

The Book Of Daniel (Part Six)

Daniel 8:1-9:23

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The book of Daniel has been an exciting book for me, far more exciting than I had realized it was after reading it for the last fifty years. It is amazing once you get into something how much you can appreciate it. Today we are going to continue on with the book of Daniel, and we are going to cover Daniel 8:1 through 9:23.

In chapters 8-12 Daniel reverts back to Hebrew (his native language), to survey the future of the Jewish nation under Gentile dominion. Even though he was a Jew from the tribe of Judah, he was also warning and prophesying to the Israelites as well.

The theme of God's sovereign control in the affairs of world history clearly appears here, and provides comfort to the future church of God as well as the Jews whose nation was destroyed by the Babylonians. The Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans will come and go but God will establish His Kingdom through His redeemed people forever.

The focus in chapter 8 of Daniel narrows to a vision of the ram and goat that shows Israel under the Medo-Persian and Greco-Macedonian empires. In Daniel 8, we again see the final enemy destroyed by the Prince of princes, but only after the sanctuary of God has suffered the abomination of desolation. This later prophecy is not explained to Daniel because his angelic interpreter Gabriel reports that the "vision concerns the time of the end."

The first and second halves of Daniel are quite different—the first half is a narrative and the second half is prophecy. True, there is some overlap. The first half also contains prophecy as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great statue composed of different types of metals. The second half also has narrative elements. The values of the first half is in its account of the way in which Daniel and his three friends functioned in pagan Babylon, and how God protected them in the midst of that hostile pagan environment. We are seeing our environment quickly becoming this way, even worse than it has been.

In analyzing the first half we were encouraged that our faith was strengthened by the fact that God rules in the affairs of mankind and that we as the saints of the Most High are promised possession of the Kingdom of God.

The second half focuses on prophecies of the end times. How can we relate to visions of animals that represent nations and kingdoms? What are we to think of little horns that rise up to destroy other horns? We wonder if any of this can be practical to our everyday lives at all.

It can be difficult to understand and apply some of these things, but what I hope to show is that the symbolic elements of these visions are not all equally difficult to interpret, and that there are practical lessons in them.

Daniel 8 contains a vision of a ram and a goat, which gives additional detail about a period of history that has been described twice already in previous sermons in Daniel. The initial vision of the statue of various kinds of metals, which Nebuchadnezzar had recorded in chapter 2, spoke of four successive world empires. The empire of Babylon, ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of the Medo-Persia that followed it, the Greek empire established by Alexander the Great, and the final powerful empire of Rome or of Rome-like rulership. Notice the setting of the prophecy in Daniel 8.

Daniel 8:1-4 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

So Then, here is a mysterious ram, what does it symbolize? Notice what God's explanation is, in verse 20.

Daniel 8:20 “The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia.”

That answers specifically what that one is. This ram symbolizes the Media-Persia Empire. It destroyed the kingdom of Babylon in the early autumn of 539 B.C. But this is only the beginning of the prophecy.

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Daniel 8:5 And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground, and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

So what was this mysterious symbol? This is strange by any account. This is the Bible's own interpretation, and we will look at verse 21 to get the answer.

Daniel 8:21 And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.

This is the Bible's own explanation of its symbols. These symbols were revealed to Daniel and he was inspired to write them in Scripture so that we, today, can understand the important time setting of this prophecy.

This vision we now have, the vision of the ram and goat, corresponds to the second and third parts of the initial vision. The ram represents the Medo-Persian Empire, which came on to the world's scene in the autumn of 539 B.C. That is why it is described as having two horns, each horn representing one half of that kingdom, or empire.

One horn is described as being longer or more powerful than the other, just as one side of the bear was described as being higher. This corresponds to the dominance of the Persian element in the two nation coalition of the Medes and Persians.

The goat represents the Greco-Macedonian Empire which came on to the world scene in 331 B.C. with its first king, Alexander the Great.

Daniel 8:5-7 And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground, and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

The goat has one horn that represents Alexander himself. It suddenly and quickly goes

across the service of the whole earth without touching the ground, as Alexander did in his remarkable three year conquest of the entire Persian Empire.

Daniel 8:8 Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.

Remember the great horn is in the goat's head, symbolized by the first king of the Greco-Macedonia Empire, that was Alexander the Great. The elaboration of this vision shows that the great horn was suddenly broken off and that four other horns replaced it, which is what happened Alexander died suddenly with fever in Babylon, in 323 B.C. at about age 33.

He had a career of military conquest in his short life span. What follows in time sequence is found in verse 22.

Daniel 8:22 "As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power."

Alexander's empire was divided into four parts, among his generals, by 301 B.C.—Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus, Cassander. The south, ruled by Ptolemy, the north and east, Syria, was held by Seleucus, the northwest, under the control of Lysimachus, and the far west was dominated by Cassander.

In other words the vision of chapter 8 focuses on the middle portions of the vision of chapter 2, and gives additional details. The same thing is true when we compare this vision with the four unusual animals of chapter 7. Those were: a beast like a lion, representing Babylon, a beast like a bear, representing the Medes and Persians, a beast like a leopard, representing Greece, and a beast unlike any other animal, representing Rome.

The ram corresponds to the bear; the goat corresponds to the leopard. The ram here in chapter 8 corresponds to the bear of chapter 7; and the goat corresponds to the leopard of chapter 7.

Why is this new vision given? Is it just to add some details or is there a shift in emphasis or a new purpose? An important clue to Daniel's purpose in his vision is the fact that the language in which he is writing changes from Aramaic to Hebrew at this point. Daniel

wrote both sections of this book and he spoke both Aramaic and Hebrew.

The opening part of Daniel is in Hebrew, from the first verse of chapter 1 through the third verse of chapter 2. From Daniel 2:4 through the end of chapter 7 everything has been written in Aramaic. Now this changes: chapter 8 switches to Hebrew and this is the language used to the end of Daniel. This is unparalleled in any other biblical book! The reason seems to be that Daniel wrote in the language of the people to whom he primarily wanted these various parts of the book to be directed.

Chapters 2-7 concerns the predictive flow of the Gentile world empires, and concerned the Gentile world especially. So they were written in Aramaic, the dominant Gentile language of that day. By contrast, chapters 8-12, which are written in Hebrew, chiefly concern the Jews and all Israelites.

What we are going to see is that these chapters deal with a particular era in Jewish history, and they predict the end of this era, and thus anticipate a new era of Gentile and Israelite blessing. Here in chapter 8, we are at the point in the time setting where the four divisions of Alexander's empire are foretold in this prophecy, brings us to the date 301 B.C. The rest of this prophecy therefore cannot begin before this date.

Daniel 8:9 And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land.

This little horn appears coming out of one of the four divisions of Alexander's empire. This little horn, therefore, cannot have risen before 301 B.C. because not until then was the four-fold division of Alexander's empire settled. The prophecy will later disclose out of which one, and it is another little horn, and it would be a mistake to confuse this individual with the little horn of chapter 7. They are two entirely different individuals.

Whatever this little horn does on the world's scene must occur after the death of Alexander the Great, and after the division of his empire in 301 B.C. into four parts. We now come to the climax of the vision.

Daniel 8:15-25 Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the visions and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision

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refers to the time of the end.” Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be. [The vision of the little horn is for the end time, the same time setting is recorded also in the first part of verse 23.] The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human means.”

This is the prophecy for the last days, and the little horn symbolizes a king, a ruler, who will arise in the latter time of their kingdom. Not immediately after a four-fold division of Alexander's empire, but in the latter time of human misrule in this world. This little horn, this mortal man, stands up against the Prince of Princes, that is, Christ at His second coming. What will the little horn do?

Daniel 8:10-12 And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

What about the daily sacrifices prophesied to be taken away? Where is the sanctuary that is to be cast down? What do these symbols mean? In order to help you better understand the true interpretation of this prophecy, I will give you two popular *false* interpretations first, so we can compare the truth with what is the most common and popular explanation of this.

First, found in most Bible commentaries on Daniel 8, is that Antiochus Epiphanes, who died in 164 B.C., is the little horn. Antiochus did prohibit the daily sacrifice from 167-164 B.C. He defiled the Temple with an idol and offered swine's blood on the altar. He authorized the burning of many scrolls of the laws as could be found, and he attempted to stamp out the truth. Another thing he did was he stopped all public worship of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

In one sense he did fulfill the prophecy of the little horn but as a forerunner, an anti-type. The final ruler symbolized by the little horn of Daniel 8, is to be alive at the second coming of Jesus Christ. He comes on the world scene in the latter days when human transgression that is, sin and suffering, reaches its climax; he will stand up and he resists Jesus Christ at His second coming. Antiochus Epiphanes came over two thousand years too early to fulfill this prophecy, except as a forerunner, or anti-type.

Second opinion has it that the sanctuary is not the earth but is in heaven, that it is God's throne. The daily sacrifice according to this view is the work that Christ has been performing in heaven as High Priest, but is this the biblical explanation?

Daniel 8:11 He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

Notice what this scripture says, "the place of His sanctuary was cast down." Consider this: if these daily sacrifices are assemblies of the daily work of Christ in heaven, then a mortal man, the little horn, would have power to intervene in heaven and stop the work of Jesus Christ. Obviously to us that is impossible. Furthermore, if His sanctuary is in heaven, the little horn would have the power to cast down the sanctuary, the very throne of God in heaven, and that is impossible.

No man can stop Jesus Christ from performing His work in heaven. No man, no ruler, not even Satan himself, can cast down the throne of God and profane His Holy Sanctuary. Now what is the meaning of this Daniel 8 prophecy?

Daniel 8:13-14 Then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression [or the abomination] of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

Now for the word “days” in verse 14, a footnote correctly reads, literally, ‘evening-mornings.’ Some tried to explain this enigmatic prophecy before God’s time came to reveal it. Those who assume sanctuary in heaven, claim that this vision of twenty three hundred days commences in 457 B.C. and end in A.D.1844. They say that the twenty three hundred days represent twenty three hundred years in fulfillment.

They further insist that the sanctuary that was cast down, the Holy of Holies in heaven itself, God’s throne, was to be cleansed beginning in 1844. We are way beyond that. They obviously have been shown to be wrong.

Notice that the Bible makes clear that whatever the little horn is to do for twenty three hundred days cannot have begun until after the division of Alexander’s empire into four parts in 301 B.C. Notice further, the little horn takes away the daily sacrifices for twenty three hundred days. Were daily sacrifices whether on earth or in heaven taken away from the year 457 B.C. until A.D. 1844? Of course not.

The Jews were offering daily sacrifices almost continually from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70. It is insisted the sanctuary was not on earth but in heaven. Granted, the earthly sanctuary is a *type* of the heavenly sanctuary, God’s throne, but what king or power has ever cast down God’s throne in heaven for two thousand three hundred years? Notice the last part of Daniel 8:13: “the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot.”

Has any kingdom, any power ever trodden underfoot God’s heavenly sanctuary for one day, much less two thousand three hundred years? Certainly not. The Bible proves for itself that this prophecy has nothing to do with the heavenly sanctuary or the year 1844. Then what does the prophecy of the twenty three hundred days really mean?

Daniel 8:26 “And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future.”

The vision of the twenty three hundred days is here called in Scripture, the vision of the evenings and mornings. In most Bibles you will find a marginal note for the word “days” that reveals the original Hebrew word is evening-mornings.

Daniel 8:14 And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

This prophecy is not referring to twenty-four hour days, but to daily sacrifices offered evenings and mornings. The Revised Standard Version of the Bible correctly reads, for two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings. Many other versions translated this using evenings and mornings. Young's Literal Translation renders it this way, "And he said unto me, till evening morning two thousand and three hundred, then is the holy place declared right."

In other words here is a prophecy that twenty three hundred evening and morning sacrifices would cease to be offered since the daily sacrifice was offered twice a day. This prophecy is actually speaking of eleven hundred and fifty days. There would have been exactly twenty three hundred daily sacrifices offered during that time.

The Jewish Soncino commentator of Daniel by Dr. Judah J. Slotki comments on this verse. "the numeral refers to the number of times the offerings normally brought twice daily would be omitted, giving a total period of eleven hundred and fifty days."

At the end of this eleven hundred and fifty day period the sanctuary was to be cleansed, or justified, or declared right. This prophecy is dual, as are many biblical prophecies, and it is yet to be completely fulfilled. What happened to the daily sacrifices in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes from 167-164 B.C. when twenty three hundred sacrifices were not offered for a period of eleven hundred and fifty days was only a type of what is yet to occur.

The fulfillment of this prophecy in the latter days will not again be for eleven hundred and fifty days, but for twelve hundred and ninety days, according to Daniel 12.

Daniel 12:11 "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days."

From the time the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. This included suspending the public worship of the Great God at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and will again in the latter days.

Notice also in Daniel 11, the latter days do not commence until verse 40.

Daniel 11:40 "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him;

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and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.”

This happens in our day more than two thousand years after the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, therefore the taking away of daily sacrifices and trampling a sanctuary underfoot is yet a future event. In our day a coming world dictator will arise speaking blasphemy and persecuting God's people.

At the conclusion of this chapter, Daniel describes his reaction to the vision and explanation given by the angel Gabriel.

Daniel 8:27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

It appears that Daniel communicated it to others but no one was able to explain it either. Its general features were plain but no one could follow out the details until precisely what would occur before the vision was fulfilled. This is the general nature of prophecy. If neither Daniel nor any of his friends could explain this vision in detail, are we to hope that we will be successful in disclosing the full meaning of those which are not yet fulfilled?

The truth is, in all such revelations of the future there must be a lot of detail that is not now fully understood, and the general features may be plain as in this case. It was clear that a mighty king would arise, that he would be a tyrant, and that he would oppress the people of God. It was clear that he would invade the Holy Land, that he would at a time put a stop to the offering of the daily sacrifices, and that this would continue for a definite period, then he would be cut off.

But who from this would have been able to draw out in detail all the events which in fact would occur. Who could have told precisely how these things could or would come to pass? We have a clear picture of how this effected Daniel—he was faint, he was sick, and he was astonished, but what does this have to do with us? I am sure that if we were back at the time of Daniel and we saw the vision that he did, and all the advanced technology and the horrible things that were happening to people, we would feel the same way.

I will suggest two ways we should be effected, having to do with the prophecy. First, predictive prophecy teaches us that the God of the Bible is the true God. This is because the only way that prophecies can come true is if God stands behind them. The true God, who alone is able to determine the outcome of history. If the God of the Bible is not the true God, if another bigger God, or even no God stands above and behind Him, then the God of the Bible cannot control what will happen, and then the prophecies of the Bible given in His name will not come to fulfillment.

This is not what has happened. These prophecies have come true and the God of the Bible is thereby shown to be the one true sovereign God of everything. Human beings can make shrewd guesses of course, soothsayers have done this, Satan can make even shrewder guesses, but history is complex. Human beings are often unpredictable and therefore have mere guesses and while they are sometimes partially accurate, do not come to fulfillment as the Bible prophecies do. They can predict all they want till they are blue in the face but, unless it is according to God's will, then we will be getting it wrong.

Second, predictive prophecy proves that the Bible is the true and trustworthy revelation of this true God. Please turn to I Kings 22. The story of Micah is a wonderful illustration of this point. Micah lived in the northern kingdom of Israel at a time when Ahab, the king of Israel, wanted to go to war against the king of Aram to capture Ramoth Gilead. He persuaded Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to go with him. Jehoshaphat wanted to consult the Lord first, so they had called four hundred of the paid court prophets together and asked them.

I Kings 22:6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?" [These men knew who was paying them and what the king of Israel wanted to hear.] So they said, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king."

I Kings 22:12 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the king's hand."

This was more than enough for Ahab, but Jehoshaphat had a little more spiritual sensitivity and was just a bit suspicious of the answer. Going back to verse 7.

I Kings 22:7-8 And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the Lord

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here, that we may inquire of Him?” So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say such things!”

At this point the two kings had a humorous exchange but at the end of it, they had sent for Micah. To get the full force of what happened now, you have to understand something of the geography of Samaria, where this took place. Samaria stood on a high ridge of a hill, and was surrounded by an enormous wall, in the center of the city was a large square and from that square the one road by which anyone could leave the city passed through the gate and down the ridge to the plain below. This is the road the messenger would take who was dispatched to get Micaiah. So everyone in the armies, the four hundred false prophets, and two kings who were assembled in the city square could have seen him go.

What is more important, they all would have been watching as Micah responded to the king’s summons, and made his way up that long road along the ridge through the gate and into the city. When the messenger reached Micaiah he warned him to say what the king wanted to hear.

I Kings 22:14 And Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak.”

But when Micaiah finally stood before the two kings with the eyes of this great priestly military host upon him, he responded mockingly saying, word for word what the four hundred false prophets had already spoken.

I Kings 22:15 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?” And he answered him, “Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king!”

Remember this was spoken sarcastically, we have understood that this was not genuine so he rebuked Micaiah.

I Kings 22:16-17 So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord” Then he

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said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, "These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace."

Do you know what they had done when he heard that?

I Kings 22:18 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

At that point Micaiah went onto the additional details including the specific prediction of Ahab's death. And Ahab did what kings do to unpopular prophets, he threw him into prison, and went out anyway to fight against Aram for possession of Ramoth Gilead. Yet before he did this, turn to verse 28.

I Kings 2:28 Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

Micaiah was correct, because he was God's prophet. We never hear of Micaiah after that, perhaps he perished from being in prison, but we do know what happened to Ahab, he was killed in the battle and the people were scattered each one to his own town, as Micaiah had prophesied. The point is obvious. God, the true God, had spoken through Micaiah his true prophet, and because it was God who had spoken, the word of this God through Micaiah could be trusted.

At this point we will move into chapter 9. Here is some background. Chapters 8-12 of Daniel are largely prophecy. This is often difficult to interpret and perhaps at times even more difficult to apply. Chapter 9, which we come to now, is also prophecy, and it is a decisive passage for all the various systems of prophetic interpretation, a basis for which you can take the prophecy of the Bible and compare them to, in one sense.

It has two main parts: a prayer of Daniel, which is a model of devout, humble, and effective prayer. The other part is an answer to the prayer—a concluding revelation which was God's answer to that prayer. This concluding prophecy concerns Jesus Christ and is a prediction not only of the nature of His earthly ministry, but even of the precise time of His appearing and death.

While reading Jeremiah and realizing that the seventy years of the desolation of

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Jerusalem are almost up, Daniel turns to God in prayer seeking mercy for Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel appears to him and explains that another period is set (seventy sevens), and it is at hand for God's people. Commentators have called the ninth chapter of Daniel the key to prophetic interpretation. Others have called it the backbone in a prophecy.

Arno C. Gaballion, a careful scholar who spent much of his life studying and comparing prophetic portions of the Bible, wrote this:

The prophetic message Gabriel brought from the throne of God to Daniel, perhaps is the most important, not only in the book of Daniel, but in the whole Bible. The clear understanding of it is indispensable to every reader of God's word who wants to know God's purpose concerning the future. In the few verses which contain the words of Gabriel, events relating to Jewish future history are predicted, and the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the rebuilding of the city in a time of distress, the coming of Christ in humiliation, His death, the destruction of the temple and the city by the Romans, the desolation and wars which were to follow. All this is pre-written in this great prophecy. The final end, and at the time of the Gentiles, the great eventful week of seven years is revealed in the last verse.

I mentioned earlier that the second half of the book of Daniel is primarily prophecy as opposed to being mainly narrative. It is noteworthy that this, the backbone of all prophecy is nevertheless set in the context of a narrative. At the end of Daniel 8, after Daniel had been given the vision of the ram and the goat, we are told that the prophet was troubled by the vision to the point of becoming sick. As we begin in Daniel 9, we find where Daniel recovered from his agitation, and it is absolutely essential advice for us as well.

What would you do if you were in Daniel's shoes at this time? He is so bothered he is sick to his stomach. Daniel did these two things: he studied the Bible and he prayed.

Daniel 9:1-3 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the book the number of the years specified through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

In verse 2, notice the phrase, the word of the Lord. This has profound meaning, the Hebrew name Yahweh, presented by LOORD, means the self existent one, or the Eternal. It is not used elsewhere in Daniel, but it is used seven times in this chapter emphasizing God's covenantal relationship to His people. Yahweh is used in verses 2, 4, 8, 13, twice in verse 14, and verse 20.

Daniel did not have all the scriptures we have access to today. But he had some of it and he studied what he had and then after he knew what the promises of God given in Scripture were, he prayed and fasted about them, asking God to do what He had promised. There are several important points about this I would like to bring out.

First, Daniel was a prophet himself. Nevertheless he found it important to read the Scriptures and be instructed by it, rather than to trust in some special new revelation. We are not prophets so how much more important a role should Bible study play in our own lives.

Second, when Daniel studied the Scriptures, God directed him to the passages that spoke most of his need, and he was comforted by them. Jeremiah had lived in Jerusalem up to the time of its destruction by the Babylonians, and he had predicted that the people would be carried away into captivity and the captivity would last seventy years. Daniel and Jeremiah were contemporaries, however Jeremiah began prophesying years before Daniel was taken into captivity. If you remember Daniel was just a young boy, when he was taken into captivity, Jeremiah had already prophesied by this time, and it you noticed in verse 2, Daniel said, "I, Daniel, understood by the number of the years specified by the word of God through Jeremiah the prophet."

Jeremiah 25:11-12 And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the Lord; and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

Daniel was directed to this passage and concluded from it that the years of captivity were drawing to an end. It is always difficult to date far-distance events accurately, partly because the ancients did not always reckon time as we do, but in rough times the dates involved are these.

Daniel was probably carried away to Babylon in a partial deportation of the people that took place in 605 B.C. That is about nineteen years before the cities final destruction in

586 B.C. The vision of this chapter dates from the first year of Darius the Mede, which we can establish from extra biblical sources as being 538 B.C. This was only forty eight years after the destruction of the city, and about twelve years after the vision in chapter 8.

Daniel appears to be over eighty years old at this time. Since Jeremiah had spoken to the people serving the king of Babylon for seventy years, Daniel probably counted the seventy year period of captivity from the time of his own deportation and if this was the case then sixty-seven years out of the total seventy years had gone by. The termination of the captivity was only about three years away.

Daniel was, as I mentioned, over eighty years old at this time. He would not return to Jerusalem and he knew that, but the assurance that his people would go back and that the city would soon be rebuilt must have been a great comfort to him.

The third thing to notice is that after Daniel had made his discovery, he prayed; furthermore he prayed for the very thing that the Bible had assured him would happen. This may seem strange to us in one way. The misguided would conclude in such situations that since God had decreed three more years of captivity and a return to Jerusalem after that, there would be nothing they could do and they could sit back and let God work out His prophecy.

Daniel knew better than that, and he knew that although God certainly works according to His own plans and timetables, he nevertheless does this through people and through their acts and attitudes, and particularly their prayers. Knowledge of God's promises stirs us to prayer rather than merely causing us to become detached from God's actions. The faithful do not yield to God's promises by growing apathetic, and becoming idle and lethargic. Faith without works is a dead faith. Just because we know God's promises will most certainly be performed does not mean we have no need to pray about them. Rather they should stimulate us to prayer, and give us something to pray about specifically within our prayers.

A true proof of faith is the assurance that when we pray, God will perform what He has promised us. It is essential to our relationship with God that we ask for what He has promised.

Luke 11:2 So He [that is Christ] said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

How do we know what God's will is unless we read and study in Scripture? Faithful prayer involves responsibilities, honoring God's Kingdom, and doing God's will. The purpose of prayer is not to get our will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. Prayer is not telling God what we want, and then selfishly enjoying it.

A major aspect of prayer is asking God to use us to accomplish what He wants so that His name is glorified, His Kingdom is extended and strengthened, and His will is done. We must test all of our personal requests by these overruling concerns if we expect God to hear and answer our prayers.

When a person prays for the coming of the Kingdom, he is identifying with a message of Jesus Christ and His followers. It is important for us to know the Word of God, for there we discover the will of God. We must never separate prayer from the Word. If we do, our prayers have a tendency to become selfish.

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you".

This is another way of saying, God's will will be done. Most of us has seen professing Christians disobey God and defend themselves by saying, "I prayed about it and God said it was alright," or "I prayed about it and God didn't say no."

Once we are secure in our relationship with God and His will, then we can take a request to Him and we can ask Him to provide our needs, not our greeds today, to forgive us for what we have done yesterday, and to lead us in the future. All of our needs maybe included in these three requests: Material and physical provisions, moral and spiritual perfection, and divine protection and direction.

If we pray this way we will be more likely to be praying according to God's will. That does not mean every prayer we send has to contain all of these things, but in our major prayers of the day, morning and evening, we should include such things.

As I mentioned earlier, chapter 9 of Daniel is divided into two parts, and comprises two things: the prayer of Daniel and the answer to the prayer. The first part of Daniel 9 records the prayer of Daniel and this part is covered by verses 1-19. It begins with the inquiry of Daniel into the time that the desolations of Jerusalem were to continue, and his determination to seek the Lord, pray that His purpose in regard to the restoration of the city and Temple might be quickly accomplished.

Daniel does not appear to have any reservations that the predictions would be fulfilled and the fact that they were so clear and so positive, was a strong reason why he should pray, and was the reason why he prayed so earnestly at this time. He wanted to be part of that, he wanted to experience it and be able to say that he actually did something about it. He prayed about it and was in sync with God, and the people of God.

The prayer which he offered was an illustration of the truth that people will pray more earnestly when they have reason to believe that God intends to impart a blessing and that an assurance that an event is to occur is one of the strongest encouragements and motivators to prayer. What are we told to do about the place of safety? "Watch and pray that you maybe counted worthy to escape these things."

People will pray with more confidence when they have evidence that God is blessing their restoration to health, and they will pray with more diligence when they have evidence that God is about to display His power in fulfilling prophecy. A belief that God intends to do something is never a hindrance to prayer. In fact it does a great deal to stimulate us to earnestly call on Him.

Daniel's prayer is remarkable for its simplicity, its commitment, appropriateness, and sincerity. It is a frank confession that the Israelites in whose name it was offered had deserved all the calamities which had come upon them. Daniel realized it and the people realized it—that it was their fault that these calamities came upon them. It is accompanied with sincere intercession that God would hear this prayer, and remove the judgments from the people, and accomplish His purpose of mercy toward the city and Temple.

A long captivity of nearly seventy years, the utter desolation of the city and Temple during that time, the numberless hardships and evils to which during that period they had been exposed, had demonstrated the greatness of the sins for which these calamities had come upon this nation.

The greater the sins of a nation, the greater the punishment. How great are the sins of this nation and other Israelitish nations of the world? Daniel, in the name of the captive people, expressed their sentiments, confessed their guilt, and acknowledged the justice of God's dealings with them so from Daniel's prayer we can better understand the attitude we must have as an individual, as well as corporately, with regard to our own nationalities, as well as the rest of the world. This is what we should feel for our respective countries when the hand of God's judgment comes down long and severe upon us because of our personal and corporate sins.

I was struck and amazed by this prayer that Daniel gave because it is so applicable to us today, in the Israelitish nations especially. We are a sinful nation, with a sinful people, in a sinful evil society, maybe more so than has ever been before. We are not only dealing with gay marriages, we are also dealing with pedophilia, bestiality, also necrophilia, the disgusting—the depth of evil that this society is in right now is beyond my imagination, thankfully. As we read this prayer of Daniel, take it to heart, because it could be very well said of a minister of God for the people of Israel today.

Daniel's prayer is worthy of great contemplation, it is an excellent example guide for prayer for the whole church, and the nation, and it has three parts. I will read down through this prayer and I will tell you what those parts are.

First, it contains a confession of Daniel's and the people's sin.

Daniel 9:4-10 And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets.”

Second, there is acknowledgment that it is because of this sin that the just judgments of God had come upon them.

Daniel 9:11-14 “Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a

The Book of Daniel (Part Six) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

great disaster; for under the whole heaven such never has been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice.”

Third, there is a shift in the prayer to plead for God's mercy.

Daniel 9:15-19 “And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly! O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all who are around us. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear, open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

These are three necessary marks of faithful prayer: acknowledgment of sin, the fact that sin always brings judgment, and a plea for God's mercy. Notice one more important thing about this prayer. When Daniel prayed for his people, confessing the sins that caused God to punish them by the deportation in captivity, he did not distance himself from his people, but rather identified himself intimately with them in his confession.

Notice how Daniel uses the first person plural pronoun “we” in the following verses in Daniel 9. I will skim down through these. Verse 5, we have sinned and done wrong, we have been wicked, we have rebelled, we have turned away from Your commands and laws. Verse 6, we have not listened to Your servants or prophets. Verse 7, we are covered with shame. Verse 8, O Lord, we and our kings and princes and fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against You. Verse 9, we have rebelled. Verse 10, we have not obeyed the Lord our God. Verse 11, we have sinned against

You. Verse 13, we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins. Verse 14, we have not obeyed Him. Verse 15, we have sinned, we have done wrong. Verse 18, we do not make request for You because we are righteous, but because of Your great mercy.

When we confess sins, we humans have a tendency to confess the sins of other people, or if we do not do that, we confess sin in a matter meant to excuse ourselves. Daniel is not like this. If anyone could have done this, he could have, because Daniel was greatly beloved by God. Nothing bad is said about Daniel in all of the Bible! He was only a youth at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, he had lead an exemplary life in the wicked city of Babylon for sixty seven years. Daniel could have pleaded with his innocence yet he took the part of his people and confessed his own sins with theirs, saying, we, we, we etc.

That is the kind of prayer God honors. Daniel prayed with a highly and emotional moving cry. O listen, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, hear and act for Your sake. O my God, do not delay because Your city and Your people will bear Your name.

It is no wonder that God sent Gabriel with the revelation with which the chapter ends. After Daniel's prayer of confession for his people, he was privileged to receive the revelation of the seventy weeks including the Messiah's atoning death. It gives the chronology of God's perfect plan of redemption and deliverance of His people.

Daniel was a faithful prophet worthy of admiration and respect. The speediness of Gabriel coming indicates a joyful messenger, the substance of that message is as follows: As a compensation for the seventy years in which the people, the city, and the temple had been entirely leveled, seventy weeks of years, seven times seventy years of a renewed existence would be secured to them by God.

Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 provides the chronological framework for Messianic prediction from the time of Daniel to establishment of the Kingdom on earth.