

Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Nine, Part 1

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Boat number one with capacity of 40 held 12 people. Boat number two, also with a capacity of 40 souls contained 25 people. Boat number three with a capacity of 65 had but 40 people in it. Boat number six, capacity of 65 people cradled only 28 people. Thus it reads, down through the list. Almost all of the lifeboats launched from the Titanic on that fateful night of April 15, 1912 had empty seats. The crew thought that it would be too much of a strain on the ropes and mechanisms to load the lifeboats to capacity and then lower them. It was thought that somehow the boats could be filled after they were lowered into the icy ocean, but that didn't happen. Lost at sea from that event: 1503 persons. Of all the tragedies of that catastrophic night, the story of the unfilled lifeboats is unmatched.

When I came upon this information, my mind immediately went to another scene. A life and death matter; a horrific collision and a sinking ship. Humanity in jeopardy because of an avoidable failure. A rescue plan put in operation to save lives. Empty seats on the lifeboat of salvation.

Jesus has provided a way out from the icy sea of death, at a cost we can't imagine. But how many empty seats are there on the lifeboat! People are too busy. People are too wrapped up in the things of this life. People don't know the ship is going down and they'll be lost if they're not in Christ. People don't believe it's necessary to take advantage of the offer of salvation. He has a "way out," an "Exodus" from this disaster, if we will put our faith in Him. There's a seat on His lifeboat for every single soul, for all who will come to Him and comply with the terms of the Covenant.

The Book of Daniel is about Jesus. He is the theme of not only this book, but all the books of the Bible. We've seen Jesus as the Stone in the statue dream, putting an end to earthly kingdoms and establishing one that will never be destroyed. We've seen Jesus in the flames of the fiery furnace of chapter three, bringing deliverance to His faithful ones. We've seen Jesus sending His angel to spare Daniel from the lion's mouth in chapter six. We've seen Jesus being brought to the Ancient of Days in chapter seven to receive His kingdom at the conclusion of

heaven's court session. In chapter eight we saw Jesus, as that "certain One" Who answers the question of "How long?"

In chapter nine we see Jesus again. This time we see Him as the Messiah, the One coming to take our sins upon Himself and die the death we deserve, that we might have the life that He deserves. In this prophecy we are told that He would be "cut off, but not for Himself." It is because of what He will do, that is brought to light in this chapter, that He will have the authority and right to come as the Stone. It is because of His unfathomable sacrifice that this vision highlights that He will be entitled to receive the kingdom that chapter seven told us about.

A most wonderful study awaits our discovery in chapter nine. Information so specific about the timing of the Savior's coming into this world that opponents of God's plan, the wicked priests, who should have been the first to proclaim His coming, pronounced a curse on all those who studied the prophecy of Daniel nine!

"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 books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD, given 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. 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.'" Daniel 9:1-6.

Chapter nine might be divided between the prayer of Daniel (verse 1-19) and the answer of Gabriel (verses 20-27). When most give study to this chapter, the prayer of Daniel is given little attention, and focus is placed on the prophetic explanation. While the response of the Lord through Gabriel is important and we will certainly spend appropriate time in discussing it, we should not in the least minimize the

value and lessons in the prayer of Daniel, which occupies the first 2/3 of the chapter.

Remember that the book of Daniel can be seen as composed of *stories and prophecies*. The prophecies tell us when significant events in God's timetable will take place; the stories illustrate what kind of people we ought to be to survive the events foretold; how we can be prepared for what's ahead and give honor to God's name. There's no point in knowing what's coming if we're not prepared by His grace to live through it.

That's the main difference between a true analysis of prophecy and a false one. The false interpretations concentrate only on the events to come, and often have those tangled and confused. A correct understanding of prophecy not only seeks to arrive at the truth of what God has in store, but also seeks to experience His changing power within to be prepared for what is coming. The tabloids are filled with predictions, but are absent with appeals to repent and let God change our sinful hearts and natures. God wants to give us both; truth concerning the future and a new life in Him. He has everything we need to be ready, if we will ask Him to live within us. In this prayer of Daniel we can learn a lot about what our attitude, our pattern of thinking should be in the light of God's great plan. Prophecy drove Daniel to his knees in confession and repentance.

Let's back up a minute and catch the backdrop of Daniel's prayer and ascertain what was in his mind. It's most important to grasp where Daniel was coming from as he offered this prayer. In chapter eight he was given a vision that featured entities and powers that were destroying machines. It must have been exhausting for Daniel to witness the devastation brought against God's people in these scenes. The stars were ripped from the sky and trampled underfoot. The place of God's sanctuary was desolated. Truth was cast down to the ground. By the way, the word "truth" in Daniel 8:12 should be understood as including not only the expressions of God's truth as in teaching and doctrine, but also He Who is the Truth. Satan delighted in doing both. The abusive treatment of our dear Savior Jesus is within that phrase. Then a question is asked concerning How long the trampling will continue, and an answer is given which contains a time period, but *no beginning point is established* for this period.

At the conclusion of the vision, one of God's most exalted angels is commissioned to bring understanding to Daniel. "And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, 'Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.'" Daniel 8:16. Who is it that gives commands to Gabriel? That would have to be

Jesus, wouldn't it! The "man's voice" that spoke between the banks of the River Ulai was the "voice of many waters" belonging to Christ.

So Gabriel came and gave many helpful insights so that Daniel could comprehend what he had seen. But notice very carefully the last verse of chapter eight. "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." Daniel 8:27. What was Gabriel commissioned to do? "Make this man understand the vision." What did Daniel confess when Gabriel finished? He didn't understand it. What was it particularly about which Daniel lacked understanding? The time period of the 2300 days, everything else being pretty much explained. The fact that it says "no one understood it," probably implies that Daniel shared its contents with his godly friends as he had done back in chapter two.

Years go by. The vision of chapter eight was given in the third year of Belshazzar, about 550 B. C. It would be another ten years or so before Babylon fell and Darius the Mede would take the throne, which is where chapter nine begins. In the meantime, Daniel has had time to reflect on the vision he had received and meditate on its meaning.

This much Daniel knew for sure. God had a plan for Israel in bringing them out from Egypt to occupy the promised land. In his prayer Daniel said, "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." Daniel 9:15. Daniel knew that God had a specific purpose in doing this, so that His truth would be preserved in holiness and shared with the rest of the world.

Daniel knew that Israel had been warned through Moses that should the nation rebel against God, His protection would be withdrawn, they would suffer the consequences of disobedience and be taken captive to far-off countries. We saw that in the second verse of the book when Daniel reported, "The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into (Nebuchadnezzar's) hand." Daniel 1:2. If Judah had followed her Lord, this could have been one of those times Jesus later spoke about when He said, "How often I wanted to gather our children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Matthew 23:37. Daniel saw clearly the cause and effect relationship between disobedience and disaster. He was able to "connect the dots" and see the causal relationship between departure from God and destruction experience by the nation.

It is evident that Daniel was well acquainted with passages such as Deuteronomy 28 which outlined the blessings conditioned on obedience and the curses befalling rebellion. It was crystal clear in Daniel's mind that the nation as a whole had rejected God, the prophecy of Moses had come precisely true and that the success of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and captivity of Judah were nothing less than an accurate fulfillment of what Moses had predicted.

Notice what Daniel said in his prayer. "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. 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 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." Daniel 9:8-14. What a prayer of confession and repentance is this!

Daniel also knew that God had spoken through Jeremiah, a contemporary of Daniel, concerning the length of time Judah would spend in captivity. "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts; 'Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 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 the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD." Jeremiah 25:8-12.

Daniel cared deeply for the purpose of God to be carried forward. He sensed that the plan of God would be best fulfilled if the beloved city Jerusalem could be rebuilt and again repopulated. He felt confident, from the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the time was nearing when this might happen. The seventy years was nearly completed. Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion was in the year 606/605 B. C. Seventy years later would be with a very short period of a year or two from when Daniel offered his prayer.

But there were some concerns that troubled Daniel. He well knew that the nation fully deserved the punishment brought upon her. He knew that the promised restoration was conditioned on genuine repentance. Were the fruits of repentance evident? Did Judah experience true sorrow for her sins? Daniel wondered. He felt it appropriate to pray for the whole nation himself and present his petition before the Lord on their behalf, basing his plea not on the nation's goodness, but God's mercy. His was an intercessory prayer.

“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 (Allow me to interject and share this word of counsel: make sure that if this phrase ever comes from your lips it is with the reverential tones of Daniel and not a casual, flippant, disrespectful way), 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.” Daniel 9:16-19.

Daniel was concerned about the time period brought to view in the vision of chapter eight. That period of 2300 days: *was it to be an extension of the 70 years of captivity?* Would there be a delay in the fulfillment of God's promise? Would the promised release from captivity and restoration of the city be retarded because of Judah's apathy? This weighed heavily on the heart of Daniel and caused him to plead, “Do not delay” in the fulfillment of the promised restoration.

You and I need to see ourselves in this chapter. We should be “Daniels.” His prayer is filled with meaning and relevance for us today. It is set within the context of a ruined sanctuary but a promise of restoration. That applies to the world as a whole, to our beautiful country of America, to the Church and to us as individuals.

God created a perfect world which was ruined by sin. He has promised to make it new some day, and restore it to Edenic beauty.

God brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty so that people could worship Him according to the convictions of their conscience. He lavished upon America blessings beyond calculation. How have we repaid Him for all His generosity? Our country is polluted with godlessness, crime and disobedience. People have outdone each other in an effort to erase the memory of God from this land. Truly, the “sanctuary” created for liberty lies “desolate” in the present atheistic, humanistic, materialistic society of today. We have so much to be thankful for, and this week a day is set aside to give thanks, as well we should. We also have much to repent for in the sins of our nation in desecrating His name. Well might the Christian today pray Daniel’s prayer of confession with the nation of America in mind, for it is altogether applicable. Just as Israel was brought from bondage to freedom in Canaan, so the Lord providentially led to the discovery and establishment of America at a time when persecution raged. How have we rewarded Him for His great kindness?

He paid the divine dowry for His bride, the Church. Sad to say, many who profess to be followers of Jesus take the profession lightly. The “sanctuary” lies desolate in the half-hearted commitment of those who say they are His. The Church has ignored His counsels, turned her back on His commandments and committed spiritual harlotry by being joined to the world. But God says He can bring revival and reformation.

Individually, our own hearts are like desolated Jerusalem of Daniel’s day. We’ve rebelled against our Maker. Satan has taken us captive to his city, where we’ve become engrossed in a life style that follows his plan. But Jesus promises deliverance to all who will turn to Him. He as the heavenly Cyrus can neutralize the walls of evil habits. He can re-channel the rivers of our minds and rescue us from patterns of thinking that are destructive and fit us for heaven. He has promised that He can restore and cleanse the “sanctuary” of our hearts so that we will live according to His plan and purpose.

Notice carefully how Daniel acted in the light of the *promised restoration that was apparently delayed*. First of all, see that it mattered to Daniel. His heart was inclined toward God's purpose. Doubtless there were many Jews who had been taken to Babylon who didn't know or care whether Jerusalem would ever be rebuilt. They had become comfortable in their new home of Babylon. After nearly seventy years had elapsed, most of their population had been born there. It's all they knew.

It wouldn't be much different if I was suddenly invited to go to my ancestral homeland, Norway, where my grandparents came from last century. But what do I know of Norway? I was born here. This is my home. So with most of the Jews. Their jobs were in Babylon, their friends were there, their homes were there. Their lives and thoughts were entwined in the culture of Babylon to the point that they cared little for the ultimate accomplishment of God's purpose in the restoration of Jerusalem. What did it matter? They were doing quite well where they were! We know this to be true because when the invitation to return to Jerusalem was extended only a paltry fraction, less than 50,000 according to Nehemiah 7:66, 67 "came out of Babylon" and returned to their homeland.

But the accomplishment of God's purpose mattered to Daniel! It's what occupied first place in his thinking. Does it matter to you? Or are you so involved in the day to day considerations of this life that little thought is given to the great issues between the forces of God and the devil? Are you concerned that His promised restoration, whether it be the ultimate restoration of the physical world or the spiritual realm of your heart seems to be delayed? Does the phrase of Jesus' prayer, "Thy kingdom come" have meaning in your life, or would you be just happy living in this "Babylon" forever? Does it bother you that America has become largely pagan; that the mainstream media is a fountain of pollution, much of it defiantly blaspheming God's name? Does it concern you that the professed Church is not living up to her calling, that the name of Christ is dragged in the gutter by the sins of those who wear the label "Christian"? This does not mean that we are called to be "spies" and spend our time searching out the supposed sins of others, but when flagrant and undeniable sin is cherished and flaunted by those who claim to be His Bride, does it bring anguish to your heart, for His sake? Do you wince when you can't help but see the name of Jesus taken in vain?

How did Daniel act in that circumstance, and what can we learn from what he did? You will find in his behavior things that are not necessarily new, but shine with brilliance in the setting of his example. Because he cared about the fulfillment of God's purpose, *He studied the Scriptures*. Does it strike you that Daniel, a man

gifted with prophetic insight, one taken in vision on many an occasion, one addressed as “greatly beloved” (Daniel 10:19) would himself study the Scriptures? Burdened with his concerns and questions, he turned to the Holy Writings. He was not so proud, not so “high and holy,” given the auspicious honors conferred upon himself, to ignore the information given by God through the Holy Book. He sought answers in the Sacred Writings.

If the prophet Daniel read the Bible, shouldn't we? But how few make it a priority to spend time in the Word each day. How can we expect to gain spiritual strength if we don't eat at His table? What a blessing it is to spend time with Jesus each day in His Word. Though I have read through the Bible a number of times, I consider myself a student of the Word, because every time I open its pages, He reveals something new to me.

Jesus has answers for us in His Word. But beyond mere information, spending time in the Word is spending time with Him. It is building a relationship with Him, a connection which is vital. There is no substitute for having a faith based connection with God nourished by the daily study of His Word. If that is not now your pattern, may I invite you, may I encourage you to make that your highest priority.

Then we find that Daniel prayed. Again, this is not something that we've never heard before, but how many have a vibrant daily prayer life? For how many is it a “quick hello,” and then I'm off for work. Talking to the Lord as to a Friend is a privilege for every child of God. Bring your burdens to Him. Bring your questions to Him. Bring to Him everyone for whom you have a concern. Someday we'll wish we had prayed more than we do! Some day we'll regret every hour spent in frivolous self-indulgence and wished that more time had been spent in Bible study and prayer! God invites us to seek Him.

Daniel demonstrated the seriousness of his request by “fasting, sackcloth and ashes.” Are we serious about bringing our petitions to Him? Do we pray earnestly for our own conversion? Do we plead for His Spirit to enter and control our hearts and minds? Do we earnestly desire that His likeness be seen in our lives? Elijah, a man of experience in prayer, prayed for the rain to come after the 1260 days of drought. He sent his servant out to look after the first prayer, but no evidence was in sight. Elijah prayed again and the servant looked. Nothing. Three, four, five, six times Elijah prayed. Still nothing. Many would have given up by this time. It wasn't until the seventh prayer of Elijah that the cloud was seen, the token of a coming rainstorm. Are you praying for a “latter rain” experience in your life? Are

you praying to be baptized by His Spirit and receive the promised refreshing? Are you serious enough to match the seven-prayer vigilance of Elijah?

Daniel studied, prayed, confessed, interceded and claimed God's promise. That's what we should be doing right now. Though Daniel was a godly man, he confessed before His Lord the sins of his people. He identified with them and presented them as if they were his own, but pleaded God's forgiveness and mercy. He set before the throne the preservation of God's holy name as the reason God should answer.

I challenge you today to be Daniel. To have God's plan, purpose and reputation foremost in your mind. I encourage you to follow his godly example of studying the Scriptures and earnestly praying for the fulfillment of God's design, though it seems delayed, in the world, in America, in the Church and in your life.