Daniel’s Prayer for the Restoration of the Nation Part 1

Daniel 9:1-19

**Introduction**

This morning we will be looking at the prayer of Daniel for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel in chapter 9. If you have ever been through a time of trial in your life, I am sure that you, like myself, have asked this question of God: How long will this trial last? As Daniel was going through the 70 years of exile with his fellow countrymen, he was longing for the return of the people back to the Promised Land. It is in chapter 9 that Daniel decides to approach the Lord in prayer to ask Him for His blessing as the people await their return to Jerusalem. This prayer shows us a model of how we should also approach God when we are going through a troubled time of life. As we will see Daniel approaches the Lord in humility confessing the sins of the people as well as asking for God to remember the covenant He made with the people. The amazing point in this prayer is that Daniel is asking God for His faithfulness to the people while at the same time he acknowledges that the people have not been faithful to God. The Lord is always faithful while we are not. This is why the God we serve is so amazing, wonderful and awesome. Please join me as we read together and study what the prayer of Daniel teaches us in Daniel 9:1-14.

**Context and Setting (vv. 1-3)**

**1 “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans- 2 in the first year of his reign, 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. 3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God, to seek Him by prayer and pleading, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”**

The first year of Darius’s rule was 539 BC when the Babylonian Empire was invaded and defeated by the Medio-Persian Empire. Daniel is referring to the passage of Scripture in Jeremiah referring to the judgment of God on the nation of Judah because of their wickedness. We must remember that Jeremiah was sent to Judah to inform them of their sin, to pronounce on them God’s judgment and to give them the opportunity to repent of their sin so that they would not have to be sent into exile. In **Jeremiah 25:11-12** the prophet writes these words **“This entire land will be a place of ruins and an object of horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, declares the Lord, for their wrongdoing, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.” This judgment is echoed also in Jeremiah 29:10 “For this is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.”’** The people of Judah were taken captive by the Babylonians and arrived in Babylon in 605 BC, therefore the time between the deportation of Daniel and the nobles and the setting of this chapter is 66 years. Since 66 years have passed, Daniel knows that the time of their restoration is near causing him to feel the urgency to pray to God for the promised restoration.

This is the ultimate outward sign of repentance. Fasting shows God that the desire for His intervention is so focused that the need for anything else comes second to Him. Sackloth and ashes are signs of humility showing God that the person asking for such answer to prayer is not worthy of such recognition. We are shown the heart of Daniel as he approaches the Lord to ask for His intervention.

**What is the Purpose of Prayer?**

I think this is a great time for us to review the purpose of prayer. When we gather together corporately to pray for the needs and praises of the church we do so because it is our desire to share with God what we feel and to allow Him to act in our lives. Does God need us to pray to Him in order for Him to act? He does not need us to act, but He desires for us to reach out to Him because He desires to have a relationship with us. Therefore, the first purpose of prayer is to establish a relationship with God. We see this in the life of Christ Himself who took may opportunities to go away by Himself to pray with God. This is where He was encouraged and strengthened to continue in the ministry. We also need the connection with God. Jesus taught that God already knows what we need before asking Him, but we should still ask because our Father cares for us (Matt. 6:8).

The second purpose of prayer is to serve as a way to worship God. Prayer is an act of worship because we are recognizing who God is and approaching Him to commune and connect with Him. While worshiping God we become refocused on His greatness, holiness and worthiness. God is great, He is holy and He is worthy of all our praise. The Psalmist writes these words in **Psalm 95:6 “Come, let’s worship and bow down, Let’s kneel before the Lord our Maker.”** When we approach the Lord in prayer this is exactly what we are doing.

Finally, a third purpose of prayer is what we will be seeing in our passage today. Prayer is a time for confession and repentance. Confession is where we acknowledge our sin showing the Lord that we are aware of our station asking Him to listen as we admit our need for Him. After confession we ask the Lord to forgive us of that sin and request that He restore us to the right position with Him. The Apostle John in his first epistle discusses the importance of confession in our lives. **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).** We cannot overlook repentance, which is the desire to turn from that sin and walk in a new way of life. Daniel will not only confess the sin of the people, but he will also ask God to instill in the people the desire to turn from that sin and restore the broken relationship with God. As we move ahead in our study today may we remember the importance of prayer and keep it as a daily spiritual discipline in our lives.

**Daniel’s Confession of Sin and the Guilt of the Nation (vv. 4-11)**

**4 “I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, and said, ‘Oh, Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and faithfulness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, 5 we have sinned, we have done wrong, and acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our leaders, our fathers, and all the people of the land. 7 Righteousness belongs to You, Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day- 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. 8 Open shame belongs to us, Lord, to our kings, our leaders, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, because we have rebelled against Him; 10 and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 Indeed, all Israel has violated Your Law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has gushed forth on us, along with the oath which is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.”**

We are told that this is a prayer of confession. Daniel is acknowledging to God the wrongdoing of His people and also admitting that God always is faithful in keeping His covenant despite the fact that His people are not faithful to Him.

This confession is admitting that the nation had forgotten about God and had rebelled against His law. The reason this is important is because when God gave the nation of Israel the Promised Land, He entered into a covenant with them. The covenant is provided for us in Deuteronomy 28. If the people agree to follow the commands of the Lord, He promised that He would make them higher than all of the other nations on the earth as well as bless them. However, if they rebelled against His law there would be a curse placed on them and they will have to serve other kings. **“And you will become an object of horror, a song of mockery, and an object of taunting among all the peoples where the Lord drives you” (Deut. 28:37).** Daniel is well aware of that warning and refers to that in his prayer. He is confessing that even though the people knew that covenant, they ignored it.

Daniel explains that God is so faithful that He continually sent the prophets to share the Word of God with the people. Despite all of the warnings and the numerous prophets He sent, the people ignored the warnings and chose rather to go their own way. Many of those prophets were persecuted for sharing the truth, but still God sent more. The Lord is righteous because He always keeps His covenant. The people are shamed because they broke the covenant and because of that rebellion have been driven away from the land that the Lord gave them. None of this was done without warning! God gave the people numerous chances, but they refused to listen.

Daniel is also making it clear that the shame is on the people because they allowed their leaders to rebel against the Lord resulting in the difficult times they are now facing. This is a reminder to us that we cannot allow those in a leadership position to lead us in a any direction that contradicts the word of God in Scripture. Those who teach and are in a position of authority will ultimately be accountable to God for the words they use. As the Apostle James taught in his epistle. They will experience a stricter judgment (James 3:1). When sitting under the teaching of any pastor or church leader I encourage you to hold them to God’s Word and ask questions if you ever hear them say anything contradicting God’s Word. Scripture is the final authority in this church, not the words of the pastor. May we never forget that. May we learn from those who have come before us that when we focus on the Word of God and allow it to guide us, we will have God’s approval. It is when we go our own way that problems begin and we see the Lord allowing His people to face the consequences of that choice.

**God is Just and the Punishment is Deserved (vv. 12-14)**

**9:12-14 “So He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great disaster; for under the entire heaven there has not been done anything like what was done in Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our wrongdoing and giving attention to Your truth. So the Lord has kept the disaster 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.”**

Everything that God allowed to happen to the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah took place to confirm what He told the people would happen when they made the covenant with Him during the days of Moses. The destruction of Jerusalem and the eventual invasions of both Assyria and Babylon brought in so much destruction that Daniel says there was never anything done under heaven like what was done to Jerusalem. To take things a step further, even after all of this was done to Jerusalem the people still did not repent or take responsibility for their actions. Rather they were looking at this situation as being abandoned by God. We see the exact same attitude in the culture today. The objection to the existence of God saying that God cannot exist because there is so much evil in the world is blaming God for the evil rather than man taking the responsibility for being the cause of that evil. There is evil in the world today because man rejected God and in doing so brought sin into the world. God has allowed evil to exist because it is through that evil that He is able to bring about the restoration that the world so badly needs. For example, through betrayal and the devious planning of man God brought about the crucifixion of His only Son. Jesus Christ died at the hands of sinful man to bring about the salvation for those who accept Him as Savior. He even prayed for the forgiveness of those who murdered Him showing that God’s salvation is available to all even if they have sinned. God is righteous in all that He does, so the fact that He allows anyone who has sinned against Him to be redeemed shows just how much mercy our God has to give. This is amazing love!

**Daniel Pleads to God Based on His Mercy, Not Man’s Merit (vv. 15-19)**

**15 “And now, Lord, our God, You who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the wrongdoings of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become an object of taunting to all those around us. 17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his pleas, and for Your sake, Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. 18 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 pleas before You based on any merits of our own, but based on Your great compassion. 19 Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”**

As we mentioned earlier, we see that Daniel has realized that the 70-year exile is about to end. He is asking for the wrath and anger of God to be removed from the people since they have served their time in exile. The prayer is not asking God to act because the people deserve His saving work, but Daniel believes that God will act because of His great compassion. This is speaking of the grace that the Lord has extended to each of us despite that fact that we are underserving of it. The people have been called by the Lord to be His chosen nation to represent Him on the earth. It is because of that calling that Daniel is asking for God to remember them and take action to return to Jerusalem.

It is important that we look closely at verse 18. **“We are not presenting our pleas to You based on any merits of our own, but based on Your great compassion.”** The salvation made possible through the actions of Jesus Christ are not because we have sone something worthy of it. Before we could ever love God, He already had His plan of salvation prepared for His creation. Immediately after the fall in the Garden of Eden God said that He would send a savior to break the curse of sin and bruise the head of the serpent. This has always been the way that God has operated and He still makes the offer to His creation today. Let’s not forget the words of Christ in Revelation when He says **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20).** Daniel is making his pleads and prayers to God because he knows that God listens to the prayers of His people. God is full of mercy and we are blessed to have the ability to pray to Him. As we leave here today may we remember that we serve a risen Lord who has given us all we need to be right in the eyes of holy God. He also loves us so much that He has paid the price for our salvation not because of what we have done, but because of how great He is. As we gather around the Lord’s table today let us receive the bread and the fruit of the vine as God’s gift of grace. Amen.