

Daniel 9 — Prayer, Confession, and God’s Redemptive Timeline

Setting & Historical Background

- **Date:** First year of Darius the Mede (c. 539–538 BC), shortly after Babylon’s fall to Medo-Persia (Dan 9:1, CSB).
 - **Context:** Daniel is an elderly statesman in exile, reading Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning **70 years** of Jerusalem’s desolation (Jer 25:11–12; 29:10, CSB).
 - **Significance:** Daniel responds to Scripture with prayer. Revelation flows from obedience and humility, not speculation.
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Structure of the Chapter

1. **Daniel Studies Scripture** (vv. 1–2)
 2. **Daniel’s Prayer of Confession & Appeal** (vv. 3–19)
 3. **Gabriel’s Answer: The Seventy Weeks** (vv. 20–27)
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1. Daniel Studies Scripture (9:1–2)

“In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, I, Daniel, understood from the books, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.” (Daniel 9:1–2, CSB)

Observations

- Daniel treats Jeremiah’s writings as authoritative Scripture.
- Prophecy motivates prayer, not passivity.
- God’s promises invite participation through intercession.

Cross-References

- Jeremiah 25:11–12, CSB — “All the nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”
- Jeremiah 29:10, CSB — “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
- Ezra 1:1–4, CSB (fulfillment begins)

Key Insight

Prophecy is not given to satisfy curiosity but to stir faith-filled obedience.

2. Daniel’s Prayer of Confession (9:3–19)

Posture of Prayer (v. 3)

“I turned to the Lord God, pleading with him by prayer and petition, in fasting, in sackcloth, and in ashes.” (Daniel 9:3, CSB)

Theology of the Prayer

Daniel:

- Identifies with the sins of the nation:

“We have sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly, and rebelled...” (Daniel 9:5, CSB)

- Appeals to **God’s character**, not Israel’s merit:

“The LORD our God is righteous in all the works he has done” (Daniel 9:14, CSB)

- Emphasizes God’s **righteousness**, **covenant love**, and **mercy**:

“We do not present our supplications before you because of our righteous acts but because of your great mercy.” (Daniel 9:18, CSB)

Key Themes

- **Sin acknowledged** (vv. 5–11, CSB)
- **Judgment justified** (vv. 12–14, CSB)
- **Mercy requested** (vv. 15–19, CSB)

Application

- True repentance names sin without excuse.
- God-centered prayer appeals to who God is, not what we deserve.

3. Gabriel’s Answer: The Seventy Weeks (9:20–27)

Immediate Response (vv. 20–23)

“While I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my petition before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening offering. He gave me instruction and said to me, ‘Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding.’” (Daniel 9:20–22, CSB)

The Seventy Weeks Explained (Dispensational View)

- Hebrew *shabuim* = units of seven
- **70 weeks = 490 years**

Purpose of the 70 Weeks (v. 24, CSB)

“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish transgression, end sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the most holy place.”

Timeline Overview

1. **Decree to rebuild Jerusalem** (v. 25, CSB)

“Know and understand that from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.”

2. **Messiah Cut Off** (v. 26, CSB)

“After the sixty-two weeks, the Anointed One will be cut off and have nothing.”

3. **70th Week (Future)** (v. 27, CSB)

“He will confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.”

Key Cross-References

- Matthew 24:15, CSB — “...the abomination that causes desolation... in the holy place”
- 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, CSB — “...the man of lawlessness is revealed... sets himself up in God’s temple”
- Revelation 11–13, CSB

Theological Notes

- God’s program for **Israel** is distinct from the Church.
- God’s promises are precise, literal, and faithful.
- History unfolds according to God’s redemptive calendar.

Major Themes of Daniel 9

- Scripture fuels prayer
- Repentance precedes revelation
- God is faithful to His covenants
- The Messiah stands at the center of history

Point 2 — God Responds to Humble, Scripture-Shaped Prayer

Explanation

Daniel begins with **Scripture**, moves to **confession**, and rests his appeal on **God's character**. Before Gabriel explains the seventy weeks, God affirms Daniel's heart:

"At the beginning of your petitions, an answer went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are treasured by God." (Daniel 9:23, CSB)

God's response reminds us that:

- Understanding flows from humility, not intelligence.
- God delights to answer prayers aligned with His Word.
- Prophetic insight is entrusted to those who tremble at God's holiness.

Supporting Scripture (CSB)

- Psalm 25:14 — "The secret counsel of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he shows them his covenant."
- Isaiah 66:2 — "...I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and trembles at my word."
- James 4:6 — "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Application

- Prayer that ignores sin dulls spiritual perception.
- Prayer shaped by Scripture invites divine clarity.
- God may answer faster than we expect—but deeper than we imagine.

Questions:

Observation Questions

1. What prompted Daniel to pray according to Daniel 9:2 (CSB)?
2. What words or phrases show Daniel identifying personally with Israel's sin (Daniel 9:5–11, CSB)?

How / Why Questions

1. **Why** does Daniel move from reading Scripture directly into prayer instead of waiting for God to act?
2. **How** does Daniel's view of God's righteousness (Daniel 9:14, CSB) shape the tone of his confession?
3. **Why** does Daniel appeal to God's mercy rather than Israel's obedience (Daniel 9:18, CSB)?

4. **How** does Gabriel’s description of Daniel as “treasured by God” (Daniel 9:23, CSB) reframe our understanding of answered prayer?
5. **Why** is the distinction between Israel and the Church necessary for interpreting the seventy weeks (Daniel 9:24–27, CSB)?
6. **How** does God’s control over history encourage perseverance and faithfulness today?

Application Questions

1. What Scriptures currently shape how you pray—or expose areas where repentance is needed?
2. How can Daniel’s prayer inform the way we pray for our nation and church today?
3. In what ways does trusting God’s timing free us from fear or urgency-driven decisions?

Key Takeaway

God hears prayers rooted in His Word, shaped by humility, and anchored in His covenant faithfulness. History moves at His command, but revelation is entrusted to the repentant heart.