

At the end of the chapter we hear God’s promise that the day is coming  
that will put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness,  
to seal both vision and prophet,  
and to anoint a most holy place.

In other words, a Day of Atonement is coming.

Okay, I need to ask you to think outside the box for a moment.  
Or, better yet, *inside* the box – where the box is *scripture*.

Last week, we hear Daniel’s vision of the ram and the male goat.

The ram was the Persian empire.

The goat was the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great.

Many scholars have puzzled their heads over *why* God would use a ram and a goat.

There is really *nothing* in Persian or Greek literature or culture  
that would explain why Persia would be a ram,  
and Greece would be a goat.

But then again, the book of Daniel was not written for Persia or Greece.

It was written for Jews.

And honestly, if Daniel 8 wasn’t followed by Daniel 9,

I don’t think anyone would have noticed this –

but in Daniel 9, God makes it clear that a Day of Atonement is coming.

And if you look through the scriptures for a passage that talks about a ram and a male goat,  
there are only two:

Leviticus 16 and Daniel 8.

(There are lots of passages that talk about rams and goats generally –  
but only two that talk about a ram and a male goat!)

Except Leviticus 16 talks about *two* male goats.

Where is the other goat?

But watch:

Leviticus 16 says that Aaron shall offer the ram as a burnt offering for the people.

Then he shall take one of the male goats as a sin offering,  
and the other one shall be “presented alive before the LORD  
to make atonement over it,

that it may be sent away into the wilderness as a scapegoat.”

And Daniel 9 says that at the end of the 70 weeks, atonement will be made.

Jesus is the other male goat.

We saw last time that Daniel 8 ends with Daniel sick – appalled by the vision.

He sees a ram and a male goat.

That would make any Jew think of the Day of Atonement.  
But there is no atonement.

The end of chapter 9 explains the unfinished vision of chapter 8.

### **1. The Word of the LORD to Jeremiah – the 70 Years (v1-2)**

*In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—<sup>2</sup> 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 first year of Darius coincides with the first year of Cyrus –  
so Darius the son of Ahasuerus would appear to be Cyrus.  
And while these names are not used of Cyrus in ancient writings,  
Herodotus tells us that Cyrus's grandfather was the king of the Medes –  
so this fits with what we know of Cyrus.

(There was a king Darius who took the throne in 522 BC –  
but he was a Persian, not a Mede –  
so it makes more sense to connect this with Cyrus).

The first year of Cyrus was about 50 years after the destruction of Jerusalem.  
The book of Ezra tells us that Cyrus issued the decree to rebuild the temple in 538 BC  
(the same year as Daniel's prayer).  
This would also be the same year that Daniel wound up in the lions' den.

But in the first of Darius/Cyrus,  
Daniel – now around 80 years old – perceives from his reading of Jeremiah  
that the 70 years of the desolations of Jerusalem are nearing their end.  
After all, Daniel has been in Babylon for nearly 70 years.  
He had been taken captive as a youth in 605 BC.  
He has spent his entire life in the service of the kings of Babylon –  
and now is serving the Persians.

When he was in his early 20s, he would have watched Ezekiel  
and the second wave of exiles arrive in Babylon (in 597).  
Ten years later, there was a third wave – after the fall of Jerusalem in 587.

Each successive band of refugees would have told him the stories of horror –  
the atrocities of war that had afflicted his people.

During that time, the prophet Jeremiah sent at least two letters to the exiles  
(one in the time of Jeconiah – Jer 29 –  
and the other in the time of Zedekiah – Jer 51).

## 2. Daniel's Prayer as a Pattern for Us (v3-19)

### a. Fasting, Sackcloth and Ashes – Seeking the Lord Includes the Body (v3)

<sup>3</sup> Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

If all we needed to know was that Daniel prayed and asked God for mercy,  
then you could say that in a single verse.

Instead, we are given a lengthy prayer that goes into great detail.

This serves as a model for us – so that we might learn how to pray –  
how to confess our sins before God,  
and ask for his mercy!

And the first thing to note is that Daniel seeks God

“by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.”

Someone recently asked me, “why do they use ashes for Ash Wednesday?”

The answer is that it is the last remnant of sackcloth and ashes.

Sackcloth is very uncomfortable clothing – rather scratchy...

Modern people don't like to be uncomfortable, so we don't do sackcloth anymore –  
but a little smudge of ash... that's not so bad...

The point of what Daniel is doing –

and the point of what *we should do* when we want to get really serious with God –  
is that we need to include *our bodies* in seeking the Lord.

If you say, “Oh, well, I can just seek God in prayer” –

then you are saying that you will love God with all your heart and all your soul –  
but you will *not* love God with all your strength –  
you will *not* love God with your *body*.

How do you love God with your body in prayer?

By humbling your body –

by denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus.

We are *really* bad at this.

*I* am really bad at this!!

But it's no wonder that we are spiritually so weak!

We think that we can pamper our bodies –  
and somehow still discipline our souls!

But, surprise, surprise!

Our bodies and our souls are connected!

Jesus was once asked why his disciples did not fast.

The Pharisees fasted – and John’s disciples fasted – but Jesus’ disciples did not.  
And Jesus explained that the reason was because the bridegroom was with them.  
You do not fast at a wedding feast!  
But when the bridegroom is taken away – *then* they will fast (Matthew 9/Luke 5).

We regularly see the apostles fasting – and in the early church, they had weekly fasts.  
But there is one principle that the church has *always* agreed upon!  
You do *not* fast on Sunday!  
When we gather on the Lord’s Day, at the Lord’s Table,  
that is the heavenly feast day!

I am planning on fasting once a week for the present.  
I haven’t decided on a day yet – but if you are interested,  
let’s talk about selecting a day together, if possible.

Fasting – properly speaking – means abstaining from food,  
but those who are unable to go for a full day without food  
may fast by eating as little as possible,  
and as simple as possible  
(bread and water, for instance).

People sometimes talk about “fasting” from other things besides food –  
and that’s fine –  
but every instance of fasting in the Bible is talking about abstaining from food.

After all, the two basic things that we need are food and clothing.  
Fasting is about denying ourselves food  
as a means of disciplining our bodies  
to recognize that man does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.  
And wearing sackcloth and ashes is about denying ourselves comfortable clothing  
(since going naked would be entirely inappropriate!!) –  
as a means of training our bodies to seek our *comfort* in Christ alone!

But the basic point of fasting – the basic point of sackcloth and ashes –  
is to discipline the body in the same direction that we are disciplining our souls –  
namely, in seeking God – in seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy  
with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

So the first point is that we need to seek God *bodily* –  
that our prayers need to be joined with fasting –  
(and at times, uncomfortable clothing!) –  
as we recognize that we need to seek God’s face.

But then we turn to Daniel’s prayer:

### **b. Who Is God? We Confess God's Greatness (v4)**

<sup>4</sup> *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,*

Daniel's prayer starts with *God*.

Who is God?

Too often we jump immediately to ourselves and our situation.

Daniel starts with who God is –

and as proceed through his prayer,

he keeps coming back to who God is!

We must never forget who we are talking to!

"O Lord, the great and awesome God,

who keeps covenant and steadfast love

with those who love him and keep his commandments"

This is a quote from Deuteronomy 7:9 –

"the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand

and redeemed you from the house of slavery,

from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God

who keeps covenant and steadfast love

with those who love him and keep his commandments,

to a thousand generations,

and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them."

Daniel remembers what God had said.

And so, in his prayer, he weaves together the teaching of scripture!

You often hear people say that prayer should be a conversation –

just "talking to God" like you would talk to anyone else.

I cannot find *any example* of that sort of prayer in the Bible!

Because when you are talking to God, you are talking to *God*.

You are talking to the "great and awesome God"!

And *yes*, he calls you to draw near – to come into his presence –

and *yes* he promises to hear those who draw near through the blood of Christ!

But all the examples of prayer – in both the Old and New Testaments –

demonstrate a sort of reverence and honor

that goes beyond "ordinary" conversation.

Daniel's prayer weaves together a number of passages of scripture.

He sees clearly who God is.

He also sees clearly who he is – and who his people are:

### **c. Who Are We? We Confess Our Sins (v5-10)**

<sup>5</sup> *we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.*

Who are we?

We are those have sinned.

We often just stay with that one word.

Sin.

But Daniel adds lots of ways of saying it.

We have sinned.

We have done wrong.

We have acted wickedly.

We have rebelled.

We have turned aside from your commandments and rules.

Sin is almost too easy a word.

For us, we tend to use it only in religious contexts.

The verbs in verse 5 focus on sins of *commission*:

We have done wrong.

We have acted wickedly.

We have rebelled.

All of these focus on our intentional – active – sins.

We have *turned aside* from your commandments and rules.

We *know* what you have commanded, and we have turned around and walked the other way.

But then in verse 6, Daniel adds another dimension:

<sup>6</sup> *We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

Not only did we turn away from the commandments that you gave us through the Law of Moses, but we also failed to listen to the prophets.

The prophets spoke in the name of the LORD.

And they spoke to the kings, the princes – to our fathers – and to all of us!

When we pray,

we should confess our sins –

including our sins of failing to heed the prophets –

failing to hear the preaching of those who have taught us God's ways.

You might say, "But Daniel was not guilty of any of this!"

Why is he confessing the sins of his fathers?

Verse 7 explains it:

*<sup>7</sup> To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.*

Daniel is among the “far away.”

Daniel has experienced the “open shame” of being an exile –  
banished from Jerusalem, banished from the presence of God –  
because of the sins of his fathers.

To understand this, we need to recognize the principle of *corporate sin* and *corporate guilt*.

We are such individualists,  
that we think that no one should ever suffer for someone else’s sin.  
But, to put it simply, if no one should ever suffer for someone else’s sin,  
then Jesus could not suffer for *our* sin.  
If the innocent may never suffer, then God must condemn all humanity to hell forever!

So Daniel says, “To you, O LORD, belongs righteousness.”

You order your kingdom – your community – in a manner that is right and just.  
But we recognize that we have not reflected that righteousness.  
And so to us belongs open shame.  
Because we have betrayed you.  
We have not demonstrated faithfulness.  
We have not lived our lives in covenant loyalty to you.  
Rather, we have committed treachery.

*<sup>8</sup> To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.*

Daniel was only a boy when he was exiled.

He didn’t participate in the decision-making of the community.  
But he *did* participate in the *shame* – the *open shame* – of the community.

We have all experienced this.

Our parents have made terrible mistakes.  
Our parents have done things that screwed up our lives!!

And we have suffered because of it!

And not just our parents!

Our communities – our cities, our states, our nation!  
We have all suffered as a result of the sins of others.  
And particularly, we have all participated in the *punishment*

that was due to those around us.  
Daniel may not have been old enough to participate in the *sin* of Jerusalem,  
but because he part of the *community* of Jerusalem,  
he shared in the guilt and the punishment (and thus the sin) of Jerusalem.

And Daniel shows us that the only way to deal with communal, corporate sin and guilt,  
is through corporate repentance and confession:

*<sup>9</sup> To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him <sup>10</sup> and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.*

Verse 9 shows us that our only hope is the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord our God.

Verse 7 had highlighted the righteousness of God.

God is just – but he is also merciful and forgiving –  
to those who repent – to those who turn away from their sins!

And so in verses 11-15,

Daniel recounts what has happened.

He confesses the righteous judgment of God in the case of Israel:

**d. What Has Happened? We Confess the Righteousness of God's Judgment (v11-15)**

*<sup>11</sup> 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.*

Verse 11 refers to the curse and oath that was written in the law of Moses –  
a reference to Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 –

where God had warned of all the things that he would do,  
if they rebelled and refused to obey:

*<sup>12</sup> He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, <sup>[a]</sup> 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.*

Daniel is not saying that no other nation has ever gone through these sorts of things.

During his 70 years in Babylon, he would have heard the stories of all the other nations  
whose people had been exiled and brought to Babylon as well!

What makes the suffering of Jerusalem unique  
is not the particular events of the Babylonian invasion,  
but the particular relation that Jerusalem sustained to her God.

The Lord God – the Creator of heaven and earth –

had entered into a particular covenant relation to Israel.

He made his name to dwell in his sanctuary – his temple in Jerusalem.

He revealed his law to Moses, his servant.  
He warned his people through his servants, the prophets.  
But Israel did not listen.

And as Jeremiah and Ezekiel testify,  
the exiles had not fully learned their lesson:

*<sup>13</sup> 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.*

Notice how Daniel speaks of repentance:  
“we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God,  
turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.”  
True repentance – repentance unto life – is a saving grace,  
whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin,  
and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ,  
does, with grief and hatred of his sin,  
turn from it unto God,  
with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.

Daniel says that even in the midst of the exile,  
Israel has not turned from their iniquities and gained insight by listening to God’s truth.

And so Daniel concludes this review of Israel’s history:

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. <sup>15</sup> And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.*

God is righteous.  
In all the works that he has done.

That doesn’t mean that the Babylonians were righteous!  
The Babylonians were *cruel* –  
the siege and destruction of Jerusalem were horrific and barbaric.  
Daniel is *not* saying that wicked people are justified in doing horrific things!

Rather, Daniel is saying that *God is righteous* in his judgments.  
The wages of sin is death.  
There is much innocent suffering in this world –  
but all of that innocent suffering has come about *because of sin*.

Think of all the children who have been killed by abortion.

They didn't deserve to die!  
In many cases, you also need to see the mother as an innocent sufferer –  
or at least, as one who has grievously suffered at the hands of others.

You may not have ever had an abortion –  
but as citizens of the United States, we all share in the guilt.  
You may never have been slaveholder –  
but as citizens of the United States, we all share in the guilt.

You may say, but my ancestors came to the US after the Civil War!  
So?  
You are part of the corporate entity called the United States –  
therefore you share in the benefits and the liabilities!  
The sojourner who came to Jerusalem 10 years before its fall  
could not say, "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, you can't destroy the city –  
because I don't deserve it!"

This means that even those whose ancestors were *slaves*  
also share in the corporate guilt for slavery!  
That sounds stunning!  
But whether you are children, slaves, or other innocent sufferers –  
you share in the corporate guilt of your people.

Again, while this seems totally unfair,  
it is the foundation of the principle on which God can be *just*  
and the justifier of the ungodly!

If the innocent cannot suffer for the guilt of others,  
then Jesus could not die for *our* sins.  
And if God cannot declare Jesus guilty in our place –  
then neither can he declare *us* innocent in him!

Indeed this is at the very heart of the conclusion of Daniel's prayer in verses 16-19:

**e. What Next? We Beg God for Mercy (v16-19)**

<sup>16</sup> "O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. <sup>17</sup> 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,<sup>[b]</sup> make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.

If God acts on the basis of Jerusalem's actions,  
then God's anger will burn forever.  
Therefore, Daniel pleads with God to act *for your own sake*.  
Why should God act?  
Why should God save Jerusalem and restore her?

Because the LORD had spoken through the mouth of his servant, Jeremiah the prophet.  
The LORD had *said* that Jerusalem would lie in ruins for 70 years –  
but then the temple would be rebuilt.  
And so Daniel prays that God would do what he had promised!

“Make your face to shine upon your sanctuary.”  
In other words, all of this prayer is oriented toward asking God  
to do exactly what God had already said that he would do!  
There is nothing redundant about this!  
Because God not only has determined what he will do –  
he has also determined *how* he will do it!  
And he uses *your prayers* to accomplish his salvation in all the earth.

Notice the emphasis here at the end of Daniel’s prayer on God:

*<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.”*

If you look at *us*, there is no reason for God to act.  
Righteousness does not belong to *us*.  
Righteousness belongs to the LORD.  
The reason for God to act is *your* great mercy – *your* own sake – *your* name.  
In Daniel’s day, that was as far as they could understand it.  
Only in the coming of our Lord Jesus would it become clear *how* God would do this.

Indeed, that is partly the *point* of Gabriel’s answer in the second half of the chapter –  
but since we have run out of time,  
we will have to come back to that next week!

For now, it is sufficient to point out that the atoning work of Jesus  
is what brings salvation to the ends of the earth.  
In Jesus – the goat of goats! –  
an Atonement is made that finally fulfills all that God had promised.