

Daniel 9

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[0 : 00] Am I on? No, I've got to turn it on. No, no. Good. How about now? Can you hear me? Yes.

Good. Alright. Hey, we're looking at Daniel chapter 9 this morning, continuing our series in the Old Testament book of Daniel.

So lately Beth and I have been doing quite a bit of pre-marriage counseling, which we love doing with couples. And one of the topics that we always cover is the topic of expectations.

What expectations, preconceived ideas, assumptions, hopes are you bringing with you into this relationship? We try to uncover those. Because nothing can cause conflict or disappointment.

Or even despair in a relationship that seems faster than unarticulated and unaddressed expectations. So you need to talk about them. And more often than not, couples need to adjust them to reality.

[1 : 10] But you know, the same is true in spiritual life. What sort of expectations ought we to have in our life with God? This is actually something of vital importance because much like a young, nice couple with unbeautiful expectations, we can end up in disappointment or turmoil or frustration or even despair. But thankfully we have texts like the one we're looking at this morning.

Daniel chapter 9, which helps us to be moving on the way, which helps us to shape the right expectations for what our life with God will look like as we pursue His kingdom as a church in the midst of the kingdoms of this world. So if you haven't done so already, turn to Daniel chapter 9. It's page 747 in the Pew Bible. If you look there, you'll notice that the outline of Daniel 9 is actually quite simple. It shows us first a prayer that we need to pray, and then it will show a second an answer that we need to hear. A prayer that we need to pray, and an answer we need to hear. So let's dive in first. A prayer we need to pray. Let's read the first half of chapter 9, starting in verse 1 and heading in verse 19. In the first year of Darius, the son of Hoshveros, by descent Amid, who is made king over the realm of the Calvians, 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 70 years. Then I turned my face to the Lord

God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I pray to the Lord my God in made confession, saying, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love of 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 and prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and all the people of the land. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us hope and 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, and 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've rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his walls, which he set before us by his servants and prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oaths that are written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against them. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who rule us by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been anything done 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 favor 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 of 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 God, listen to the prayer of your servant who is pleased from her seat. 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 in 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,

[5 : 45] O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name. Amen. A few years ago, the writer, Anne Lamott, wrote a little book on prayer called Help, Thanks, Wow, The Three Essential Prayers. And of course, those three prayers are certainly essential. It's not a bad way of capturing their essence either. Help, the prayer of supplication and petition, asking God for what we and others need and realizing our dependence upon him. Thanks, the prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude, acknowledging that every good gift comes from God and giving him the credit that says do. And then, of course, wow, the prayer of adoration to God. The prayer of loving all simply for who God is. But you know, in Lamott's catalog of prayer, actually, something's missing. A prayer that's actually utterly essential to having a real, vital relationship with God. And that prayer is the prayer of confession.

Of admitting our sin before God and asking for mercy. Now, maybe you have a hard time with the idea of confession. On one hand, if you come from a religious background, maybe the thought of confession conjures up the thought for you of sitting in a tight wooden stall, a confessional, talking through a screen, praying great prayers, and doing a lot of anti-religious activity.

Well, who's all that? On the other hand, maybe the idea of confession just makes you think of being pummeled down with a bunch of false guilt. And of course, there is such a thing as false guilt, to be sure. Like when we take responsibility for things that are beyond our control.

Like a parent who blames him or herself for the waywardness of their child, even though they've been faithful to the parent. Or more often, false guilt comes when we constantly compare ourselves to others. And then we beat ourselves up, thinking that we should have or be able to do what we see others around us doing. And so we feel guilty of making them accuse ourselves because we're measuring ourselves up to these human standards.

But you know, none of this is what the Bible has in mind when it calls us to confession, to repentance. It's not an empty ritual. It's not wallowing in false guilt. No.

[8 : 18] It's actually the God-given means of dealing with our broken relationship with God and then with one another. Confession, you see, is the path to reconciliation and to change.

After all, if there is such a thing as false guilt, there's also such a thing as real guilt. As the great angelic prayer of confession puts it, most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you and fought word and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. You know, if we're honest, and if you and I are through with playing spiritual games, none of us can say that we have no need of confession. I'm reminded here of C.S.

Lewis' opening chapter of your Christianity where he says that we've all broken the rule all. And then he says in the tongue-in-cheek, now if there are any exceptions among you, I apologize to them. They had better read some other book. You had better listen to some other servant.

For nothing I am going to say concerns them. And now, turning to the ordinary human beings who are left. Indeed. Turning to us ordinary human beings who realize that we need a prayer confession. But who also need help in learning how to pray it. We come to Daniel 9. Let's look at these verses again. In verse 1, the scene opens in 539 B.C. The Babylonians have just fallen to the Persian Empire. Darius the Mede pulls over the city of Babylon. And in verse 2, Daniel, reading the prophet Jeremiah, realizes that the time of exile is about to come to an end. Now what would Daniel have been reading in the book of Jeremiah? I want to be able to think of that. Well, think of a verse like Jeremiah 25 and 11 and 12. Jeremiah says, In the people of Israel, you shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years. And after 70 years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation for their indignity, he declares the Lord. And perhaps Daniel would have also been meditating on Jeremiah 29. Listen to verses 10 through 14. For thus says the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you. And I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place where I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope. That verse sounds familiar, doesn't it? Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear 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 I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I've driven you, declares the Lord. And I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Amazing. Decades before, Jeremiah 3, God's world were new and settled in this period of exile. And here is the Lord reading these promises from God's word, knowing that the time is near, and he responds by praying. Which is something Daniel does a lot of in this book, doesn't he? He's always praying. He's praying when he needs wisdom. He's praying when he's in trouble. He's praying regularly three times a day he prays. But why does he pray a prayer of confession here? Why not a prayer of adoration? God, you're going to do it. It's here. Why not a prayer of thanksgiving? Yes, the end has finally come. No, it's a prayer of confession.

[11 : 59] Daniel prays that way because ultimately it wasn't Babylon that put Israel in that God. It was God. This is how the whole book of Daniel begins, you remember, because Israel broke God's gracious covenant again and again. Chapter 1, verse 2, the Lord gave them into Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. As we'll see in a minute, the law of Moses warned the people that if they broke faith with God, he would drive them into exile, hand them over to their enemies. You can look up Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. There God warns Israel the curses that would fall on them if they preached the covenant. But God also promised, again in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30 and in 1 Kings 8 when Solomon dedicates the first temple. And from the text of Jeremiah we just read, God promises that in exile the people would turn to him in confession and repentance and he would forgive their sins and bring them home. And so here is Daniel living in the middle of this unique moment in redemptive history on the cusp of God bringing his people home from captivity. But even though Daniel's situation is unique, you know, his prayer is still instructive for us. It's still here to teach us. So what then does a genuine prayer of confession look like? I think we see three parts here in verses 3 through 19. Let's look at them each briefly. First, a genuine prayer of confession looks like acknowledging the truth about God and about us. This is verses 4 through 10. Look at how

Daniel speaks of God here. Great and awesome. Verse 4, if you haven't King James, great and terrible. He keeps covenant and steadfast love. Verse 4, to him belongs righteousness. Verse 7, 14, 16. To him also belongs mercy and forgiveness, verse 8 and 19. And for the first time in the whole book of Daniel, which is really surprising, for the first time in the whole book of Daniel, in this chapter alone, God is called upon, is spoken of by his covenant name. By the name that he revealed to Moses and the burning bush out of the Lord. Capital L, R-D in our English translations.

I am who I am. Verse 4, 8, 10, 13, 13. You see, it all begins with a right view of God.

The God of the Bible, the one true God, friends, is no doting or an apparent. The God who created us is no cosmic therapist that we pay to ask us questions and merely affirm us. No, this God, the true God, is the consuming fire. The perfection of righteousness. The perfection of mercy. Calvin in the opening of the Institute says that so often the reason we think that we aren't sinful in need of grace is because we spend so much time merely comparing ourselves to other people. If we spend all our time only contemplating earthly things, if we only look for the ■■■ider and truly accept aged 12 years later. And then we would like to see the examine our body, when we can see how state that it looks at us. But when we get a glimpse of the white, hot blaze of the sun, when we lift our gaze to see the radiance of holiness and righteousness that is God, then our condition is seen for what it is. Suddenly what once appeared it is.

Suddenly, what once appeared bright is seen murky and in the of the insane. Look then at how Daniel speaks of us.

[16 : 20] We have sinned, verse 5, 8, 11, 15, 16. That is, we've fallen short in God's purposes for us. We've done wrong, verse 5. We've acted wickedly, verse 5 and 15.

We've rebelled, verses 5 and 9. We've turned aside, we've gone astray for God's commandments and rules. We've not listened to the prophets and obeyed God's voice, verse 6, 10, 11, 14.

We're guilty of treachery, verse 7. Transgression, verse 11. Iniquity, verse 13 and 16. To us belongs open shame, verses 6 and 9.

It's quite a picture of that. A heart one to swallow, perhaps. Pretty bleak. But you know, the reason why the picture is so grim is because of what God originally created us to be.

You see, God created every human being in His own image, worthy of dignity and honor and value. And that's true of each one of us, regardless of race or gender or class or age or ability.

[17 : 38] Humans are the high point of God's creation in Genesis 1. The crowning moment of God's creation in the earth. And that is why our fallen condition is so wretched.

We are full of dignity, God's blown image bearers, and yet we rebel against God. We ignore God and the world He has made.

And as a result, we ruin our relationships to one another, the world, and even to ourselves. Friends, look.

Look at the wreckage we've made of God's good world. Blaise Pascal once said, in brutal but honest words, humans are the glory and the garbage of the universe.

And note that Daniel includes himself in this picture, doesn't he? We have sinned, he says. Now think about it.

[18 : 51] Daniel is one of the few figures in the Old Testament of whom some massive failure is not reported. Count all through your mind most of the main figures. Abraham, oops, there's that whole deal with Satan, with Agar, Jacob, he didn't really come off so clean, did he?

David, and on and on and on and on. And yet, Daniel, man, he seems to be a pretty good guy. But as we see in verse 20, Daniel knows himself to be guilty as well.

He cannot exclude himself from this condition. And he makes no intent to excuses. And that brings us to the second part of this prayer, verses 4 through 10.

Verses 4 through 10 show us that a genuine confession, a genuine prayer of confession acknowledges the truth about God and ourselves. But then in verses 11 through 14, the next section, the genuine prayer of confession leads us to confess the rightness of God's judgment.

Throughout this section, 11 through 14, Daniel affirms that God was not arbitrary or capricious in sending the people in exile. God had clearly warned them of the law of Moses.

[20 : 09] He had sent the prophets of them again and again to remind and plead and warn the people of what the law said. Generation after generation, God was patient and forbearing and loving. And so when judgment finally came, Daniel could say in verse 14, the Lord our God is righteous in all the works he has done.

Now it's one thing to admit that God is holy and we are sinful. It's another thing to admit that God is just to judge our sin.

And yet friends, this is what real confession looks like. It makes no excuses. It doesn't try to justify or minimize what we've done.

How often have you heard of an apology like that? I'm sorry if I hurt you. I'm sorry if you do offense at that.

I'm sorry that this bad thing happened. And yet none of that is saying I was wrong. A genuine prayer for confession puts the reality full in the face.

[21 : 22] You know, too often we see sin as a collection of missteps or mistakes. And deep down we think we're basically good. Deep down we're good in these faults or flaws that word of anger, that look of lust, that spike of jealousy.

Well, that's just me having a bad day. I was feeling under some pressure. I skipped breakfast. But you know, friends, the truth is that anger, that lust, that jealousy, they're not some mere mistake of your true character.

They're actually a symptom of a deep heart condition. Now they overflow of the heart and the mouth speaks.

All these things are a symptom that our hearts rebelled against God. And God is completely within his rights to end our rebellion. But that's not where the prayer ends.

Third, verses 15 through 19, a genuine prayer of confession leads us to appeal for mercy. And notice on what grounds Daniel appeals for forgiveness.

[22 : 47] Look at the end of verse 18. We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness but because of your great mercy. Friends, why do we go to God in confession?

Is the act of confession itself some sort of righteous act that God will reward with forgiveness? I've screwed up all this other stuff but at least I can do this one thing.

I can do this act of forgiveness and then God will reward me on the basis of that act and then he'll forgive me. No! Not even our act of confession is something that God rewards.

Rather, and so much more freely, we go to God in confession because we know that God is great in mercy. that we can't and we don't need to bring our unrighteousness because God is great in mercy.

This is what we've been studying in the evening service in the book of Ephesians for the last couple of weeks. In chapter 2, John has been preaching about these opening verses where the apostle Paul says that we're spiritually dead because of our sins, but God, he says, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[24 : 13] By grace we have been saved. Because of God's great mercy. And you see, friends, this is what separates biblical faith from pretty much everything else.

Because when you see it, when you pray a genuine prayer of confession, you realize that the answer to our problem isn't found in our own righteousness. It's not in our own resources, our own intentions, our own efforts, our own resolutions, not even in our own confession and repentance, but wonderfully and amazingly our answer comes solely and totally and sufficiently abundantly from God's own great mercy.

And this makes genuine biblical prayers of confession, the prayers of confession very different from all else too. Why? Because even though the biblical picture of our sin and guilt are dire indeed, and that makes us very humble and very contrived, yet we can also approach God with an unheard of assurance and confidence that He will accept us and forgive us because He is great in mercy.

Daniel was very confident in God's mercy in verse 15, if you look at that verse, because this was His name God who had delivered His people once already. This is a God who had shown His steadfast love.

When the people were in captivity in Egypt, God rescued them in the Exodus. For the sake of His great name, that is to make known to all the world how great and awesome He is.

[26 : 04] God's already done this, He's already extended to us His steadfast love. And so now Daniel can call upon God knowing that God has done it already, delay not. For your own sake, O my God, for your city and your people are called by your name.

In other words, let everyone know that you're not like these other gods. Let everyone see how great glorious you are. Let everyone see how merciful and faithful you are. Act, God, for the glory of your great name.

Hear, forgive, act. And friends, if Daniel can pray for mercy with such urgency and with such confidence, how much more can we today?

Daniel looked back to the Exodus. But as John mentioned earlier in her service, we look back to the cross.

In the Exodus, you remember when the final plague came upon Egypt, when every firstborn was going to die. The people of Israel were told to sacrifice a lamb. And when God's judgment came, that lamb would serve as a substitute, the place of the firstborn, and the plague would pass them over, and they would be saved.

[27 : 23] Friends, in the same way when Jesus died on the cross, he died as our substitute, as the true lamb of God for our sins, so that we might be safe when God's judgment passes by.

That the blood of the lamb has been spilled for us. That the judgment has been poured away. And now we can be right, and can be safe, and can be accepted.

And so our goal for mercy can be made with even greater confidence and pain. Because we've seen the fullness of God's great mercy on the cross, where the love of God was expressed fully when the Son of God died for us.

And not just that, but being raised from the dead on the third day, Jesus now lives to intercede for us. Who could possibly condemn us? Paul writes in Romans 8, 34, Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who is indeed interceding for us.

Before you even pray a prayer of confession, the Almighty Savior has been praying for you. So friends, as we wrap up this first point, the prayer we're going to pray, let me ask.

[28 : 47] Are you regularly praying this sort of prayer to God? Is this part of your regular communion with God, this sort of prayer?

Are you taking your sins and failures to God, admitting that they deserve just judgment, and then pleading and resting in God's great mercy, that they have been forgiven for his name's sake because of the crisis of God?

We're not talking about groveling in guilt, you see. We're talking about dealing with guilt. Actually dealing with it. We're talking about experiencing the reconciling power of the cross of Christ on a daily basis, and feeling the burden lift, and knowing our conscience is clean.

God. Friends, if this is not characterized with regular communion with God, start now. God. God. And do you make this prayer not just for yourself, but for the church in the whole?

Daniel prayed for God's old covenant people. We too should pray for God's new covenant people, the church. There are many sins that we must corporately confess, you know.

[30 : 13] We can make a long list of them this morning, I'm sure. Pride, self-righteousness, racism, sexism, a coldness to the mission of God, lethargy, on and on and off you can list them out.

Friends, do you join your voice with the whole church and pray for God's mercy upon us as people, as a body? Or do you excuse yourself?

And think yourself better than your brothers and sisters in Christ. Well, I'm not like that. I'm a little more than Daniel, sock of the spectrum. Friends, a prayer for confession is a great gift.

In fact, it's one of the marks of genuine vital Christianity. One writer put it this way, what distinguishes us from the world is not that we are less wicked. What distinguishes us from the world is not that we are less wicked.

but that by the grace of God we have learned to see our wickedness for what it is and that we confess our sins. The church is the only body on earth that confesses sins.

[31 : 25] Where the confession of sin dies out, the church is no longer the church. church. This is one reason why Sunday after Sunday we have a prayer of confession.

So that we can constantly come back to the very heart of the gospel that our sins are great. But the mercy of God in Christ is even greater.

Well, let's move into our second and our last point. the answer we need to hear. Let's read the second half of the chapter, verses 20 to 27. While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, presenting my plea before the Lord my God from the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer to thank Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision of 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 plea or 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 to grieve about your people and your holy city to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring an everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet and to anoint a most holy place.

[32 : 47] Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one of prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and open 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.

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.

So God sends Daniel in answer to his prayer through the angel Gabriel. And at first the answer we need to hear is a word of comfort. Verses twenty through twenty-three Gabriel comes in swift flight with a word of mercy telling Daniel you are greatly loved.

And friends that is a word of comfort for everyone who confesses their sins. God is eager to listen and respond to his people's prayers for mercy. Isaiah 65 24 says before they call I will answer.

[34 : 08] While they speak I will hear. Psalm 139 4 even before a word is of my tongue oh Lord you know it all together. Think of Jesus' parables of Luke 18 that we read earlier. If the unjust judge grants a persistent plea how much more our heavenly father.

And when the two men go up to the temple to pray it's not the righteous Pharisee but the contrite tax collector who confesses his sins and Jesus says wait then he goes home justified.

Right. He goes like. So friends let these words sink in. These words to Daniel. Let them sink in your own heart. You are greatly loved.

So it's a word comfort. But the answer we need to hear is also a word great promise. We see this in verse 24. Now. Verses 24 through 27 are a notoriously tough passage to interpret.

Some of you have just been drumming your fingers waiting for me to talk about verses 24 through 27 and now you're thinking oh my gosh this sword's gotta end soon. What is he doing? Okay. These verses are very tough to interpret.

[35 : 23] This is one of those passages where scholars love to pontificate how challenging they are. But the reality is lots of good careful faithful scholars have read these verses in a variety of different ways so we want to be generous and we certainly don't want to be overly dogmatic here.

If someone comes to me and says I know exactly what the end of Daniel 9 means you should be suspicious. And certainly with the time we have we won't be able to go into all the fine details and differences of those readings this morning.

If you're interested in doing that grab a cup of coffee and meet me in the fellowship hall downstairs after the service. I'll hang out down there and I'll be happy to dive into all the eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology you want to.

We can throw it in. That'd be fine. I'd be happy to do that. That'd be fine. Come do it. But what I'm going to try to do with the time that we have left is I'm going to just try to capture the big idea here because very often we will lose the force for the trains.

And if you understand this passage differently great. You might be right. This is one of those passages where we're not going to get too uptight if we put the pieces together differently. Well that preface let me say that verse 24 is a word of great promise.

[36 : 32] Imagine yourself in Daniel's shoes for a moment. He's just seen the Babylonian empire fall. Jeremiah's prophesied 70 years are almost up. His expectations must be running high right?

God is going to fulfill his promises soon. We're going to go home. All that stuff that the prophets talked about is going to be now. It's happening. But with verse 24 God tells Daniel that the ultimate fulfillment of his redemptive plan isn't going to happen at the end of this 70 years with the return from exile but at the end of 70 times 7 years.

The margin of the ESV helpfully lets you know that the phrase translated 70 weeks could also be translated 70 seconds. Now remember how this part of the book of Daniel works.

Daniel is writing in a style, in a genre, that we call apocalyptic literature. That is, it's literature that's heavy with symbolism and figurative language. Why?

What's the use of that kind of literature? Well not ultimately so that PhD students in late night prophecy hour radio shows can have endless debates about exactly who, what, when, where, and why all these little details will sort of take place.

[37 : 42] No. God employs this kind of symbolic figurative literature because it helps us feel the truth of this stuff rightly. When we read about the four beasts in chapter 7 we're supposed to feel a bit frightened.

And when we think about a goat and a ram in chapter 8 we're meant to feel the swift power and at the same time the fragility of these earth-living notes. And when we hear 70 times we're supposed to feel something too.

But what? Well I think in order to know what we're supposed to feel we're meant to hear, we're meant to see an echo in this phrase of an earlier passage of scripture.

And that earlier passage is Leviticus 25. In Leviticus 25 God institutes the year of Jubilee. This is what Leviticus 25 says.

Let me know if this sounds familiar. You shall count seven weeks of years. Seven times seven years until the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you 49 years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the day, on the tenth day of the seventh month.

[38 : 57] On the day of atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you. The jubilee year was supposed to be every seven times seven years.

And on the day of atonement when God took care of Israel's sin and the holy of always they were to blow a trumpet and they were to set everyone free. And they were to release everyone from them.

And they were to give back all the land of the original families who had lost it. And they were to let the whole land rest from the earth. You know, I don't know if Israel ever actually did that.

We don't know from history. It's unlikely they did. Could you imagine how radically countercultural that would be economically, sociopolitically to institute in the middle of a regular economic and political life such a wildly generous and gracious act of liberation.

And friends, if that's what was supposed to happen, if that's what was supposed to take place every seven times seven, then what will God do when it's seventy times seven? Not just forty-nine years, but four hundred and ninety years.

[40 : 14] Do we make it tenfold jubilee or not? You see, Daniel's using these numbers symbolically to speak of something great.

That's God. And the rest of the verse tells us what God will accomplish. He'll finish transgression. He'll put an end to sin and atone for iniquity.

Imagine that. Sin done away with once and for all. Every spiritual burden that weighs us down, that attacks our soul, that steals our true happiness, that wrecks our relationship, that damages our world, all of it will be put to an end.

And there will be an atonement made so great, so lasting, that it never needs to be repeated. Friends, that would be an unruly. That would be a real return from exile. That would be jibily.

But it doesn't stop there. God will bring in everlasting righteousness. He will seal, that is, he will authenticate, he will fulfill all that the prophets had spoken about and he would anoint the most holy place.

[41 : 18] Can you imagine a world where everything is right? Where nothing is as it is meant to be. Where perfect justice rolls down like waters, like an ever-flowing stream.

Where every relationship and the order of the whole creation is fitting and beautifully just like it's house. When the prophets had visions of that, they would sometimes speak of the whole creation bursting out in song, of hills and trees resounding with joy.

And if Revelation 21 and 22 give us any help here, then we can understand that the ultimate anointing of a most holy place is nothing less than the new heavens and the new earth.

Whereas another Old Testament prophet, Zachariah, says everything has become whole to the Lord, because the Lord is there in all of his fullness, dwelling in the midst of his people.

God's God's God's telling Daniel and us in verse 24. He's telling us that these 70 years of exile and the return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C., those are really just a foretaste of something even greater to come.

[42 : 38] That God's redemptive plan is unfolding towards a climax that will make the great jubilee years of the Old Testament look like a backyard birthday party in comparison.

Small in comparison to the celebration of liberty that's on its way. But with this word of great promise in verse 24 comes a word of preparation in verses 25 and 27.

The 77s will unfold in three periods, Daniel's told. And note how each period increases in turmoil. The first period, the 7 7s, verse 25, the first part of that verse seems quite calm.

The second period, the 62 7s, the second half of verse 25 is a troubled time, God says. And the third period, the last 7, verses 26 and 27, is full of all out of war and desolation.

But then, when it seems like the desolations couldn't get any worse, God's decree is poured out. And evil is judged and put away with once and for all.

[43 : 55] Now, a ton of ink has been spilled trying to determine and figure out the exact time frame of these three periods and trying to identify the various figures. And roughly speaking, there are three big views.

Some would see all the details of verses 25 through 27 as being fulfilled in the second century B.C. when the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes attacked Jerusalem and defiled the temple. Others would see everything as being fulfilled in the first century A.D.

when Jesus came as the Messiah, was crucified and risen, and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Others would see a fulfillment of these verses partially in Jesus' day, but would see verse 27 especially as referring to events yet to come, just before Christ returns.

And so we ask, well, which is it? Is this about Antiochus? Is this about the Romans? Is this about the end times? And I think the answer, friends, is all three.

We know from the context of the book of Daniel that the Antiochus crisis is at least alluded to here. There are enough similarities to chapter 8 that we looked at last week and chapter 11 that we'll look at in a couple weeks to see a connection.

[45 : 08] But at the same time, any of the details don't quite fit with that. Antiochus didn't destroy the city for one. And his downfall certainly didn't put an end to sin once and for all and bring it out of last righteousness.

Fact, we know from the New Testament, is what Jesus accomplished in his personal work. So our sites rightly look through this text beyond the 2nd century and on to the 1st century AD where Jesus is the true important one who has come.

He really does atone for sin. He really does anoint the true holy places in heaven with the sacrifice of his own self, as the letter to the Eucharist tells us. It's very interesting, Jesus himself in Matthew 25 and 13 tells us that the so-called abomination that makes desolate, that you see here in 927.

We saw back in 13, you see in 1131, Jesus says that that will find its ultimate fulfillment when the Romans under Tyrus destroy the temple in his own day in 17, just after his own resurrection.

But still, as we let the cosmic scoop of the promises of verse 24 sink into us, it seems to push us even further still to the consummation of all things and the final conflict with evil that will happen when Christ returns in the second time.

[46 : 31] So what we have here in Daniel 9 is an example of Old Testament prophetic literature having multiple horizons of fulfillment. Think of Isaiah 40, comfort my people, a voice crying in the wilderness.

We know that was about the exile, the return from exile on one hand, but also it was about Jesus. And the New Testament as Mark tells us, two things at once, it's the same here in Daniel 9. Multiple horizons.

There are multiple crises on the horizon for God's people. And so God gives Daniel and us a message of preparation. Preparation as the Apostle Paul said in the early churches in Acts 14, 23, that it's for many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God.

And as Jesus taught his disciples after the last supper in John 15, 20, remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will also persecute you.

Like the New Testament does over and over again, Daniel 9 is giving us the right expectations. On the one hand, there is the fullness of forgiveness and mercy.

[47 : 43] Every prayer of confession is met with a speedy word of comfort. And there is a great future ahead for the people of God in God's world. But on the other hand, becoming a Christian, knowing God's mercy and grace, will not automatically result in an easy life.

All of your troubles and problems will disappear. Today, as Matt mentioned, is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Friends, many of our brothers and sisters worldwide are experiencing some of this deep, unknown reality.

Hatred, violence, arrest, imprisonment, even death. And like the persistent widow in Luke 18, friends, may we lift our voices to God and pray for His justice to come speak to me.

Because Daniel 9 also gives us one more expectation as well. Not only will there be trouble, but all these times are in God's hands.

Daniel's not speaking chronologically here, but chronographically. He's painting a picture for us with numbers of symbols. The 70 times 7 is a way of saying that God is in control of history.

[48 : 59] He orders the events and days. He has appointed a decree end for all suffering and injustice and violence and oppression. These things will be cut short in God's perfect heart.

And that means we can live with courage, with confidence. God has not only forgiven our sins in personal, but one day he promises to bring an everlasting righteousness and justice to make all things better.

Let's pray. God, we do ask that you would give us the humility and the strength for the living of these days.

Lord, we thank you for your great mercy. We thank you for the great comfort, the great hope that we have, but we also thank you that no matter what trials we face in this life, your victory is secure.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.