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# Session 6 - Daniel

Daniel 9:1-9:end

## Brief Notes

### Introduction

Your heart may have sunk having read through this long chapter with its strange talk of sixty-two "sevens" and abominations and so on, but it has great things to teach us about prayer and about God's purposes for the world.

### The Setting (vv.1-3)

The reign of Darius marked the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, which had been God's instrument in punishing his people. Daniel's prayer is prompted by his reading of the Bible. In Jeremiah (25:11,12 and 29:11ff) God had spoken of how the Jews' punishment would last 70 years and then he would bring them back from exile. That promise, far from precluding prayer, as though prayer were now unnecessary and Daniel need only sit back and wait for its fulfilment, drives him to pray. Chester comments -

the promise of God becomes the starting point of his prayer... This is an important principle. We are to pray the promises of God's Word... The apostle John says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God:that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1John 5:14). But how do we know what God's will is? Christians sometimes act as if discerning God's will were a mysterious process. It is not. God has revealed his will in the Bible. It is a frighteningly simple concept. Praying according to the will of God is finding out from the Scriptures what God has promised and praying for that.

Would that we so meditated on Scripture, and let Scripture drive us to prayer and shape our prayer.

### The Prayer (vv.4-19)

There is much we can learn from the way Daniel prays (the basis for his prayer, the manner, the concern etc.). It is a prayer full of great truth about God, and humble, penitent thoughts about himself. Actually not just about himself, but his people too; though deeply personal, it is profoundly corporate in its outlook. Chester again -

We could do well to use "we" and "us" even when we pray alone, for we stand before God first and foremost as those who are part of the corporate people for whom Christ died.

I suspect many of our prayers are too individually (and selfishly) focused, rather than having God's People in view.

It is the *covenant* God to whom he appeals (v.4), and the *righteousness* of this God - meaning His faithfulness to the covenant and integrity and consistency. That righteousness means they now faced his judgment, in keeping with his word (eg. vv.13,14); but it also holds out the hope of new mercy, for his character is "merciful and forgiving" (v.9), he is the saving God (v.15). So despite their ongoing sin, Daniel looks to the righteousness of God that His anger might be turned away (see v.16).

So he appeals to the character of God (his righteousness), and to the reputation or glory of God. "For your sake" he prays, "look with favour on your desolate sanctuary ... the city that bears your Name" (vv.17,18). It is an impassioned prayer, not just presenting requests, but seeking to persuade God through prayer - not to act against His will, but to act in keeping with His will and character.

### The Answer (vv.20-27)

God is not slow in answering - "as soon as you began to pray, an answer was given" (v.23) - but wants Daniel to know that the fullness of what Daniel seeks still lies some way in the future.

There is much debate about these final verses of the chapter, and no space to unravel all the details here (nor time in the Bible study). But it should be possible to dig out the essential truths. The message Gabriel brings is that though the 70 years are up, there is a further wait, another seventy - not years this time but "sevens". These seventy "sevens" are divided into three periods. In the first seven (implying in the shorter term), Jerusalem would be rebuilt, as happened under Nehemiah "in times of trouble". But that that partial fulfilment would not be the end to which God is working (which is described in v.24). After a long wait (62 sevens, representing the intertestamental period) would come the last days (the final seven) in which the Messiah would come, and be cut off (on the cross, putting an end to sacrifice and offering), Jerusalem would be destroyed (so in AD 70), then the end will come.

## Some possible questions

- Should we expect our experience of prayer to be like Abraham's? Why not? [*Heb. 1:1,2 might help*]
- Should we expect to be able to learn lessons about prayer from Abraham? Why?

### Verses 16-21

- Has God decided already what he is going to do to Sodom and Gomorrah? [*See Ezekiel 16:49,50 to understand why*]
- God doesn't hide his plans from Abraham, and yet when he tells them to Abraham (vv.20,21) the outcome appears open. Why might God have chosen to speak so? What does that imply about the place of prayer in God's sovereign plans?
- How do vv. 18,19 help us understand why God tells Abraham what he does?
- What does that teach about the plan that undergirds, and in a sense provokes, Abraham's prayer?
- How should that plan and purpose inspire our prayers?

### Verses 22-25

- What is the concern that drives Abraham's prayer? In what ways should that concern drive and shape our prayers?

### Verses 26-33

- What could we learn from the way Abraham prays here?
- Why do you think he stopped at ten?
- What do we learn about the justice of God?

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