

# Daniel 9

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm turning to Daniel chapter 9. Daniel chapter 9. I'm going to preach a couple of one-offs in everlasting righteousness.

To seal both vision and profit and to anoint a most holy place. That verse is as full as an egg with the gospel. So if you're able to read that verse, I think, and not see the gospel.

There's a man called Martin Lee Muller. He was one of the leaders in the Confessing Church in Germany. As some of you will know Dietrich Bonhoeffer, him and Martin Lee Muller were both heroes of the Confessing Church.

They stood up to Adolf Hitler. And Bonhoeffer, the famous one, you know he was martyred. He died just within a few weeks to the end of the war. And Niebuhr was imprisoned.

He was set for a concentration camp in 1938. And he was in Dachau until 1945. He was that as Hitler's personal prisoner. He narrowly escaped execution.

[ 1 : 24 ] And in his autobiography, he describes the first few days in prison. He says they took my wallet, my wristwatch, my wedding ring, my pocket Bible. That night I didn't sleep at all.

I didn't find any peace. I'd lost my memory during the very strenuous week of interrogation, during the trial. During the trial, I couldn't remember a single verse of Scripture.

I was dependent on the written word, on the printed word, but they'd taken away my Bible. If only I could have my Bible, he said. And then amazingly, the next day, he pleaded with the guards to give him back his Bible, and they gave him his pocket Bible.

And he writes in his diary, I've not been 12 hours in the concentration camp, and the book is entered. The holy book. The book that bears witness, witness, and testifies to him to whom all power belongs in heaven and earth.

It was all I needed. How do you cope if you're the private prisoner of Adolf Hitler in a concentration camp? Well, you get your Bible out, and you pray.

[ 2 : 36 ] How do you cope if you're an old man in exile, in Babylon? You get your Bible out, and you pray. And that's what Daniel says.

In chapter 9, he's a long way from home. He's been away from home for most of his life. He's been in exile in Babylon, and so here in chapter 9, he prays. Chapters in 2 and a half, the first half is Daniel's prayer.

He's praying to God, and then from verse 20 to the end is God's answer to the prayer. And those are the two things. First of all, Daniel's praying in God's remarkable answer to his praying.

Because God always answers, doesn't he? If you look at the opening verse of chapter 9, it's about 539 BC. It's approximately 70 years since Daniel had been taken as a young teenager away from home.

He's in his mid-80s, and he's been taken into exile. And so we read that in the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, by descent, Amid, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.

[ 3 : 43 ] In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet must pass before the end of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely 70 years.

It's really interesting that Jeremiah has only been dead for about 20 years. He's only been dead for a couple of decades, and yet look how Daniel describes his book.

Can you see it? He describes it as the word of the Lord, the word of God. Jeremiah is seen as scripture only 20 years after his death. It's now being written down, and now he says, I understood through the word of the Lord, of Jeremiah the prophet, that it must pass through the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely 70 years.

And so what he's reading, what he's quoting to you is a really famous passage. It's a passage from Jeremiah 29. Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylon.

And if you've been for a Christian for any length of time, it's one of these verses that's always on a fridge magnet, or it's on Christian calendars. You know it is. You know it is.

[ 4 : 58 ] I have plans for you. I have hope for you. Let me read the passage. It's Jeremiah 29. That says, the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and I will fulfil to you my promise and I'll bring you back to this place.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for wholeness and not for evil. To give you a future and a hope. And then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear you and you will seek me and find me and when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes.

And I'll gather you from all the nations and all the places where I've driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. And so Daniel read in his Bible that.

He found those words in the scriptures and he says in verse 3 of Daniel 9, then I turned my face to the Lord, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy.

That's the first thing I want you to notice about his praying. It's a prayer that's rooted in the Bible, in the Word of God. It's a prayer, isn't it, that arises out of the Bible.

[ 6 : 10 ] And when you read that passage from Jeremiah and that promise that God makes that after 70 years, God is going to end their captivity and he's going to bring them back to Jerusalem, when you read those words in the Word and when you realise what's happening in the world around you, Daniel says there's a discrepancy.

There's a discrepancy, he says there's a tension between what Daniel is reading in his Bible in Jeremiah 29 and what he's experiencing in his life. What he sees in the world around him.

The 70 years are almost up and yet there's no sign at all of God's people returning to Jerusalem. In fact, most of them don't want to go back. Most of them have been born in exile, most of them have made a pretty good life for themselves and they are far away from God and they've got no intention of returning to him.

They've got no intention of going back to God's city, Jerusalem and picking things up where they left off. And despite what the Bible says, God's people after this time are still in captivity and there's no immediate and there's not even a remote prospect of them going home.

Babylon has fallen. It's the first year of Darius the Mede and it's here, there's the tension. The tension between what is in the word and what is happening in the world.

[ 7 : 38 ] And out of that tension between the two, prayer is born. But I think one of the reasons why we find it so difficult to pray either corporately as a church or individually as Christians and one of the reasons why our prayer life is so weak is because we don't spend enough time either in the word or in the world.

There are some Christians that spend all their time in the word and they never set foot in the real world and so there's no tension. They're out of touch. They're out of touch when the burdens of people carry.

They've shielded themselves from the world. From the things that are happening under their very nose. And then there are those that have all their time in the world and they're never in the word and so there's no tension there either.

But when you live in the word and in the world it creates a great tension. And so the Bible tells you and I that the gospel is the power of God and to salvation for all who believe.

Best news. The Bible tells us that the gospel is a very powerful message from God that changes men and women and boys and girls. But the gospel is a message which will change the world that the gospel is intended to save people from all kinds of different backgrounds.

[ 8 : 56 ] Whites, blacks. It's the power of God of salvation to everyone who believes. That's what the word says and yet when you travel around the UK you don't see many conversions happening.

There are not many people coming to faith in Christ in the UK despite some of the claims. and there is that discrepancy isn't it between what the word says and what's happening in the world.

Doesn't the Bible tell us that God's word will not return to void that God's word will always accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. And yet I know and you know people who've been in churches faithful churches men who've been in the ministry for decades and they've hardly seen

anything happen.

Doesn't the word of God say that God does not decide the death of the wicked? Doesn't the Bible say that God decides all people to come to repent and to come to acknowledge the truth?

But people are I don't know about your friends but very blasé aren't they about their spiritual state? People drift along with no thoughts to where they're going or where they're heading.

[10:15] Doesn't the Bible say to you that he that is in you that's the Holy Spirit is greater than he who is in the world. And yet the spirit of this world seems to win over and over again in my heart.

Now what do you do when there's this discrepancy? When there is that tension between what you read in the Bible and what you read in your newspaper? Well you can do one or two things can you?

First of all you can shrug your shoulders and walk away. Carry on living or you can bend your knees and pray and that's what Daniel did. He says to me so I turned to the Lord.

I turned my face to the Lord. And I pleaded with him in prayer and petition and fasting and in sackcloth and ashes. I still use the cheque book I hope some of you do and when people write a cheque on the cheque it says doesn't it pay bearer on demand.

Pay bearer on demand. So your neighbour's on the cheque somebody's giving it to you you are the bearer you take that to the bank and you give it to the bank and they pay in what is on the account they pay the bearer what is on the cheque.

[11:31] And that's how Daniel prays. Daniel pleads with God he said God you said this but it's not happening.

Do you remember how the Lord told us to pray he taught you and I to pray your kingdom come. He taught us to pray for his kingdom to come for his will to be done. God taught us to pray for his name to be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven but it's not like that is it?

It's not like that in your family service it's not like that in your workplace it's not like that in a society in general and so we come to God and we plead with him look at how it's put there in verse 3 then I turn my face to the Lord God seeking him by prayer and please for mercy with fasting fasting what is it?

fasting is really disciplining yourself fasting is giving up anything that gets in the way of being serious about praying we've had days of fasting where we've tried not to eat for a day but that isn't the only type of fasting you might fast by not having a night in front of the telly because it stops you praying you might think I'm going to give up the internet for a day I'm going to put my phone away and so I can devote myself to pray because we need to get together to pray don't we because nothing much is happening but God has said things will happen and we plead with God and we plead with God's promise so I hear people say to you well Wednesday night is my night for Champions League there's

Champions League on a Wednesday night or Wednesday night when we meet for prayer that's my time that's my time for me I want to say to you this if we really see the tension between what God has said in his word and what is happening in the world it will mean that we are very serious about prayer and that we'll be serious as a church to come together and plead with God I want to make a practical suggestion sometimes people just don't know what to pray about like I said you get the evening standard or get the evening gazette and just read through it and pray through it because when we do that we'll know what to pray about don't we when we read about what's in the news make the headlines your prayer points as you read what people's lives are like if you're a real believer it'll break your heart it should grieve you that if the spirit of

[14:32] Jesus is in you it will break your heart why not take those headlines and make them into prayer points and what do we say to God it is meant to be like this you didn't create people to go through this you made men and women and boys and girls in your image and things are broken aren't they and things are fallen and things are screwed up Lord and you start pleading with him and that is where prayer is born it is born in that tension between what is in the word and what is happening in the world there's a creative tension and Daniel's praying is rooted in the Bible the second thing is it rests in the character of God it rests in the character of God I don't know if this has ever happened to you but you go to meet someone when and you are standing like a lemon at the airport and at first you're really irritated and annoyed you're thinking about all the money you've clocked up in the car park you're up to about 12 20 minutes or whatever it is and you get annoyed but then you start to worry because if you know that person you think it's not like so and so is!

it's not like! they said that they would be here she would have phoned surely if there was something wrong and so your focus turns from your own irritation and your own grievance and so on to the person you're waiting for and something like this happens in Daniel's prayer of it verse 4 I prayed to the Lord my God and I made confession saying O Lord the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments the reason he's praying is that God has said in his word that in 70 years I'm going to turn that exile back on itself and that you God's people will return back to Jerusalem but he doesn't actually mention the 70 years now the 70 years are up but Daniel doesn't mention them in his prayer what Daniel is taken up with in verse 4 is the character of

God and the reputation of God you see it's not just some casual acquaintance who may or may not show up this is isn't it the covenant God of Israel this is the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant with those who love him and obeys commandments Lord you said that you'd be here for us and what has happened and what has gone wrong and of course the answer is there in verse 5 and 6 for we have sinned and we have done wrong and we have acted wickedly and we have rebelled and we have turned away and we have not listened the problem is it's not with God the problem is with us that we don't see things through God's eyes we don't see things the way God sees it I'm going through a bit of a stage of reading John White's books I recommend his early books but in one of his books

John White gives this his own personal experience of being a missionary in Bolivia he says I watched the birth of our first child if you asked me how I felt I'm sure I would have said I'm feeling great but as I look back I know that I was extremely frightened Scott my oldest was born with badly clumped feet as he was lifted from the delivery table my wife cried John look at his feet there's something wrong with his feet I looked but I saw nothing wrong his feet are fine but his feet look at his feet I looked it's okay dear his feet were just fine such was my anxious need to feel that all was well but I was blind to the distorted limbs incredible as it may seem for I am a physician and I was trained to inspect babies as they were born I saw no grotesquely twisted limbs only straight ones I didn't know it at the time but my fears may be blind to the reality that my son was born a cripple I couldn't see what was under my nose and then he goes on to say this were the full impact of the fate of people around us to break over our minds we might be too overwhelmed to pray at all some of us are blind to their fate in the same way for the same reason that I was blind to my son's legs we are either we deny the reality or else we shield ourselves from its full impact acknowledging the fact but isolating ourselves from its horror and then he says this no urgency grips us as we pray no urgency grips us as we pray you see when

[ 20 : 11 ] Daniel prays he prays with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other when Daniel prays he doesn't come with a shopping list of his own needs his concern is for the reputation of God and you see tonight the greatest tragedy in healing is that people are far away from God doing their own thing and that is an insult to the glory and majesty of God and that is what Daniel is concerned about the majesty of God and the glory of God and at the same time he doesn't pray in a kind of standoffish finger pointing way you know the way we can sometimes be so judgmental and pharisaical sometimes so holier than thou that isn't the way Daniel prays he identifies himself he says look at verse 4 we have sinned verse 5 we have done wrong we've rebelled we've not listened we're all in the same boat someone has described intercessory prayer as love on its knees with tears in its eyes that's the way to pray that's how

Daniel prays for his people love on its knees with tears in its eyes no finger pointing no writing to the newspaper no complaining on facebook but on your knees with tears in your eyes lord we've done this we've turned our back on you we are in exile we are far from you lord you promised you said lord will you not turn your face towards us again the last Daniel's praying now how does God answer Daniel's prayer it's very interesting look at verse 20 while I was speaking I'm praying confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel presented my plea before the lord my god for the holy hill of my god while I was speaking in prayer the man Gabriel who had seen the vision at first came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice and he made me understand speaking with me I think it's ironic!

Daniel says that Gabriel gave him insight and understanding because what follows is one of the most confusing and difficult to understand chapters than the rest of the Bible I don't know if you've noticed it's literally all six and you might have thought what on earth is all this about and Daniel says God sent Gabriel to give me insight and understanding so the first thing is he's given an assurance

that his prayer has been heard and that God is going to answer his prayer but what is God's answer to his prayer we'll look at verse 24 and it's a wonderful answer to his prayer 70 weeks or 70 times 7 in other words God is showing the real answer to David's prayer is not in the immediate future but in the distant horizon 70 times 7 it's kind of perfection personified and yes Samuel the 70 years are almost up!

God is going to do what he said he was going to do God is going to fulfil that promise to bring his people back but there's going to be something beyond the 70 years there's a 70 times some there's a 70 weeks let me illustrate it this way there's a film called an Englishman went up a hill and came down a mountain have you seen it who's seen that film?

it's a great film it's based on a true story it's about the village of Gwiler and Garth which is just outside Ponte Prez about 20 miles outside Cardiff near Tom Gridlite if you know where that is and it's a true story it's a true story about after the war somebody from London is sent down to South Wales in the valleys they were doing the ordnance survey maps and they send a surveyor to look at all these towns and they come to Gwiler to Garth the Egyptians have got their pyramids Greeks have got their temples and Welsh people have got their mountains and they're very proud of them and Gwiler to Garth was very very proud of its mountain and when the ordnance survey guy comes round he discovers it's not a mountain at all it wasn't high enough to be a mountain they couldn't classify it in the ordnance survey map as a mountain it was a hill and that puts the cat amongst the pigeons the whole village goes into uproar there was no way that they were going to suffer this indignity so they get together the men of the village get their wheelbarrows out and they eventually will let me spoil the story they add height to the hill so that the height is raised just enough for it to become a mountain it's a true story and in a sense

[ 24 : 56 ] Daniel in verse 20 is a man who goes up a hill that's what he's concerned about he talks about in verse 20 he's praying about God's holy hill it's the temple mount it's the hill in Jerusalem which the temple has built it's the place where the animal sacrifices were offered where the priests come and go that's what he's concerned about that's what he's praying about he's praying about God's holy hill but as he prays about it God as it were draws the walls back and broadens his horizon and shows him that hill is going to become a mountain and God is going to actually do something in Jerusalem far more than he could have ever imagined it's really fascinating for Jerusalem it was a boyhood memory for Daniel he spoke between Alasar and Dominic's age when he was taken off and carted off from Jerusalem he's made jeans but he never forgot it if you remember earlier on in the book

Daniel in that children's story that you know so well he opened his windows three times a day and he prays towards Jerusalem Jerusalem is always on his mind it's as if his watch was always set to Jerusalem time you know when you go on all day sometimes you keep your watch set till the time it is at home we look at verse 21 you can imagine Mr and Mrs Daniel in their flat in Babylon they turn to his wife and he says I wonder what time it is in Jerusalem now and she says oh it's the time of the evening sacrifice that's what it says there isn't it but there hadn't been evening sacrifice in Jerusalem for 70 years the temple has been destroyed the priests have dismissed the sacrifices have been discontinued and yet as far as Daniel is concerned it's still the time of the evening sacrifice that's what he's concerned about and that's what he's praying about and if he prays about that and he pleads with God to end the exile and to bring the people back to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple and that the sacrificial system would be reintroduced

God as it were broadens his horizons and he sees in the distant horizon 70 times 7 from now he sees that the hill has become a mountain and on that mountain there is a cross and from that cross he hears a cry it is finished because God he sees going to do something momentous in Jerusalem verse 24 what is he going to do he's going to make an end to sin he's going to bring everlasting righteousness he's going to atone for wickedness he's going to seal up vision and prophecy and he's going to anoint the most holy this is monumentally significant and when he does that and I think it's the only way I can put it when he sort of shows Daniel that the real answer to his prayer lies in the distant future as far as he's concerned 70 times 7 he hands him a pair of binoculars and then he gives 25 to 27 at the end of the chapter he gives him these binoculars so he can get a close up look at what's going to happen this is a bit controversial

I'm not sure I've understood all the details and I don't want us to get bogged down in the arithmetic partly because I'm dyslexic when it comes to figures don't get bogged down in the arithmetic it's theology not maths do you remember when Peter asked Jesus how often should I forgive my

brother sometimes and you can also you can almost hear him patting himself on his back can't he seven times isn't that good I've put up with this rat bag for years what does Jesus say he says no 70 times seven does that mean 490 times of course it doesn't what Jesus means is you go on forgiving your brother or your sister you keep on forgiving them you go on forgiving them perfectly continuously you never give up that's what Jesus means 70 times seven it's theology not arithmetic and what you've got going on here

God says to Daniel that in the not too distant future in the seven times seven there's going to be an immediate answer to your prayer in fact we know that happened don't we we know that Jerusalem was rebuilt they came back from exile the temple was restored but it was never as good as the old temple some of the people returned sacrifices were reintroduced the priests and so on that was an answer to prayer but in the more distant future he's saying after the seven times seven in the 70 times sevens way off into the future what's going to happen well the anointed one will come and the anointed one will come God's anointed the Christ will come there's 70 times seven there's 70th week it's God's perfect timing that's what he's saying it's really simple Galatians in the fullness in the fullness of time and what is going to happen to the anointed one well he will be cut off it's the language of violent death cut off not for himself it's the language of

[ 30 : 15 ] Isaiah isn't it from Isaiah 53 he's cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people why did Jesus die it wasn't an accident it wasn't an awful tragedy it wasn't something out of control he deliberately and voluntarily died in your place taking your sin upon his shoulders for your transgression he became accursed that's what it means really when you have this abomination of the desolation my God my God why have you forsaken me the cross is the most abominable thing that ever happened or will happen when we sinners took God's son and nailed him to a cross he became sin for us he is forsaken by God he was made sin for us he who knew no sin became sin do you see what God has done in Christ he has verse 24 put an end to sin he's brought everlasting righteousness and so tonight if you trust in

Jesus as your sin bearer as the one who died in your place then you never wonder tonight whether you're right with God or not because you are and you don't have to go through life thinking he loves me or he loves me not you don't have to do that because if you trust in Jesus as your sin bearer he's taken what belongs to you he's taken your sin and what belongs to him that perfect and lovely and winsome life is now given to you and you are everlastingly righteous you don't have to go to special seminars on prophecy to work out what this means because he's made an end to prophecy can you see that both vision and prophet are sealed it's all torn up now the veil of the temple was torn at his death all the lines of prophecy converge at the cross you see what is God's answer to Daniel what is God's answer to Daniel's prayer it is Jesus that's what the whole Bible is about and if you've not met Jesus in the

Bible you've not understood the Bible how can God turn the captivity of his people when people wander off and follow false gods and get themselves into a mess and life gets messed up they've not worshipped the true and living God they've made idols they've bowed down to and worshipped and they've been taken into some sort of captivity how can our lives tonight be turned around again how can God turn again the captivity of his people in this country how can God who is holy and righteous and just and good be reconciled to fickle and faithful people like you and I who keep letting him down and disgracing his name how can God keep covenant with covenant breakers none of us keep the promises he's made whether that's in baptism or membership or marriage covenant breakers how can the covenant keep in God keep covenant with covenant breakers and the answer is only to the cross of Jesus and we have to keep coming back to that isn't that your story certainly mine let's pray thanks