

Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Nine, Part 2

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Last week we began our study of Daniel nine, which contains Daniel's prayer and explanations given by the angel Gabriel. Remember that he had been given a vision in chapter eight which featured a horn with remarkable destroying power which trampled the stars, cast truth to the ground and desolated the sanctuary. A question was asked "How long the trampling?" to which the answer was given, "Unto 2300 days, then the sanctuary will be cleansed."

We noted that after the vision in chapter eight, Gabriel was commissioned to "make the man understand" the vision, but when he left, Daniel confessed "none understood it." He was particularly uncertain with respect to the time given in the vision.

We saw then in the beginning of chapter nine, which takes place about ten years after the vision of chapter eight, that Daniel sought answers to his questions in the Sacred Writings, in this case a portion of the message given through the prophet Jeremiah, which foretold Judah's captivity lasting a period of seventy years.

Daniel knew that the nation had been taken captive because they had rebelled against God. He knew that the seventy years were nearly completed. But he wondered if the nation had repented of their sins that had caused the captivity in the first place. He wondered if the time period, the 2300 days mentioned in the vision he had been given, represented an extension of the captivity. Was the return and restoration promised through Jeremiah going to be delayed? Was it going to be longer than seventy years before God's promise was fulfilled?

This drove Daniel to his knees in prayer. It wasn't that Daniel had not prayed before. In chapter two we witnessed Daniel in prayer in a time of extremity, his life being threatened, when the king had had the dream he couldn't remember. God answered Daniel's prayer and gave him the information. In chapter six we watched as Daniel's life again was put in jeopardy and he prayed. Once more God answered and spared his life in the lions' den.

Now Daniel is going to pray again. This time, to demonstrate the seriousness of his prayer, he fasts and wears sackcloth and ashes, the garments of contrition. We noted how he opened his heart before the Lord. He cared deeply about the condition of the sanctuary which at that time lay in ruins. He earnestly desired that God's plan would be fulfilled and the promised restoration would not be delayed.

Last week we discussed how his prayer for the restoration of the "sanctuary" can be applied to the world as a whole, to our country of America, to the sanctuary of His Church, and to us as individuals, designed to be His temple.

The prayer of Daniel is something with which we should be thoroughly familiar. It is of extreme relevance to where we are today. So we want to continue our study of Daniel's prayer, taking a look at four things. We'll look at his prayer in its similarity to what we call "the Lord's prayer," as a model for the attitude of one participating in the Day of Atonement, the fact that it is supremely "God-centered," and its ideal of corporate confession.

Daniel 9 and the Lord's Prayer

First, look at his prayer as it compares with the prayer Jesus taught His disciples. Jesus said that when we pray we ought to say "our Father in heaven, *hallowed be Your name.*" That's what Daniel prayed. We'll take a look at the parts of Daniel's prayer that correspond with that theme a little later.

Jesus continued, "*Your kingdom come,* Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The "coming of His kingdom," which for Daniel represented the restoration of the temple and city of Jerusalem form the substance of his prayer.

Jesus said, "Give us this day our daily bread. And *forgive us our debts* as we forgive our debtors." Daniel's prayer contains many appeals for forgiveness based on God's mercy, not man's merits. Jesus' prayer concluded by saying, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For *Yours is the kingdom* and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Matthew 6:9-13. Daniel's prayer likewise acknowledges the authority and eternal nature of God's kingdom.

Daniel 9 and the Day of Atonement

We see then that Daniel's prayer bears a strong likeness to the one Jesus taught us. But there's a more specific application of Daniel's prayer. The one Jesus taught His disciples is meaningful for Christians of all ages. The one Daniel offered has a

particular relevance to Christians living at the end of time, ones who live during what the Bible calls the “Day of Atonement.” What does that mean?

One of the Hebrew festivals, which occurred in the Fall of each year was called the “Day of Atonement,” or Yom Kippur. “Yom” is the Hebrew word for “day,” and “kippur” (from the Hebrew verb *kaphar*) is a word in their language which is translated “atonement” about 70 times in the Old Testament. If you look up a Hebrew lexicon, you will find the definition of *kaphar* as being to “cover, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, to cover over, pacify, propitiate” and so on.

It has the basic meaning of “cover.” Often the first time a word appears in the Bible is significant and “sets the stage” as to how the word will be used throughout the Bible. The first time this word is found is in Genesis 6:14. As you think of how this word would take on the meaning “to cover in a special sense” and represent the forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation and atonement demonstrated by God to save man, let your mind contemplate how the word was first used in Scripture. “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover (*kaphar*) it inside and outside with pitch.” There is a beautiful illustration of what God is trying to do to save man in that image!

Today we might compare the meaning of this word, to “cover in a special sense,” with the concept of being *covered* by an insurance policy. Or, we might think of it in the sense that a soldier might say to his buddy, “I’ve got you *covered*.” The Scriptural analogies of the prodigal son being *covered* by the father’s “best robe,” the doorposts of the Hebrews on Passover night being *covered* by the blood of the lamb and Jesus’ comment about how He wants to *cover* us with His wings like a hen does her chicks are unavoidable. All these things can help us understand what Jesus has done and is doing for us to save us from sin.

When William Tyndale translated the Scriptures into English, he struggled to find a word to embody the significance of the Hebrew word *kaphar*. It meant so many things! Frustrated in trying to choose an existing word to use, he coined a word. He made up a new word. He felt that the basic concept of *kaphar* was to “put back together,” or to be “at one.” The process of putting two formerly estranged parties “at one” he conceived as an “at-one-ment.” Hence the word “atonement” was born into the English language. Sadly, because we have become familiar with pronouncing the word with the emphasis on the second syllable, the rich history and intended significance of the word Tyndale made up is not readily seen. “At-one-ment” has a slightly different shade of meaning than does “atonement.”

In chapter eight, the crucial event highlighted as the focus of the prophecy was something called the “cleansing of the sanctuary,” which we discussed as representing that festival in the Hebrew calendar which occurred on the tenth day of their seventh month called in their language Yom Kippur. Of course, there was a sacrifice on that day, representing the Lamb of God, Jesus, Who would take our sins upon Himself and be our sin-bearing Savior. When He died on the cross, Jesus accomplished that fully and completely.

On this day all Israel was to “afflict their souls,” which meant that they practiced self denial in not eating nor working. They repented of their sins. They spent the entire day making sure that every sin was confessed and forsaken. They concentrated on what the high priest was doing within the sanctuary as he ministered on their behalf. On that day, looked at as the “day of judgment” still today, they knew that God was going to “cleanse the sanctuary” by removing from it the record of sins accumulated through the previous year, eventually transferring them to the head of the “live goat” which was then forever banished from the camp.

We recognize that these festivals were not an end to themselves, but taught the people of God about His methods through the history of humanity in dealing with the sin problem. Eventually God is going to rid the universe of sin. Sin can’t remain forever. To this end He sent Jesus to die for our sins and reconcile us, who were His enemies, to be “at-one” with Him again. At the cross we were purchased and put right with Him. In these last days our High Priest, Jesus, is ministering for us in a special way, accomplishing a work of “at-one-ment,” the purpose of which is to remove sin completely from the hearts of His people; to cleanse our hearts as well as our records and get us ready for heaven.

We follow His movements by faith as He works in our behalf in the most holy place of the sanctuary in heaven, *covering* us with His righteousness and separating sin from our lives, bringing us “at-one” with Him. Back then, the Hebrews fasted, abstained from work, and afflicted their souls. We can’t go without food, as they fasted for that one day, but we can be careful and practice self-denial in our diet. We can’t go without working as did they on that day, but we can approach our work in a different way.

We work, not to accumulate a vast amount of wealth or lavish upon ourselves material things or self-indulgent pleasures, but we work to earn a living. There is a difference between working to make money and working to make a living. The Christian who is conscious that we are indeed living in the end of time does not

over-work to the point that there is no time for study, contemplation, prayer and sharing. Character building through the grace of Christ is what life is about and is what is of utmost importance to the one who knows we are living on the very edge of eternity.

Living in the Day of Atonement means we consecrate our hearts fully to Him and plead with Him to cleanse our soul-temples of every defilement, through the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit, Whom God promises to us to gain the victory in the battle against sin.

Living in the Day of Atonement means that we, like Daniel, hold the honor and purposes of God supreme, and therefore it disturbs our hearts when His reputation and name are trashed. Like Lot in Sodom, the heart of the Christian is “vexed” by the wickedness of the world. It brings pain to the heart of the Christian when those in the Church live in a way that does not represent the character of God. In a vision given to the prophet Ezekiel, who lived at that the same time as Daniel, he was shown that God placed a mark of protection on those who “sighed and cried for the abominations” that were done, not in Sodom or Babylon, but *in Jerusalem*. Ezekiel 9:4. The counterpart of “Jerusalem” today would be the Church, those who call themselves the people of God.

The remorse for sin, whether in the world, in the church or in my own life, the sense of spiritual poverty that Jesus mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount, the desire for the restoration of the “sanctuary,” or sacred name of God and the soon completion of His great plan are all a part of what it means to “afflict the soul” that God’s people were told to do on the Day of Atonement.

If you believe that we are now living in the antitypical Day of Atonement, you need to study the prayer of Daniel as a model. It is a precise template of how we should approach God’s throne today. Daniel’s prayer is filled with humility, contrition, repentance and confession of sin. He holds nothing back as he boldly acknowledges the rebellion of the nation in disobeying God. He confesses that they have utterly failed in repenting as they should. “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 9:13.

What was the message of John the Baptist as he prepared the world for the first coming of Jesus? It was a call to repentance. What was the invitation of Peter at the formation of the early Church? Repentance. What is the message given by Jesus to

the last church of Revelation's seven churches, the church of Laodicea? It is an appeal for repentance. What is Daniel's prayer focused on? Repentance.

Repentance means literally "to change your mind." Only God can do that. His method of bringing repentance to our lives penetrates to the very depths of our souls in bringing a new way of thinking into our hearts. His plan means that we will turn from sin not only by reluctant choice, as in something we'd really like to do but will forego, but *turn from it in revulsion*. Through the grace of Christ we can learn to turn from it in disgust. We will have the same reaction to sin as would the parents of Ron Goldman if they were presented with the bloody dagger of their son's death. When we see sin as the implement that caused the death of God's dear Son Jesus, it will become exceedingly unattractive to us.

You would normally think that "hate" is not exemplified in the Bible, but there is a sense in which it is. There is a "time to hate" (Ecclesiastes 3:8) and that is when we encounter sin. In fact you will find the phrase "perfect hatred" in Psalm 139:22. We are to "hate evil" (Psalm 97:10), "hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104) and "hate and abhor lying" (Psalm 119:163).

Hating sin requires a different way of thinking than what we were born with. Daniel's prayer is bathed in the atmosphere of confession and repentance. Our prayer life today ought also to be immersed in the humility, confession and repentance exhibited by Daniel's prayer. We need to pray that God will give us a different way of thinking and be "at-one" with Him! Jesus is getting us ready for heaven!

The God-centeredness of Daniel's Prayer

As Daniel pled for forgiveness based on the mercy and goodness of God, not the deeds of humanity, so we today ought to be basing our petitions on His merits and not ours. Daniel's prayer is a plea for mercy like the Publican and not the Pharisee. It is an invitation for God to forgive and not delay in acting for the restoration of the sanctuary. He cries, "we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous needs, 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 9:18-19.

It would be years before the New Testament authors chose a special word to describe selfless love. Daniel probably never heard the word *agape*, but his prayer is filled with it. It is a selfless prayer.

Often our prayers have too much self in them. We commend ourselves to God by our good deeds. Our requests and petitions are based largely on what we want. Too many of our prayers are about “us” rather than about “Him.” Daniel’s prayer is God-centered in a way that provides a shining example. It’s based on His plan for us, His merits, His glory and His name. Daniel acknowledges that his people have followed their own inclination rather than seeking the will of God in their history. Now it is time to seek His glory and the honor of His name. Rather than a prayer that seeks primarily something good for himself, Daniel’s prayer is one which seeks fundamentally the accomplishment of God’s purpose.

He prays, “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.” Daniel 9:16. Daniel appeals, “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.” Verse 17. He requests that God restore “the city which is called by Your name,” and concludes his prayer by saying, “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 9:19.

It was for the honor of God’s name that Daniel prayed. It was for the sake of God’s tarnished reputation that Daniel pled. This is the prayer that we need to pray today. Of our material needs, God is well aware, and invites us to present them to Him. But beyond that, our prayers should be centered on the restoration of God’s holy name. We should be praying for the restitution of His reputation and sacred honor represented in this wayward world, our fallen country, a rebellious Church and our selfish lives.

Daniel’s Prayer of Corporate Confession

What tribe was Daniel from? We’re told that when Nebuchadnezzar came in that first invasion that he took those who were “the king’s descendants.” Daniel 1:3. That would make Daniel from the tribe of Judah and not from the tribe of Levi, much less the family of Aaron. So Daniel was not a priest, but he prayed like one. He included himself as a part of the nation. The nation of Judah was the “body,” of which he was a part. The New Testament teaches the corporate nature of God’s Church and Daniel exemplifies this principle in his prayer.

Notice how many times he uses the “first person” in his prayer. He says “we” have sinned, “we” have done wickedly and rebelled, neither have “we” heeded Your servants the prophets. Throughout his prayer, Daniel says “we,” “us,” and “our.”

Later, he explains that it was while he “was speaking, praying, and *confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel*” that Gabriel returned. Daniel 9: 20. Only for a brief moment in verse seven does he use “they.” He identifies himself with the nation and presents his prayer in a very personal way. He is a Hebrew; he is a part of the body; the sins of the nation in a sense are his sins and he presents them to God as if they were his own. His confession and repentance are built on this model.

We may not be from the tribe of Levi or family of Aaron, but we can pray the priestly prayer of Daniel. We are part of the human body which sinned against God and put His Son on the cross. Have you asked for God’s forgiveness for that? Most of us are part of the nation of America which has turned her back on God. We can ask God’s forgiveness on behalf of our nation. We identify ourselves as part of the Church, which has too often failed to live up to her holy calling.

We are part of the body. It is appropriate to pray and ask forgiveness in behalf of the body. We can wear the mantle of intercessory prayer as did Daniel and plead with God to forgive, according to His great mercy, the sins of the body. Daniel’s was a selfless prayer in this respect. He laid his own reputation in the dust and confessed the unworthiness of the corporate body of which he was a part.

There is one more phrase in Daniel’s prayer that we need to highlight. He says, “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.” Daniel 9:17. Daniel was well acquainted with the writings of Moses and had heard from his mother’s lips the blessing given. “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying; ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them, ‘The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD *make His face shine upon you*, and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.’”’ So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.” Numbers 6:22-27.

Daniel longed for that blessing to rest upon His people and the city called by God’s name. He greatly desired that God’s favor descend upon the nation and sanctuary. Today we wish that God’s face would shine upon us. We wish that the bright beams of His gracious radiance would lighten this darkened globe. We pray that the promise in Revelation will be fulfilled soon, “After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.” Revelation 18:3.

The prayers of Daniel and Jesus will be answered soon. His face will shine upon us. His kingdom will come. His honor will be restored. The sanctuary will be restored in the world made new, in the Church made ready and in the cleansed hearts and souls of all those who like Daniel confess their deep need of His saving grace. Will you ask Jesus to give you a new heart today?