

Daniel 9:1–27 – Prayer, Prophecy, and the Messiah Who Was “Cut Off”

Daniel 9 is one of the most moving and important chapters in the Old Testament. It shows us a man who knows God’s Word, takes God’s warnings seriously, and throws himself on God’s mercy—not just for himself, but for his people. And in answer to that prayer, God gives Daniel one of the clearest prophetic windows into the coming of the Messiah and the unfolding of history.

Let’s walk through the chapter and then draw out some very practical lessons—and an invitation.

1. A Man of the Word Who Understands the Times (Daniel 9:1–2)

Daniel tells us:

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

(Daniel 9:1–2 NKJV)

Daniel has been living in exile for decades. Now the Babylonian Empire has fallen, and Medo-Persia is in power. As he reads Jeremiah’s writings—what you and I would call Scripture—he sees that God had promised:

- Israel would be in captivity **seventy years**,
- and then God would judge Babylon and restore His people (see Jeremiah 25:11–12).

Daniel does the math and realizes:

We are almost at the end of the seventy years.

Notice the pattern:

- He reads the Word.
- He believes the Word.
- He responds to the Word in prayer.

Application for believers:

We live in a time when many want God to speak, but they do not want to open the Bible. Daniel shows us a better way. If you want to understand what God is doing and how to pray, saturate your mind and heart with Scripture. God’s promises in His Word are not meant to sit on a shelf; they are meant to drive you to your knees.

2. Daniel's Prayer of Confession and Intercession (Daniel 9:3–19)

When Daniel realizes where they are in God's timetable, he does not say, "Great, the seventy years are up—problem solved." Instead:

"Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." (Daniel 9:3 NKJV)

He enters a season of earnest, humble prayer. The prayer itself (Daniel 9:4–19) is one of the most beautiful in the Bible.

a. He begins with God's character

"O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments..." (Daniel 9:4 NKJV)

He does not begin with, "Lord, why did You let this happen?"

He begins with, "Lord, You are faithful. You keep covenant. You are merciful."

b. He openly confesses sin—and includes himself

"We have sinned and committed iniquity,
We have done wickedly and rebelled,
Even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments." (Daniel 9:5 NKJV)

Daniel is one of the godliest men in Scripture, yet he does not stand apart from the people, pointing fingers. He says **"we," not "they."** He acknowledges:

- "We have not listened to the prophets."
- "We have transgressed Your law."
- "We brought this judgment on ourselves."

He is not blaming God; he is agreeing with God.

"O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face..." (Daniel 9:7 NKJV)

c. He appeals to God's mercy, not his own righteousness

"We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies." (Daniel 9:18 NKJV)

Daniel knows they have no case based on their own performance. Their only hope is the mercy and covenant love of God.

d. He pleads for God's name and God's city

"O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name." (Daniel 9:19 NKJV)

He is not only praying for relief; he is praying that God's reputation would be honored. "Lord, people know we are called by Your name. Act for Your name's sake."

Application and challenge for believers:

- **Own our sin honestly.** It is easy to complain about the state of our nation, the church, or the world—and never confess our own compromise, coldness, or disobedience. Daniel shows us the right posture: "We have sinned."
- **Stop blaming God for the harvest we sowed.** God warns us that sin destroys. When we ignore Him, we cannot blame Him for the consequences. He is righteous in all His ways.
- **Pray for our city and our people with broken hearts.** Ask God to work, not because we deserve it, but for His mercy and His name. Daniel's prayer is a model for how we can intercede today for the church, our communities, and our nation.

3. Gabriel Arrives: Seventy "Sevens" Decreed (Daniel 9:20–24)

While Daniel is still praying:

"...the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering." (Daniel 9:21 NKJV)

Gabriel tells him:

"O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved..." (Daniel 9:22–23 NKJV)

That alone is worth pausing over:

At the beginning of your prayer, the command went out.

God hears quickly, even if His answers unfold slowly.

Then comes the prophecy:

"Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,

To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.” (Daniel 9:24 NKJV)

The word “weeks” here literally means “sevens”—seventy sets of seven. The context suggests seventy “sevens” of years; in other words, **490 years** symbolically or structurally set aside for God’s dealings with Israel and Jerusalem.

Look at the goals God has in view:

1. Finish the transgression.
2. Make an end of sins.
3. Make reconciliation for iniquity.
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness.
5. Seal up (complete) vision and prophecy.
6. Anoint the Most Holy (likely pointing to a climactic, holy reality—ultimately fulfilled in Christ and the presence of God with His people).

These are not small things. They point to nothing less than God’s full redemptive plan brought to completion—and they center on the Messiah.

We know that at the heart of this plan is Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on the cross to make reconciliation for our iniquity and rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord. In His death and resurrection, God’s plan to deal with sin and bring righteousness has reached its decisive moment.

4. From the Decree to the Messiah (Daniel 9:25)

Gabriel continues:

“Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;
The street shall be built again, and the wall,
Even in troublesome times.” (Daniel 9:25 NKJV)

From a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem
until the coming of “Messiah the Prince”, there will be:

- 7 “weeks” (sevens), and
- 62 “weeks” (sevens),

for a total of 69 sevens.

Many Bible students see this as pointing remarkably to the time when Jesus publicly presents Himself as King—the day He rides into Jerusalem and is welcomed with “Hosanna” and “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD” (see Luke 19:28–44, Psalm 118). Whether you work out all the dates in detail or not, the key point is this:

God is not vague.

The coming of the Messiah is not an accident.

It is God’s plan, on God’s timetable, exactly when God intends.

Jesus Himself, as He approached Jerusalem, wept over the city and said:

“If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” (Luke 19:42 NKJV, emphasis added)

Daniel 9 suggests that there truly was “a day” for Jerusalem—a day of visitation—when Messiah the Prince came, and most of the nation did not recognize Him.

Application:

God’s grace often comes with a window of opportunity. Israel had a “day” when their Messiah came to them in humility. Many missed it. If God is speaking to your heart, do not assume you can always put Him off until a more convenient time. There is a danger in continually saying “later” to God.

5. The Messiah “Cut Off” and the City Destroyed (Daniel 9:26)

Gabriel then gives a sobering word:

“And after the sixty-two weeks

Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;

And the people of the prince who is to come

Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

The end of it shall be with a flood,

And till the end of the war desolations are determined.” (Daniel 9:26 NKJV)

Two key events:

1. **“Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.”**

- The Messiah will not immediately bring the visible kingdom in glory.
- Instead, He will be “cut off”—a phrase often associated with violent death.
- He will not receive the earthly kingdom at that moment; He will be rejected and killed, **not for His own sins but for ours.**
At the cross, Jesus shed His blood as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He was cut off so we could be brought near.

2. **“The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”**

- This points to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.
- The “people” are the Romans; the “prince who is to come” suggests later opposition to God’s purposes, but the immediate historical fulfillment is the fall of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish people.

Jesus Himself warned of this coming judgment (see Luke 19:41–44; Luke 21:20–24). The prophecy of Daniel and the words of Jesus fit together: Israel’s rejection of Messiah leads to the destruction of the city and temple, and ongoing desolations.

Application:

God’s love is real, but so is His holiness. When a person, a community, or a nation repeatedly hardens itself against God’s gracious warnings, judgment eventually follows. The cross shows us both realities at once:

- **Love:** Jesus willingly lays down His life for sinners.
- **Justice:** Sin is so serious that it cost the blood of the Son of God.

The resurrection, three days later, powerfully declares that Jesus is God, Savior, and Lord. He is not just another martyr; He is the risen King.

6. The Seventieth “Week” and the End of Sacrifice (Daniel 9:27)

Verse 27 is one of the most debated verses in prophecy:

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate.” (Daniel 9:27 NKJV)

Without diving into every viewpoint, here is a Christ-centered, non-dispensational way of understanding it:

- The “he” can be read as the Messiah (the nearest major subject of verse 26).
- He confirms a covenant with many—Jesus establishes and confirms the new covenant in His blood (“This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,” Matthew 26:28 NKJV).
- “In the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering” points to the way Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice on the cross permanently fulfills and renders obsolete the old sacrificial system (see Hebrews 9–10). After the cross, animal sacrifices are no longer needed to deal with sin.
- The “abominations” and the “desolation” can be understood as fulfilled, in a historical sense, in the Roman desecration and destruction of the temple in A.D. 70—judgment falling on a system that had rejected its true Messiah.

In that reading, the “seventy weeks” reach their climax in:

- The first coming of the Messiah,
- His atoning death and resurrection,
- The end of the old sacrificial system,
- And the judgment that follows on the city that rejected Him.

There is still mystery here. God’s final purposes for Israel and the nations will be fully unveiled when Jesus returns in glory. But the heart of Daniel 9 is clear: God’s timetable centers on the Messiah and His saving work.

7. Lessons for Believers Today

Daniel 9 is not just a chart for prophecy students; it is a mirror for our hearts.

1. Be people of the Word and of prayer.

Daniel understood the times because he understood the Scriptures. And he did not treat that knowledge as trivia; it drove him to pray, confess, and plead for mercy. Let God’s Word move you from information to intercession.

2. Take sin seriously and confess it humbly.

Daniel did not excuse or minimize the sin of his people, and he did not stand above them in self-righteousness. We need the same honesty—in our personal lives, in our churches, and in our nations. God’s mercy is for those who come into the light.

3. Anchor your hope in the Messiah, not in earthly kingdoms.

Empires rise and fall. Decrees are issued and revoked. But God's plan marches forward, centered in Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for us and rose again. Everlasting righteousness does not come through politics but through the saving work of Christ.

4. Recognize the seriousness of rejecting God's visitation.

Jerusalem had a day of visitation and missed it. Do not assume that you can keep putting God off without consequence. There is a time to respond—and that time is now.

8. An Invitation to Those Who Have Not Yet Trusted Christ

The prophecy of Daniel 9 is not just about dates and empires. It is about a Person:

"Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." (Daniel 9:26 NKJV)

Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was "cut off" at the cross—not for His own sins, but for ours. He shed His blood so that our transgressions could be finished, our sins dealt with, and reconciliation made for our iniquity. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

The same Lord who will one day bring in everlasting righteousness is inviting you now into a right relationship with God.

If you have never given your life to Jesus, consider what this chapter shows:

- God knows the future in detail.
- He kept His word in the coming, death, and resurrection of the Messiah.
- He takes sin seriously.
- He offers mercy freely to those who turn to Him.

You can respond by turning from your sin and trusting in Jesus Christ today. There is no formula, but a prayer like this may express what is in your heart:

*"Lord God, I recognize that I have sinned against You.
I have gone my own way and ignored Your voice.
I believe that Jesus is the Messiah,
that He shed His blood on the cross for my sins,
and that You raised Him from the dead.
I confess Him as my God, my Savior, and my Lord.
Please forgive me, cleanse me, and give me a new heart.
I give my life to You and ask You to lead me from this day forward.
In Jesus' name, Amen."*

If that is truly your heart, then you are not just reading an ancient prophecy—you are stepping into the saving purpose that prophecy was pointing to all along.

May Daniel 9 move you to deeper repentance, greater confidence in God's faithfulness, and a stronger hope in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Messiah, who will one day bring in everlasting righteousness and make all things new.