

Daniel 9 (Part 1) - John Karmelich

Let me begin by saying, I've been looking forward to sending this lesson for weeks. Why? Because it's on one of my favorite topics: Prayer. Not just praying, but doing it in a way that gets God to respond to our prayers! With that thought in mind, let me explain further and hopefully improve our prayer lives:

There are few things that thrill me more than having God not only answer a prayer, but He interrupting me to answer it! There's only one place in the entire bible where God does that and yes it's right here in Daniel Chapter 9. It reminds me of a time when I was really serious about praying for my country: The evening of "9-11": I remember President Bush asking all Americans after that event to fast and pray for our country. The obvious prayer that came to my mind was the text of this chapter. I figured if Daniel could pray for his nation when it was in ruins, it's an obvious clue to me that I should pray on behalf of my nation during that troubling time. I didn't get a response like Daniel but I knew it was what I should do at that moment in time and I'm convinced God worked to help those in need because of that event!

So if Daniel's prayer got a direct answer from God, does that mean we'll get our prayer answered if we recite the same prayer? Of course not, God is God. He does what He wants when He wants. To begin a discussion of prayer, first we must remember what prayer is. God isn't a "genie in a bottle" to give us what we want when we want! We can pray for anything, but God only does what is His will. Prayer to me is about trying to line up my will with His. Yes many of my prayers go unanswered, and I don't let it bother me. I like praying, and one of my goals of living the Christian life is trying to line up my will with His! That's one reason why Jesus encourages us to pray fervently. To pray over an issue over and over again helps us to consider things from God's perspective.

There is a famous Christian acronym about prayer calls ACTS. Because it's like the book, it's easy for us to recall it. The letters stand for Acknowledgment (as in stating who God is), Confessing is not just about confessing our sins but also those of fellow believers. That's because we seek God as a body, not just individuals. Then comes Thanksgiving, which is the importance of being grateful for whatever we have. At the least, we should be grateful for a roof over our head, food to eat and our health. We can't be happy in life unless we are grateful. Finally comes Supplication. That's when we pray for whatever is on our mind. All of those elements exist in Daniel's prayer in this chapter and hopefully that's a clue as to how to get our prayer's answered! It does not mean we must pray exactly as Daniel did. It's just a nice rule ("ACTS") to keep in mind when seeking His guidance!

Even with that said the prayer also indicates that Daniel studied God's word carefully and made prayers based on His promises. So if God says He's going to do something why pray about it? It's to recall His promises to us! Again it's about lining our will up with His. The text also states that Daniel considered Jeremiah a prophet of God. Jeremiah was written about a hundred years prior to Daniel. If you wonder how we know something is the word of God, obviously, the text has to not contradict all the other bible books. It has to be 100% perfect on predictions. In the New Testament, each writer had a relationship with Jesus either when they lived or got revelations from God like Paul had. My point is to realize how fast Jeremiah got accepted as part of the bible as Daniel called him a prophet of God!

OK enough background on prayer. Chapter 9 takes place in the first year of the Persian king. That was an empire based out of what is Iran today. They overthrew the Babylonian Empire (based out of what's Iraq today) in 539BC. Daniel was probably in his 80's when he made this prayer and got interrupted as he was saying it as we'll discuss in the next lesson. The text says he prayed in the first year of Darius. I should let you know that Darius is a title like Caesar, Pharaoh or King. We learn in Ezra Chapter 1, the

Persian king who ruled during Ezra's day gave the order that the Israelites could return to Israel. If you recall, (Chapter 7) Daniel held a top "government post" for the Persian king, but whether or not he was retired when he wrote Chapter 9's prayer is anyone's guess.

So what was Daniel's motivation for this prayer? He was studying Jeremiah. He probably read in what we call Chapter 25, Verses 11 and 12 (Chapter numbers weren't added till when the printing press was invented.) Anyway those verses give a specific prediction that the time of the Babylonian captivity will be seventy years. Daniel knew how old he was and he knew he was taken captive to Babylon when he was a teenager, so he knew the seventy years were almost up! So why not just pray, "Hey God, the 70 years is almost up, isn't it time for You to do Your thing?"

Instead Daniel gets into "ACTS" (The acronym I gave earlier!). In the prayer Daniel acknowledges that God is God and He's in charge, so let's "deal with that fact"! He confesses that Israel didn't obey God's commands, which is why they were in Babylon in the first place. Obviously Daniel was not there when they disobeyed. The point of confession isn't just to acknowledge our own sins, but also the sins of the people who claim to be chosen by God! If you think about the Lord's Prayer, there is a bunch of "we's" in that! It's the idea of all of us are guilty and fall short of God's glory. Death is what we deserve, and yes only by His grace are we saved. To acknowledge sin is to proclaim in effect, "God's right and I was wrong!" It's important to think of the church as one "body of believers" so even if we're not personally guilty of a sin, the "body" is! That's why Daniel confessed it and why we should acknowledge the sins all of us are collectively guilty of before God. The point here is that confession is dominant in Daniel's prayer as it should be dominant in ours before we pray for our sick whoever! Remember God gave an answer to this prayer quickly, so keep that in mind when we pray!

We get Daniel thanking God for the fact He will rescue Israel and restore temple worship in Jerusalem, as the temple was in ruins when Daniel prayed and as well it is today! Again, God told Jeremiah Israel would be in captivity for seventy years. Daniel didn't pray, "Hey God, the time is almost up, so let's get moving!" Daniel prays for God to act because it's His will! That is how we should pray, for God to act because it's His will to do so! The prayer supplication was for God to restore Israel as He promised. I'll just say Daniel lays it on thick as he was serious about wanting God to not only do what He stated He's going to do, but to act for His sake and not for ours!

Bottom line is while Daniel was praying the angel Gabriel shows up to give Daniel a specific answer to that prayer! The answer will be the topic of the next lesson and yes, "It's a doozy!" There are only two angels named by name in the bible (not counting Satan) and Gabriel's one of them. Daniel was praying and was interrupted by Gabriel. He said in effect was "Hey Daniel since you asked about the 70 years, let me explain what else will happen after another "seventy" occurs! I'll just say it specifically leads to the dates of Jesus First and Second Coming. It's a specific prediction that ties with the date of His First coming, and it gives clues about what to watch for when the Second Coming of Jesus occurs!

In my lesson on Chapter 8 I asked whether you prefer the bad news first or the good news. Chapter 8's effectively bad news as it gave warnings about horrible things that will occur to the Israelites. Chapter 9 also has bad news but it is blanketed by the good news of Jesus First and Second Coming. What we should care about here is Daniel prayed fervently for God to act on Israel's behalf. He calls us to pray fervently for His kingdom to come ("Thy Kingdom come!"). If Jesus tells us to pray fervently for His return, we should take that as our marching orders as part of our prayers. I'm not saying we got to pray "ACTS" every day to get God to respond to our prayers. It's just a good model to use when praying as we desire He intercede in our lives. Again God is God and we can't force Him to act just because we're

praying a specific way! I just know I want God to answer my prayers and if I figured if this prayer got interrupted for an answer, that gives me a "clue" as how God wants me to pray!

Yes I know God answers all my prayers, but to get more "now" answers, I like to study the prayers that were stated that got answered!

If interested, the other two links on this section of the book are a more detailed lesson that I did write about twenty years ago. You're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John