

### DANIEL

#### Week 25, chapter 9

We only just began to study Daniel chapter 9 last week. And after reading it all we immediately noticed two things: the first part of the chapter is a beautiful, sincere and passionate plea by Daniel to the Lord to accept his confession and repentance on behalf of his fellow Jews for their many sins against Him. That is followed by one of the most challenging, mind-blowing, frustratingly ambiguous End Times prophecies that has led to extreme divisiveness in the Church as to its interpretation: the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

Let's begin with the easier, and the lovely, part first: Daniel's prayer. I especially enjoy this first part because I get to be a little preachy. Let's re-read Daniel 9:1 – 19

#### RE-READ DANIEL 9:1 – 19

There's significant depth to Daniel's prayer and so there are a number of God-principles that we'll discuss that are highlighted in it. The time setting is that Media-Persia has conquered Babylon, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of prophetic fulfillment of the 3 visions given in Daniel (the one to King Nebuchadnezzar and the two to Daniel) has come about. The 1<sup>st</sup> stage was the emergence of Babylon as the 1<sup>st</sup> gentile world empire (the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue). But now Babylon's reign as the 1<sup>st</sup> gentile world empire (symbolized by the statue's head of gold, but also by the lion beast) has given way to the 2<sup>nd</sup> gentile world empire of the Medes and Persians (symbolized by the statue's chest and arms of silver, the bear beast, and the Ram with 2 horns). To be clear; it is NOT that the 4 gentile world empires depicted in these visions represent all the gentile world empires that would ever exist in history. Rather, it is from Daniel's time forward to the End Times that is being dealt with; nothing that came before Daniel's time is included. Thus for instance the Assyrian Empire that preceded the Babylonian Empire has no place in this prophecy. And the reality is that after the 4<sup>th</sup> Empire, Rome, there were other wide ranging world empires constructed by the French, British, and Spanish. But, so far as I can tell, none of those particular gentile empires have any direct relevance to the prophecies put forth in Daniel, but others might disagree with me in that regard.

It was only months after the fall of Babylon to Media-Persia when the events of Daniel chapter 9 occurred, and the Lord saw fit to give us a pretty definitive timeframe by recording that Daniel is speaking during a time within the first 12 months of King Darius the Mede's reign. This means it is about 538 B.C. This date is important because the overriding premise for chapter 9 is that Daniel is thinking about the prophesied 70 years of exile in Babylon and wondering if it is coming to an end. But he is concerned because if the 70 years is expiring, there ought to be some kind of significant circumstance occurring (or near to occurring) that would be tangibly indicate that the time has arrived. But nothing was happening other than Media-Persia was

now in control of the Jews.

Here's the thing to keep in view: Daniel of course knew how to count years with precision. He was living and working among the foremost calendar experts of his day; the astronomers and scientists known as the Chaldeans. Discerning days, months, and years was no mystery whatsoever. All the modern era discord within Christian and Jewish scholarship about the correctness or inaccuracies of Biblical calendars (did they operate on a lunar year, a solar year, or a hybrid solar-lunar year, etc) wasn't an issue for Daniel. Whatever was the accepted norm is what he practiced. So it is self-evident by his thoughts expressed in verse 2 chapter 9 that by his calculation he thought it might be time for the exile of the Jews to Babylon to be coming to an end. But he wasn't sure.

Why, of all people, couldn't Daniel be sure when the period of 70 years of exile was going to be over? Because first, he couldn't be 100% certain if the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy was indicating a precise period of time, or an approximate period of time, or whether 70 was just a symbolic divine number and thus indicted an indefinite and unknowable period of time. And second, because upon what date would God have determined was the start date of the exile from which the 70 years would be calculated (assuming the 70 years was a literal and precise 70 years)? In other words, did God reckon the 70-year exile began upon the first attack by Nebuchadnezzar upon Judah in about 606 B.C. (when Daniel and his friends and others were personally hauled off to Babylon)? Might it have been the second attack a few years later in about 597 B.C. when much damage was done to Jerusalem and another and larger wave of captives were taken to Babylon? Or perhaps it was the third attack in 587 or 586 B.C. when the Temple was destroyed and plundered, and the remaining leadership and an even greater portion of the Jewish population were taken to Babylon. Or maybe it was none of the above and instead it was some other occasion that took place in between 606 and 586 B.C. that God counted as the beginning of the exile.

This was Daniel's dilemma. No doubt he hoped it was the 1<sup>st</sup> invasion when he was taken captive in 606 B.C. because since it was now 538 B.C., then it would only be about a year before the Jews would be released to go home. However at the other end of the scale, if God counted the beginning date of the exile as when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C., then he had another 2 decades to wait. And because he was perhaps near 80 years old the odds were low that he'd be alive to see that day 20 years later, and even lower that he'd survive the journey home if he was still living. So a lot was at stake for Daniel, in the most personal possible way. And I tell you truly, Daniel's dilemma is the same dilemma for the same reasons that are going to face us when we begin to examine the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of chapter 9 about the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

It is interesting that Daniel says in verse 2 that he was reading "the books" about the number of years that Jeremiah predicted for exile. What books? The Hebrew word used for books is **seferim**, and it by no means always indicates the term Holy Scriptures that some Bible versions adopt. However it does make it obvious that Jeremiah's words had been written down and probably also Isaiah's as he, too, had something to say about the Jews' exile and release. So the point is that these inspired words that we today call the Bible were recorded in written form called **seferim** (books) prior to Daniel's time and were no longer only being

handed down by word of mouth, told as stories from generation to generation, as it had been several hundred years earlier. Thus when we read in the Book of Daniel that he wrote down his own visions and pondered them, we can take him at his word as that had become the norm for the Hebrews for quite some time.

Verse 3 explains that the attitude of Daniel in prayer to God was as one in mourning. So, as with all Jewish mourning customs, he donned the traditional garment of mourning, sackcloth, splayed ashes over his head, and did not eat (he fasted). Even though chapter 9 is written in Hebrew as opposed to chapters 2 -7, which were written in Aramaic (this was in order to express that the focus has shifted from gentiles to Jews), the verse makes it clear that the god Daniel directed his sorrowful prayers to was the Lord God of Israel. It is interesting that having been in Babylon for so long, he no longer addressed the Lord by his formal name (YHWH), but rather by the more generic Adonai Elohim (Lord God) no doubt because it was more politically correct and socially acceptable to do so.

As the prayer begins, in addition to its majesty and sincerity, we need to pay attention to its elements. That is, we have a proper confession accompanied by a repentant attitude, and certain important attributes of God are also described. For instance, Daniel describes God as great and dreadful. Then in the next words from his mouth, Daniels says that God keeps His covenant and extends grace to those who love Him AND keep His commandments. So much is reinforced about God's nature for us in these few words and we need to pay attention. Daniel has essentially set up what scholars call merism. A common example of merism in our modern world is to say that we have taken care of everything from A to Z. In other words from the beginning to the end AND every conceivable thing in between. Thus a merism is constructed by establishing the two extremes (A and Z for instance as the 1<sup>st</sup> and last letters of the Alphabet) with the understanding that although it is unspoken, there is much contained in between those two extremes, and it is all inclusive.

So at one end of the scale of everything that makes up God's nature Daniel says there is God's attributes of being great and dreadful. Great doesn't mean "wonderful"; great means all-powerful, unstoppable, something that can't be opposed. Dreadful we understand as terrible, frightening. So God can be dreadful if need be and we are powerless to stop it or avoid it. And the other end of the scale of God's nature Daniel says is God's faithfulness to keep whatever covenant He has made, and to show grace. And then we have all the unspoken attributes and shades of gray of God's nature in between those two extremes. Thus for a modern Christian to say "God is love" is no more correct or incorrect than for another to say "God is wrath". God is not predominately or only love, or He is predominately or only wrath. He is both and He is all. And that has not changed because Christ died on the cross.

The Hebrew word used for grace, or mercy, or loving kindness (depending on your Bible version) is **chesed**, and it means all of these English words and even more. It is a supremely positive attribute that comes from a selfless love. But there is a significant caveat included for when God displays His **chesed**. Notice to whom God keeps covenant and demonstrates **chesed**; it is to those who love Him, and obey His commandments. All throughout the Bible we hear those two requirements to receive God's mercy, grace, and kindness coupled together: we must love and to obey God. To love and obey; over and over. For to obey God is to show

love to Him. And to show love to Him is accomplished by obedience to Him. And what does "obedience to Him" mean? How do we demonstrate "obedience" to God? Repeatedly the OT and NT states that we do this by obeying His commandments. What commandments? His written ones of course; the Bible knows of no other.

And yet, much of modern Christianity says that's no longer true. Our obedience to God is demonstrated by some kind of subjective, undefined, fully customized set of rights and wrongs that God has given to each of us individually through His Holy Spirit. What is sin for you isn't for me, and vice versa. And this set of rights and wrongs may actually be contrary to His Biblical covenants and commandments, because those covenants and commandments were done away with by Jesus on the cross. As I was reminded once again at a recent speaking engagement, it can't be pointed out often enough to a modern Christian or Messianic that Christ Himself strongly refuted any such notion that His advent or life or death somehow abolished the Torah and replaced it with something else. So, with only mild apologies I present you once again with something we must all put to memory and use as foundational Scripture; words that Yeshua spoke in the midst of His most famous speech, that which we call the Sermon on the Mount.

### **Matthew 5:17-19 CJB**

***<sup>17</sup> "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete.***

***<sup>18</sup> Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened.***

***<sup>19</sup> So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.***

Did Christ abolish the Torah? He insists He didn't. Did Paul say the Torah is abolished? Even if you find a statement from Paul that you think means that he says the Torah is abolished, let me ask you a question. If Christ says no, and Paul says yes, what do we have? And assuming that is the case, whose judgment will you accept, the Master or His student? Will you accept Paul over Christ? But I can also tell you with firmest confidence that Paul NEVER said that the Torah was abolished; it is a sad misunderstanding and misinterpretation of his words. However, will the commandments of the Torah EVER pass away, which the NT does seem to indicate? Absolutely; because Yeshua says they will and it will happen when heaven and earth pass away. And indeed heaven and earth will pass away as Revelation 21 says forthrightly.

***<sup>CJB</sup> Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer there.***

At that moment, the Torah and the Prophets finally pass away. Christ didn't say that the Torah passed away upon His crucifixion. And certainly upon His death heaven and earth didn't pass away. Why no more Torah once heaven and earth pass away? Because the Torah was created for one thing: to deal with sin. It was to show us what sin is, what the cost is, what is right and wrong in God's eyes and in turn to create transgressions. Upon the new heaven and earth, sin will not even be possible, therefore there can never again be transgressions against the Lord, and so humanity will have become fully transformed and perfected to the ideal point that evil, wickedness and death have vanished from the universe. Now there is no more need for a Torah. Wow!

But Daniel also says that the Lord keeps covenant. In other words, when the Lord makes a covenant, it is permanent; He doesn't rescind it. The Covenant with Noah to never again destroy the earth by flood was not abolished with the next covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant was not abolished by the next covenant, the Mosaic Covenant. And the Mosaic Covenant was not abolished by the next covenant, the renewed covenant sealed and sanctified by Christ's blood. Each covenant is different, each is used and efficacious for its own separate purpose, and all 4 are alive and well. They do not conflict with one another, they compliment one another. The final covenant, the renewed covenant that is typically called the New Covenant, didn't void the Law; it enabled a deeper devotion to the Law in the spirit it was always intended.

Verse 5 has Daniel using a variety of words in order to try to cover the range of types and seriousness of sin. Dr. Kiel says that this is Daniel's "exhaustive expression of a consciousness of sin and guilt". And Daniel does not separate himself from his people; as a Jew in Babylon, who once lived in Judah, despite his Biblical portrayal as a wonderfully pious man he still counts himself as equally sinful and responsible for the consequence of exile as any other Jew. And what is Daniel's stated definition of sin? Turning aside from God's commandments and judgments (judgments meaning decisions or verdicts).

In verse 6 he confesses on behalf of himself and his fellow Judahites that God sent His prophets to warn that if they didn't pay attention and turn from their ways that divinely sent catastrophe would be the result. And those prophets didn't speak only to kings in private settings, but also to the tribal leaders, and to generations long past so that plenty of time was given to ponder and change. They also took their messages of warning to the common folks of the land. Everyone knew and everyone had an opportunity to turn. Daniel and all the exiled Jews were without excuse. And there is no issue of whether God wasn't perhaps quite right or fair in His judgments, for Daniel says that God is inherently righteousness itself, while the Jewish people as well as the Israelites (meaning the now scattered 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel) as a result of their rebellion, are at the other end of the spectrum; they are shame itself.

Verse 11 emphasizes that ALL Israel is represented in Daniel's prayerful confession. So here Daniel is confessing and repenting on behalf of even the 10 tribes that are long gone, and are not with the Jews in Babylon. So even though nearly 2 centuries has passed since the 10 northern tribes (sometimes called the 10 Lost Tribes) were removed from their land and scattered by Assyria, and have by now mostly melded into the countless gentile cultures and

civilizations of Asia, Daniel has not forgotten about them. And essentially, says Daniel, all that has happened is that the curse that is written into the Law of Moses for its violation has been poured out upon the violators. Something that All Israel ought to have expected rather than being shocked when it happened.

Ekklesia; Fellowship; Church; do you still think that because you are Believers that you are immune from violating God's laws and suffering for it? That upon your Salvation you won a Get Out of Jail Free card? The same Christ, who explicitly has tried to tell us that the Law remains alive and well, also gave us this sobering warning:

### **Matthew 7:21-23 CJB**

***<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants.***

***<sup>22</sup> On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?'***

***<sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'***

Get away from me you workers of lawlessness. What does that mean? Have you ever considered that? What law is Christ talking about here? Does He mean those who violate the Roman laws of His day were to be cut off from Him? In our day does that mean we'll be judged by Messiah for salvation on whether we obey our national and local law codes, many of which are in opposition with one another, and worse, in opposition to God's morality code? Does it mean if we go 45 in a 35 mph zone, we are subject to being rebuked into eternity by Christ, because that is lawlessness? Obviously not. Rather "law" in the Bible is always referring to only one of two things: the Laws of Moses or alternately or sometimes when Paul is speaking) the laws of Judaism (manmade Tradition). So is Yeshua advocating that He'll disown us if we violate Jewish Rabbinical laws, Traditions of the Elders He sometimes calls it? Again, of course not. Well, if lawlessness is not referring to human government laws, or to Jewish Rabbinical laws, that leaves us with only 1 possibility remaining: the Laws of Moses. The Torah. The laws that God gave from heaven. What other law would the Jewish Messiah be speaking about to fellow Jews than the Laws of Moses? What other laws would Christ judge us by than the laws His Father set down? So let me slightly rephrase His response that, for those living in modern times, better makes the point that is meant: I never knew you. Get away from me you workers of **Torah-less-ness**. Let those who have ears, hear.

Verse 13 brings up another important feature of God's nature; He will warn us when we are living a lifestyle of sin, and give us an opportunity to change. As Daniel says, the Lord spoke through His prophets exactly what He would do if Israel refused to listen to His warnings; all they had to do was stop sinning and begin obeying, and then He would show them favor. What is it they say? If you find yourself in a deep hole, put down the shovel and stop digging. God is

a God of justice, so He must punish unrepentant sin. At the same time He is a God of forgiveness and mercy and will be moved by a contrite heart and sincerely changed behavior, and not send upon us the evils we deserve.

After Daniel has confessed all on behalf of all Israelites, he arrives at the basis for his appeal. He is counting on God as being a God of unchanging patterns. I ran across a wonderful anonymously written paraphrase on this passage that I think best exemplifies what Daniel is asking the Lord: "O God, who in times past has brought about wonderful deliverances for Your people, and in so doing acquired a glorious name; repeat Your wondrous doings and add to the glory which You have already acquired. As You did when you brought us out of exile from Egypt, so also bring us out of exile from Babylon".

Even more, because God is righteous, and because He is a God of unchanging patterns, now that Judah has served its allotted time in exile, and Daniel as its representative before God has confessed, repented, and sought the Lord's forgiveness, then the request is also to end His divine wrath upon His own holy city of Jerusalem. In truth, nothing much remained of Jerusalem and especially of the holy site of the Temple, than the cap rock of Mt. Moriah. Jerusalem and the Temple should have been a light to the world, set atop a glorious mountain, which called even to the gentiles. But because of the terrible sins of God's own chosen people, Jerusalem and the Temple lay desolate and stood as nothing more than a monument to rebellion, tragedy and disgrace.

The final verse of the prayer, verse 19, opens with an enlightening series of 3 requests. The CJB says they are: Lord, hear. Lord, forgive. Lord, pay attention. In Hebrew the words are **Adonai, shema. Adonai, salach. Adonai qashab**. Let's look just a bit closer to better understand what Daniel is actually asking. To **shema** means to listen and to actively respond. "Hear" is a translation that is only correct if the words "and do" are attached to it. "Hear" is essentially only half the meaning of **shema**; unless the 2<sup>nd</sup> half is added, "to do", then the statement loses its intended meaning.

**Salach** is a bit more difficult to explain. It is generally translated as either forgive or pardon. And while forgive isn't necessarily wrong, and pardon is a much better choice, what that means to modern folks isn't quite what the Biblical intent is. First, **salach** is a divine form of pardon; it flows from God to man, not man to man. From the Biblical viewpoint, a human can't actually offer true **salach** to another human. What is being asked by Daniel is not that the sins of the Jews that led to their exile are forgiven, but rather that the consequence for committing those sins is set aside. Thus in the more technical legal sense, for a criminal to be given a pardon does NOT mean that he has had his conviction overturned. He has not gone from having been judged guilty to now being re-judged as innocent. Rather, it is that his punishment for his guilt that has been set aside. The guilt of his crime remains. Therefore, in a sense, the pardon is only partial. Since the sin was real, and since God's justice is that sin MUST ALWAYS be punished, then for God to offer **salach** means essentially that the punishment is not so much ended as it is postponed.

Daniel's 3<sup>rd</sup> request, that the Lord **Qashab** means to be attentive; it has the sense of someone "leaning in" when listening to a conversation so as to show acute interest in what another

person is saying. So Daniel is asking God to: 1) hear and act on Daniel's request; 2) set-aside and postpone Judah's punishment for their sins; and 3) to carefully listen and be highly interested or focused upon Daniel's confession and display of sincere repentance on behalf of himself and his people so that the Jews might see an end to their exile. And the reason that Daniel thinks is the most important for the Lord God says yes to his request is that God's own name is set upon his holy city of Jerusalem and His holy people of Israel. And because in Judah's current condition of exile, and in Jerusalem's current condition of desolation, then God's name is tainted.

This in many ways is the OT equivalent of the NT Lord's prayer; it is a model for the attitude that a worshipper of all ages and eras ought to have in true prayer.

Let's read a little more.

### RE-READ DANIEL 9:20 -23

It was during his praying that Daniel gets an unexpected interruption. Gabriel suddenly swoops in to intervene for the purpose of bringing an important message from God. Thus we find that a heavenly angel is usually a spirit messenger of God's oracle in the same way that a prophet is a human messenger of God's oracle.

This passage says that it was the "man" Gabriel who appeared to Daniel. The Hebrew term used is **ish**, which indeed means a male human. No doubt the term is used here in order to make the connection to chapter 8 verse 15, and assure us that this is the same being even though a somewhat different Hebrew word is used to describe Gabriel in chapter 8.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Daniel 8:15** *After I, Dani'el, had seen the vision and was trying to understand it, suddenly there stood in front of me someone who appeared to be a man.*

However here in chapter 8 the word that is translated into English as "man" is a poor translation, because the word is not the Hebrew **ish** but rather **gibbor**. And **gibbor** means **mighty** man, a title usually reserved for a renowned warrior leader. And that is a near perfect description of Gabriel: a renowned warrior leader. Nonetheless, the connection is that in both cases Gabriel has a human male appearance. It is the same being.

There is scholarly disagreement by what is meant when we're told that Gabriel flew swiftly, or flew into weariness, etc. Almost every Bible version has their own way of translating these words. But the general idea seems to be that Gabriel had to fly a long way, very quickly, on short notice in order to get to where God wanted him to be: by Daniel's side. In other words, the mission was urgent. He came at the time of the evening sacrifice, or in Hebrew, **Erev Minchah**, probably 3-4 in the afternoon, which only adds to the drama. Make no mistake; there was no actual evening sacrifice going on. It's only that this would be the normal time of the day that the **Erev Minchah**, the evening altar sacrifice, would have been made if the Temple were in operation (which of course it was not).



And the purpose of Gabriel's sudden appearance was to make Daniel understand something that God wanted him to know. So in verse 23 Gabriel made it known that at the very moment Daniel had begun his prayer of national confession, a word came forth from the Lord for Gabriel to fly to Daniel with that word. And what a comforting and precious announcement from Gabriel that God did this because He so greatly loved and treasured Daniel. Thus Daniel was to understand that he was very special in God's eyes, and it was that special merit that gave Daniel the enormous privilege to hear an End Times oracle meant only for his ears.

Although the verse says that the oracle is coming to Daniel as a vision, the "vision" is actually Gabriel himself. So it is not like the 2 earlier visions that Daniel had, or the 3<sup>rd</sup> one that we'll hear about starting in chapter 10, that are more along the lines that we are used to when hearing about Biblical visions and dreams.

Beginning in verse 24 Gabriel explains the confounding prophecy of the 70 weeks. And we'll devote our next time together to discuss it at length.