

Daniel 9:1-14

Daniel 9 contains one of the most important prophecies in the Bible concerning the history and future of Israel as noted in verses 24-27. This passage has been subject to several interpretations and one can imagine why when you start to ask the following questions. What did Gabriel mean by the seventy sevens? What did he mean by the 62 plus the 7 sets of seven? Is there a gap between the 69th seven and the 70th seven? Who is the Anointed One? What does all the military activity mentioned in the passage mean? In the next two or three weeks we will do our best to sort these things out so we can make sense of what Gabriel is saying. We will do so in a methodical manner so stick with me and raise your hand if you are confused.

Daniel 9 has three parts. The first is some historical context in verses 1-2, then Daniel's prayer in verses 2-19, and then God's response given through Gabriel in verses 20-27.

- a. The Historical Context, vs 1-2.
- b. Daniels Prayer
 1. The Acknowledgment of National Sin and Guilt, vs 3-10.
 2. The Punishment for Sin and Guilt, vs 11-14.
 3. The Plea for Mercy, vs 15-19.
- c. God's response
 1. The Arrival of Gabriel, vs 20-23.
 2. Gabirel's prophetic correction, vs 24-27.

The Historical Context, vs 1-2.

Vs 1, It was the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, who became king of the Babylonians.

In verse 1, Daniel sets the historical context in which he received this vision. We have noted in Dan 5 and 6 that once Babylon fell, it was under the control of Darius the Mede. We know Babylon fell on Oct 14, 539 BC, so we are in the first year of Darius's reign which means the date is 539/538 BC. The word *Ahasuerus* can be a bit confusing as some scholars think it was a title while others believe it was an actual name. Regardless, the important fact of verse 1 is that Daniel received his vision shortly after the fall of Babylon during the first year of Darius the Mede's rule. Assuming Daniel was 15 at the time of Neb's first deportation in 605 BC, he is now 81 yrs of age. He had already dealt with the following three visions,

- a. Neb's dream (2:1-45) in 602 BC.
- b. The Four Beasts and the Ancient of Days (7:1-28) in 553 BC.
- c. The Ram and the He-Goat (8: 1-27) in 551 BC.

Now in 539/ 538 BC Daniel is to receive divine revelation through Gabriel.

Vs 2, During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, learned from reading the word of the Lord, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years.

In verse 2, we see Daniel had been reading from the *word of the Lord*. This phrase is in the plural meaning he was reading multiple books of the OT. As we shall see, besides Jeremiah, he was probably also focused on Leviticus, 1 Kings, and Hosea. He specifically mentions Jeremiah, who was a bit older than Daniel, but a contemporary. Jeremiah's ministry was to Judah prior to Neb's 1st invasion and during the subsequent years between the 2nd and final invasion in 586. Jeremiah was never deported. He remained in the land even after the destruction of Jerusalem (remember he wrote Lamentations after its destruction). Jeremiah noted that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years as noted in Jer 25:10-14,

I will take away your happy singing and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard. Your millstones will fall silent, and the lights in your homes will go out. ¹¹ This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. ¹² "Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins," says the Lord. "I will make the country of the Babylonians^[e] a wasteland forever. ¹³ I will bring upon them all the terrors I have promised in this book—all the penalties announced by Jeremiah against the nations.

Also note Jer 29:10-14,

This is what the Lord says: "You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen. ¹³ If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.

What other passages may Daniel have been reading? We do not know but there are passages that would pertain to his situation that are worth noting.

Lev 26:40-45, But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors—their unfaithfulness and their hostility toward me, ⁴¹ which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, ⁴² I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. ⁴⁴ Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. ⁴⁵ But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord.

1 Kings 8:46-53, *When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to their enemies, who take them captive to their own lands, far away or near; ⁴⁷ and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly’; ⁴⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; ⁴⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. ⁵⁰ And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their captors to show them mercy; ⁵¹ for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace. ⁵² “May your eyes be open to your servant’s plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you. ⁵³ For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, Sovereign Lord, brought our ancestors out of Egypt.*

Jer 3, 12-18, *Go, proclaim this message toward the north: “‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will frown on you no longer, for I am faithful,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will not be angry forever. ¹³ Only acknowledge your guilt—you have rebelled against the Lord your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,” declares the Lord.*

¹⁴ *“Return, faithless people,” declares the Lord, “for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding. ¹⁶ In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the Lord, “people will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. ¹⁷ At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the Lord, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. ¹⁸ In those days the people of Judah will join the people of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your ancestors as an inheritance.*

The last is from Hos 5:15-6:3, *Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face—in their misery they will earnestly seek me. Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ³ Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.*

Note the pattern in all these passages is an acknowledgement of sin and national confession. It is now 538 BC. Since Daniel was deported in 605, he reckons in 3 years the captivity will cease (there is also another way to reckon the 70-year captivity and that is to count from the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 to the reconstruction of the temple in 515). But Daniel was not counting from the destruction of Jerusalem, rather he was calculating from the 1st deportation, and he estimated that the *accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem* had nearly been reached. Noting the above passages, it would also seem clear that after God had so severely punished his people, He would call the nation back to the land to

establish the Kingdom He had promised. Note the requirement of this return would be a national confession of sin. This explains why Daniel starts chapter 9 with a prayer of national confession. His reasoning is that with confession, and after the 70-year period of captivity, God will call the people back to the land and establish the Kingdom He had promised. This is Daniel's mindset, but it is not what God was going to do, so he sends Gabriel to Daniel to correct him (verses 20-27).

Daniel's Prayer, vs 3-19.

The Acknowledgement of National Sin and Guilt, vs 3-10.

Vs 3, So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Verse 3 notes the preparation and state of heart Daniel presents in his prayer to God. Note there are three outward preparations Daniel makes before praying,

- a. He fasts.
- b. He wears sackcloth.
- c. He places ashes on himself.

All three actions are symbolic of remorse and grief (see Josh 7:6, 2 Sam 1:2, Est 4:1-3, Job 2:12, Ez 27:30). Once the outward preparations are made, Daniel prepares his heart by *turning to the Lord*. The idea here is focus and attention. Daniel is purposely blocking everything out from his mind and turning his face, heart, and mind, to God. Only after these things does Daniel begin to pray. Then note he pleads. This has the idea of fervent petition. It is a heartfelt conversation.

Vs 4, I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

Daniel now begins his prayer of confession. He starts by praising God as *great and awesome*. Some translations say *great and dreadful*. The phrase is a recognition of God's majesty, immensity, and grandness.

Note God is also one who *keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commands*. The phrase *your covenant* is a reference to the promise of restoration to the nation that if they confess their sins, God will restore them and establish his Kingdom. The phrase, *of love*, means favor. Daniel is reminding God you are the one who fulfills his promises out of your love to those who love and respect you by keeping your commands.

Vs 5, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

Daniel now admits Israel's sin. Daniel uses four terms to describe the sin of his people (note he includes himself in the description).

- a. He says *we have sinned*. The Hebrew word is *chata*, meaning to miss the mark. All of Israel had fallen short of God's righteous demands.

- b. Second, we have *done wrong*. The word here is avah, meaning to twist or to bend. Daniel means the Israelites had bent, twisted, and turned from the right way.
- c. Third, *we have been wicked*. The word here is rasha, meaning to act in ways contrary to God's standard.
- d. Lastly, *we have rebelled*. The word here is marad, which means to deviate or turn from. In this case it was a turning from God's *commands and law*.

Interestingly this verse of confession is very similar to 1 K 8:47 (and Daniel may have used this verse as a reference for his own writing), *and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, 'We have sinned (chata), we have done wrong (avah), we have acted wickedly (rasha).*

It is also like Ps 106:6, *We have sinned (chata), even as our ancestors did; we have done wrong (avah) and acted wickedly (rasha).*

Vs 6, *We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.*

Daniel now notes that not only were the Israelites disobedient to God they were also disobedient to God's prophets. Daniel also makes the point that it was everyone who was disobedient. It was *our kings, our princes, our ancestors, and all the people*. This is manifestly evident by reading Jeremiah, Isaiah, or any other prophetic books that had been written until this time.

As 2 Chron 36:15-17 states, *The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷ He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians,^[a] who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.*

Vs 7, *Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.*

Verse 7 first notes God's righteousness then contrasts it with the result of Israel's sin which is shame and dispersion. First, in 722 BC the 10 northern tribes of Samaria were conquered then dispersed by the Assyrians and now from 605 to 586 the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin are conquered and dispersed by the Babylonians. Daniel then notes that all the nation, both those of Judah (the south) and all Israel (the north) bear the shame of the sin of unfaithfulness. (see Rm 3:23). The word *cover* is appropriate as to be covered means to be seen. Daniel notes the humiliation of their sin was visible to all.

Vs 8, *We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you.*

In verse 8 Daniel emphasizes that all strata of Israeli society was sinful. The kings, the princes, and all our ancestors (the common folks) were guilty.

Vs 9-10, *The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him, ¹⁰ we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.*

In verses 9 and 10, Daniel notes the need for national forgiveness. He begins by first reminding God of his attributes of mercy and forgiveness. The word “*mercy*” is also translated *compassions*. It is the idea of gentle intense concern, and this concern is expressed even though we have *rebelled against him*. Is 49:13-16 notes, *Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.¹⁴ But Zion said “The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.”¹⁵ “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!¹⁶ See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.*

God’s compassion and mercy is what saves us as Rm 5:6-8 notes. *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Verse 10 gives proof of Israel’s rebellion, *we have not obeyed the Lord our God, or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.*

The Punishment for Sin and Guilt, vs 11-14.

Vs 11, *All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.*

In verse 11a Daniel summarizes verses 3-10 by noting Israel’s sin. In 11b Daniel notes that Israel has now received the curse of the Mosaic Law. These curses are detailed in Deut 28:15-68, 29:20, and Lev 26:14-39. Moses explained what would happen if Israel went astray (including captivity) and indeed everything Moses foretold happened *because we have sinned against you.*

Vs 12, *You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.*

Verse 12 notes God keeps his Word as it has been fulfilled *against us and against our rulers*. The judgment of Israel not only confirmed the words of Moses, but it also confirmed the words of the prophets after him who had warned Israel repeatedly to turn from their sin and repent.

The *great disaster* was the Babylonian captivity and the desolation of Jerusalem.

Vs 13, 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 sins and giving attention to your truth.

Verse 13 contains a confirmation and a proof. Daniel notes the Law of Moses (*just as it was written in the Law of Moses*) was confirmed by the fact of the captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem (the proof), for *all this disaster has come on us*. In all of Israel's troubles, Israel refused to seek God's forgiveness (*we did not seek the favor of the Lord by turning from our sin*) or seeking correction in God's Word (*or giving attention to your truth*).

Vs 14, The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

Verse 14 now summarizes God's righteous and just punishment on the nation. Daniel is saying, we sinned, and we deserved our right punishment. Note Daniel does not blame God for the situation. The circumstances, though dire, are just and right because *we have not obeyed him*.