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C1236 – October 24, 2012 – Daniel 9:1-19
The Prayer Of Confession

We have been studying the Book of Daniel and particularly Daniel 2-7 which was written in Aramaic, an indication that its primary audience is Gentiles and we have had laid out for us by dreams and visions the times of the Gentiles which began in 605BC with the rise of Babylon and extends through Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome until the Messiah comes to establish His kingdom upon the earth. The Jews of course are under divine discipline during this time and now that we are in the latter part of Daniel the chapters are written in Hebrew showing that the primary audience is the Jews and God's purposes for them during this time and how they should live during this time to receive blessing.

This week we come to Daniel 9, one of the great chapters in the Book of Daniel for two reasons. First of all because Daniel 9:1-19 records one of the longest prayers in the OT, Daniel's intercessory prayer of confession on behalf of his nation in hope of restoration to the kingdom. Secondly, because Daniel 9:24-27 records one of the outstanding prophecies of the OT, a seventy sevens timetable for the restoration of Israel to the kingdom; a prophecy that has probably received more attention than any other in the entire book because it is so crucial to understanding the prophetic framework of later revelation in the books of Matthew and Revelation.

In Daniel 9:1 we get the setting of Daniel's prayer, it was **the first year of Darius the son of Ahaseurus, of Median descent**. Darius is the man we met in Daniel 5:31 who is hotly contested by critical scholars of the Book of Daniel. They say Daniel made a historical blunder on this point because they can't find any extrabiblical evidence for a Darius the Mede. They say history only reports a Darius the Persian who began his rule several years later in 521BC, but that Darius was the son of Hystaspes, a Persian and not **Darius**,

the son of Ahaseurus, a Mede. So we had to investigate the identity of **Darius** the Mede. John Whitcomb pointed out in his book that on the last night of the Babylonian kingdom Belshazzar was having his great feast in the royal banquet hall and he got arrogant and had the gold and silver vessels from the Temple of God brought in so they could drink from them and praise the gods of gold, silver and stone. While he was carrying on drunk Cyrus had sent one of his armies led by Ugbaru who diverted the Euphrates River from flowing into the city and through those water canals his army came and took Babylon without a battle, killing Belshazzar and his nobles. Ugbaru apparently died three weeks later. In his place Cyrus appointed a different man by the name Gubaru and historical records indicate he governed Babylon for 14 years. Seeing that it was common for ancient rulers to have multiple names Whitcomb suggested that Gubaru was also known as **Darius, the son of Ahaseurus, of Median descent.**

Since that attack and kingdom shift occurred in 539BC then the first year of Darius' reign was 538BC and that is when the events of this chapter occur. And you will notice in verse 1 that Darius **was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans**—someone appointed him to that office of king that was over the realm of the Chaldeans or Babylonians and that someone was Cyrus the Persian. Cyrus was the greater king and ruled the greater territory of the Persian Empire. Babylon was only a portion of the great Persian Empire, and the man he initially set over it was Darius the Mede. If you were to go back to Daniel 6:1 you would see that when Darius came to rule this kingdom it seemed good to him to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom and over them three commissioners, of which Daniel was one. So Daniel was high up in the governmental structure of the second Gentile kingdom out of the four that compose the times of the Gentiles.

And as he operated in that Medo-Persian government it says in verse 2, **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.** Now do you see a predicament Daniel faced upon reading this Scripture? Jerusalem would be under desolations for seventy years. Daniel was in year 68.ⁱ There are just two years remaining before Jerusalem was restored and the kingdom of God was to come. Yet Daniel also knew that the times of the

Gentiles had to run its entire course before the kingdom of God would come; that means Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. So then why is Daniel praying for restoration to the kingdom of God when the course of the times of the Gentiles had yet to take place? I would suggest that Daniel has a predicament. Daniel didn't understand how the Scriptures harmonized with one another. How can you ram, cram and jam the rest of Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome in two or three years? Well, Daniel doesn't know. That's what this chapter is about. Daniel has to get straightened out about what he had seen in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 regarding the four Gentile kingdoms and what he read in Jeremiah 25 and 29 about the **seventy years**. Now do notice in verse 2 that Daniel studied **books**, plural, not a book, so here is a man in his 80's still heavily involved in Bible study, he's a prophet at that which shows you the prophets studied the Bible with great interest. And he has a dilemma. As he read these books, plural, I suggest he found in Deuteronomy 28 that they were in Babylonian captivity as discipline for disobedience. He also read on into Deuteronomy 30 and recognized that the discipline would not come to an end until the nation repented and that repentance involves confession, acknowledgment of sin.

So, verse 3, I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. Literally he set his face toward the Lord God which means toward Jerusalem as he had been doing in chapter 6 because God said in Solomon's time, if you set your face toward My temple I will hear in heaven. So he's praying toward Jerusalem and there are two words used for prayer here. The first word **prayer** means "intercession," so this is an intercessory prayer. Daniel had been a leader of the people of Israel who were in captivity in Babylon and so he is going to intercede on behalf of the nation. The second word is **supplication** and this word means "an entreaty with mercy." Daniel is going to make intercessory requests to God that will require mercy on God's part. Mercy because the nation Israel deserved much more discipline than what God had given them in Babylon. Actually their stay in Babylon was not that terrible. They were allowed to own property, they were allowed to run businesses, they had Daniel in the high governmental office to intercede on behalf of them to the king, and so while it was discipline it wasn't as terrible as it could have been, it certainly was not like Egypt had been centuries before. And now Daniel is interceding for them on the basis of God's mercy.

And you see he's quite serious about the prayer because he's **fasting** with **sackcloth** and **ashes**.

In verses 4-14 he confesses the sin of his nations. **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, 5we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6Moreover, 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.** Obviously, since this is a confession, the subject is sin, our sin, notice verse 5, **we have sinned...we committed iniquity...we acted wickedly, we turned aside...verse 6, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets.**

The point is we are at fault, Daniel doesn't say they are at fault while I am so perfect, no, he includes himself, we are at fault and we justly deserve the discipline we are facing in captivity. The language sounds like his reflections on Deuteronomy 28:1-14, all the cursings for disobedience, and his conclusion, we deserve every bit of this captivity. And you'll notice there's nothing like, look God, isn't enough, enough? Isn't it time to let up? And why not? Because that's not the way you confess. You confess by acknowledging that everything you are getting you justly deserve. And in fact you deserve more than you get if you're honest with yourself.

God had done many things to try to avoid disciplining the nation Israel. Notice verse 6, He graciously sent them **prophets**, they spoke to the **kings**, the **princes**, the **fathers and all the people of the land**, they warned everybody. Nobody was acting in ignorance; everybody was acting in full knowledge against God. The prophets warned everybody, they pointed everybody back to Deuteronomy 28 which outlined the curses for disobedience. God had charted all the disciplinary measures in advance. But did they listen? No, they didn't listen to the word of God, they didn't listen to the prophets of God, instead they killed the prophets, tore up the word of God and used it for fuel in the fireplace.

But if you noticed how he started off the prayer in verse 4 you notice a key. **Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His**

commandments. Here we have mention of God; here we have mention of the covenant-keeping God. And we know that there are ultimately two covenants behind Israel's history, on one hand the Abrahamic Covenant wherein God promises ultimate blessing and on the other hand the Mosaic Covenant wherein God promised blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. Now the problem is getting these two covenants together. How do you get to ultimate blessing if the nation is disobedient? You can't. You have to have an obedient nation. That's what the verse says, **who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments.** So the nation has got to **love Him and keep His commandments** in order to get to the ultimate blessing in the kingdom of God. Well how is that ever going to occur when the nation is nothing but sinful hearts? Answer, God has to give them a new heart. What you're seeing in verse 4 is that ultimate blessing will only come upon the remnant of Israel that is given a new heart. The old sinful heart can't produce love of God and obedience to His commandments. So God has to give them a new heart that can produce love of God and obedience to His commandments. That's the promise of the New Covenant later in Jeremiah 31. But to get that new heart a sufficient portion of the nation has to confess. And you can see in this prayer it's only Daniel confessing the sin of the nation. There may have been some other godly Jews at the time but not a significant portion of the nation. The nation Israel is going to have to come under extremely difficult times to confess their sin and that time is going to come under the reign of the anti-Christ, the little horn of the fourth beast. So on that basis I see Daniel's prayer here as anticipatory of the future remnant's prayer in the tribulation that will confess and be given a new heart. Then, and only then, having hearts that can love Him and obey Him, will the ultimate blessing come in the kingdom of God. And so verse 4 shows that while God promised ultimate blessing of the nation under the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant He also promised blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience under the terms of the Mosaic. The only way then to get ultimate blessing is for God to give them a new heart that will obey. This new heart is graciously provided for by the New Covenant which assures that a future remnant of the nation will confess and receive a new heart.

But Daniel is anticipatory of this and he is confessing on behalf of the nation. And notice how it must be done in verse 7. Confession involves putting sin up against the righteousness of God, that's how we know what sin is, we put

it beside God's righteousness and then we look at ourselves and go, yuck. He says, **Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day.** Notice the stark contrast. In confession you are drawing this stark contrast between you and God. You have violated His holiness and therefore you see how nasty you are. God is righteous but we are in **open shame** says Daniel. Shame came about in Scripture because of the fall of man and it came to express our nakedness before God. Remember how Adam said, we were naked so we hid. Adam was ashamed. You hide because you're ashamed of something. But unlike Adam Daniel is admitting we can't hide our shame, we are openly naked before You. We can't hide from Your sight. Then he says, **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.** There's the cause of the exile right there, Daniel sees it, what is the cause? **Unfaithful deeds**, but the Hebrew means "treacherous deeds, stealthily done sins, trying to hide sins" but it's all laid open before the Lord, you can't hide from Him. And you can see Daniel has restoration of the entire nation on his mind because he mentions Judah the southern kingdom and Israel the northern kingdom. So Daniel is looking to the ultimate blessing in the kingdom, what we call the millennial kingdom and he's representatively confessing the entire nation's sin.

Verse 8, a principle of confession. **Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.** Confession must be made to the one against whom the sin was committed, you don't sin against the papacy, you don't sin against me, you sin against God. David ached it in his confession, "Against You and You only have I sinned." Daniel ached it too. God is the only one we sin against because God is the standard by which sin is measured. As verse 7 indicates, **Righteousness belongs to you, O Lord.** It doesn't belong to any creature so you don't confess to any creature, you confess to God, the one against whom the sin was committed.

Now Daniel is very adamant in his confession, which is a perfectly good thing, but he's in a predicament, don't forget the predicament - he sees seventy years and four kingdoms and four kingdoms don't exactly fit in seventy years but hey, God is God and there's nothing too hard for God so

he's confessing and praying for restoration. And so the way I want you to understand Daniel's prayer is he's assuming the guilt of the nation, confessing that sin as though it were his own, and on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant pleading for the compassion and forgiveness that will result in ultimate blessing in the kingdom. Verse 9, **To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 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.** The restoration, if it's ever going to come is going to come solely on the basis of God's compassion and forgiveness and not on who we are because we're rebels, we're disobedient, we don't have a heart to obey. Unless God showers us with mercy and forgiveness, Daniel recognizes there can be no ultimate blessing.

Verse 11, **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.** More statements of guilt, more reflections on Deuteronomy 28, he acknowledges frankly their contrariness to the Law of Moses. All of them transgressed. No one ever obeyed the law perfectly. Everyone blew it, even Daniel blew it. But at least Daniel recognizes it. Whereas the rest of the nation isn't going to recognize it until the future tribulation when they're so hot under the collar they can't stand it anymore and at that time Isaiah 53 said the nation will say, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way," they'll all confess their guilt, here it's just Daniel, but he's anticipating what's coming.

Verse 12, **He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity;** again, this prayer cannot be understood apart from Deuteronomy 28:15-68 which lays out the cursings for disobedience, one of which is military defeat and exile. God has **confirmed His words** meaning that God is serious about what He says. If God says it He will do it, don't test the Lord because you're mom or dad may not mean what they say but He means what He says and He does what He says. He finishes the verse with concern for Jerusalem. **For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem,** he speaks of the desolations of Jerusalem by

Babylon, verse 2. And you'll observe throughout Daniel's concern is all those things that have a special place in God's plan, Jerusalem, God's city, Israel, God's people, the concern in chapters 8-12 is Israel, Israel, Israel and only the nations as they touch Israel.

Verse 13, **As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.** In other words, Daniel recognizes that the only way to restoration in the kingdom is if a sufficient portion of the nation repents. Repentance includes confession but is more than confession because it includes a change of direction in life. So the nation has to confess their sin and then turn from iniquity and give attention to the truth of God's word in order to be restored to ultimate blessing. It's important to realize you can't get blessing just by sitting there and praying. I know many people never listen to the word of God; they just pray, pray, pray and I tell them God isn't listening. You listen to Him first, then He'll listen to you. So you can pray till you're blue in the gills but your talking to a deaf ear. The only way to get God's attention is to turn from your iniquity and give your attention to His truth.

Now Daniel had God's ear as we'll see later in vv 20-23, the angel Gabriel was sent to clarify to Daniel his predicament. But the rest of the nation? Ha. They hadn't turned from their iniquity and given attention to His truth. And therefore ultimate blessing could not come at this time. The nation must repent and that is why in the Gospels what is the message John and Jesus come preaching? "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." They needed to turn from their sin and turn to the truth of God; that was the condition for the kingdom of God coming upon the earth. But as long as a significant portion of the nation refuses to repent they will continue to remain under divine discipline. Daniel wants out of the discipline.

Verse 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.** The **calamity** was looked upon by Daniel as having been stored up for centuries and finally brought upon them at the proper time. And He admits once more that this calamity was justly deserved. God had not done anything wrong, we were the ones who did wrong.

Now up to this point in verses 4-14 it has all been confession, confession, confession acknowledging the nation's sin before God. Now he moves forward to his requests of forgiveness and restoration, verses 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...**he's recounting God's work in history, what God had done for them at the Exodus and how God's name or reputation became well-known to all the surrounding people because of His great work. You might think of Rahab who said that her people in Jericho feared YHWH because of what He had done to the Egyptians at the Red Sea. God's reputation for mighty deliverances was established at the Exodus and Daniel is calling them up, recounting history so that God might do such a mighty deliverance once more, this time from captivity and taking them into the kingdom of God. It's been seventy years, let's get to the kingdom.

He says again at the end of verse 15, **we have sinned, we have been wicked**, it's more confession just to be clear that the basis of the restoration is nothing in us but everything in God. If then verse 16, it is **in accordance with all Your righteous acts**, that is, if the discipline we have received in captivity is sufficient according to Your **righteousness**, **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.** Over and over notice how he says these are **Your** things Lord, Your city, Your mountain, Your people, it's all associated with You and as long as they remain in desolations Your reputation is being damaged, so let Your anger and Your wrath be turned away for Your own sake. That's the argument Daniel is making, not for our sake but for Your sake. And a principle of prayer is that all our prayers should ultimately be for His sake and not our sake. It is a commonly stated error that prayer is for our sake. No, prayer is for God's sake and therefore we ought always to emend our prayers with words such as "for Your sake" or "for your name's sake" meaning for Your own reputation, not for mine.

Verse 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.** Now it's very interesting he asks God to listen

to the prayer because Jeremiah had written in 11:14 that God commanded the Jews not to pray during the captivity to Babylon because God would not listen to their prayers, the exile was already decided. However, now that Babylon had been defeated by Medo-Persia and Darius the Mede was in his first year, the way is clear for a prayer like Daniel 9. Thus Daniel says **now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and for Your sake...let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.** I haven't been able to pray that for 68 years, I can pray that now, so he does, let's get back to Jerusalem and the temple.

Verse 18, and another principle of prayer, see if you can find it; **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.** What's the principle? It's embedded in the statement about no merit of our own, **we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own.** They had no merits upon which to base their prayers and God doesn't answer prayers on the basis of any merit in us. God doesn't owe you anything and God doesn't owe me anything. We have no merit and He's not interested in us offering prayers on the basis of how good we've been. God doesn't do for you because you've done for Him. God does for you because God has compassion on you, a poor miserable sinner. It's tucked right at the end of the verse, He only answers prayer on the basis of His **great compassion.**

Verse 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.** The verbs are rapidly uttered indicating the earnest desire of Daniel. **hear,** God hadn't been hearing these prayers for 68 years, so **Lord, hear! Forgive,** when we confess God forgives, Daniel prayed on behalf of the nation but he is not a sufficient part of the nation to get national forgiveness. **Listen and take action!** Do something about our condition but do it **For Your own sake,** the theme that rings in our ears every time we confess, do these things for Yourself Lord. Daniel says, **because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.** God's reputation was tied to the condition of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, so if they were restored from desolations it would reflect positively on Him, Do it for **Your own sake!**

Alright, verse 20, **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.** Now Daniel was apparently interrupted there in verse 20 right at the end of his prayer and the angel explains how he got there so fast in verse 23, he was dispatched back in verse 4 when Daniel started praying which shows you angels can travel faster than the speed of light despite the claims of physicists. So right from the start Daniel didn't understand that how the seventy years gelled with the four kingdoms. He's got it in mind that at the end of the seventy years he read in Jeremiah will result in the kingdom of God coming and God said, Gabriel, go straighten Daniel out, which shows you our prayers travel faster than angels. But the whole purpose of the angel being sent is to straighten Daniel out. That's the whole purpose of this angel and the seventy sevens. Daniel connected the seventy years he read in Jeremiah with the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in kingdom blessing. The angel is sent to disconnect that idea in Daniel's mind. So the prophecy of Jeremiah about seventy years is not the final restoration of all Israel in the kingdom but only a prophecy of the partial restoration of Judah after the Babylonian kingdom. And in fulfillment, just two years later, in 536BC, Cyrus ushered a decree allowing them to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, it was a 20 year project so they completed it by 516BC. So the seventy year prophecy of Jeremiah was not to be connected with the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in the kingdom but to a partial restoration. But because Daniel has made a connection the angel Gabriel was sent when Daniel began to pray in order to give him understanding of when the ultimate and final restoration of all Israel will occur and that is the subject of the seventy sevens or heptads there in Daniel 9:24, which I suggest are years because Daniel has been thinking in terms of seventy years and the angel is saying the final restoration occurs after seventy groups of seven years or 490 years. And that's the subject of

next week's lesson but for this week I suggest that the way you think of Daniel's prayer, when the time comes near to the end of the 490 years the remnant of Israel will pray a prayer like unto Daniel's and they will turn from their iniquity and they will turn to the truth of God and then the kingdom blessing will come. So Daniel's prayer anticipates the future prayer of the godly remnant of Israel that will result in their final restoration.

Conclusions, what can we learn from Daniel's prayer? First, *the reason for Israel's captivity is Israel's sins violating the Mosaic Covenant*. This covenant outlined curses for disobedience and that is what Israel is currently facing, divine discipline. Daniel clearly recognizes that their calamity is due to God's discipline. Second, *the purpose of God's discipline of Israel is to convict them of sin so they will confess and be restored to blessing*. Daniel clearly recognizes the need to confess in order to be restored and enjoy ultimate blessing. Third, and here we come to the principles of prayer, I will mention four. First, *prayer should avoid fatalism*. What do I mean by fatalism? I mean the idea that whatever will be, will be, *que sera, sera*, so I just sit back and do nothing because God's already going to do what God's going to do. Daniel could have concluded that from reading Jeremiah. Seventy years - so all I have to do is sit on my buttkus and do nothing. But Daniel believed that God does carry out some things in his prophetic program by means and prayer is a means and so Daniel went to a prayer of confession. God has conditioned some things on prayer and so prayer is a valid enterprise. So to be a prayer warrior like Daniel you need to avoid fatalism. Second, *prayer should be motivated by God's faithfulness to His word*. God is faithful to His promises and Daniel was motivated to pray for restoration because God is faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant and will ultimately bring blessing to the remnant. So be motivated to pray on the basis of God's faithfulness to His word. Third, *prayer should be based on God's grace and mercy*. Daniel said, not because of any merit in us, but because of Your compassion. We should never base our prayers on the sense that we might have that God owes us because we followed His principles or taught His word. God does not owe us anything. And fourth, *prayer should be for His name's sake*. Ultimately what is at stake is God's reputation. Our reputation is inconsequential compared to His. If we're going in to prayer with the thought that my reputation is at stake here and I want God to improve my reputation then we have the wrong focus. Our aim should be that God gets glory and God's purposes be met. We should never want a prayer to be answered that would not further His purposes. So every prayer

should be emended with something like, “For Your name’s sake” or “for Your glory.”

ⁱ Another view is the desolations of Jerusalem began in 597BC and still another view is 586BC. The 605BC view is best because of Daniel’s near expectation in 538BC, despite the fact Jerusalem was only in desolations politically in 605BC and not militarily until 586BC.

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