

Week 36---Kingdom-sized Prayers

Daniel 9

September 7/8

Summary & Goal:

We have access to God's Word like never before in history. Daniel shows us that even while in exile, he found comfort and hope in the word of God through the most difficult of circumstances. The sovereignty of God was true in the days of Daniel and remains true even today as His plan continues to unfold in His perfect timing.

Main Passages:

Daniel 9: 1-27

Session Outline:

1. GOD'S WORD GIVES US HOPE FOR TODAY-- (DANIEL 9: 1-2)
2. GOD'S WORD GIVES US A BURDEN TO PRAY-- (DANIEL 9:3-6, 17-19)
3. GOD'S WORD GIVES US HOPE FOR THE FUTURE—(DANIEL 9: 24-27)

Session in a Sentence:

Sometimes circumstances are beyond our control; yet we do have the opportunity to read God's Word in such a way that it moves us to changed behavior, thoughts and relationships; while giving us confident hope.

Kingdom Connection:

The timeline of God began with the end in mind. Daniel gives us a glimmer of what that timeline might look like. More importantly, this chapter gives us hope in Jesus Christ who will be victorious at the end times for all time.

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INTRODUCTION:

It's amazing how our world is consistently mesmerized by the movie box office. Decade after decade, generation after generation has flooded into theaters to spend their hard-earned cash. Hollywood has capitalized on our demand by pumping out films like hotcakes. They look for screenplays everywhere, including Barnes and Noble. Have you noticed how many books are currently being adapted as feature films? IMDB tells us that 35 books turned into movies in 2018 alone. Hundreds more have been adapted over the years, including many fan favorites such as *The Godfather*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Shawshank Redemption*, *Jurassic Park*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Hunger Games* and more.

Many of these movies are critically acclaimed, however, most book lovers will quickly tell you that Hollywood always falls short to the original story in print. I'll be honest... I've never once left the theater and purchased a copy of the book that it was adapted from. Why not? To me, it feels like a waste of time to read a story that I already know.

Unfortunately, some Christians carry that same perspective with them regarding a different book. Some believers are hesitant to pick up "the Book" because they too think they already know the story. Many ask, "Why should I read the Bible if I've already heard it at church. Some would perhaps add that they've even seen several movies based on the Book. However, this argument does not hold up when it comes to God's Word. Simply put, the Bible is a different kind of book. The Bible is the only book that can be and should be, re-read every day of your life. Why? Hebrews 4:12 explains, "The word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." God's Word is not a familiar story that grows stagnant. The Bible is a living book that speaks life and practical application into our hearts. Paul goes as far as to say that we actually NEED this book in order to be successful in our everyday lives (cf. 2 Tim 3:16).

The prophet Daniel understood the value of God's Word. As a major prophet of Israel, Daniel served as an interpreter and even received personal visions and messages from God Himself. Yet even though Daniel literally received God's Word directly from the source, he still understood the importance of re-reading the Scriptures. In Daniel chapter 9, we're going to see the prophet turn to the words of another prophet, Jeremiah. And by doing so, Daniel sets an example for all of us to follow today. We will see that when we dig into God's Word, we never walk away the same.

EXPOSITION:

Daniel 9:1-2, NKJV “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—² in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” (Chronological Bible pg. 1190, Sept. 8)

As you may remember, a few weeks ago we were introduced to the character in today’s text, Daniel. As we began studying the Captivity Era, we learned that Daniel was an elite young Jew that was exiled to serve in King Nebuchadnezzar’s court. Chosen for his noble birth, good looks, and talent, Daniel was taken as a teenager from his home and placed into service in the wicked King’s court. The book of Daniel tells us that the young man only continued to grow in knowledge and wisdom as he aged, and God blessed him with the ability to interpret dreams. Subsequently, Daniel rose in stature and served the King’s court for many decades. At this point in his life in chapter 9, Daniel is in his 80’s, and he has served in the foreign land for 66 years.

Our text today says it was “the first year of Darius,” which was 539 BC. In that year, the Babylonian empire fell into the hands of the Medes and Persians. Through their invasion, God fulfilled His promises to the prophets to punish the Babylonians in His perfect timing, after He used them to discipline Israel according to His sovereign will. The rise of the Medo-Persian empire in 539BC may have seemed quick and swift to the Babylonians, but it surely was no surprise to Daniel. God had already told him this would happen through Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Cf. Daniel 2) the writing on the wall (Cf. Daniel 5) and an incredible vision (cf. Daniel 7).

If anyone would have felt “up to speed” on God’s Word, it would have been Daniel. Yet it says he went to an old scroll of Jeremiah’s words to seek understanding in his present life. He likely turned to Jeremiah 24 (as we have it numbered today) and was reassuring himself that God would take care of his people regardless of the leader on the throne. Then he likely read Jeremiah 25 and reminded himself that God promised the exiles would only stay in captivity for 70 years. He probably flipped over to Jeremiah 29 and saw that God still had a future redemptive purpose for Israel and that He would not leave them in shame. You see Daniel understood our first point today...

POINT 1 – God’s Word gives us HOPE FOR TODAY.

Daniel is trying to make sense of his present circumstances. He knows a new occupying force has now come into play, and Israel is still suffering. Uncertainty was likely flooding the minds of many Israelites. Would the Persians perhaps even be worse than the Babylonians? Would Israel remain as slaves for decades to come? What does Daniel do to make sense of his present circumstances? He turns to God’s Word. He reminds himself that God promised their suffering

would end after 70 years of captivity. He looks at the calendar and reminds himself that the countdown is officially on. He reminds himself that God is always faithful to His promises and their time in exile will sovereignly draw to a close very soon. Daniel finds hope by renewing his mind with God's promises and is reminded that God is at work all around him.

Every day, you and I face challenges, in some ways, similar to Daniel. Like Daniel, the Bible says we too are in exile in a foreign land (cf 1 Peter 2:11) and our true citizenship is elsewhere (cf Phil 3:20). The Bible also explains that there is an evil occupying ruler in this world, Satan, whose goal is to oppress us and seek our destruction (cf John 14:30, 1 Peter 5:8). Because of that, we too endure hardships every day. Many of us wake up and face the challenges of broken relationships, financial distress, health struggles, uncertainty at work, and dysfunctional families at home. To make matters worse, culture and public policy are increasingly becoming hostile towards our faith. Freedom of religion seems to be heading towards freedom of religion, "at church." In other words, culture still accepts the practice of faith in our church walls, but opposition is rising against us carrying our faith into our paradigm, our policy preferences, and our everyday decision making.

So how do we find the strength to endure these problems of today? We follow Daniel's example: we turn to God's Word. Romans 12:2 tells us to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." God's Word renews our mind every day. It reminds us that he is true to His promises. It realigns us to His will for our lives and puts wind in our sails for the day. It serves as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (cf. Psalm 119:105). It shows us how to proceed as we walk through a world of darkness. Simply put, God's Word gives us the hope that we need today. Daniel's cup is refilled by combing through the words of Jeremiah, and God wants to refill your cup and my cup every day as well. But will you give Him the time to do so? Let's see how Daniel responds after he reads the prophet's words.

Daniel 9:3-6 NKJV, "Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. ⁴ And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. ⁶ Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land." (Chronological Bible pg. 1190, Sept. 8)

After Daniel processes the words of Jeremiah, he responds in an interesting way. God's Word appeared to have not only spoken to his mind, but also to his heart. He cognitively understood that the 70 years of captivity were almost over. However, his heart also emotively responded to the words he read. How do we know that? He immediately turned his face to the Lord and

began to pour out his heart through passionate, earnest prayer. That brings us to our second point...

POINT 2 – God’s Word gives us a BURDEN TO PRAY

Sadly, many do not approach God’s Word in the same way as Jeremiah. Almost everyone approaches the scriptures with their minds. What I mean is that we all read the Bible to seek intellectual understanding and knowledge. However, that pursuit is insufficient in and of itself. If you solely seek knowledge, but not transformation, you become religious and miss the transformational power of God’s Word. That’s why Jesus tells us to approach Him not just with our minds, but also our heart and soul (cf Matthew 22:37). When we approach God’s Word with our entire being, God moves the information from our minds to our hearts and our lives are changed. This is what happens to Daniel. Not just his mind, but also his heart is reminded of God’s patience, faithfulness, love, and mercy, and it prompts him to respond immediately in prayer. And we can see that his prayer takes on two different forms....

A Prayer of Confession

Through reading Jeremiah’s words, Daniel is overwhelmed by how far Israel has fallen short! In verses 3-6 he confesses that God has kept His covenant, but Israel has not. He confesses that God has sent prophets, but Israel did not listen. He confesses that righteousness belongs to God, but shame belongs to Israel. This kind of response is what happens to us when we read God’s Word: the more we understand it, the more we understand how far we have fallen short.

This is where many people misunderstand the purpose of reading God’s Word. They think Christians are supposed to read God’s Word solely so they can understand all the rules we are supposed to follow. What they miss is that Christians are supposed to read God’s Word so we can be exposed for how far we are falling short on those rules! Paul explains it this way in Romans 3:20, “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for *by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” Paul says the law was not given so we would learn how to be justified. He says the law is given so we would understand that we cannot be justified in and through ourselves! God’s Word reminds us that we only have one hope at salvation and one hope at a new life: through the mercy and grace of our Lord. Daniel is confessing this same truth to God. He is saying, “we cannot do it ourselves!” He is saying, “we are not worthy to be called your people!” He is humbly admitting that they are in desperate need of His grace. Which leads Daniel to a second prayer....

A Prayer of Petition

Daniel 9:17-19, “Now 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. 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 do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. ¹⁹ O 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.”
(Chronological Bible pg. 1191, Sept. 8)

In verses 17-19 Daniel begs for God to move His hand. He has confessed that they cannot redeem themselves. They do not have the ability to save themselves from bondage and re-establish Jerusalem's glory. Instead, he appeals to God's righteousness and mercy asking for God to move powerfully. He implores God to restore the glory of Israel for the good of His people and the glory of His name. When we understand God's Word, we too respond with similar prayers of petition. Some may ask, why on earth would you ask God for stuff when you just confessed that you are unrighteous and falling short? There are two answers to that question.

First, we can confidently pray prayers of petition because we have been made righteous through our faith (Romans 3:22) not our works. We can stand confidently at the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), we can ask, seek and knock (Matthew 7:7), and we can know that He cares (1 Peter 5:7) because we have been made righteous before the Almighty through our faith! Daniel is confident that God is listening because he knows his relationship, and Israel's relationship, has always been based on faith. You and I can rest assured of the same thing. God listens to your prayers and He wants you to petition Him because you have been declared righteous through your faith in the Son.

Secondly, we can confidently pray prayers of petition if we know our prayers are in accordance with His purposes. How do we know His purposes? Through His revealed Word. The more we read and understand God's Word, the more we will understand and discern His purposes for our lives. Daniel prays confidently because he knows he is only praying for that which he knows God wants: the restoration and returned glory of Israel. You and I can follow Daniel's example. Jesus tells us to pray that His Kingdom will come and that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). When we read God's Word, it stirs our heart to pray for God to fulfill His purposes in and through our lives, and the lives of those around us. Those are good, godly prayers that are awakened through studying God's Word. It's good to ask for God to fulfill His will in our lives and the lives of those around us! And the answers to those prayers come according to God's perfect timing. Sometimes those prayers are answered quickly, sometimes we have to wait. In Daniel's case, his answers come immediately. God sends the archangel, Gabriel, with a vision and a word to explain how God will fulfill His promises (Daniel 9:20-23) and restore Israel. Gabriel's hope-filled message leads us to our final point...

POINT 3 – God's Word gives us HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Daniel 9:24-27, “Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy,

And to anoint the Most Holy. ²⁵ “Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. ²⁶ “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.” (Chronological Bible pg. 1190-91, Sept. 8)

Most people stress about the future. The mere thought of what could come paralyzes them with anxiety. People are crippled by fear for their families, their health, and their finances. People are terrified of future wars and conflicts, politicians, and leaders. There is good reason for this as we live in a broken world with problems that surround us. But Jesus says that His followers should not fall victim to the world’s pattern of fear and anxiety. He says we have a hope unlike anyone else. He explains in John 16:33, ³³ *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

Jesus says the future looks bright for those who walk in faith with Him! One of the best reasons to turn to God’s Word is that it reminds us of that reality. God in His providence has left us with scriptures that give us a snapshot of the glorious future. These prophecies serve as a source of hope for the believer.

TEACHERS- If you are not comfortable teaching on the 70 weeks, it is fine to skip to the Conclusion section from here and not cover verses 24-27. We have included the below explanation for you as an option.

Four of the most important verses of prophecy are hand delivered right here to our friend, Daniel. Verses 24-27 are complex verses of prophecy in the Bible, and the truth is we do not have enough time to unpack them fully. However, we can gain some key points that I think will renew our hope for the future.

In these 4 verses, Daniel receives a vision of 70 “weeks.” Some translations call these 70 “sevens” because they are best understood as 70 “weeks of years.” In other words, each individual week symbolizes 7 years. Basic multiplication tells us then that Daniel is learning about a critical 490 years that are to come to pass. Through these 490 years, God explains that He will answer Daniel’s prayer for Israel’s restoration and renewal. Through this plan, God will

redeem and restore His Holy city and His people. As verse 24 explains, through this plan, sin will be eliminated, iniquity will be atoned for, and everlasting righteousness will come over the Holy Land. So how and when will that happen? This takes us to Daniel's critical vision...

First Period: 7 Weeks (49 years) – Verse 25

Daniel is told that two distinct periods of time will first come to pass: 7 weeks and then 62 weeks. After the first 7 weeks, he's told Israel will be rebuilt, even in troublesome times. While some scholars differ on the exact years in history, this is best understood to speak to the time between the return of the exiles and the re-establishment of the second temple. Indeed, exactly as God revealed to Daniel, there was much opposition that came to Nehemiah and leadership that pursued rebuilding Jerusalem after the exile. But God's purposes were ultimately fulfilled, and the second temple was established. Many see this period of 49 years beginning with Artaxerxes' decrees to send Ezra back to Israel to begin the work of the 2nd temple in 458BC (Ezra 7).

Second Period: 62 Weeks (434 years) – Verse 26

Following the re-establishment of the temple in the first 7 weeks, Daniel is told that another 62 weeks will immediately follow that lead to the Messiah being cut off, "but not for himself." Amazingly, history tells us Daniel's math is spot on. After those 483 total years, the temple was indeed rebuilt, the Messiah was sent, and sadly He was rejected after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus Christ was cut off, but not for Himself, just as Daniel said. Instead, He who knew no sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). Christ was cut off so that we didn't have to be.

Following the Messiah's death, Daniel sees what will happen next. He says Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed and war will be brought to the city. Once again, Daniel hits it right on the head. This is exactly what happened in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and the Jews were scattered across the earth until Israel's miraculous return in 1948.

Third Period: 1 Week (7 years) – Verse 27

If you're good at math, you know there is still one mysterious week lurking. Daniel had a vision of 70 weeks, but so far, we have only accounted for 69 of them. So, what about that climactic 70th week? In verse 27 he says that a final week will come when "he makes a strong covenant for one week." The first question is who is the "he" that Daniel is talking about?

The short answer is the antichrist. Jesus actually points to this verse in His own teaching on the matter in Matthew 24. Among many other passages, 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13 tell us that a "man of lawlessness," or a "beast," will rise up on our earth shortly before Christ's return. This final week, or 7-year period, is what's known as the Tribulation. During this time, Daniel says this antichrist will offer a false peace and hope to Israel, and in fact reinstate the Jewish sacrificial system of offerings. How on earth could he do that? Indeed, building a temple in Jerusalem seems implausible to us today, especially considering Islam's Dome of the Rock currently sits on the old temple mount. But we must not forget that nothing is impossible for God (Matthew 19:26). As impossible as it sounds, Daniel, Paul, and Jesus Himself all point to a

rebuilt temple, as well as a horrifying event that will take place inside that temple known as the “abomination of desolation.” (Cf Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:4). At that event, the antichrist will show his true colors and demand the world to worship him. This will also be the moment that ushers in those final 3 ½ years before Christ’s return, known as the Great Tribulation. Israel and all of God’s people will be under intense persecution and darkness will be unleashed on earth for 3 ½ years.

This is very heavy theology to consider and process. And you might read this and think, “how on earth is that supposed to give Daniel, and us, hope for the future?” It’s because there is a great final promise in verse 27. Daniel writes, “And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even **until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.**” The ending to this story should give us hope. Evil will not forever reign on this earth, for our God will not allow it. After this final week (7 years) is complete, Jesus will return in glory (Revelation 19). And when He returns, “the Lord will consume (the antichrist) with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess 2:8). When Jesus returns, there will be no doubt over who will win on this earth. Christ has already won through His death, burial, and resurrection. When He returns, He will simply claim the victory that is already rightfully His. The antichrist will be immediately destroyed, and Jesus will establish His kingdom here on this earth. Because of that, we should have hope today! We can rest assured that if you’re in Christ Jesus, you’re on the winning side. Today we live in what’s known as the “Great Parenthesis.” We live in this unique period of time between Daniel 9:26 and 9:27.

CONCLUSION:

So once again, why do we look to God’s Word? Because it gives us hope not just for today, but also for tomorrow! We may not know with absolute certainty *when* those final days will come, but we do know with complete confidence *how* they will end. During this church age, we work as ambassadors for Christ, taking His Gospel to others, in hopes that they will join us on that final side of victory. But there is only one way we can thrive during this time of exile. We must follow the example of Daniel during his exile. We must open the Book. Because when we do, we are led to our knees where we receive the power, grace, and hope that we need for today and for tomorrow.

- 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, kingdoms, and timespans.