

Faithful Under Empire – Daniel 9
"Faith That Seeks God's Mercy While Waiting for God's Kingdom"

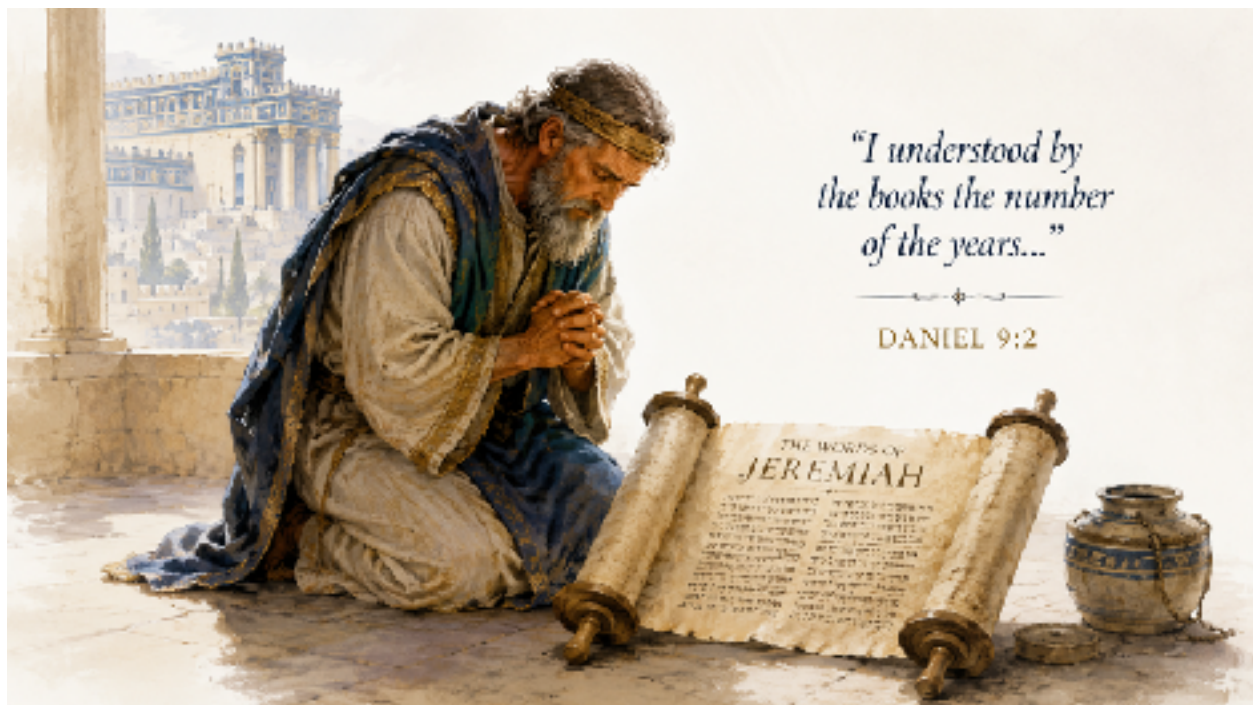
INTRODUCTION:

One of the clearest examples of faithful waiting comes from the life of the Gospel preacher George Roger. He kept a prayer list and on that prayer list was his next door neighbor. This neighbor lived beside brother Roger for years; George and his wife Deloris moved and the neighbor stayed. The Rogers' son and his wife moved in; the neighbor stayed. Over the decades, both sets of couples invited the neighbor to worship. He declined and declined and declined. The son and his wife bought their own house and moved. George and his wife retired and moved back into the same house, with the same neighbor. They continued being neighbors and continued inviting. After Rachel and I moved to Swartz Creek, the neighbor accepted the invitation and came to worship, studied, and obeyed the Gospel. Brother Rogers did not stop praying and inviting because he did not believe in the promises of God. Rather, brother and sister Rogers continued praying and inviting because *they did* trust the promises of God.

Daniel 9 presents that same kind of faith. Daniel had read Jeremiah's promise that the exile would last seventy years. He could have concluded, "God has already promised it, so there is nothing to do." Instead, God's promise drove him to earnest prayer, confession, and dependence. The lesson is that divine sovereignty does not eliminate prayer—it inspires it. God's people participate in His purposes by trusting His Word and seeking His mercy while they wait for His kingdom to be fully revealed. This is precisely what it means to live faithfully under empire.

Empires rise and fall according to God's decree, but God's people survive not by political power but through repentance, prayer, and confidence that God will accomplish His covenant promises in His appointed time.

Daniel 9 shifts from the politics of empire to the spiritual condition of God's people. Daniel realizes that Israel's greatest problem is not Babylon or Persia—it is sin. Likewise, God's greatest solution is not merely the end of exile but the coming of the Messiah.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Date: about 539–538 BC, "the first year of Darius the Mede" (9:1).

Babylon has fallen (Daniel 5).

Medo-Persia now rules the world.

Daniel is around eighty years old.

Nearly seventy years have passed since the first deportation (605 BC).

Jeremiah had promised that Judah's captivity would last seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10). Daniel studies Scripture—not visions—to understand God's timetable. This chapter shows that prophecy does not eliminate prayer. God's promises encourage prayer.

This chapter naturally divides into two halves:

1. Daniel's prayer (1-19)
2. Gabriel's explanation (20-27)



I. GOD'S WORD PRODUCES HOPE (9:1-3):

Daniel discovers hope by studying Jeremiah. "I understood by the books..." Faith begins with Scripture.

Historical Importance

Persia has replaced Babylon. The political landscape changes. God's promises do not.

References to the Law

Deuteronomy repeatedly promised: exile for covenant breaking (Deut. 28); restoration after repentance (Deut. 30:1-10). Daniel realizes Moses was right. Jeremiah simply confirmed Moses.

"Books" - Refers to sacred writings already recognized as inspired.



Jeremiah Connections

Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10

Daniel is reading Jeremiah exactly as written.

What was God teaching?

Pagan rulers -

God—not military power—determines the lifespan of empires.

Faithful Jews -

Study Scripture before interpreting current events.

Later Jews - God always keeps covenant promises.

Christians - Hope grows from Scripture, not headlines.



NT parallels

Romans 15:4

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Discussion Question

How does Scripture shape the way we interpret world events?

Application

Christians should spend more time reading Scripture than reading the news.



II. GOD'S PEOPLE MUST CONFESS THEIR SIN (9:4-19)

This is one of Scripture's greatest prayers. Notice Daniel says "we" never "they." Although personally righteous, Daniel identifies with God's people.

The structure of the prayer

- A. God is faithful (4)
- B. Israel has rebelled (5-10)
- C. Moses predicted this judgment (11-14)
- D. Daniel appeals to God's mercy (15-19)

Law of Moses

Daniel repeatedly quotes or alludes to:

Deut. 7:9; chapters 28 & 29 & 30; Lev. 26

Almost every paragraph echoes the covenant curses.

Jeremiah

Jer. 14, 15, 18

Ezekiel

Especially Ezekiel 14

Both emphasize national guilt.

"Pouring out the curse" - Judgment pictured like liquid emptied from a bowl.

"Your city" - Jerusalem belongs to God, not Israel.

What was God teaching?

Pagan rulers - Israel's exile happened because Israel's God judged His own people.
Babylon did not defeat God. God used Babylon.

Faithful Jews - Repentance precedes restoration.

Later Jews - National renewal begins with humble confession.

Christians - The church should confess corporate sins as well as individual sins.

NT parallels

1 John 1:9

James 5:16

Luke 18:13-14

Discussion

Why does Daniel confess sins he personally did not commit?

Application

Faithful believers often identify with God's people instead of distancing themselves from them.

III. GOD ANSWERS BEFORE DANIEL FINISHES PRAYING (9:20-23)

Gabriel arrives. Prayer is answered immediately. The answer, however, concerns much more than the seventy years. It concerns the coming Messiah.

"You are greatly beloved" - God's covenant affection rests upon Daniel.

What was God teaching?

Pagan rulers - Kings issue decrees. God answers prayer.

Faithful Jews - Heaven listens.

Later Jews - Prayer matters because history belongs to God.

Christians - God often answers beyond what we ask.

NT parallels

Ephesians 3:20

Discussion

How does God's answer exceed Daniel's request?

Application

Prayer changes our understanding before it changes our circumstances.

IV. GOD'S KINGDOM ARRIVES THROUGH THE MESSIAH (9:24-27):

This is one of the Bible's most discussed prophecies. Under the assumptions of this class:

The seventy weeks culminate in the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.



The prophecy reaches beyond the return from Babylon to God's complete redemptive plan.

Six accomplishments (9:24):

Finish transgression

End sins

Make atonement

Bring everlasting righteousness

Seal vision and prophecy

Anoint the Most Holy

These find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ's work.





The Messiah (9:25-26)
The Anointed One comes.
The Anointed One is cut off.
This anticipates Christ's death.

NT

Matthew 27
Mark 15
Luke 23
John 19

The destruction of Jerusalem - The city and sanctuary are destroyed. Christ foretells this: Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 17 & 21

Covenant confirmed - The Messiah establishes the New Covenant - Jeremiah 31; Luke 22; Hebrews 8-10

Law Background

The sacrificial system of Leviticus culminates in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice.

Revelation

Assuming Revelation addresses Rome and the early centuries of Christianity: Daniel 9 anticipates themes developed in Revelation.

Overall Lessons

What should pagan rulers learn?
God governs history.

Empires are temporary.
Israel's exile demonstrates God's justice, not His weakness.

What should faithful Jews learn?

Repentance is more urgent than political freedom.
God always keeps covenant promises.
Prayer is participation in God's sovereign plan.

What should later Jews learn?

The exile proves Moses and Jeremiah true.
The Messiah is central to God's restoration.
History moves toward redemption rather than merely national independence.

How do Jeremiah and Ezekiel illuminate Daniel 9?

Jeremiah explains the seventy years.
Ezekiel explains why exile occurred.
Jeremiah promises restoration.
Ezekiel promises spiritual renewal.
Daniel combines both.



What should Christians learn?

Christ fulfills the deepest purpose of exile.
The cross accomplishes the atonement Daniel anticipated.
The church is the embodiment of the everlasting kingdom promised throughout Daniel.
Prayer remains the proper response to God's promises.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Daniel study Scripture before praying?
2. Why does Daniel confess the nation's sins instead of only his own?
3. What does Daniel teach us about corporate repentance?
4. Why did God answer Daniel with a prophecy about the Messiah?
5. How does Christ fulfill the six promises of verse 24?
6. Why is God's kingdom more significant than the rise and fall of earthly empires?