

Introduction to Daniel Chapter 9

The Great Confession and the Seventy Weeks: Prayer, Repentance, and the Promise of Ultimate Restoration

Daniel chapter 9 is the most theologically layered chapter in the book — and also the most personally intimate. After the cosmic visions of chapters 7 and 8, with their beasts and thrones and angelic interpreters and prophetic timetables extending to the end of history, the scene in chapter 9 is startlingly human. Daniel is reading. He is in his study, working through the scroll of Jeremiah, and he encounters a specific prophecy that arrests him: seventy years of desolation for Jerusalem. He calculates. He looks at the date. And he realizes — with the clarity of a man who has been paying attention to history — that the seventy years are nearly complete. The exile is almost over. And his response is not celebration. It is prayer. The most extended, most theologically concentrated, most personally costly prayer in the entire book.

The prayer that Daniel prays in chapter 9 is the definitive model of confessional intercession in all of Scripture. It is structured with a precision that reflects decades of formation in the Psalms and the prophets: an address to the covenant God of steadfast love and faithfulness, a sustained confession of corporate sin that takes explicit, unflinching ownership of every failure of Israel across every generation, a declaration of the righteousness of God in all that He has done, a plea for mercy grounded not in Israel's righteousness but in God's great mercies alone, and a specific, urgent petition for the restoration of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. The prayer is not the prayer of a man who considers himself personally innocent. It is the prayer of a man who identifies completely with the people he represents before God — who prays we, not they, who says we have sinned and we have been wicked and we have not listened, even though the personal excellence of Daniel's life has been confirmed by multiple chapters of the book.

The prayer is answered before it is finished. While Daniel is still speaking and praying, Gabriel comes to him in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. The timing is deliberate: the evening sacrifice that should have been offered in Jerusalem but could not be offered because the temple was desolate and the people were in exile — at that hour, when the sacrifice cannot be made, Gabriel arrives with the word of the God who has heard the prayer. And the word he brings is both immediately encouraging and cosmically expansive. Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city — not seven weeks, not seventy years, but seventy weeks of years, four hundred and ninety years — to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

The seventy weeks prophecy is one of the most discussed and most debated passages in the entire Bible, and it would be dishonest to pretend that the interpretive questions are simple or fully resolved. What is clear, and what every serious interpreter agrees on regardless of their eschatological framework, is the theological core of the message: the restoration that Daniel is praying for is not merely the physical return from Babylonian

exile. It is a restoration that reaches to the root of the problem — the transgression, the sin, the iniquity — and addresses it finally and completely. The return from Babylon is a shadow of a deeper return that Gabriel is announcing. And the one who makes that deeper restoration possible is identified in verse 26 as an anointed one who will be cut off and shall have nothing — a figure whose fate is voluntary deprivation and whose cutting off is the mechanism of the reconciliation that the seventy weeks were decreed to accomplish.

Chapter 9 stands at the intersection of two of the great movements of the book: the movement of human prayer reaching upward toward a sovereign God, and the movement of divine response reaching downward through an angelic messenger with a word that extends the horizon of what was prayed for far beyond what the one praying could have imagined. Daniel prays for the restoration of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. He receives a revelation about the ultimate end of sin itself, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the sealing of vision and prophet, and the anointing of the most holy. He prays about the seventy years Jeremiah described. He receives a revelation about seventy weeks of years. He asks about a return from exile. He is shown the ultimate exile-ending event: the cutting off of an Anointed One who takes on himself the cost that no earthly temple restoration could address.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come to Daniel chapter 9 with a recognition that makes us both ashamed and hopeful: ashamed, because the prayer Daniel prays is the prayer that most of us have not prayed — not with this comprehensiveness, not with this honesty, not with this refusal to excuse or minimize or deflect the responsibility that the confession requires. And hopeful, because this is the chapter that shows us what God does when one of His servants prays with this kind of complete honesty about sin and complete trust in His mercy.

Lord, teach us to pray as Daniel prays. Teach us to take corporate responsibility for the failures of the community we belong to — to pray we have sinned rather than they have sinned, to stand before You as representatives of a people rather than individuals eager to distinguish ourselves from the failings of those around us. Give us the willingness to confess what is true, even when what is true is deeply uncomfortable. And give us the confidence that underlies every line of Daniel's prayer: that You are the Lord our God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love You, that righteousness belongs to You and to us the open shame, and that You will act — not because we deserve it, but because of Your great mercies and for the sake of Your own name.

And for those who read the response Gabriel brings — the seventy weeks, the Anointed One cut off, the end of sin, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness — give us the eyes to see what is being promised. The exile that Daniel prays about the end of is the surface problem. The exile from the presence of a holy God — the condition of every human being under sin — is the deep problem. And the response God gives to Daniel's prayer is the response to the deep problem: the One who would be cut off, who would make atonement for iniquity, who would bring in the everlasting righteousness that no human achievement and no institutional restoration could provide.

In Jesus' name — in the name of the Anointed One who was cut off — we pray, Amen.

Daniel 9:1–3

From Scripture to Prayer: The Believer Who Reads and Then Responds

*(1) In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—
(2) in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.
(3) So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*

THE CONTEXT

The year is 539 BC — the first year of the Medo-Persian kingdom following Babylon's fall on the night of Belshazzar's feast. Cyrus the Great has come to power, and under him Darius the Mede governs Babylon. Daniel is now an old man — perhaps in his eighties, having been taken from Jerusalem as a young man approximately sixty-six years earlier. And he is reading. This detail is among the most theologically significant in the chapter: the chapter that contains one of the most profound prayers in Scripture begins not with a mystical experience or a divine vision but with an old man reading his Bible.

The specific text Daniel is reading is Jeremiah's prophecy about the seventy years — almost certainly the passage in Jeremiah 25 and 29 where the prophet declared that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years before the Lord would restore His people. Daniel has been in exile for approximately sixty-six years. He is close enough to the completion of the seventy to recognize it. And the recognition is not met with passive waiting for the prophecy to fulfill itself. It is met with prayer. Daniel understands what the Scripture says and then turns to God in response to what he has understood. Scripture reading leads directly and immediately into prayer. This is the model of the biblically formed prayer life: Scripture shapes the content of prayer, and prayer is the

response to Scripture. The two are not separate activities. They are one movement of the engaged soul toward the God who speaks.

The posture Daniel assumes for the prayer is itself a theological statement. Fasting. Sackcloth. Ashes. These are the three ancient markers of mourning and penitence — the outward expressions of the interior condition that the prayer will make explicit. Daniel is not casually asking God to fulfill His promises. He is prostrating himself before God in the full acknowledgment of what has caused the exile and what its continuation costs the people he loves. The old man who has served with excellence in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and Darius approaches God in sackcloth and ashes. The excellence and the brokenness are not in competition. They are both expressions of the same character — the character of a man who knows both his God and himself with complete clarity.

PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

In the first year of Darius the Mede — who was of Median descent and had been installed as ruler over the Babylonian kingdom — I, Daniel, was studying the Scriptures. I came across the word the Lord had given to the prophet Jeremiah: that Jerusalem's desolation would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and prayed. I fasted. I put on sackcloth and sat in ashes, pouring out my prayer and my plea before Him.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

"I understood from the Scriptures": This signifies **The Prayer That Changes History Begins with the Believer Who Has Actually Read the Word of God and Taken It Seriously.**

Daniel's prayer does not arise from a mystical prompting or a divine vision or an angelic messenger. It arises from reading. He has been studying the scroll of Jeremiah, he encounters a specific promise, he does the calculation, and he realizes — with the full engagement of his mind and his knowledge of history — that the time is near. The prayer that produces Gabriel's visit and the seventy weeks revelation begins with a man reading his Bible. This is the most important and the most consistently neglected truth about intercessory prayer: it is grounded in the knowledge of what God has said He will do, and the knowledge of what God has said He will do comes from reading the word He has given. Daniel intercedes for what God has already promised — which is why the prayer can be prayed with confidence, and why it is answered before it is finished.

"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition": This signifies **The Movement from Scripture to Prayer Is the Essential Movement of the Spiritually Formed Life.**

The word translated 'turned' carries the sense of directional reorientation — the deliberate shifting of attention from the text to the God the text is about. Daniel reads about what God has said He will do and immediately turns toward the God who said it. This is the essential movement of biblical spirituality: not reading about God as an academic exercise that ends with intellectual satisfaction, and not praying without the content that Scripture supplies, but the continuous movement from the word to the One who spoke it. The prayer that follows is not Daniel's construction — it is formed by

everything he has read in the Torah, the Psalms, and the Prophets. The Scripture gives him the language, the theology, the framework of covenant and sin and mercy and hope that the prayer requires.

"With fasting and sackcloth and ashes": This signifies **The Posture of Genuine Intercession Is Never Casual — It Bears the Weight of What Is Being Brought Before God.**

The three elements of Daniel's penitential posture — fasting, sackcloth, and ashes — are not religious performance. They are the physical expression of the interior condition that the prayer requires. Fasting is the deliberate emptying of the body of its ordinary pleasures as a way of expressing that the matter before God is more urgent than the ordinary urgencies of daily life. Sackcloth is the rough, uncomfortable fabric of mourning — the physical discomfort that corresponds to the spiritual discomfort of genuine brokenness over sin. Ashes are the ancient symbol of death, of what remains when everything has been consumed — the acknowledgment that what is being confessed has produced, and deserves, the kind of devastation that ashes represent. The weight of the posture is the weight of what Daniel is carrying into the prayer: not a casual request but the full burden of a people's failure and a city's desolation.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

1. Read the Bible as the Foundation of Your Prayer Life, Not as a Separate Discipline: Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 is a direct product of his Scripture reading. Every major element of the prayer — the covenant name of God, the acknowledgment of sin, the appeal to the character of God rather than the merit of the people, the specific petition for Jerusalem and the sanctuary — is drawn from the prophets and the psalms and the Torah that Daniel has spent his life reading. The person whose prayer life is thin is often the person whose Scripture reading is thin, because the two are inseparable. Scripture gives prayer its content, its direction, its confidence, and its vocabulary. Prayer gives Scripture reading its urgency, its personal application, and its communion with the One who spoke the words. Do not separate them.

2. When You Understand What God Has Promised, the Appropriate Response Is to Pray It Back to Him: Daniel does not merely note the prophecy of Jeremiah and wait for it to fulfill itself. He turns to God in prayer. The recognition that God has promised to do something is not the end of the believer's engagement with that promise — it is the beginning of the intercessory prayer that asks God to do what He has said He will do. This is the logic of all biblical intercession: it is not the attempt to persuade God to do something He is reluctant to do. It is the alignment of the pray-er's will and petition with what God has already declared He intends. Daniel prays the promise because praying the promise is the appropriate response of a person who believes that God means what He says.

3. The Weight of Your Posture in Prayer Should Match the Weight of What You Are Carrying: The fasting and sackcloth and ashes are not required elements of effective prayer — they are the honest expression of a soul that takes seriously what it is bringing before God. Most of our prayer is too casual not because our hearts are bad but because we have not felt the full weight of what we are interceding for. Daniel prays in

sackcloth and ashes because he has felt the full weight of Jerusalem's desolation, of his people's exile, of the corporate sin that produced both. The prayer that carries that weight looks and feels different from the prayer that does not. Pray with the posture that matches the weight you are carrying.

HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The movement from Scripture reading to prayer that Daniel demonstrates in these three verses is the single most important corrective available to the contemporary church's prayer life — because the great failure of contemporary Christian prayer is not primarily a failure of desire or discipline. It is a failure of content. Prayer that is not formed by Scripture tends to become prayer that is shaped by the emotional state of the moment, the urgency of the immediate need, or the theological assumptions of the culture — which is to say, prayer that has lost its anchor in the specific, reliable, character-revealing word of the God being addressed. Daniel prays with confidence because he knows what God has said. The believer who does not know what God has said has no comparable confidence to draw on.

The physical posture of Daniel's prayer — fasting, sackcloth, ashes — also speaks to the contemporary tendency to reduce prayer to a purely interior, cognitive exercise that requires no physical engagement and produces no physical cost. The biblical tradition of prayer is consistently more embodied than this: kneeling, prostration, fasting, the lifting of hands, the tearing of garments, the pouring of dust on the head. These are not superstitions or religious theater. They are the honest expression of the body's participation in what the soul is doing — the acknowledgment that the whole person, not merely the mind, is engaged in the act of standing before the living God with the full weight of what needs to be said.

Key Lesson: *The greatest prayer in the book of Daniel begins not with a vision or a mystical experience but with an old man reading Jeremiah and doing the math — and the lesson it teaches is that the prayer which changes history is the prayer that is formed by the word of God, grounded in what God has already promised, and carried into His presence with the full weight of what is being confessed and petitioned.*

Daniel 9:4–19

The Great Confession: We Have Sinned, Lord, But You Are Merciful

(4) I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:
'Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments,
(5) we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.
(6) We have not listened to your servants the prophets,

who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors,
 and to all the people of the land.
 (7) Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—
 the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel,
 both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered them
 because of their unfaithfulness to you.
 (8) We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame,
 LORD,
 because we have sinned against you.
 (9) The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled
 against him;
 (10) we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us
 through his servants the prophets.
 (11) All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey
 you.
 Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses,
 the servant of God, have been poured out on us,
 because we have sinned against you.
 (12) You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers
 by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever
 been done
 like what has been done to Jerusalem.
 (13) Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us,
 yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God
 by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.
 (14) The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us,
 for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does;
 yet we have not obeyed him.
 (15) Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty
 hand
 and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day,
 we have sinned, we have done wrong.
 (16) Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts,
 turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city,
 your holy mountain. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors
 have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.
 (17) Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant.
 For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary.
 (18) My God, turn your ear to me and hear. Open your eyes and see the
 desolation
 of the city that bears your Name. We do not make our requests of you
 because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.
 (19) Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, act! For your sake, my God,
 do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.'

THE CONTEXT

The prayer itself occupies sixteen verses — more than any other single prayer in the book of Daniel — and it is structured with extraordinary theological care. It begins with the address: Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments. This is not a generic opening. It is a deliberate, theologically loaded identification of the God Daniel is addressing: the

covenant God, the God of steadfast love, the God who is both great and awesome in His power and faithful in His commitment to those who belong to Him. The contrast between God's greatness and faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness is the theological engine that drives the entire prayer.

The confession that follows is notable for its comprehensiveness and its complete refusal of any self-exculpation. We have sinned — the full catalog of what that means is spelled out in verses 5 through 6: done wrong, been wicked, rebelled, turned away from commands and laws, not listened to the prophets. Every generation and every social stratum is included: we and our kings, our princes and our ancestors — the whole nation across its entire history. No one is exempted from the confession. No subgroup is held up as the faithful remnant that can distinguish itself from the sinning majority. Daniel, who has maintained remarkable personal integrity for decades of exile, prays we have sinned as though the guilt were his own. This is the defining feature of genuine corporate intercession: the intercessor identifies with the people rather than distinguishing himself from them.

The structural backbone of the confession is the sustained contrast between divine righteousness and human shame. You are righteous — we are covered with shame. Your word has been fulfilled exactly as written — we have not turned from our sins. You did not hesitate to bring the disaster — we have not listened. The God who is being addressed has done nothing wrong. Every element of the disaster that has come upon Jerusalem and the people is the direct, just, specific consequence of what the people have done and refused to do. Daniel does not argue with the exile. He accepts the justice of it completely. And the acceptance of the justice of God's action is the foundation from which the petition for mercy can be genuinely and credibly made.

The petition that closes the prayer rises in urgency as it approaches its end: hear the prayers — look with favor — turn your ear — open your eyes — listen, forgive, act. The escalation of the imperatives is the escalation of urgency — the movement from the measured, theologically careful confession toward the raw, urgent, personal cry of a man who needs God to act now. And the basis of the petition — stated explicitly in verse 18 and restated in verse 19 — is not Israel's righteousness but God's great mercy and for the sake of Your own name. The prayer grounds itself in the character of the One being addressed, not in the merit of the one addressing Him. This is the only possible basis for genuine intercession: not what we deserve, but who He is.

PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

I prayed to the Lord my God and made this confession: 'O Lord — the great and awesome God, who faithfully keeps His covenant with those who love Him and obey His commands — we have sinned. We have done wrong. We have been wicked. We have rebelled. We have turned away from Your commands and Your laws. We have refused to listen to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and leaders and ancestors and to everyone in the land. Lord, You are in the right — but we are covered in shame today. All of us: the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem and all Israel, near and far, in every country where You have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness. We are all ashamed — our kings, our leaders, our ancestors — because we have sinned against You. But Lord our God, You are merciful and forgiving, even

though we have rebelled against You. We have not obeyed You or followed the laws You gave us through Your servants the prophets. All Israel has broken Your law and gone their own way, refusing to listen to You. And so the curses and judgments that were written in the Law of Moses — Your servant's law — have fallen on us, because we sinned against You. You have done exactly what You said You would do: You brought on us and our rulers the great disaster. Under the whole sky, nothing has happened to any city like what has happened to Jerusalem. Everything that was written in the Law of Moses has come true. And still — even after all this — we have not turned back to You or paid attention to Your truth. You were completely right to bring this disaster on us, Lord our God. You are just in everything You do. But we have still not listened. And now, Lord our God — the One who brought Your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and made for Yourself a name that has endured to this day — we have sinned, we have done wrong. Lord, in all Your righteousness, turn away Your anger and wrath from Jerusalem — Your holy mountain, Your city. Our sins and the sins of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and Your people an object of contempt to everyone around us. So now, our God — hear the prayers and requests of Your servant. For Your own sake, Lord, show favor to Your desolate sanctuary. Listen to me, my God. Open Your eyes and see the devastation of the city that bears Your name. We are not asking You to act because we are righteous — we are asking because of Your great mercy. Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, act! Do not wait, my God — for the sake of Your name, because Your city and Your people bear Your name.'

KEY OBSERVATIONS

"We have sinned and done wrong — we have been wicked and have rebelled": This signifies **The Completeness of the Confession Is the Measure of the Confessor's Honesty Before God.**

The four-part declaration in verse 5 — sinned, done wrong, been wicked, rebelled — is not rhetorical repetition. Each term adds a dimension to the confession: sinning is the missing of the mark, the failure to achieve what God required; doing wrong is the active commission of what God prohibited; being wicked is the characterization of the heart from which the wrong actions flow; rebellion is the posture of deliberate, willful defiance against a known and acknowledged authority. Together they cover every possible dimension of human failure before God: the inadvertent and the deliberate, the behavioral and the dispositional, the passive and the active. Daniel does not select the most palatable category of failure and confess only that. He confesses the whole of what Israel has been, without qualification and without evasion.

"Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame": This signifies **The Confession That Accepts the Full Justice of God's Action Is the Foundation of the Petition That Asks for His Mercy.**

The structural contrast between divine righteousness and human shame — stated repeatedly and explicitly throughout the prayer — is the theological spine of the entire confession. Daniel does not argue that the exile is unjust or that God has overreacted or that Israel's failures were somehow understandable given the circumstances. He accepts the full weight of divine righteousness: God has been faithful to His word, God has acted justly, God has done nothing that does not correspond exactly to what He said He would

do. And the acceptance of this is not resignation or despair. It is the necessary precondition for asking for mercy — because the person who has not accepted the justice of the judgment cannot ask for mercy with integrity. Mercy is only meaningful when it is received by someone who knows they deserve what mercy is rescinding.

"We have not listened to your servants the prophets": This signifies **The Refusal to Hear the Word of God Is the Root Failure That Produces Every Other Failure.**

Daniel identifies the failure to listen to the prophets as the pivotal sin that underlies the entire catalog of Israel's failures. The prophets spoke in God's name to kings and princes and ancestors and all the people. And Israel did not listen. This is the diagnostic observation that runs beneath every other failure in the confession: the disconnection from the word of God is what makes every other disconnection possible. When a people stops listening to the word that God speaks into their life — through the Scriptures, through the prophets, through the faithful preaching of His word — every other element of faithfulness becomes unsustainable. The worship loses its grounding. The ethics loses its shape. The identity loses its definition. The refusal to listen to the prophets is not one sin among many. It is the sin that opens the door to all the others.

"We do not make our requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy": This signifies **The Only Valid Basis for Petition Is the Character of God, Not the Merit of the Petitioner.**

Verse 18 contains the most important statement in the entire prayer — the explicit declaration of the basis on which the petition is made. Not because we are righteous. Because of Your great mercy. This is the theological heart of all biblical intercession: the approach to God is not merit-based. It cannot be, because the confession that has occupied the preceding fourteen verses has established beyond any possible argument that the petitioner has no merit to bring. The approach is mercy-based — grounded in the character of the God who is being addressed, who has defined Himself as merciful and forgiving even to those who have rebelled against Him. This is the only basis that can sustain prayer through any honest reckoning with the actual condition of the one praying. Not my righteousness. Your mercy. Lord, I have nothing to bring except the need. You have everything that need requires. Act for Your own sake.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

1. Pray We Have Sinned — Not They Have Sinned: The most striking feature of Daniel's prayer is the persistent use of the first person plural. Daniel does not pray Lord, they have sinned — the leaders, the ancestors, the rebellious majority that dragged the rest of the nation into exile. He prays we have sinned. He includes himself in the confession of every generation's failure: our kings, our princes, our ancestors. This is the identifying mark of genuine corporate intercession: the willingness to bear the weight of the community's failure as though it were personal. The intercessor who prays they have sinned has separated themselves from the people they claim to represent. The intercessor who prays we have sinned has identified with them completely — and it is from that identification that genuine intercession becomes possible.

2. Accept the Justice of Every Divine Discipline Before You Ask for Mercy:

Daniel does not petition for mercy before he has accepted the full justice of what has happened. The confession of divine righteousness — Lord, you are right, you have done exactly what you said you would do, you did not hesitate to bring the disaster — precedes and grounds the petition for restoration. This is the sequence that makes the petition for mercy coherent: you cannot ask God to relent from a judgment you have not acknowledged to be just, because a request for the relenting of an unjust judgment is not a petition for mercy — it is an argument about God's character. Accept what God has done as just. Receive the discipline as righteousness. Then ask for mercy on the basis of who He is, not on the basis of a disputed claim about what you deserved.

3. Ground Every Petition in God's Name, Not in Your Need: The three-part urgency of verse 19 — Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, act! — is grounded in a single repeated phrase: for Your sake, because Your city and Your people bear Your Name. Daniel's most urgent petition is not primarily about what the people need. It is about what God's name requires. The city bears His name. The people bear His name. The desolation of both is a reproach to the name of the God who called them His own. This reframing of petition — from my need to Your name — is not a manipulation strategy. It is the recognition that the deepest motivation for God's action on behalf of His people is not their suffering but His glory. And when the petition is aligned with what God cares most about — the honor of His own name — it becomes the petition that He is most disposed to answer.

HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The form of Daniel's prayer — the corporate confession, the sustained acceptance of divine righteousness, the appeal to God's character rather than human merit — is the form that every genuine revival prayer has taken in the history of the church. From the reformation of Josiah to the great awakenings of the eighteenth century to the twentieth century's most significant spiritual renewals, the pattern is consistent: the prayer that precedes genuine corporate restoration is not the prayer that asks God to bless what the community is doing. It is the prayer that kneels in sackcloth and ashes, confesses what the community has done and refused to do, accepts the justice of whatever consequences have followed, and asks for mercy on the basis of who God is and for the sake of His own name. Daniel's prayer is the template. The communities that have prayed it most honestly have experienced the restorations it describes.

The specific content of the confession — we have not listened to your servants the prophets — is also a direct challenge to the contemporary church's relationship to the word of God. The prophets of today are the preachers and teachers who faithfully expound the Scripture, who speak what God has said rather than what the culture wants to hear, who maintain the word's authority over against the pressures of social acceptability and institutional convenience. The failure to listen to the prophets that produced Israel's exile is the failure to receive the word of God in its full demand on human life — to hear it selectively, to apply it partially, to treat the parts that require costly change as advisory rather than binding. The we have not listened of Daniel's prayer is a word that every generation of the church needs to pray with specific reference to the ways it has tuned out the word it found most inconvenient.

Key Lesson: *The prayer of Daniel chapter 9 is the most complete model of confessional intercession in Scripture — we have sinned, You are righteous, we ask not because of our merit but because of Your great mercy, for Your own sake and for the sake of Your name — and it is the prayer that God answers before it is finished, because the prayer that is grounded in the character of God is always the prayer that reaches the ears of the God whose character it describes.*

Daniel 9:20–23

Gabriel's Arrival: The Answer That Comes While the Prayer Is Still Being Spoken

*(20) While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy mountain—
(21) while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.
(22) He instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding.
(23) As soon as you began to pray, a command was issued. I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Consider the message and understand the vision.'*

THE CONTEXT

Four verses that compress an extraordinary sequence of events into the briefest possible narration. Daniel is still praying — still in the middle of the confession and the petition, still speaking the words of verse 19's urgent cry — when Gabriel arrives. The timing is deliberate and theologically significant: the answer to the prayer is already in motion before the prayer has concluded. Gabriel comes in swift flight — the swiftness of the flight corresponding to the urgency of the answer — at the time of the evening sacrifice. The evening sacrifice that should have been offered in Jerusalem but cannot be offered because the temple is desolate. At the hour when the absence of the sacrifice is most keenly felt, when the desolation that Daniel has been praying about is most precisely embodied in the liturgical silence of the missing offering, Gabriel arrives with God's response.

Gabriel's identification of himself is gentle and orienting: I am the one you saw in the earlier vision — a reference to the vision of chapter 8 where Gabriel first appeared to interpret the ram and the goat. He has been sent again, for the same purpose: to give Daniel insight and understanding about a vision whose scope and significance exceeds what Daniel has yet grasped. And the word he brings about the timing of God's response is one of the most encouraging statements in the chapter: as soon as you began to pray, a command was issued. Not after the prayer was concluded. Not after Daniel had prayed

long enough. The moment Daniel turned to God in prayer — the moment the prayer began — the response was already being dispatched.

The characterization of Daniel — you are highly esteemed — is not flattery. It is the description of the relationship that exists between this man and his God: a relationship of deep mutual regard, of God's genuine delight in the faithfulness of the servant who has opened his windows toward Jerusalem for decades, who has maintained his integrity through Babylonian and Persian courts, who now kneels in sackcloth and ashes to confess the sins of a people he loves. The highly esteemed is the language of covenant intimacy — the language of a God who sees His servant completely and regards what He sees with profound appreciation. And it is specifically to this person — not to the professionally religious, not to the institutionally powerful, not to those who have carefully managed their public image — that Gabriel is sent in swift flight with the word of God.

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While I was still speaking in prayer — confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, bringing my request before the Lord my God on behalf of His holy mountain — while I was still praying, Gabriel suddenly appeared. He was the same person I had seen in the earlier vision, and he arrived in swift flight at around the time of the evening sacrifice. He spoke to me, saying: 'Daniel, I have come right now to give you insight and understanding. The moment you began to pray, a command went out, and I have come to tell you about it — because you are highly regarded. So pay close attention to the message and to the meaning of the vision.'

KEY OBSERVATIONS

"While I was still in prayer, Gabriel came to me in swift flight": This signifies **The Speed of God's Response to Genuine Intercessory Prayer Is One of the Most Encouraging Realities in the Book of Daniel.**

Gabriel arrives while Daniel is still speaking. Not after a period of waiting. Not after the prayer has been repeated multiple times. While the words are still being spoken, the answer is already arriving. The swift flight of Gabriel is the narrative's way of expressing the immediacy of God's engagement with Daniel's prayer — the complete attentiveness of the God who hears, who responds, who does not require the prayer to be sustained beyond the moment of genuine, earnest, Scripture-grounded petition. This does not mean that all prayer is answered immediately or that the experience of waiting has no place in the life of faith. Daniel himself will wait in chapter 10. But in this specific instance, the immediacy of the response is the text's declaration about the character of the God who is being addressed: He is not distant, not reluctant, not requiring to be persuaded. He hears, and He responds.

"As soon as you began to pray, a command was issued": This signifies **The Command of Response Goes Out Before the Prayer Has Been Completed — Before Even Daniel Knows What He Is About to Ask.**

The most stunning detail in Gabriel's message is the timing of the divine command: as soon as you began to pray. Not as soon as you finished praying. As soon as you began.

The command that sends Gabriel in swift flight is issued at the moment Daniel turns toward God in prayer — before the full confession has been made, before the petition has been articulated, before the urgency of Lord, listen, Lord, forgive, Lord, act has been expressed. This is the testimony of a God who does not wait for His people to complete the performance of a prayer before He responds to the heart that has turned toward Him. The beginning of the turning is enough. The posture of prayer — the orientation toward God, the willingness to come before Him — already elicits the response that the full articulation of the prayer will eventually receive.

"You are highly esteemed": This signifies **The Relationship That Makes the Prayer Effective Is Not the Performance of the Prayer but the Character of the One Who Prays.**

Gabriel's characterization of Daniel — highly esteemed, a phrase used twice in the book, once here and once in chapter 10 — is the most personal element of the divine response to the prayer. God does not merely hear Daniel's words. He sees Daniel himself — the man behind the prayer, the character that the decades of faithful service have formed, the person who kneels in sackcloth and ashes at the age of perhaps eighty and confesses the sins of a people as though they were his own. The high esteem in which God holds Daniel is not the esteem of God for Daniel's technique of prayer or his theological precision. It is the esteem of a Father for a son who has walked faithfully with Him through furnaces and dens and courts and exiles and visions — who has maintained the open windows and the three-times-daily kneeling and the resolved heart across an entire lifetime. The character is the credential.

"I have now come to give you insight and understanding": This signifies **The Purpose of Divine Revelation Is Always Formation — the Production in the Recipient of the Understanding That Changes How They See and Live.**

Gabriel's stated purpose — to give Daniel insight and understanding — is the purpose of every act of divine communication in the book. Not to satisfy curiosity. Not to provide prophetic timetables for academic analysis. Not to supply the raw material for eschatological speculation. Insight and understanding: the capacity to see reality as it actually is, from the perspective that only the God who governs reality can supply. The revelation of the seventy weeks that follows is given not so that Daniel will have more prophetic information but so that Daniel will understand — will see the whole of what God is doing with Jerusalem and the people and the exile and the restoration, from the vantage point of the purpose that reaches all the way to the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. Understanding, not merely information. Formation, not merely data.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

1. The Moment You Turn Toward God in Prayer, the Response Is Already in Motion: The as soon as you began to pray of verse 23 is the most practically encouraging word in the chapter for the believer who doubts whether their prayer is reaching anyone. The command was issued at the beginning. Not at the end. Not after a sufficient duration of supplication. At the beginning. The God who is being addressed by genuine, Scripture-grounded, honestly confessing, mercy-appealing prayer does not require the prayer to be completed before He begins to respond. He is already responding. The answer may take time to arrive in the form that Daniel can perceive and

receive — the seventy weeks of years is a long time. But the divine response to genuine prayer begins at the moment the genuine prayer begins. This is the confidence that keeps the pray-er praying.

2. The Character That Makes Prayer Effective Is Built Over a Lifetime, Not Assembled for the Occasion: Daniel is highly esteemed not because he has prayed particularly well on this particular evening but because he is the person his entire life has made him. The open windows. The three-times-daily kneeling. The resolved heart that did not defile itself in chapter 1. The composure under a death decree in chapter 2. The faithfulness in the den in chapter 6. All of it has built the character that Gabriel calls highly esteemed. The prayer that God responds to most immediately is the prayer of the person whose whole life has been a preparation for the prayer — not the isolated performance of a technique that bypasses the character formation that the technique was designed to express. Build the life. The prayer will flow from it.

3. Ask God for Insight and Understanding, Not Merely for Information: Gabriel comes to give Daniel insight and understanding — not merely data about the future. The distinction matters for every believer who approaches the prophetic sections of Daniel. The goal of engaging with Daniel chapter 9's seventy weeks is not to achieve confident mastery of a prophetic timetable. It is to receive the understanding of what God is doing — the vast, redemptive, sin-ending, righteousness-bringing, anointed-one-cutting-off purposes that the timetable describes. Ask for understanding, not merely information. The information without the understanding produces the kind of confident eschatological speculation that Daniel's overwhelmed, appalled, face-pale response in chapter 8 suggests is not the intended outcome of receiving the revelation.

HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The arrival of Gabriel at the time of the evening sacrifice — the hour when the sacrifice is missing, when the desolation of the temple is most precisely felt in the liturgical silence of what cannot be offered — is the chapter's most theologically concentrated image of the intersection between human longing and divine response. The sacrifice that should be offered but cannot be. The prayer that rises in the absence of the sacrifice. And the answer that arrives at the hour when the absence is most keenly felt. This is the pattern of God's engagement with His people's suffering: He does not come in the hours of abundance and liturgical fullness. He comes at the evening sacrifice that cannot be made, at the moment of greatest desolation, at the hour when the absence of what should be present is most painfully evident. The arrival of Gabriel at the time of the evening sacrifice is the foreshadowing of the ultimate divine arrival at the ultimate hour of absence — the incarnation, which comes at the fullness of time, when the absence of genuine atonement is most precisely felt.

The phrase you are highly esteemed — appearing here and in chapter 10 — is also a word of extraordinary pastoral comfort for the believer who fears that their prayer life is too inadequate, too inconsistent, too theologically imprecise to be heard by the God they are addressing. Gabriel does not say to Daniel: your prayer technique is correct, or your theology is precise, or your confession was sufficiently comprehensive. He says: you are highly esteemed. The basis of God's responsiveness to Daniel is not the performance of a correct prayer but the character of a person who has walked with Him long enough and

honestly enough to be known and valued by Him. The God who highly esteems Daniel highly esteems every person who has walked with Him in honest, sustained, faithful relationship — even imperfectly, even with all the gaps and inconsistencies that characterize every human prayer life. He sees the person, not merely the performance.

Key Lesson: *As soon as Daniel began to pray, a command was issued and Gabriel was sent in swift flight — which means that the prayer of the highly esteemed person who has turned toward God with their whole heart does not have to reach a certain level of performance or duration before God responds; the response begins at the beginning, because the God who hears the prayer sees the person praying it and has already moved before the words have reached their conclusion.*

Daniel 9:24–27

The Seventy Weeks: The Scope of God's Ultimate Answer to the Prayer for Restoration

*(24) 'Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.
(25) Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.
(26) After the sixty-two weeks, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.
The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.
(27) He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. In the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.'*

THE CONTEXT

The response God gives to Daniel's prayer is the most expansive possible answer to the most specific possible petition. Daniel prays for Jerusalem and the sanctuary and the people in exile — for the restoration that Jeremiah's seventy years have promised and whose time seems to be near. And God answers with a revelation that stretches from Daniel's present to the ultimate end of sin itself — from the return from Babylon to the atoning work of the Anointed One who will be cut off, from the rebuilding of Jerusalem's streets and walls to the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. The answer contains what was asked for — the restoration of Jerusalem is part of the seventy weeks — but the

answer is vastly larger than what was asked for, because the question behind the question of exile and restoration is the question of sin and its ultimate end.

The seventy weeks — literally seventy sevens of years, giving a total of four hundred and ninety years — are decreed to accomplish six specific purposes, all of which point beyond any merely political or institutional restoration. To finish the transgression: the completion and consummation of human rebellion against God. To put an end to sin: not merely to forgive specific instances of sin but to bring the era of sin to its conclusion. To atone for iniquity: the making of a sacrifice sufficient to cover every count of human guilt before God. To bring in everlasting righteousness: not the temporary righteousness of a reformed institution but the permanent righteousness of a new creation. To seal up vision and prophecy: the completion of the prophetic word, the fulfillment of everything that the prophets have been pointing toward. To anoint the most holy place: the consecration of the ultimate sanctuary. These six purposes are not fulfilled by the return from Babylon or the rebuilding of Jerusalem. They are the purposes of the entire redemptive plan of God.

The central and most theologically loaded verse in the entire passage is verse 26: after the sixty-two weeks, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The Anointed One — the Messiah, the *mashiach* in Hebrew — will be cut off. The word for cut off is the same word used in the Mosaic law for the covenant penalty of exclusion and death. The Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing — will receive nothing that His anointing would entitle Him to receive. No kingdom. No throne. No vindication from the human authorities who cut Him off. And the people of the ruler who comes will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The most natural reading of this sequence — the Anointed One cut off, the city and sanctuary subsequently destroyed — corresponds precisely to the sequence of the crucifixion of Jesus followed by the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 AD. The vision given to Daniel in 539 BC describes, with this precision, the sequence of events that would occur five hundred and sixty years later.

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Gabriel continued: 'Seventy sevens of years have been decreed for your people and your holy city. During this time, six things will be accomplished: the rebellion will be brought to its completion; sin will be brought to an end; iniquity will be fully atoned for; everlasting righteousness will be brought in; every vision and prophecy will be sealed up and fulfilled; and the most holy place will be anointed. Here is what you need to know and understand: From the time the word goes out to rebuild and restore Jerusalem until the Anointed Ruler arrives, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with its streets and its defensive trench, but it will be a time of trouble and pressure. After those sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and left with nothing. The forces of a ruler yet to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will arrive like a flood — war and desolations will continue right up until the decreed end. This coming ruler will impose a covenant on many for one final seven. But in the middle of that seven, he will bring sacrifice and offering to a halt. He will place an abomination that causes desolation in the temple — until the end that has been decreed comes down on him.'

KEY OBSERVATIONS

"Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city": This signifies **God's Answer to the Prayer for Restoration Is Always Larger Than the Restoration Being Prayed For.**

Daniel prays for the end of the seventy years of exile and the restoration of Jerusalem. God's answer involves seventy weeks of years — a period roughly seven times longer than what Daniel was praying about — and accomplishes purposes that dwarf the physical restoration of a city. The pattern is the consistent pattern of biblical prayer: what is asked for in faith, from a heart genuinely aligned with what God cares about, receives an answer that exceeds the request by a factor that the pray-er could not have anticipated. Daniel asks for a city restored. God answers with sin ended, iniquity atoned, everlasting righteousness brought in, the Anointed One given, and the most holy place consecrated. The God who answers prayer does not merely supply what is asked. He supplies the purpose behind what is asked — and the purpose behind every prayer for restoration is always the ultimate restoration that only He can bring.

"To finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness": This signifies **The Six Purposes of the Seventy Weeks Are the Six Dimensions of the Comprehensive Redemption That No Earthly Restoration Could Accomplish.**

The six purposes listed in verse 24 are arranged in a progression from the problem to the solution: the transgression will be finished — brought to its completion and conclusion. Sin will be put to an end — not merely managed or reduced but ended. Iniquity will be atoned for — covered, expiated, the debt fully paid by a sufficient sacrifice. Everlasting righteousness will be brought in — not the temporary righteousness of reformed institutions but the permanent righteousness of the new creation that the prophets described. Vision and prophecy will be sealed — the entire prophetic witness of the Old Testament will be fulfilled and confirmed by its completion. The most holy place will be anointed — the ultimate sanctuary, the dwelling place of God with His people, will be consecrated by the One who anoints it. Together these six purposes describe not the restoration of a political entity but the redemption of the entire created order — the work that the New Testament will describe as the reconciliation of all things through the blood of the cross.

"The Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing": This signifies **The Most Important Sentence in the Entire Seventy Weeks Prophecy Describes a Death That Is Voluntary, Costly, and Precisely Timed.**

The cutting off of the Anointed One is the theological center of the entire passage — the event around which all six purposes of the seventy weeks turn, the event that makes every one of them possible. The Anointed One is cut off — the language of covenant death, of exclusion, of the penalty that falls on the one who bears the transgression of others. He is cut off and will have nothing — no kingdom, no throne, no earthly vindication, no reward from the human authorities who execute the cutting off. This is the most direct Old Testament prediction of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: the Messiah, who is expected to receive a kingdom, is cut off instead. Who receives nothing instead of everything His anointing entitles Him to receive. Who is cut off precisely after the sixty-nine weeks and before the seventieth — in the gap that corresponds to the entire church

age — making atonement for iniquity and bringing in the everlasting righteousness that the seventy weeks were decreed to produce.

"And desolations have been decreed": This signifies **The Vision That Answers a Prayer About the End of Desolation Also Describes the Continuation of Desolation Across a Long Intermediate Period.**

The repeated references to desolation in verses 26 and 27 — the city and sanctuary destroyed, war until the end, desolations decreed, the abomination that causes desolation — are the vision's honest acknowledgment that the period between the cutting off of the Anointed One and the final end is not a period of unbroken peace and restoration. It is a period of continued conflict, continued desolation, continued pressure against the people who bear the name of the God who decreed the seventy weeks. The decree that begins with the promise of restoration ends with the acknowledgment of an intermediate period of sustained difficulty — a period that Jesus Himself will describe in Matthew 24, citing this very passage, as the period between His first and second comings. The honesty of the prophecy about the intermediate difficulty is the measure of its trustworthiness about the ultimate resolution.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

1. The Answer to Every Prayer for Restoration Points Ultimately to the Atonement of Christ: Daniel prays for the restoration of Jerusalem and receives a revelation about the Anointed One who will be cut off and will make atonement for iniquity. This is not a tangential response to an unrelated petition. It is the most direct possible answer to the deepest version of Daniel's prayer — because the exile that most needs to be ended is not the political exile from a geographical homeland but the theological exile of a sinful humanity from the presence of a holy God. And the restoration that ends that exile is not the rebuilding of a wall or the rededication of a sanctuary. It is the cutting off of the One whose sacrifice is sufficient to atone for every count of iniquity that has accumulated across the entire history of the transgression. Every prayer for restoration, prayed honestly and deeply enough, leads to the cross.

2. The Precision of the Seventy Weeks Prophecy Is One of Scripture's Greatest Gifts to Faith Under Pressure: For the believer who is in a season of doubt — who is struggling with the question of whether the biblical account is reliable, whether the God of Daniel is the God who actually governs history, whether the promises of the gospel can be trusted — the seventy weeks prophecy is a gift of extraordinary proportions. The prediction of the Anointed One's cutting off, precisely timed, following the sixty-nine weeks from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, is the kind of verifiable prophetic correspondence that no natural explanation can account for. The God who gave Daniel this vision knew exactly who was coming, approximately when, and what would happen to Him. The same God has made promises about what comes after the cutting off. If the prediction of the cutting off can be trusted, the promise of the resurrection and the return can be trusted on the same basis.

3. The Church Age Is the Intermediate Period Between the Cutting Off and the Final End — Live With the Urgency That This Position Requires: The gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks — the period between the cutting off of the

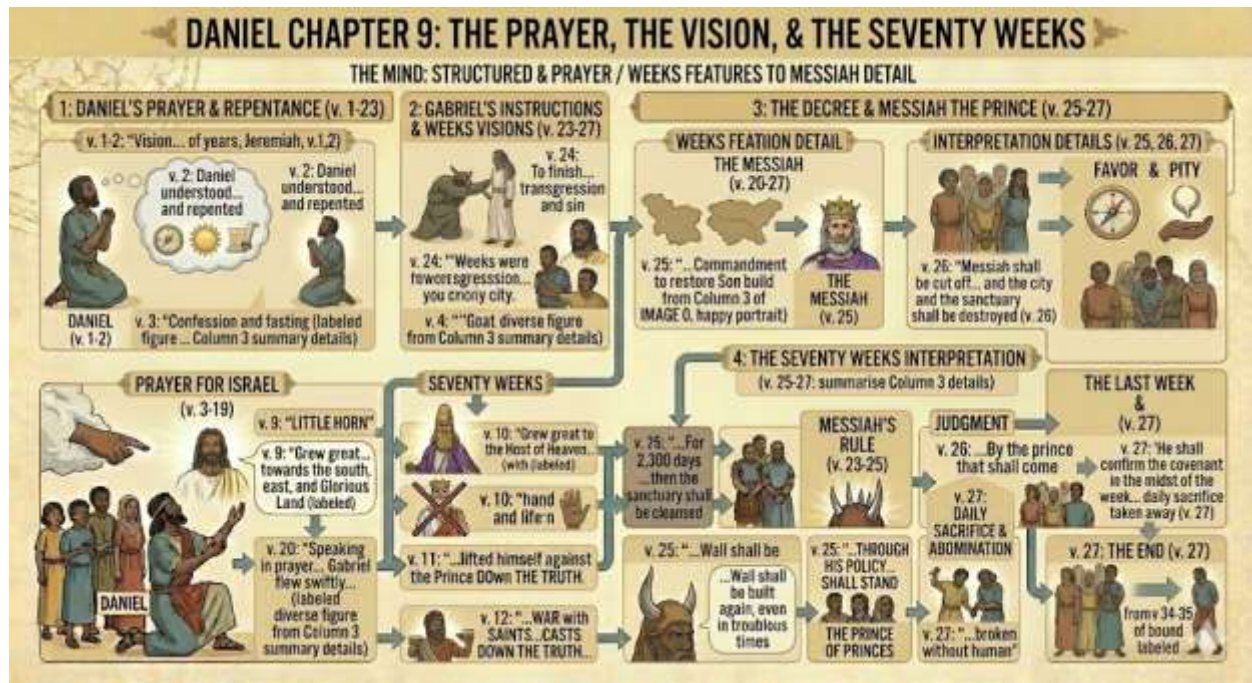
Anointed One and the final week — corresponds, in the most widely held Christian interpretation, to the church age: the entire period from the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus to His return. If this reading is correct, then every believer is living in the gap — in the intermediate period that the vision describes as a time of war and desolations, but that is also the period of the gospel's advance, the gathering of the nations, the filling up of the kingdom that the Son of Man received from the Ancient of Days. Live in the gap with the urgency of people who know what follows it.

HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The six purposes of the seventy weeks — finishing the transgression, ending sin, atoning for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing vision and prophecy, anointing the most holy place — are the six dimensions of what the New Testament calls the finished work of Christ. The transgression is finished in the sense that Christ's death absorbs and concludes the legal weight of every count of human rebellion. Sin is put to an end in the sense that its dominion over those who are in Christ has been broken at the root. Iniquity is atoned for by the one sufficient sacrifice of the Anointed One who was cut off. Everlasting righteousness is brought in through the imputation of Christ's righteousness to those who trust in Him. Vision and prophecy are sealed in the sense that Christ is the fulfillment of everything the prophets pointed toward. And the most holy place is anointed in the sense that the Spirit of the living God, who descended on Christ at His baptism, now dwells in the community of those who belong to Him. Every one of the six purposes of the seventy weeks finds its fulfillment in the New Testament's account of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The cutting off of the Anointed One has also been a source of enormous pastoral comfort and theological confidence for believers across two millennia — precisely because of its specificity, its timing, and the contrast between what the Anointed One was entitled to receive and what He voluntarily accepted in its place. He was cut off and had nothing — no earthly kingdom, no political vindication, no reward from the authorities who crucified Him. And yet the New Testament's claim is that this voluntary cutting-off, this willing acceptance of having nothing, was the mechanism by which everything was accomplished: the transgression finished, the sin ended, the iniquity atoned, the righteousness brought in. The One who had nothing gave everything. And those who have nothing in themselves receive everything through Him. This is the gospel embedded in the seventy weeks of Daniel 9, hidden in plain sight in the most discussed and debated passage of the most studied prophetic book in the Old Testament.

Key Lesson: *The seventy weeks are decreed to accomplish what no earthly restoration could accomplish — to finish the transgression, end sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal the prophets, and anoint the most holy place — and the mechanism by which all six are accomplished is the cutting off of the Anointed One who receives nothing so that those for whom He is cut off may receive everything, which is why Daniel's prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem receives an answer that stretches all the way to the cross and beyond it to the everlasting righteousness that the cross alone can bring.*



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We close Daniel chapter 9 at the intersection of the most honest prayer in the book and the most expansive answer in the book — the prayer that confesses we have sinned and have nothing to bring but Your great mercy, and the answer that reaches from the return from Babylon all the way to the cutting off of the Anointed One and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. We have been in the presence of both the prayer and the answer, and we are undone by both.

Lord, teach us to pray as Daniel prays. Not the prayer that manages Your expectations of us by presenting our best side and minimizing our worst. The prayer that kneels in sackcloth and ashes and says: we have sinned. We have done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled. We have not listened to Your servants the prophets. Lord, You are righteous and we are covered with shame. We do not come to You because we are righteous. We come because of Your great mercy. Lord, listen. Lord, forgive. Lord, act. For Your own sake, because Your people bear Your name.

Give us the confidence to pray what Daniel prays — not the false confidence of people who believe they are bringing something worthy to the throne, but the genuine confidence of people who have understood that the throne they are approaching is the throne of the God who keeps

covenant and steadfast love, who is merciful and forgiving even to those who have rebelled against Him, and who sends Gabriel in swift flight as soon as the prayer begins, before it is even finished.

And for those who have encountered the seventy weeks for the first time — who are seeing for the first time what it means that the Anointed One was cut off and had nothing, that the six purposes of the seventy weeks find their fulfillment in the One who made atonement for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness — give them the grace to receive it not merely as prophetic data but as the word about what was done for them specifically. The transgression that was finished was theirs. The iniquity that was atoned for was theirs. The everlasting righteousness that was brought in is theirs — not because of anything they have brought or done, but because the Anointed One was cut off in their place, receiving nothing so that they might receive everything.

And for those who are currently in exile — who are experiencing the intermediate period of war and desolations that the vision describes, who are in the gap between the cutting off and the final end — remind them that the decree is moving toward its conclusion, that the desolations that are decreed are decreed with a limit, and that the everlasting righteousness that is coming is as certain as the cutting off that has already happened.

In the name of the Anointed One who was cut off — in the name of Jesus, who had nothing so that we might have everything — we pray, Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
Glory to God Alone