



Prayer Study 1: Daniel's Prayer

Background

There are many words used in the New Testament which we can translate from the Greek into words associated with prayer. The Greek word for 'to pray' is 'déomai' or sometimes 'prosdéomai', which is derived from the root word that literally means 'to lack' or 'to need'. Similarly, the Greek word for 'prayer' is 'déēsis'. From the New Testament, the understanding is that of asking or seeking. These words are used in such passages as Luke 22: 32, Romans 1: 9-10, Romans 10: 1 etc. Often the sense of petition or intercession comes across.

We also find other words, such as 'eúchomai' meaning 'to wish, or pray' (or sometimes 'proseúchomai'), and 'euchē' meaning 'prayer or vow' (or sometimes 'proseuchē'). These words are used in such passages as James 5: 15-16, 2 Corinthians 13: 7-9.

Jesus was a man of prayer, and in our study on Jesus and the Lord's prayer, we will look at both His teaching and practice. There is certainly much that we could say on the subject of prayer, but we want to begin by looking at a series of studies on particular prayers that we find in the Bible. From these we can be encouraged in our own prayer lives. In this first study, we shall be looking at the prayer of Daniel found in Daniel 9:1-27. In your own time we would encourage you to study the whole of the book of Daniel.

In chapter 6, Daniel rose to unprecedented heights of importance. In the new regime, he was second only to the king himself. Many years had passed since he last saw Jerusalem, but even as an old man his faith is as fresh as ever. Trials have not broken it. Promotion has not eroded it or seduced him to love other things more than his God. As chapter 9 begins, we find Daniel reading his 'Bible' - the Scriptures. Daniel was a great prophet and had had many remarkable visions and revelations, but he never outgrew the need to read scripture. His example is worth noting.

The Message

Daniel 9: 1-19

At the start of Daniel 9 we find Daniel reading through the scriptures as today we might find Christians reading the Bible. Daniel has been in Babylon for sixty-eight years having been taken into exile from Jerusalem at the age of fourteen. In Daniel's time the scriptures would have been separate scrolls individually rolled up. Here we find Daniel is reading from Jeremiah. It is possible that as a young boy in Jerusalem before the exile, Daniel may even have heard Jeremiah speak. As Daniel starts to read Jeremiah, he suddenly reads something that speaks out clearly to him. Read Jeremiah 25:8-11 and 29:10-14. There is so much to inspire us in these verses in Jeremiah, but just imagine how Daniel's heart must have been moved to read:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you



and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and I will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and I will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."'" (Jeremiah 29: 10 - 14)

Questions

- 1 What is it that Daniel discovers in the scroll by Jeremiah that affects him so deeply and inspires him to pray?
- 2 How does he approach God in prayer? List four aspects of Daniel's prayer and approach to God which should deeply affect us and our own approach to prayer (verse 3, verse 4, verses 5-15, verses 16-19).
- 3 What is Daniel's heartfelt desire in his prayer (verses 17-18)?
- 4 What do we learn of God's character through Daniel's prayer?
- 5 How can we use Daniel's prayer as a model for our prayers?
- 6 How could we tailor aspects of Daniel's prayer to suite specific situations?

Daniel 9: 20-27

We do not know how long Daniel prayed, but the context infers that it was for some time (verse 21). It was while the enormity of sin and its consequences still overcame him, and pleading for the future of God's cause, that the great revelation came. When Gabriel comes Daniel is told that from the very first moment that he began to pray heaven has been listening - and Gabriel's swift coming is the result.

Questions

- 1 What expectations do we have when we pray?
- 2 How can we understand what the different periods of time mean when there are so many different translations into the English?
- 3 What is God trying to say to Daniel in this divine revelation?
- 4 Does God always answer prayers in the way that we expect, or hope?