

Daniel: Praying for Restoration

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[0 : 00] Thanks very much, Dave. So keep your Bibles open there at Daniel 9. We're actually going to be looking at all of it. We didn't read all of it, but we will be looking at it all.

Daniel prayed, and let us pray. Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. Give ear, O God, and hear.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hear and act.

Father, please, would you give to us your Holy Spirit? Would he act in our lives and within our church to restore us as people and to restore us in the way you call us to live?

May your transforming work be done amongst us today. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[1 : 35] Well, Daniel is longing to go home. He's been in captivity now for about 67 years.

When he was a young teenager, the Babylonians had come in, attacked his city, defeated and destroyed Jerusalem. His people were carried away as slaves into exile.

And since that time as a young teenager, he has lived under foreign rule, facing constant opposition and persecution.

For Daniel, being away from home was a little bit like being separated from God. He had no freedom to pray. He had no freedom to pray. That had been denied. He had no temple to worship. That had been destroyed.

Everything around him that he saw and witnessed intensified his deep longing and desire to go back home.

[2 : 42] Now that longing to go home is what all Christians should feel. We live life in this world, but we know that this is not our true home.

As Peter in the New Testament tells us, it's like we ourselves are living in exile. That we're strangers in a foreign land.

We're longing for something better. Our true home. Our eternal home. We're longing for this place of peace and security. Joy and happiness.

We're longing that God would come again and restore everything. And put things right. And bring us home.

Well, Daniel chapter 9 is all about this prayer for going home. A prayer for restoration.

[3 : 48] And we're going to see how we can not only pray this prayer, but how we can also have it. We're going to look at three things. The promise of God.

The prayer to God. And the answer from God. So first, the promise of God. Restoration.

The promise of God is found in the word of God, which is where we find Daniel. Look at verse 2. In the first year of his reign.

This is during the time of the Persians. I, Daniel, understood from the scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years.

Isn't it interesting that as Daniel feels the pain and pressure of being away from home, Daniel doesn't despair.

[4 : 52] Instead, he is driven towards God's word. And in his reading, he turns, we are told, to the prophet Jeremiah. He had a copy of the prophecy of Jeremiah.

And here's what I think he was reading. You might like to turn to it. In Jeremiah chapter 29. It's just back a few pages. If somebody's got a page number, they could call it out and I'll help you along. Jeremiah 29. It's on page 789.

So Jeremiah 29 on page 789. So Daniel has been reading Jeremiah, what we're going to read now. And here's what I think he was reading. Jeremiah 29 verse 10.

So this is written 70 years before Daniel read it. This is what the Lord says. When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.

[6:10] For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity.

I will gather you from the nations and places where I have banished you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.

Back to Daniel 9. What an amazing promise to read in the midst of facing the struggles of life in a world that you know is not your true home.

And Daniel has picked up the book of Jeremiah and he started reading it, and we can imagine him being so excited because now it's almost 70 years since Daniel and God's people have been taken into exile.

[7:19] His longing to go home is about to become a reality. God had made this promise all those years ago to restore his people, and Daniel has been reminded of it as he has read God's word.

So what does he do with the promise? Well, look at chapter 9, verse 3. Daniel 9, verse 3.

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, in sackcloth and ashes. The promise of God has motivated Daniel to ask God to fulfil the promise that he has made. God's word causes Daniel to start praying for the very thing that God has planned and purposed to do. So this promise is found in God's word, but it is also found, or also rests, in the character of God.

Look at verse 4. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all those who love him and obey his commands.

[8:39] Through this prayer, Daniel is reminding himself of the God that he has, the God who loves him. He tells us in verse 4, he's great and he's awesome.

And God shows his greatness and his awesomeness, again look at verse 4, by keeping his covenant of love. God doesn't forget his people.

He doesn't give up on his people. He doesn't abandon his people. God's character demands that he keeps his promise.

I have promised to restore you and I will restore you. So Daniel turns to prayer, knowing that this God, his God, is faithful and loyal and will do what he says he will do.

That's the trust, the confidence that he has. And we know from history, about three years after Daniel read this and prayed this prayer, when the 70 years were up, God's people were allowed to return home, back to Jerusalem, to settle in their own land.

[9:53] God did keep his promise. And what I want us to grasp is this, that this is the same promise keeping God that we know and that we have access to.

God has plans to prosper us. God has plans not to harm us. God has plans to give us a hope and a future.

So what are those plans? Are we somehow to return to the land like Daniel did? Well, no, in the full story of Scripture, we know that this plan for a future and a hope is so much more and so much greater.

Turn with me. Keep your finger in Daniel 9 and go forward to 1 Peter. It's on page 1217. It's on page 1217.

1 Peter, chapter 1. Verse 1. It's on page 1217.

[11:09] And here we read these words. Peter actually picks up this theme of exile. And he says, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, this is God's people, strangers in the world who've been scattered.

So God's people have been scattered throughout the world and they feel like strangers. They're in exile. And then look what he goes on to tell them. Verse 3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you.

Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

This is God's plan for you. This is God's promise for you. He will come and gather up those who have been scattered, who do not feel at home and are longing for their eternal home.

[12:29] God has promised and God will deliver on his promise. So first we have the promise of God, restoration. Second, the prayer to God which is all about confession and reputation.

God has made the promise to restore his people. He is going to bring them home. But to experience this, we've got to listen carefully to Daniel's prayer.

It starts, first of all, with confession of sin. Daniel 9 verse 5. Listen to his prayer. We have sinned and done wrong.

We have been wicked and have rebelled. We have turned away from your commands and laws. 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.

Do you see what's going on here? Before there can be restoration, there must be confession. Before restoration, there must be confession.

[13:46] You see, the reason why they were in captivity in the first place is because of their sin. Look at verse 7. Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame.

The men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us, because of our unfaithfulness to you.

Yes, it's true, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonians, had come and defeated God's people and destroyed God's temple. But the reason why this happened was because of their sin.

The reason why they are not at home presently is because they had turned away from God and did not listen to God. So before you and I can experience restoration, we must take responsibility for our action.

Daniel, through the prayer, is pleading that we take ownership for what we have done. Regret is not enough. This is not a prayer of regret.

[15:03] Regret simply means feeling sorry for yourself. There's no heart change. Repentance is what is required. Repentance owns our behaviour and longs for God's mercy and looks to him to change our heart.

Verse 15. Now, O Lord, our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned.

We have done wrong. O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill.

There must be confession and it's no different for you or I. If we are to experience God's restoration in our lives, we've got to face up to our sin.

Sin is too serious. It can't be ignored. We can't pretend it's not there. And Daniel was saying to the people and he's saying to us and God is saying to us, there is no moving on.

[16:32] There is no going home. There is no restoration until it is dealt with. But not only must we confess our own sin.

Part of this also means that we go on to seek the reputation of God. Look at verse 17. Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant.

For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear. Open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name.

This is your city, your people. God was so involved with his people, he loved and treasured his people so much, he had given them his own name.

His reputation was wrapped up in the lives of these people. God and the God was involved in the God whom they said they followed.

[17:48] God was involved intimately with them. But the problem is they had dragged the name, the reputation of God through the mud. Just back up a little bit to the end of verse 16, the second half of verse 16.

He says our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

God had become a joke. No one was taking God seriously because they didn't care for the reputation of God. They were living as they pleased. If God's people were going to experience

anything of God's restoration, that had to change.

Verse 19, O Lord, listen, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, hear and act for your sake. O my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your name.

This is about transformation. And what about us? What about this reputation of God being restored in our lives?

[19 : 14] Well, when Jesus died on the cross, he exchanged names with us. He took my name and in its place he gave us his name.

and because we now bear his name, we can enter in. That name, the name of Jesus on our lives, guarantees our future hope.

It gives us access to our eternal home. It gives us access to our heavenly father. It gives us the confidence and the assurance to come to him. Christ took our sinful reputation so that we might gain his perfect reputation.

He gave us his name so that we would live for God in this world, so that people who look at us and see us would be drawn towards the love and the beauty of God and experience his restoration in their lives.

Before there is restoration, there must be confession and a seeking after the reputation of God. So God has given his promise, Daniel has responded in prayer, and third, God gives his answer.

[20 : 43] Look at verse 23. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed, which means you are treasured, you are loved, my child.

I will answer you. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision. So here's God's answer to Daniel's prayer, and it's not straightforward, it comes by way of a vision, and as we've been seeing over the last few weeks, when Daniel has a vision, it's really not straightforward, it's a bit complicated, and we're going to get into a whole lot of numbers here, but we'll explain that in just a minute.

But what I want us to focus on here is, God's answer is full of expectation, of hope, of a future. Look at verse 24, here's how the answer starts.

77s are decreed for your people. 77s. I thought we were in church, not in school. What are we to make of 77s?

Well, here's my take and my understanding of it, and I think this is how most of the commentators go on this. We're not to take it literally.

[22 : 09] We're not to take these numbers literally, but symbolically. First, remember, Daniel was told that they would return after 70 years.

That 70 years was a set period of time. But here he's talking about 77s, or if you like, 70 times 7. So you can do the maths on that one. In other words, this is a time that is going to last much longer than 70 years. It's going to go on and on and on and on.

second, the number 7 in the Bible represents perfection and completion.

So you read some of these visions here and in Revelation as well. Whenever 7 comes up, it tends to refer to perfection and completion. So 70 times 7 means a multiplication.

[23 : 12] That means perfection times perfection. Now we put all that together and we've got this timescale that is going on and on and on to which there seems no end.

And it is marked by absolute perfection and completion. So God's answer to Daniel is he's giving him a picture of full and final restoration.

And he begins to give us an insight of what it's going to be like. Look at verse 24 we'll read it all. Seventy sevens are decreed for your people this long time that goes on and on of perfection.

A time decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to cover it up once and for all, to bring in everlasting righteousness, righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, that is to bring in fulfilment of all that's been said, and to anoint the most holy, God's king.

God's answer to Daniel is so much more than Daniel expected. Daniel just wanted to go home to his earthly city in Jerusalem, just down the road.

[24 : 43] That was what he was praying for. God's answer to Daniel is a promise that is bigger and greater than he could ever imagine. This was full and final restoration in not an earthly city, but an eternal city.

Sin and suffering free, where there would be the end of sin, where there would be everlasting righteousness. This is the answer that God gives.

And what we see in the rest of chapter 9 is that this answer is expanded in three ways. So he fills out this answer in three ways.

First, he shows us what it's going to be like, what this home is going to be like. Look at verse 25. No one understands this.

From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the anointed one, the ruler, comes, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens.

[25 : 49] Now again, I don't want us to get caught up in numbers here, but simply to see this as periods of time. seven sevens refers to the time when Daniel and God's people return home to build the temple.

They're going to be brought back from exile to their homeland. And that initial time is going to be a time of peace and security, joy and happiness. The people will settle and they'll begin to rebuild, but it will be a limited time.

Because God wants them to understand that while God is bringing them restoration, it is only partial restoration. It's only a taste of what is to come.

In other words, the return from exile to their homeland is just a picture of the final restoration that is to come. It's like the starter before the main course.

It's the crumbs before the big meal. And it's exactly the same for us. God is giving us an insight to say, when you turn to Christ, that is only the beginnings.

[27 : 00] It is only the taste of what is to come. The new life that you have now is nothing compared to the eternal life and the blessings that are to come in the future.

So he begins to give us a picture of what it will be like. And it will be just like Daniel returning home to his land for peace and security, joy and happiness.

But he also tells us what to expect while we're waiting for the home. So look at verse 25 again. The end of it he says there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens.

So this sixty-two sevens is talking about to another period of time which is a bit longer. He says it will be rebuilt with streets and a trench but in times of trouble.

Look at the end of verse 26. He says the end will come like a flood. War will continue until the end and desolations, trouble, have been decreed.

[28 : 13] So this sixty-two sevens is referring to a time which follows the return to exile right into the future. And he's telling us that it's not going to be an easy time.

Look at verse 26. After the sixty-two sevens the anointed one will be cut off. The anointed one was Jesus Christ, the one to come. He will be rejected and ignored.

He will be crucified. But that's not just going to happen to Jesus. God's people will continue to live in times of trouble. war. There will be continued opposition in persecution.

In other words, he's telling Daniel and us that we are to have a measured expectation. A measured expectation.

Don't get ahead of ourselves too quickly. Don't think that just because we've become Christians that all of a sudden we're going to get all the future blessings right here, right now. That is not the case.

[29 : 17] He's saying we are to prepare for suffering now and glory later. We are to prepare for suffering now and glory later.

So he shows us what to expect. And third, he shows us what's going to happen at the very end. let's read verse 27 and again we'll just pick out the main things here and not get too caught up in the minute detail.

He, verse 27, so here it's talking about an enemy of God. He will confirm a covenant with many people. So he's going to bring many people to himself.

For one seven, this period of time. In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. So he's going to be opposed to all that God does.

And on the wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

[30 : 28] Now I think this one seven refers to the time at the very end just before Christ returns. And up until that time, until Christ returns, there's going to be hatred towards God.

There will be an enemy and there is an enemy that is against God and against his people. But look what it tells us at the very end of verse 27. Until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

So God is telling us that there is a specified time that has been set in God's calendar time that will God's ultimate enemy, Satan himself, will be destroyed once and for all.

That time has been decreed. That end will come. The enemy will be destroyed once and for all and God's people will enjoy full and final restoration at that time.

God gives us a picture, a glimpse of you into what is to come. So all the troubles that we see around us today, all the troubles that we may be in today and that we experience today, God says you will walk through them.

[31 : 49] But I will be with you and I am bringing you towards a final end when the enemy and all his opposition will be destroyed and his end will come.

Do you see what Daniel prayed for in all of this? He was praying for something really small. I just want to go home, home to my land.

And God answered his prayer by giving him something so much greater and superior, an eternal home. our true home.

And we are to pray this big prayer, these eternal things in mind, that God would come and restore people today and restore people for an eternal future to come.

God as we finish, go with me please to 1 Peter again. It's on page 1217.

[33 : 00] 1 Peter. And let's just read these few verses by way of reflection, by way of meditation.

salvation. This is what is ours in Christ. Let me read from verse 3 and just follow along and be amazed at what we have, what we have to face, and what is to come.

praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you.

Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of that salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

[34 : 39] Though you have not seen him, you love him, and though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation salvation of your souls.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Our Father God, we pray that you would expand our vision, not to be so confined to our little lives in this little space and time right here, right now, but you would expand our vision to see the grand and great restoration that you are bringing about and that you will one day bring to its full and final conclusion.

until that day, Father, would you do your work in our lives? Would you cause people, our community and ourselves as well to be people of confession, seeking your reputation?

And we pray that people will know the restoration that you alone can bring of new life, forgiveness of all of our sins, the promise of your spirit, of life to come in the new heaven and the new earth.

We thank you for all that you have given to us. We thank you for this wonderful plan, a plan not to harm us, a plan not to do us any difficulty, a plan to prosper us and give us hope and a future.

[36 : 49] thank you Lord. Amen.