they in captivity? Their sins.

He was miserable. He missed his homeland.

As a result, he cried out to God in prayer. He was confident that God would answer his prayer because God is faithful to his covenant people.

When we find ourselves in difficult situations that are the result of sin, we too can pray appealing to God's covenant faithfulness.

That brings us to the main point of our passage...

Proposition: God's covenant faithfulness encourages us to pray for mercy!

To help us understand this we will look at three aspects of Daniel's prayer.

The prayer's context

The prayer's content

The prayer's answer

First, the prayer's context!

Daniel 9:1-2 (ESV) — 1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— **2** in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

The year is 539 BC. Darius the Mede is the king of the Persian empire. Darius has crushed the Babylonians. Daniel and his people have been held captive by the Babylonians for nearly 70 years as the result of their sin. But Daniel remembers what God said in his about his specific situation.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 (ESV) — 11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. **12** Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

According to the prophet Jeremiah, after 70 years of exile/punishment for their sin God will punish the Babylonians and send the Jews will go back to their homeland.

Will this happen automatically? Not necessarily! The Jews need to repent first!

This brings us to the content of the prayer.

First, the prayer's context.

Second, the prayer's content.

This is one of the longest, most instructive, and most beautiful prayers in the bible. Let's look at a few key aspects of this prayer.

It is a prayer of confession!

Daniel 9:3-5 (ESV) — 3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. **4** I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **5** we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.

In these verses Daniel confesses Israel's sins. They have broken God's covenant. Therefore, they are guilty.

Not only is it a prayer of confession!

It is a prayer informed by the covenant

Daniel 9:11-13 (ESV) — 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. **12** He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great **calamity**. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. **13** As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this **calamity** has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.

Daniel is very aware of Israel's covenantal context.

In verse 4 Daniel appeals to the fact that God keeps covenant. Furthermore, this is the only chapter in Daniel that uses the name YHWH for God. YHWH is God's covenantal name. The name YHWH pervades this chapter.

God saved Israel and made a covenant with them. A covenant is a promise. In the laws of Moses (covenant with Moses) God promised Israel that if they obeyed him, he would bless them. If they disobeyed him, he would curse them.

According to verse 11 they are experiencing the curses of the Mosaic covenant. You can read about these horrific curses in the books of Moses (Lev. 26:27-45, Deut. 28:15-68).

I want to highlight one curse in particular...

Leviticus 26:32–33 (ESV) — 32 And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. **33** And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.

This is exactly what happened to Israel.

They disobeyed God again, and again, and again. God was very patient. But God always keeps his word. He told them that he would curse them if they continued to disobey. Ultimately, he kept his word.

Application:

If you are not a Christian, God will keep his word to you. If you don't repent, you too will experience God's judgment.

It is a prayer of confession.

It is a prayer informed by the covenant.

It is a prayer for mercy!

Daniel 9:17–19 (ESV) —17 Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. **18** O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. **19** O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."

Daniel pleads for mercy...

Why? Because God not only promised judgment for covenant breakers, he also promised mercy for covenant breakers.

In the long list of covenant curses and covenant blessings we read this...

Leviticus 26:40–42 (ESV) — 40 "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, **41** so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, **42** then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land."

See also Deut. 4:25-31, 30:1-5

Daniel's prayer to God goes something like this, "God you promised that if we kept on sinning, we would lose the land. But you also promised that if we repented you would give us back the land. You promised! Please do what you promised."

God always does what he promises. Daniel really believed this, so he prayed accordingly...

Application:

Do you believe this same thing?

God promises that he will extend mercy to those who ask for it!

Do you need mercy this morning?

Do you need forgiveness?

But Dave you don't know what I have done!!! Do you know what Israel did??? Idolatry, prostitution, fornication, and child sacrifice.

On behalf of God's covenant people, Daniel prays for mercy.

This is all important context for understanding one of the most difficult portions of Daniel.

To that we turn next...

First, the prayer's context

Second, the prayer's content

Third, the prayer's answer

Who tells Daniel his prayer will be answered? The Angel Gabriel.

Daniel 9:20–23 (ESV) — 20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, **21** while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. **22** He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. **23** At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

Daniel cry's out to God for mercy since his people have broken God's covenant.

He begs God to restore his people, forgive them, transform them, and restore the temple.

While he is praying the Angel Gabriel appears to him, informing him that his prayers have been heard by God.

What comfort... God hears our prayers! He hears them as soon as we pray.

Who tells Daniel his prayer will be answered? The Angel Gabriel.

How does God answer Gabriel's prayer? By pointing to the future!

This brings us to Daniel 9:24-27...

These are some of the most difficult verses in the Bible. These verses are why many pastors don't preach through this book. I don't blame them.

Let me give a word of caution...

While preaching on Daniel 9:24-27 Alistair Begg said, "In what follows, I reserve the right to change my mind later this evening, and as often as necessary for the rest of my life, until I finally settle the matter. What I'm about to now unfold will annoy some, disappoint others, confuse many, and perhaps encourage a few. (Begg sermon on Daniel 9)

J. A. Montgomery writes, "The history of the exegesis of the 70 weeks of Daniel is the Dismal Swamp of Old Testament criticism" (Akin)

That is my word of caution...

Let me give a word of warning...

It is unwise to turn these verses into a test of orthodoxy or to be dogmatic about one's interpretation of these verses. These are four of the most difficult verses in the Bible, embedded in highly symbolic/apocalyptic language.

Furthermore, if the main things are the plain things, this text should not be the foundation for anyone's biblical eschatology. Why? They are very un-plain!

In addition, it is never wise to build a doctrine (or multiple doctrines) from one text, especially a text this obscure. Unfortunately, some well-meaning Christians have done that very thing from this text.

I have given a word of caution...
I have given a word of warning...

Let me attempt to give a word of explanation...

Daniel 9:24 (ESV) – 24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

In these verses Daniel says that 6 things will happen within 70 7s or seventy weeks/years. I will come back to the six things later.

What does Daniel mean by 70 weeks or literally 70 7s?

It can be interpreted as 70 x 7 weeks (490 days) or 70 x 7 years (490 years).

I don't think 70 7's refers to a literal 490 weeks/years. Side note- no evangelical scholar interprets this as 490 literal years, not even the most strident dispensationalist.

As we have already seen in this series, numbers in apocalyptic literature are usually symbolic.

7 is the number of completion in apocalyptic literature.
10 is the number of fullness in apocalyptic literature.

Therefore 70 times 7 means complete fullness.

Back to the covenant curses that got Israel into their mess...

Leviticus 26:18 (ESV) – 18 And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, (see also Lev. 26:21)

This does not mean they will literally get 7 times the discipline, it means full discipline.

In Matthew 18 someone asks Jesus how many times we should forgive others? Jesus says, "seventy times seven" (Matt 18:22). Jesus was not saying, "you must forgive your brother 490 times but not 491 times... seventy times seven means complete forgiveness.

Jesus was borrowing the language of completeness from apocalyptic literature.

Furthermore, the 70 years of captivity were not literally 70 years. Depending on how you count the years it could have been 73, 66, 58, or 47 years (Storms, 85-86)

Summing up...

Verse 24 describes a long period of time, a time of fullness (490 years).

It starts with the decree of Cyrus and ends at the destruction of the temple in 70 AD or at Christ's second coming depending on your point of view.

Let's not miss the angel's point.

The angel says to Daniel in verse 24.

"Daniel, God will answer your prayers. How is he going to answer your prayers? He is going to show you the six amazing things he will do for his people in the fullness of time (seventy 7s)." I will come back to those six things in a moment.

Let's get back to the text...

- v. 24 describes the entire period.
- v. 25 describes the first 69 weeks.
- v. 26 describes the 70th week.
- v. 27 describes the 70th week in more detail.

Daniel 9:25 (ESV) — 25 Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem

This refers to Cyrus the great's edict in 538 BC to send the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

9:25b to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

The anointed priest is probably Ezra. He is referred to as the anointed one in the prophetic writings. The word prince also means leader. This was a troubled time for Jerusalem (Antiochus Epiphanes and later Rome).

Summary: The first period of seven weeks describes the period from Cyrus's decree to rebuild the temple in 538 BC to Ezra. The second period of 62 weeks describes the time from Ezra to Christ. We are now at 69 weeks.

So far so good...

Daniel 9:26 (ESV) — 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.

We are now at the last week of the 70 weeks (62 plus 7 in verse 25 equals 69).

At 69 weeks an anointed one shall be cut off.

Who is the anointed one? KJV calls him the Messiah.

The anointed one is Jesus.

The text says that he shall be cut off and have nothing.

Jesus was cut off (Isa. 53:8)

Isaiah 53:8 (ESV) — 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

Jesus had nothing. He died naked, rejected, and all alone. He had emptied himself of everything.

Daniel 9:26 B And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

This prince could be a reference to Titus (the Roman General who destroyed Rome in 70 AD). Or it could be a reference to Jesus. It was because of the sins of God's people that the temple was destroyed. In other words, they destroyed the temple through their own sin.

"Its end shall come with a flood... etc..." probably describes the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. It was horrific. Read Josephus...

Daniel 9:27 (ESV) — 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

According to some, v. 27 describes the final week in more detail. In other words, it is parallel to verse 26.

Therefore the "he" in verse 27 is the anointed one in verse 26 and the people of the prince is the desolator in verse 27.

In other words, verse 26 and 27 describe the same event from different angles. This is common in apocalyptic literature.

Summary of verse 27... The first half of 27 refers to Christ and the last half of verse 27 refers to the destruction of the temple in 70AD by Titus Flavius Vespasianus. Titus died of fever in 79 AD.

There are many other possibilities.

Back to the big picture of verses 24-27.

Summary...

God shows Daniel that he will answer his prayers by showing him the six things he will do in the fullness of time (490 symbolic years).

Let's make application:

What do we know for sure? In other words, what can we all agree on?

Several things actually.

First, this story proves that God hears and answers prayer. God heard Daniel cry out to him and God responded. God hears your prayers. Cry out to him for mercy in time of need.

Second, God keeps his word. God promised his covenant people that he would send them back to the land, forgive them, and transform them if they humbled themselves. They humbled

themselves, so God did what he said he would do. God always keeps covenant with his covenant people.

Third, God has done and will do some amazing things for those who cry out to him for mercy. like what?

Let's go back to the six things that God promised to accomplish on behalf of his people at the end of 490 symbolic years.

Daniel 9:24 (ESV) – 24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

When this time is up...

1. Transgression will be finished... through the death of Christ.
2. Sins will be brought to an end... could be a reference to the death of Christ or the new creation...
3. Atonement for sin... our sin will be removed through Christ's sacrifice of atonement so that we can have fellowship with God.
4. Everlasting righteousness will be established... could be a reference to the inauguration of the kingdom or the eternal state.
5. Vision and prophecy will be sealed... Jesus Christ is God's final word (Heb. 1:1ff) he is the one who seals up or fulfills all the OT promises (2 Cor. 1:20).
6. A most holy place will be anointed... this is better translated "a most holy one will be anointed" look at your ESV footnote on this text. This could be a reference to the baptism of Jesus (Acts 10:38, Luke 4:34, 41). If not, it still refers to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the most holy place. He came to fulfill all that the holy of holies represents. (John 1:14).

Whether all of these things happen at Christ's first or second coming is almost beside the point. In other words, it does not really matter if the 490 years terminates in 70 AD or when Christ returns. You can argue either way. The point is, they will happen, and this is great news for sinners who put their confidence in Jesus Christ.

According to this vision...

Your transgressions can be finished.
Your sins can be brought to an end.
Your sins can be atoned for.
You can experience everlasting righteousness.

Why? God is merciful, he keeps covenant, and he hears your prayers.

Fourth, all of the good things that will happen in this period of time are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

One scholar argues that the numbers 70 7s are probably meant to be interpreted theological not calendrically. What does he mean?

Every 49 years was the year of Jubilee in Israel. During this 49th year (the year of Jubilee) social justice, equity, freedom, pardon, release, and restoration were supposed to be emphasized throughout Israel. Is it possible that the 490 years comes from multiplying 10, the number for fullness by 49, the year of jubilee? I think so. In other words, when this time is up, God's people will experience all that the year of jubilee pointed towards!

Who brings the year of jubilee blessings? Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 61:1-2 (ESV) — 1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; **2** to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

Many of these things are an allusion to the year of jubilee blessings.

Christ is the ultimate bringer of Jubilee. When the 70 7s are up, Christ will have brought the fullness of Jubilee. (Storms, 87-89)

Isn't this what we all want?

Forgiveness
Freedom
Justice
Comfort
And peace.

Are you in distress this morning? Cry out to God.

Lets pray...