

Weekly Lesson Theme: Staying True In A World Far From God

Lesson Scriptures: Daniel 9:3-10,17-19

Key Lesson Theme: "Confess Wholeheartedly"

Today's Lesson: Monday, September 25

Podcast Version: [Soundcloud](#), [iTunes](#), or [Spotify](#)

Daniel 9:3-10,17-19

³ So I turned my attention to the Lord God to seek him by prayer and petitions, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

⁴ I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:
Ah, Lord—the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands—

⁵ we have sinned, done wrong, acted wickedly, rebelled, and turned away from your commands and ordinances.

⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, leaders, ancestors, and all the people of the land.

⁷ Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but this day public shame belongs to us: the men of Judah, the residents of Jerusalem, and all Israel—those who are near and those who are far, in all the countries where you have banished them because of the disloyalty they have shown toward you.

⁸ LORD, public shame belongs to us, our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors, because we have sinned against you.

⁹ Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God,
though we have rebelled against him

¹⁰ and have not obeyed the LORD our God by following his
instructions that he set before us through his servants the
prophets.

¹⁷ Therefore, our God, hear the prayer and the petitions of your
servant. Make your face shine on your desolate sanctuary for the
Lord's sake.

¹⁸ Listen closely, my God, and hear. Open your eyes and see our
desolations and the city that bears your name. For we are
not presenting our petitions before you based on our righteous
acts, but based on your abundant compassion.

¹⁹ Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and act! My God, for
your own sake, do not delay, because your city and your people
bear your name.

The Bible Meets Life

We want everyone to think we are okay. Many people use social media to make themselves look good, posting pictures and messages that highlight successes. Yet, deep within we know the truth about ourselves—and assuredly, God does too. He knows our sins and our shortcomings. We can either deny them or try to hide them, but the truth is still there and so is the pain of guilt. There is a way of release and relief. When we confess our sins to God, we see ourselves as God sees us. Confession and repentance put us in position to seek and receive God's forgiveness. We discover the joy of knowing a God who responds out of grace and love for us.

The Setting

Verses 1-2 set the event described in chapter 9 in a historical context. It was the first year of the reign of Darius the son of Ahasuerus. *Darius* is the name of several Medo-Persian kings, three of whom are mentioned in the Old Testament. Some scholars think Darius may have been a title rather than a proper name. This particular Darius is often known as Darius the Mede, the ruler who took Babylon from Belshazzar (Dan. 5:31) and the king who later was duped into having Daniel thrown into the lion's den (chapter 6). The same may be said for Ahasuerus; it was a title more than a name. In the NIV, Ahasuerus is rendered Xerxes, which is a Greek rendering of the Hebrew word.

Extensive scholarly study of these names/titles and to whom they apply have produced several options. Further discussion is beyond the scope of this commentary. Nevertheless, we can draw some significant conclusions. What Daniel described in a historical context is a testimony to the fact that God is at work in the course of human history. Even if we were to get the names confused or out of order, that does not alter the fact that behind what happened then and what happens now in history is under the control of a sovereign Lord God. He may not have caused everything, but He is forever in charge of the course of human history and will work through it and use it to accomplish His holy purpose. Some things are beyond our understanding or ability to explain. That is where we are called to exercise faith in God.

The first year of Darius's reign was c. 538 BC. If, as some scholars conjecture, Daniel was taken captive in 605 BC at about age 15, then he would have been approximately 80 years of age at the time of this prayer. How impressive—but given what we have learned about him in the earlier chapters of the book, not so surprising—that even at an advanced age, Daniel was engaged in a study of the missives, legal documents, books or scrolls, and other written records of critical information and events. He is the model of a life-long learner. We never get too old to study and learn. In fact, for believers that is the essence of being a disciple

of Jesus. He is the master teacher, and we are learners of His message of truth, which does not fade or become obsolete; it is ever fresh and new no matter how many times we have read or studied it.

The documents Daniel studied apparently included a record of the prophetic message the Lord had declared through Jeremiah, that Judah would go into captivity to Babylon but after seventy years would return to the land (cf. Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10). In simpler terms, Daniel learned that Jerusalem would endure intense desolation, or be laid waste, at the hand of the Lord for a period of seventy years.

Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah, but it was the holy city, for that is where the temple was located. The temple in Jerusalem was the center of Hebrew worship as it represented the place of the presence of God. Subsequently, Daniel apparently calculated that the seventy years period of captivity was nearing an end. Cyrus, king of the whole of the Medo-Persian Empire, had issued a decree in 538/537 BC allowing captives to return to their homelands.

Thus, Daniel was driven to make preparations for that time—spiritual preparations—by praying on behalf of the exiles. His prayer included a confession of the greatness of God, an admission of the people’s sin, and an acknowledgment that the people had been disciplined justly. He concluded with a plea for forgiveness, restoration, and favor on the people from the Lord. The elements in Daniel’s prayer offer guidance to us for how to pray with humility and confess wholeheartedly; thus, being able to receive the Lord’s blessing of forgiveness by His grace.

Until tomorrow Saints...
Every day is Sunday