Daniel 9: Biblical Reading and Reflections

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 April 2020

Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0:00] Daniel chapter 9. In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, by descendant Amid, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, 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.

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleased for mercy, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 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. We have sinned and done wrong, and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. 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. 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. To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, 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. 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. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven, there has not been anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of
Moses, all this calamity has come upon us. Yet we have not entreated the favour of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. 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. 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. 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. 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, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. 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. 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. While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your pleas for mercy, a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision. Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-17 01:19:39

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war.
[4:52] Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abomination shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. Daniel chapter 9 opens with Daniel's recognition that the seventy years spoken of in the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 25 verses 11 to 12, in which Jeremiah foretells the number of years that must pass before Jerusalem's desolations would end, was shortly to be completed. This occurs in the first year of the reign of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, whose identity is a matter of considerable debate. Jeremiah's prophecy reads, This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.

Having recognised that the time spoken of by Jeremiah's prophecy had been completed, Daniel recognises then that the people should be returning home, but they aren't doing so yet. So Daniel turned to the Lord in prayer, fasting, dressing in sackcloth and ashes, and confessing the rebellion, sins and unfaithfulness of the people that had led them into exile in the first place.
He's approaching the Lord on the basis of, and in terms of the covenant promises that you find in places like Leviticus chapter 26 verses 40 to 45. But if they confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walk contrary to them, and brought them into the land of their enemies, if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled, and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac, and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. But the land shall be abandoned by them, and enjoy its sabbaths, while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules, and their soul abhorred my statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them, so as to destroy them utterly, and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God, I am the Lord. Daniel prays as a prophetic intercessor for his people. It may also be illuminating to consider such a prayer in the light of the sacrificial system.
Covering is needed for Israel's sins, a purification, and Daniel's prayer is seeking this. Daniel's prayer is a long prayer of confession, in which Daniel confesses the sins of the nation to the Lord. The prayer is driven by a profound sense of the Lord's holiness and justice, but also by his unswerving faithfulness to his covenant, and by the confidence that, since Judah and Jerusalem are named by the Lord's name, he will not cast them off completely. The prayer alternates between the two parties of the covenant, speaking of the riches of the Lord's justice, faithfulness, righteousness, and truth, while juxtaposing each of these with the injustice, unfaithfulness, unrighteousness, and the falsehood of Israel. The Lord's unchanging character, and his commitment to his covenant, is the bedrock of Daniel's appeal. Each trait of the Lord exposes something new about the sin of his people. His faithfulness to the covenant exposes just how unfaithful his people have been. His righteousness exposes the depth of the wickedness and the shame of his people.
[8:40] His mercy, forgiveness, and long-suffering expose the seriousness of the people's rebellion. His deliverance exposes the extent of his people's ingratitude. His hallowing of his name in the presence of the nations through his redemption of his people exposes the perversity of the way that the redeemed people, graciously called by his name, have made themselves a byword among the nations on account of their wickedness and the destruction that resulted from it. But there's one hope that remains for Israel. Daniel exposes their complete and utter bankruptcy, but he can appeal to the Lord because the Lord has placed his name upon them as his people, and that's the basis on which Daniel appeals. Gabriel comes to Daniel at the end of the evening sacrifice. The evening tribute or the offering came at the beginning of a new day. It was a memorial calling upon

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-17 01:19:39

God to see his people and to act on their behalf. It's essentially what Daniel's prayer has been, a sort of memorial. And elsewhere in scripture we see the prayers of the people of God described as a memorial or as an evening sacrifice.

Even though there was no earthly tribute being given at this time, Daniel still presents the response to his prayer in terms of his prayer in terms of that offering. This is a powerful insight into the way that prayer can be considered in terms of ritual. If we go to Psalm 141 verses 1 to 2, we see something of this connection between prayer and ritual.

O Lord, I call upon you, hasten to me, give ear to my voice when I call to you. Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Prayer and song can be thought of as akin to sacrifice. But the connection can work in the other way too, and it can help us better to understand the nature of the sacrificial system. Sacrifices are like dramatised prayers, or like the actions that might go with children's songs. They are ways in which we enact our request to the Lord. We call for him to act on our behalf, to see us, to hear us, and to deliver us. And the sacrifice is all a way of enacting that. The Lord's Supper is also a memorial. We memorialise the Lord's death until he comes. The point being that as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are calling upon God to see us and to act on our behalf on the basis of Christ's prior sacrifice. As a memorial offering, it's a sort of an enacted prayer. Gabriel assures Daniel that his pleas for mercy have been heard, and tells him that he has a word and a vision in answer to Daniel's prayer, as Daniel is greatly loved. Like Moses in Exodus chapter 32 to 34, the prophet loved by the Lord intercedes for a wicked people. The vision concerns 70 weeks. While Jeremiah's prophecy was about 70 years, Daniel is told of 70 weeks or 77s, not literal weeks, but periods of time often, and I think appropriately, identified as years. We should see the jubilee themes here. In Leviticus chapter 25 verses 8 to 13, we see this more clearly. You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you 49 years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the day of atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land, and you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property, and each of you shall return to his clan. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you. In it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you.

You may eat the produce of the field. In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. Leviticus speaks of seven weeks of years in reference to the jubilee, the time of replanting in the land as people are returned to their ancestral property, and this extends themes of Pentecost, which is seven weeks of days, and is connected with the establishment of the covenant and the harvest. The event declared to Daniel is a greater awaited jubilee, a jubilee multiplied by ten, a jubilee raised by an order of magnitude. And this awaited event would bring an end to Israel's transgression, confirm the sin or purification offerings, it would cover Israel's liability to punishment, it would establish the reign of righteousness, it would confirm or fulfill that which was foretold by visions and faithful prophets, it would anoint a most holy place, establishing a place for God's dwelling. I think this anticipates Christ as the holy of holies made flesh and his anointing at his baptism. The 70 weeks are subdivided into seven weeks of years, 62 weeks of years, and a single final week. The first seven weeks of years relate to the period from Cyrus's decree to the completion of Jerusalem's rebuilding. The 62 weeks concern the time between the completion of the rebuilding and the anointing of the coming prince. This is probably a reference to Jesus' baptism.

The messianic prince acts in the 70th week, he will be cut off in that week, expelled from his people, dispossessed and condemned to death. But then the city will be destroyed, overwhelmed in a flood of judgment. This refers to the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70, I believe. He will establish a covenant, he will end sacrifice and tribute, and the city shall be rendered desolate. Christ puts an end to the sacrificial system and establishes a new covenant. Today is Maundy Thursday, where we remember the fulfillment of part of what Daniel's prophecy anticipated, the establishment of a new covenant in the blood of the long-awaited Messiah, the one who took the destiny of the nation upon his shoulders in order to confirm the purification of the people once and for all in a decisive and complete sacrifice of himself, cut off for us all. The year of jubilee began on the day of atonement, and the greater jubilee that is foretold to Daniel also involves a great climactic act of atonement or covering, as Christ is the last great sin offering for his people. Sacrifices put to an

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-17 01:19:39

end, because all previous sacrifices could only anticipate this sacrifice, and depended upon it for their efficacy. Once this sacrifice has been offered, we need only look back to it and build our lives upon it. We memorialize that sacrifice, we do not need to offer it again. As the beloved Daniel interceded for his people after the 70 weeks had been fulfilled, so the messianic prince, who is our lord, ever lives to intercede for us after the conclusion of the 70 weeks of years. A question to consider. This is not the only event that occurs in the first year of Darius's reign. The events of Daniel 6 also occur then. In the final verse of
[16:06] Daniel chapter 5, we are informed that Darius received the kingdom at the age of 62. We hardly ever are given the age of pagan rulers, and the fact that it is 62 that is the number given here, the same number as mentioned in the prophecy a few chapters later, does not seem to be an accident.

How does reading Daniel 6 in the light of this connection help us to see Daniel's experience in the lion's den, both as a fulfilment in miniature of Jeremiah's 70 weeks prophecy, and as an anticipatory fulfilment in miniature of the week of the coming messianic prince?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-17 01:19:39