



THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

Lesson Number 27



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

DANIEL'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER, #1

^{9:1} In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; ² In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. ³ And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: ⁴ And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; ⁵ We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: ⁶ Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ⁷ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. ⁸ O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; ¹⁰ Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. ¹¹ Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." ^{KJV} (Dan 9:1-11)

INTRODUCTION

Daniel faithfully records his revelations and experiences. He does so in keeping with the manner of the Kingdom. Things that "happened" to the people of God in the past are "examples" of Divine manners, and "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"(1 Cor 10:11). Events

recorded in the Word of God are never isolated from Divine purpose. While their connection with that purpose may not always be evident to the casual observer, yet that association is there. God neither speaks nor works independently of His "eternal purpose." He is never occupied with trivia, novelty, or mere historical

happenings.

A novice, for example, might think that the kingdoms of Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, Greece, and Rome, have nothing to do with the working and objective of the God of heaven. I am sure many were of that opinion during the

OUTLINE

- ▶ IN THE FIRST YEAR OF DARIUS (9:1)
- ▶ I UNDERSTOOD BY BOOKS (9:2)
- ▶ I SET MY FACE UNTO THE LORD GOD (9:3)
- ▶ THE GREAT AND DREADFUL GOD (9:4)
- ▶ WE HAVE SINNED (9:5)
- ▶ WE HAVE NOT HEARKENED (9:6)
- ▶ GOD IS RIGHTEOUS (9:7-8)
- ▶ GOD'S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS (9:9)
- ▶ NOT OBEYING AND THE CURSE (9:10-11)

time those kingdoms were dominant. However, they were pawns on the chessboard of eternal purpose, used to chasten the people of God, rebuild the house of God, and prepare the world for the entrance of the Savior. Further, after their role had been fulfilled, they were removed by the God who set them up.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

It is vital that we learn from the past. Things not only "happened" for our example, but "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom 15:4). There is a sense in which those who do not learn from these records are "unlearned" in Kingdom matters (2 Pet 3:16). This condition causes them to be more vulnerable to the wicked one, and greatly inhibits their growth in Christ Jesus. Further, there is no way to ultimately triumph if this condition continues. Salvation is never by default, and always requires spiritual advancement and fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

With these things in mind, here are some of the things that can be learned from this text – a text that deals with the

past, yet is applicable to the future.

- ▣ The unfaithfulness of God's people is never overlooked by God.
- ▣ God's longsuffering involves the allotment of space to repent.
- ▣ Heathen kings are not exempt from Divine judgment.
- ▣ Those who touch people or things belonging to God have risen up against God Himself.
- ▣ Those who are allowed to harm the people of God, whether individuals like Job, or a body of people like Judah, operate under Divine limitations in both time and what they do.
- ▣ God can use a heathen to get his work done, as He did with Cyrus.
- ▣ Those who oppose the people of God can be quickly removed.
- ▣ A person of faith, like Daniel, can be reared in a heathen culture without being contaminated by it.
- ▣ The things God reveals are not always attended by total clarity, as with the vision with which we are now dealing.

The proper consideration of events recorded in Scripture will always yield benefits to the believer. Far better to muse upon these things than to allow our minds to linger on contemporary events and issues. **While it is not unlawful to ponder what is happening in our time, it must always be set within the context of what God has done, declares He is doing, and what He has promised He will do.** This context will keep us from being deterred by a fear

of calamity, or a haphazard attitude brought on by an unwarranted sense of safety.

SCRIPTURAL PRAYERS

The text before us is a prayer. I have found Scriptural prayers to be an area of unusually profitable Divine tutelage. Paul alludes to the profitability of prayers in his Epistle to the Corinthians. "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified" (1 Cor 14:17).

The saying of "Amen" does not refer to a mere formality, but to an expression of consent and agreement. The prayer that was heard, even though it was the "giving of thanks," proved to be an advantage to those who heard it. The same may be said of the prayers recorded in Scripture. Some of them are listed below for your consideration.

- ▣ Abraham praying about his childlessness (Gen 15:1-6).
- ▣ Abraham's prayer for Ishmael (Gen 17:18-22).
- ▣ Abraham's prayer concerning the destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:23-32).
- ▣ Moses' intercessory prayer for Israel (Ex 33:12-17).
- ▣ The prayer of Abraham's eldest servant as he sought a wife for Isaac (Gen 14:12-14).
- ▣ Gideon's request for a sign (Judges

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6:36-40).

- ▶ Solomon's prayer for wisdom (1 Kings 14).
- ▶ Rebekah's prayer concerning the struggling children within her womb (Gen 25:22-23).
- ▶ Jacob's prayer for deliverance from Esau (Gen 32:8-11).
- ▶ Moses' prayer concerning the bitter waters at Marah (Ex 15:24-25).
- ▶ Moses' cry for help at Horeb (Ex 17:4-6).

- ▶ Hannah's prayer for a child (1 Sam 1:10-13).
- ▶ David's prayer, asking if the city of Keilah would be delivered into his hand (1 Sam 23:10-12).
- ▶ David asking if he should pursue Ziklag (1 Sam 30:8).
- ▶ Elijah's prayer for life to be given to a young boy who had died (1 Kings 17:20-22).
- ▶ The prayer of Jabez (1 Chron 4:10).
- ▶ Hezekiah's prayer for deliverance

death (Matt 26:39).

- ▶ The prayer of Jesus for His disciples and those who would believe on Him through their word (John 17).
- ▶ Ezra's prayer of contrition for the people (Ezra 9:5-15).
- ▶ The prayer of the people of Judah in the time of Nehemiah (Neh 9:6-38).
- ▶ Jeremiah's prayer concerning the Babylonian captivity (Jer 32:17-25).
- ▶ Habakkuk's prayer concerning the spread of iniquity (Hab 1:2-4).
- ▶ Prayer of the Apostles concerning a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:24-25).
- ▶ Prayer of the early church when subjected to persecution (Acts 4:24-30).

THESE AND OTHER PRAYERS REVEAL HOW FAITH MOVES INDIVIDUALS TO SPEAK TO THE LORD. THEY SHOW HOW HOLY MEN AND WOMEN REASONED WITH GOD, AND HOW THEY REGARDED VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

These and other prayers reveal how faith moves individuals to speak to the Lord. They show how holy men and women reasoned with God, and how they regarded various circumstances. Faith has a consistent impact upon how a person thinks, and how they handle the Word of God.

We will find the prayer of Daniel to be rich with expression, perspective, and understanding. Through his words, it will become apparent that prayer plays a vital role in the implementation of Divine objectives. **The Kingdom of God does not run on automatic pilot. It involves the will, thoughts, words, and participation of the saints.** At no point are they excluded.

- ▶ Moses' prayer when the Israelites murmured, wanting flesh to eat (Num 11:11-15).
- ▶ Moses' prayer for the healing of Miriam (Num 12:13-15).
- ▶ Menoah's prayer for direction in raising Samson (Judges 13:8-90).
- ▶ Samson's prayer for strength one last time (Judges 16:28-30).

- from Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:14-19).
- ▶ Hezekiah's prayer when he was sick unto death (2 Kings 20:1-3).
- ▶ Ezekiel's prayer to have the type of cakes changed that he was to eat (Ezek 4:12-15).
- ▶ The penitential prayer of David (Psa 51).
- ▶ The prayer of Jesus concerning His

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF DARIUS

“^{9:1} In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.”

Daniel now moves to the time following the fall of Babylon, as recorded in the fifth chapter: *“In that night was*

Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old” (Dan 5:31). The first year of the reign of Darius was a year of political transition. The Babylonian, or Chaldean, empire was terminated and a new governmental regime was initiated. While Daniel makes no extensive mention of the

involvements of this transition, they were no doubt significant in the flesh. Belshazzar was murdered, and the city of Babylon overtaken in a single night. The impact of this upon the human spirit must have been significant.

But Daniel, living by faith, does not recall the fateful events associated

with the fall of Babylon – the “*head of gold*” of Daniel two, and the mighty lion with eagles wings of Daniel seven. Instead of reviewing the political shift of power during the first year of Darius the Mede, he writes of his perceptions of a change that was to be wrought among the people of God. **The Babylonian captivity was about to end.** It is clear that in Daniel’s thinking the determinations and working of the Lord superceded any of the works or experiences of men.

AN OBSERVATION

Those who desire to be used by the Lord must become spiritually expert in their thinking. **They must not live so as to be easily drawn aside by worldly matters.** They must advance in their ability to correlate what is happening with what God has promised.

DARIUS

Previously in this book, Darius was simply introduced as “*Darius the Mede*,” who set one hundred and twenty princes over the kingdom of Babylon, three presidents over them, and Daniel as the chief of the presidents (6:1-2). Because he preferred Daniel above all others, Darius had thought to “*set him over the whole realm*.” It was then that the other presidents and princes set in motion a strategy that concluded with Daniel being thrown into the lions’ den (6:3-25). We are then told that Daniel “*prospered in the reign of Darius*” (6:28).

Now Daniel provides some additional information.

☐ **The son of Ahasuerus.** There are three men mentioned in Scripture that bear this name. Ezra mentions the first (Ezra 4:6), Esther the second

(Esth 1:1), and Daniel the third (Dan 9:1). Ezra refers to a man reigning in the period 529-522 B.C. He is considered to be Cambyses, son of Cyrus, and was a Persian, not a Mede. This is **not** the Ahasuerus to whom Esther the queen was married (Esth 2:16-17). That king reigned during a period between 486-464 B.C., and was also a Persian, reigning in Shushan. The “*Ahasuerus*” of our text reigned during 594 B.C., and is consider to be Astyages of profane history, last king of Media.

☐ **Of the seed of the Medes.** Other versions read, “*of the lineage of the Medes*,”^{NKJV} “*of Median descent*,”^{NASB}

“*made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom.*”^{NIV} The dominant part of the Medo-Persian kingdom was found in Persia. History confirms that through Cyrus, Darius was made the ruler of Babylon, or “*the ream of the Chaldeans.*”

The following is an excerpt from the writings of John Gill on this subject. He says Darius was made ruler over the realm of the Chaldeans “by Cyrus his nephew; who having taken Babylon, and settled his affairs, undertook a journey to Persia, and made Media in his way; where he met with his uncle Cyaxares, the same with this Darius, and delivered the kingdom of Babylonto him, and married his daughter, with whom he had for her dowry the kingdom of Media, as Xenophon relates.”^{JOHN}

THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE USED BY THE LORD MUST BECOME SPIRITUALLY EXPERT IN THEIR THINKING. THEY MUST NOT LIVE SO AS TO BE EASILY DRAWN ASIDE BY WORLDLY MATTERS. THEY MUST ADVANCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO CORRELATE WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED.

“*a Mede by descent*,”^{NIV} and “*by birth a Mede.*”^{NIV} This distinguishes this Darius from “*Darius the Persian*” (Neh 12:22), and his lineage from that of the Persian kings. It is another way of saying “*Darius the Median*,” or “*Darius the Mede*”^{NKJV} (Dan 5:31;11:1).

☐ **Made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.** Another version reads

GILL

The “*first year*” of Darius’ reign occurred in the year B.C. 538, which was the year Babylon fell. That was sixty-eight years from the time Daniel was taken captive into Babylon (B.C. 606). This is of particular importance because of the verses that follow. **The seventy-year captivity was coming to a close, and the knowledge of it moved Daniel.**

I UNDERSTOOD BY BOOKS

“² ***In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.***”

Th attention of Daniel now turns from the kingdoms of this world – which were preparatory to the Kingdom of God which would decimate them all – to the immediate dealings of God with His people Judah. Times and seasons are in the power of God alone (Dan 2:21; Acts 1:7). He alone determines them, and

reveals them to the sons of men. A time that God had precisely determined now becomes the focus of Daniel’s thinking.

UNDERSTANDING BY BOOKS

“*I Daniel understood by books . . .*” Other versions read, “*I understood by THE books*,”^{NKJV} “*observed in THE*

books," ^{NASB} "understood from the Scriptures," ^{NIV} "perceived in THE books," ^{NRSV} "saw clearly from THE books," ^{BBE} "was studying the Scriptures," ^{NJB} and "was studying the writings of the prophets." ^{NLT}

The term "books" applies to the Scriptures in general, and the prophets in particular. The word "books" does not refer to mere writing, but to purposeful or commissioned writing. It is equivalent to the word "Scriptures," which means "writing." Technically, a "book" is a writing devoted to some theme or subject. **Spiritually, it is a record of some Divine thought or intent that is intended for men.**

Daniel was not studying

presence of the Scriptures, as well as their indispensable message, is maintained by the God of heaven.

Where there is an appetite for and reliance upon the Word of God, provision for that appetite will be supplied.

Prophets Need to Study

We must remember that Daniel was a prophet, and not an ordinary one at that. Further, he was "greatly beloved" by God (9:23; 10:11,19), and is the only man in Scripture of whom this is said. He was to God what John was to Jesus – "the disciple whom He loved" (John 21:20).

Ponder what this man had received from God.

☐ Knowledge, skill in all learning and

- ☐ An understanding of the overthrow of the despotic power, called "the little horn" (7:11-12).
- ☐ The giving of the Kingdom to the Son of Man, or the Messiah (7:13-14).
- ☐ An interpretation of the vision he saw concerning the four great kingdoms (7:16-27).
- ☐ Details concerning the fall of the Medo-Persian empire, and the rise of the Grecian empire (8:2-7).
- ☐ The death of Alexander the Great, and the consequent division of his kingdom (8:8).
- ☐ A time of judgment in which the holy land would be invaded, the daily sacrifice removed, the altar desecrated, and the sanctuary cast down (8:9-12).
- ☐ The precise duration of this time of desolation (8:13-14);
- ☐ An extended explanation of the above vision from Gabriel the angel (8:15-27).

TECHNICALLY, A "BOOK" IS A WRITING DEVOTED TO SOME THEME OR SUBJECT. SPIRITUALLY, IT IS A RECORD OF SOME DIVINE THOUGHT OR INTENT THAT IS INTENDED FOR MEN.

Babylonian literature when this insight came to him. Rather, he was exposing his mind to the Word of God, living, as it was, "by every word of God" (Lk 4:4). He had been persuaded of a truth also made known to Paul: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

It is beneficial to ponder this facet of Daniel's life. He was a political "president," being made chief of the three primary "presidents" in the Chaldean kingdom, by Darius himself (Dan 6:2-3). **However, his worldly duties did not keep him from the Scriptures.**

Too, is it not a token of the favor of God that the Scriptures remained with Daniel in the time of the captivity, and were not destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's sacking of Jerusalem and the Temple? **We should learn from this that the**

wisdom (1:17a).

- ☐ Understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17b).
- ☐ The revelation of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue (2:19).
- ☐ The revelation of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree that was cut down (4:19-27).
- ☐ The meaning of the strange writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace (5:24-28).
- ☐ An extended revelation of the nature of the four empires of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (7:2-7).
- ☐ The revelation of a despotic ruler and kingdom that would speak blasphemies (7:8).
- ☐ Insight into the throne of judgment (7:9-10).

This is the man who was studying the Scriptures, searching through them with diligence and consistency. The great revelations given to him did not remove the necessity for feeding upon the good word of God. If prophets need to study the Scripture, what may be said of others?

The Study of Scripture

It is unfortunate that the study of the Scriptures is not prevalent in the professed church. A wave of Scriptural illiteracy has swept over the American church that is most remarkable – and it has occurred when there are more Bibles and more translations than has ever before existed. Recently (1/6/2003), a close friend of mine told me of an experience he just had in a local Bible College. He asked a class of over forty advanced students how many of them had read the entire Bible. Eight of them said they had done so. I have asked the same question of a significant number of churches, and have never received an answer of any magnitude. There were a number of congregations in which not a single

person said they had read the entire Bible.

This condition is serious beyond measure. Daniel was away from Jerusalem and the promised land – the appointed center of religious activity under the Law. Furthermore, he was in a heathen land, living in the time of severe Divine chastening – the Babylonian captivity. There is little evidence that many souls were there with whom he could fellowship in the truth. He was also involved in the affairs of state.

Yet, Daniel found time to expose his mind to the Word of God, and thus an understanding of critical matters will be given to him. The scriptures are, indeed, profitable in every way, and are not to be neglected.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

“ . . . the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet . . . ”

The phrase “*number of years*” refers to the length of the Babylonian captivity. There are three particular prophecies in Jeremiah to which Daniel refers. The first mentions the time the captivity would begin. The second mentions the term “*desolations*,” emphasizing the destruction of the holy city. The third identifies the length of the captivity itself.

▣ **THE TIME.** *“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying . . . And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him”* (Jer 27:1,7). This coincides with Daniel’s record of when he was carried away captive (1:1).

▣ **THE DESOLATIONS.** *“Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and*

perpetual desolations . . . And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment . . . ” (Jer 25:9,11)

▣ **THE LENGTH.** *“ . . . and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations . . . For thus saith the LORD, That after*

A Kingdom Mind-set

Daniel had, what I call, a kingdom mind-set. He read the Scriptures with God and His purpose in mind, and correlated them with where he was. His captivity and deportation to Babylon had not robbed him of this manner of thinking. His experience of opposition and time in the lions’ den did not change this mind-set, or way of thinking. He was young when captured, and old at the time of this text, yet that lengthy period of time – no less than sixty eight years – had not dulled his appetite for the Word of God, or his alertness to catch its message.

IF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA WILL RISE UP IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AND CONDEMN THOSE WHO DID NOT ENERGETICALLY PURSUE THE TRUTH AVAILABLE TO THEM (MATT 12:42), WHAT WILL DANIEL SAY OF THIS GENERATION WHO NEGLECTS GOD’S WORD IN A TIME OF FREEDOM?

seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jer 25:11b-12; 29:10). This was in accord with the revelation of Moses concerning failing to honor the land sabbaths (Lev 26:34-35,43). Additionally, the Chronicles particularly records that this coincided with Jeremiah’s prophecy (2 Chron 36:21). For 490 years, the land was not given its appointed sabbath rest every seventh year. That amounted to the neglect of seventy land sabbaths. In the captivity, God took them all at once –the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.

The book of Jeremiah contains a little over 45,000 words, or 1,363 paragraphs. The words relating to the duration of the Babylonian captivity are around 220 (0.4888%) words, and eleven sentences (0.807%). **It is not possible that a disinterested soul could have perceived these passages.** In fact, there are still great numbers of professing believers that still have not seen them.

In the day of judgment, when the counsels of the heart are made manifest (1 Cor 4:5), **how do you suppose it will fare for those who could not sustain an interest in the Word of God?** If the Queen of Sheba will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn those who did not energetically pursue the truth available to them (Matt 12:42), what will Daniel say of this generation who neglects God’s Word in a time of freedom? If the city of Nineveh will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn those who did not take advantage of the word delivered to them (Matt 12:41), what will Daniel say of a generation who has remained abysmally ignorant of the Word of God when it was so readily available to them?

Both of the texts just mentioned indicate that whole generations will be judged as well as individuals. **When that generation is summoned before the throne, the Lord Jesus pointed out that other generations and individuals would accompany them to the throne, pointing out any inexcusable deficiencies.** How sorely

IT IS DANGEROUS BEYOND ALL DESCRIPTION TO APPROACH THE WORD OF GOD AS THOUGH SOMETHING WITHIN IT IS NOT TRUE, IS DISTORTED, OR IS IRRELEVANT.

we need powerful preachers and teachers who can assist people in assessing the seriousness of neglecting the Word of God. For Daniel, who had far less than the least who are in Christ, to entertain more of an interest in the Word of God than a *Christian* is a condition that can in no way be justified.

SEVENTY YEARS ACCOMPLISHED

“ . . . that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Concerning the expression “would accomplish,” other versions read, “the completion of,”^{NASB} “would last,”^{NIV} “must be fulfilled,”^{NRSV} and “was to be complete.”^{BBE}

In other words, calculating the

number of years from the beginning of the captivity to the first year of the reign of Darius – sixty-eight years – Daniel knew the captivity was about to conclude. I prefer the word “accomplish,” which accents that it was a precise time imposed upon them by the Lord. The captivity would not come short of Jeremiah’s prophesy, lasting, for example, for only sixty-nine years. Nor, indeed, would it extend further than he said, lasting more than seventy years.

Daniel was convinced of the precision of Scripture as well as its inspiration. **Such an attitude could never be fostered by higher criticism, or some view of Scripture that allows for scribal errors and translation distortions.**

Whatever may be said of such approaches to the Word of God, they are thieves and robbers to the people of God. **It is dangerous beyond all description to approach the Word of God as though something within it is not true, is distorted, or is irrelevant.**

After all of the arguments have been presented concerning manuscripts, translations, etc., the child of God must approach God’s Word persuaded that it is altogether true. He must be willing to hang the destiny of his soul upon that Word, fully persuaded that the mighty God of heaven is as precise in a copy of Jeremiah, for example, as when He gave the revelation to Jeremiah in the first place. I realize such an approach is not acceptable to the person enslaved to academia. However, I am willing to allow the results of such flawed approaches speak for their authenticity. **If you are familiar with these approaches to Scripture, you already know such critics are not noted for opening any Divine treasury to us.** No person grows in grace under their miserable tutelage.

I SET MY FACE UNTO THE LORD GOD

“³ And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.”

We will now behold **the effect of understanding** upon the man of God. His response will not comport with the ways of the world, but will reveal the impact faith has upon the human spirit. Believing the Word of God moves the one doing so into holy action.

I SET MY FACE

“And I set my face unto the Lord God . . .” Other versions read, “I gave my attention to,”^{NASB} “I turned to,”^{NIV} and “I turned my face to.”^{NJB}

Knowing that the captivity was drawing to a close, Daniel turned his face toward the Lord. From a physical standpoint, he no doubt looked toward Jerusalem, for that was his manner. As it

is written, “he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan 6:10).

When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he asked God to hear the prayers of His people prayed “toward this place (the Temple)” (1 Kgs 8:29,30,35). It was said of the Lord Jesus, as He drew close to the time of His death, “And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem” (Luke 13:22). For Daniel, the place where God had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36) was a great help in his prayers. That place assisted him in recalling the good promises of God, and the many blessings He had conferred upon that holy city. Having read the books of Jeremiah, Daniel was no doubt familiar with this word: “Ye that have escaped the sword, go

away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind” (Jer 51:50). **Those who live by faith do not take lightly places and times associated with Divine visitations.** Jacob had his Peniel (Gen 32:30). Noah built an altar where God spoke with him following the flood (Gen 8:20). Abraham built altars in the plain of Moreh and at Bethel, where the Lord appeared to him (Gen 12:7,8). Isaac built an altar following the Lord’s appearance to him (Gen 26:25). These, and other similar incidents, confirm that men and women of God did everything they could to recall visitations and blessings from the Lord.

There Is More

But there is more in this text than the posture of Daniel, although that is a vital part of his prayer. In his heart and mind, Daniel focused on the Lord. He was intent upon speaking with him, and

refused to allow anything to turn him from considering the God of heaven. After all, God had sent his nation into captivity, and now the captivity was coming to a close. Only indifference and unthankfulness would keep a person from determining to focus their whole being upon the God with whom they have to do.

God makes commitments for good to those who seek Him *“with their whole heart.”* This had particular regard to the Babylonian captivity. It is written in Jeremiah: *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive”* (Jer 29:13-14).

Jeremiah also said Judah had **not** obtained favor of the Lord because she *“hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD”* (Jer 3:10).

The words *“set my face unto the Lord God”* are synonymous with *“search for Me with all of your heart.”* Daniel was not casual or perfunctory about this. He was not merely fulfilling a routine, or submitting to a requirement. His whole person was involved in this matter.

Here is an aspect of the Divine nature that is scarcely known in our time. The evil triad of institutionalism, professionalism, and academia have opened the door for thieves of casualness and empty form to enter – and the effects have been devastating. The professed church is plagued with half-heartedness, with only a minority of *Christians* exhibiting any degree of whole-heartedness toward the Lord.

Unacceptable Manners

However, God will not receive half-hearted or casual efforts! That is what He Israel offered to Him, and it was not accepted then. How much less is it acceptable in the *“day of salvation,”* when the *“acceptable time”* has been announced through Christ Jesus (2 Cor 6:2)? **However a person may choose to**

defend a lack of interest in the things of God, and casualness about things pertaining to life and godliness, these are not acceptable to God. Neither are those acceptable who are dominated by such reprehensible manners. Whatever may be said about the mercy of God toward His people, together with His longsuffering and tenderness, disinterestedness and casualness provoke Him, and *“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb 10:31).

These circumstances are why believers are exhorted to throw themselves into living by faith.

☐ *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek*

apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”^{NKJV} (Phil 3:12-14).

Lest anyone suppose this was an attitude unique to Paul, he continued, *“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you”* (Phil 3:15). Therefore, if there is any person who has difficulty seeing the necessity of having this mind-set, let him faithfully live unto the Lord, setting his face, as it was, toward the God of heaven. The Lord will make known to the

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those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2).

☐ *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Rom 12:1).

☐ *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently”* (1 Pet 1:22).

☐ *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”* (Col 3:23).

Paul’s Summary

Paul summarized this type of life in these words. *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I count not myself to have*

conscientious person that this is the only way of life that He receives.

SEEKING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

“ . . . to seek by prayer and supplications . . . ” Daniel does not seek the Lord haphazardly, but *“BY prayer and supplications.”* Other versions read, *“in prayer and petition,”*^{NIV} **“I gave myself up to prayer,** requesting His grace,”^{BBE} *“prayers and pleas for mercy,”*^{ESV} and *“begging for time to pray and to plead.”*^{NJB} Several things can be seen by this expression.

☐ He did not seek the Lord by pondering various evidences before him, but *“BY prayer and supplications.”*

☐ He gave himself wholly to this endeavor, not allowing distractions to dominate him.

☐ He perceived this as a time when pleas for mercy were in order – even though the time of chastening was coming to a close.

- ▶ He sought for time to make extended prayers, presenting his “*cause*” to the Lord, and filling his mouth “*with arguments*,” as Job was wont to do (Job 5:8; 23:4).

Daniel knew the word spoken through Isaiah, “*Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob*” (Isa 41:21). With Israel, this was a challenge to come to Him instead of turning to idols (vs 22-23). With Daniel, it was the way he desired to come to the Lord. This is involved in the Divine summons, “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet,*

In this form of prayer men particularize, seeking consideration and mercy from the Lord. There is an urgency in “*supplication*” that connects it with crying out to the Lord. There is nothing nonchalant about “*supplications*,” and thus they cannot be encapsulated in a mere routine. Properly seen, “*prayer*” and “*supplications*” involve all of the heart. Otherwise, it would not be possible to “*seek*” the Lord’s face and favor “*BY prayer and supplications*.”

“*Prayer and supplication*” are employed under the New Covenant as well as they were the Old. Part of “*the whole armor of God*” is “*all prayer and supplication*” (Eph 6:18). Our requests

is abstinence from food, or nourishment. Interestingly, the word in any of its forms does not appear in Genesis through Deuteronomy. Fasting is not mentioned in the Law or its various ceremonies.

In Scripture, no person or persons are said to have fasted from Genesis through the twentieth chapter of Judges.

- ▶ The first incident of fasting is recorded in Judges 20:26: “*Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD*” (Judg 20:26).

- ▶ The next incident of fasting occurred when the people gathered together to Samuel to confess their sin (1 Sam 7:6).

- ▶ The next time people are said to have “*fasted*” is when Israel lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:12; 1 Chron 10:12).

- ▶ The first record of an individual fasting is that of David when the child born to Bethsheba died (2 Sam 12:16,21-23).

- ▶ The first person said to have fasted with sackcloth was none other than Ahab – the next incident of fasting recorded in Scripture (1 Kgs 21:27).

- ▶ The next occasion of “*fasting*” occurred many years later, after the Babylonian captivity. It was in the time of Ezra when they besought the Lord for help in returning to the homeland (Ezra 8:23).

- ▶ When Nehemiah first heard of the circumstances in Jerusalem, he “*fasted*” (Neh 1:4).

- ▶ Before Esther went in to the king, she also fasted (Esth 4:16).

The word used in our text is a slight variation of the word used in the above texts. It refers to **the period of time** during which the fasting occurred: i.e., “*a fast*,” “*the fast*,” or “*time of fasting*.” This usage, in a good sense, is

THE PERSON COMING TO GOD IN SUCH A MANNER IS OF A HUMBLE AND CONTRITE SPIRIT. THE HEART IS UNCLUTTERED FROM THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD. FAITH IS PROMINENT, AS WELL AS A QUEST TO PLEASE THE LORD, AND STAND IN HIS FAVOR.

they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18).

Prayer

The word “*prayer*” is not an easy one to define. **It is a general word used for approaching God with words.** Those words may be audible or within the heart alone. When Hannah prayed, for example, she “*spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard*” (1 Sam 1:13). On the other hand, on one occasion when the early disciples prayed, they “*lifted up their voice to God*” (Acts 4:24). The general nature of this word is confirmed by the different forms it can take. Therefore the Spirit speaks of “*all kinds of prayer*,” ^{NIV} emphasizing its diversity (Eph 6:18). In this general sense, “*prayer*” means communicating with God from the heart, and in faith.

Supplication

The word “*supplication*” has to do with making a petition or request of God.

are to be made to God “*by prayer and supplication*” (Phil 4:6). There is no nonsense in “*prayer and supplications*.” They are attended by great sobriety, sincerity, and fervency. The person coming to God in such a manner is of a humble and contrite spirit. The heart is uncluttered from the things of this world. Faith is prominent, as well as a quest to please the Lord, and stand in His favor. All of this is confirmed by the words that follow.

FASTING, SACKCLOTH, AND ASHES

“*. . . with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.*”

While the prayer exudes from Daniel’s heart, he marshals his body, making it conform to the contrition he feels within. **All three of these words apply to the body.** They are a means of subordinating it, and refusing to allow it to have the preeminence.

FASTING. “*Fasting*”, in this case,

found in the following texts: (1 Kgs 21:9,12; 2 Chron 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Neh 9:1; Esth 4:3; 9:31; Psa 35:13; 69:10; 109:24; Isa 58:6; Jer 36:6,9; Joel 1:14; 2:12,15; Jonah 3:5; Zech 8:19).

The idea in this text is that Daniel set himself to seek the Lord, refusing to eat during that time. He would devote all of his energies to his quest for the Lord.

- ▣ You may recall that Jesus “*fasted forty days and forty nights*” before embarking upon His ministry (Matt 4:32).
- ▣ The disciples of John were also noted for their fasting (Mark 2:18).
- ▣ Cornelius was instructed by the Lord during a time of fasting (Acts 10:30).
- ▣ While the early church was fasting, the Holy Spirit told them to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which he had called them (Acts 13:2).
- ▣ Husbands and wives are said to have times of prayer and fasting (1 Cor 7:5).
- ▣ Jesus also said there were certain demons that could only be driven out “*by prayer and fasting*” (Matt 17:21).

Fasting is a voluntary action, accented by a keen sense of a need for Divine involvement in the affairs of men, or an acute awareness of a need to be more fully in His favor. Thus, we see that the matters occupying Daniel’s mind were of such gravity that the normal activities of life were forfeited in favor of a quest for the Lord.

SACKCLOTH. Sackcloth was a coarse material, apparently made of goat’s or camel’s hair (Rev 6:12). **This coarse and rough cloth was a sort of badge of mourning.** It was not worn for comfort, and was no doubt most uncomfortable when coming in contact with the skin. In the wearing of sackcloth we see an utter abhorrence of all comfort and ease when approaching the Lord (Job 16:15).

- ▣ When Jacob thought Joseph had been killed, he put on sackcloth (Gen 37:34).

- ▣ When Hezekiah heard the threats of Sennacherib read, he put on sackcloth (2 Kgs 19:1,2).

- ▣ When Mordecai heard that all Jews were to be destroyed, both young and old, little children and women, he put on sackcloth (Esth 4:1).

- ▣ Jesus spoke of repentance accompanied by the wearing of sackcloth (Matt 11:21; Lk 10:13).

The wearing of sackcloth is an acknowledgment of a seriously deficient condition that requires unusual mercy and blessing from the Lord.

ASHES. The first person said to put ashes on their head was Tamar after she had been molested by her own brother, Amnon (2 Sam 13:19). Years later, Mordecai put on ashes as he sought

FASTING IS A VOLUNTARY ACTION, ACCENTED BY A KEEN SENSE OF A NEED FOR DIVINE INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN, OR AN ACUTE AWARENESS OF A NEED TO BE MORE FULLY IN HIS FAVOR.

to see the Jews preserved in spite of Haaman’s threats (Esth 4:1). Isaiah associated “*mourning*” with “*ashes*,” saying they could be exchanged for beauty from God (Isa 61:3).

Putting ashes upon oneself is an acknowledgment of unworthiness and shame. As Job once said, “*He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes*” (Job 30:19). In Daniel’s case, it was a way of identifying with the whole of Judah. He is going to plead for the people, confessing the sin of the nation, and seeking for mercy from the Lord. Thus he fasts from food, covers himself with sackcloth, and sits in ashes. He is going to make a confession, and such a thing must not be accompanied by any element of pride or casualness.

WHY DID DANIEL DO THIS?

One might suppose that the awareness of the coming conclusion of the

Babylonian captivity would have sparked joy in the prophet. **God had promised an end to the captivity. Was that not enough?** Is there really any need for prayer in such a matter?

Indeed there is! Here is a principle of the Kingdom that naive and simplistic souls cannot see. **What God has promised must still be pursued.** This principle was articulated by God Himself through the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian captivity. The heart of the people had been weighed down, and many, no doubt, were living in utter despair. Great numbers of them had only known life in Babylon, with few recollections of the personal enjoyment of Divine benefits. Therefore, the Lord spoke through Ezekiel, telling the people what He was going to do. In the interest

of His own great name, this is what He would do. These promises are found in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel.

- ▣ He would be sanctified in His people before the eyes of the heathen (36:23).
- ▣ He would remove them from among the heathen, gather them out of all countries, and bring them into their own land (36:24).
- ▣ He would sprinkle clean water upon them and cleanse them from all of their idols (36:25).
- ▣ He would give them a new heart and a new spirit (36:26a).
- ▣ He would remove their stony heart (36:26b).
- ▣ He would put His Spirit within them

and cause them to walk in His statutes, keep His judgments, and do them (36:27).

- ▶ They would dwell in the land God gave to their fathers, be His people, and He would be their God (36:28).
- ▶ God would save them from all of their uncleannesses (36:29a).
- ▶ He would call for the corn, increase it, and lay no famine upon them (36:29b).
- ▶ He would multiply the fruit of the tree, and increase the produce of their fields (36:30).

Lord builds the ruined places, and plants that which was desolate (36:36).

It is difficult to imagine a more thorough range of promises. How would they all come to pass? Would they simply suddenly appear to the surprise of everyone? It seems as though many are conducting their lives as though that is how the Lord works. It is at this point that the Lord revealed the principle of which I speak. *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock”* (36:37). Other versions read, *“I will also let the house of Israel inquire*

purposes. Thus Daniel now acts in harmony with the way in which God has revealed that He works. He does not take the end of the Babylonian captivity for granted, but sets his face toward God, seeking to plead for the fulfillment of His promise humbly and fervently.

A PRESENT DAY LIABILITY

Our day is marked by a serious deficiency in the knowledge of the text of Scripture. Few professing Christians have even read the Bible, and this has put them at a great disadvantage. Of necessity, such people are driven by human agendas, whether their own or that of some other man or institution. They do not know what God has promised, and therefore come short of seeking such benefits.

WHEN THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE READ OR HEARD, THEY ARE DESIGNED TO SPARK A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THEIR FULFILLMENT. THAT SPARK WILL, IF NOT QUENCHED, IGNITE A FIRE WITHIN IN THAT WILL ERUPT IN PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION.

When the promises of God are read or heard, they are designed to spark a personal interest in their fulfillment. That spark will, if not quenched, ignite a fire within in that will erupt in prayer and supplication. **One of the ways of the Lord is to allow His people to ask for the very things He has promised.** The Psalmist put it this way. *“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”* (Psa 50:15). This is a picture of the heavenly economy into which men are called by faith.

- ▶ They would remember their evil ways and loathe themselves in their own sight (36:31).
- ▶ When they had been cleansed, God would cause them to dwell in the cities, and the wastes would be built (36:33).
- ▶ The desolate land would again be tilled (36:34).
- ▶ The land that was desolate would become like the garden of Eden, and waste, desolate, and ruined cities would be fenced and again inhabited (36:35).
- ▶ The heathen would know that the

of Me to do this for them, ^{”NKJV} *“This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them,* ^{”NIV} *“The children of Israel will again make prayer to me for this, that I may do it for them,* ^{”BBE} *“Yet for this will I be sought by the house of Israel, to establish them,”* ^{Septuagint} *“As a further mark of favor, I shall let myself be consulted by the House of Israel,”* ^{”NJB} and *“I am ready to hear Israel’s prayers for these blessings.”* ^{”NLT}

One of the reasons God speaks of what He going to do is in order to provoke prayers and supplications among His people – to do what He has promised to do. This is a most glorious Divine quality, bringing His people into participation with His

One might object to this, saying God has already promised to be with us, and does not need to be reminded by us to do so. As it is written, *“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”* (Isa 41:10). **Yet, the same Lord fulfills His promises as His people ask for them to be personally realized.** That is His manner. Now Daniel will live out that principle with prayer and supplications.

THE GREAT AND DREADFUL GOD

“⁴ And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the

covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.”

Throughout a period of at least sixty-eight years, Daniel has been faithful in his prayers. Even when a law was passed against praying, he continued to

pray three times a day with no attempt to conceal what he was doing (6:13). Until this time, however, specific prayers have not been recorded in this book. There is a reference in the second chapter to Daniel and his three colleagues desiring “*mercies of the God of heaven*” (Dan 2:18), to have the dream of Nebuchadnezzar revealed.

Now that a critical time has arrived, Daniel’s faithfulness in prayer will pay large dividends. **Those who wait for a crisis to arise before they pray will find it difficult to pray intelligently and with faith and power.** If God is not our mainstay in the normalities of life, it is not likely that we will experience great mercies from Him in the times of crisis.

THE LORD MY GOD

“*And I prayed unto the LORD my God . . .*” The word “*LORD*” (in capital letters) means “*Jehovah*,” or “the self-Existent or Eternal.” This is the name by which God revealed Himself under the Old Covenant. This depicted the expanded manner in which He revealed Himself to those under that First Covenant. Thus God said to Moses, “*And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them*” (Ex 6:3).

“LORD” or “Jehovah”

It is interesting that only the King James Version and American Standard Version translate the word “*Jehovah*” in the Exodus text. All of the other versions read “*LORD*.” In the KJV, “*Jehovah*” is also found in Psalm 83:18, and Isaiah 12:2 and 26:4. The American Standard Version consistently translates the word “*Jehovah*” – an astounding 6.773 times! No other standard version of Scripture contains the word “*Jehovah*” (NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, NLT).

In the days of Seth, the offspring of Adam and Eve through whom the Messiah would come, men began to call upon “*the LORD*” (Jehovah (Gen 4:26).

Under the Old Covenant, God revealed Himself as “*the LORD*” in order to emphasize that He was a covenant-keeping God. Thus, the

accent was placed upon His eternity.

Therefore, in saying “*the LORD my God*,” Daniel is saying, “I am coming to the covenant-keeping and faithful One, whom I have chosen to worship and serve. This is the God I choose to honor and serve, the One who stands by His Word and keeps His covenant.”

MADE MY CONFESSION

“*. . . and made my confession . . .*”

The word “*confess*” literally means to cast down, or place before someone. Here the word means Daniel is going to place before the Lord, with full consciousness of His Person, the praise of God as well as

have not obeyed My voice, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:13).

Lest someone think this to be a light thing, God said through Hosea, “*I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early*” (Hosea 5:15). **Those who seek Divine favor must not take sin lightly.** God does not view it with toleration, and neither can we!

GREAT AND DREADFUL

“*. . . and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God . . .*” Other versions read, “*great and awesome God*,” ^{NKJV}

THOSE WHO WAIT FOR A CRISIS TO ARISE BEFORE THEY PRAY WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PRAY INTELLIGENTLY AND WITH FAITH AND POWER. IF GOD IS NOT OUR MAINSTAY IN THE NORMALITIES OF LIFE, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT WE WILL EXPERIENCE GREAT MERCIES FROM HIM IN THE TIMES OF CRISIS.

the sins of the people. **He makes no attempt to hide what he has seen in his people, nor does he conceal what he sees of God.**

There is a sort of transparency in what he will say. It will not be laden with seemingly plausible explanations, as though national sins could be explained at all. He is able to do this because God Himself is his focus, and that focus does not allow for pretense in any other area.

It is important to note that when we have been under the chastening rod of God, and go to Him for mercy and relief, it is imperative that we acknowledge the error of our ways. When David besought the Lord for mercy following his sin with Bethsheba, he prayed, “*I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me*” (Psa 51:3). In the days of Jeremiah, God said to Israel, “*Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye*

^{NASB/NIV} “*great and terrible God*,” ^{RSV} “*great God, greatly to be feared*,” ^{BBE} and “*great and wonderful*.” ^{Septuagint}

As you peruse Scripture, you will soon find that no other persons can be addressed as the Father and the Son. Such marvelous things cannot be said of either man or angel. These are Divine qualities that are inexorably linked to the “*eternal God*” (Deut 33:27). They are not resident in anyone who was created. Notice the definite article: “*THE great, and dreadful God*.” These are exclusively Divine qualities.

“*Great*” includes the concepts of **high, mighty, exceeding, and age.** Nothing about God is demeaning, weak, diminishing, or immature. It makes no difference what He is compared to, He is “*greater*.” “*God is great*” (Job 36:26), and is consequently “*greatly to be praised*” (Psa 96:4). **In the earth, politicians, entertainers, athletes, religious personalities, and money merchants regularly receive more praise than**

God. The condition is inexcusable!

“Dreadful,” or **“terrible,”** includes the idea of causing fear and dread in those opposed to Him, and reverence and awe among those who trust Him. **No one who has ever knowingly confronted God was passive or indifferent about it.** In Scripture, the people of God were told not to be afraid of their enemies, for **“the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible”**(Deu 7:21). That is, when God makes Himself known, He strikes such terror into the hearts of His enemies, they become helpless. Those who imagine the glorified Christ will be opposed by the army of an Antichrist have conveniently overlooked this aspect of the

Nehemiah first prayed to God at the beginning of his book, he said **“O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy”**(Neh 1:5). Following the rebuilding of the wall, when the people of Nehemiah’s day prayed they said, **“Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepeth covenant and mercy”** (Neh 9:32). When Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, uttered his magnificent praise, he said God was setting out **“To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant”**(Luke 1:72). God’s mercy and God’s covenant are key factors in prayer.

keeping of the commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19).

A Thorny Text

There is text in Scripture that has been used to propagate much erroneous teaching. **“If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself”** (2 Tim 2:13). Thus men reason that those in Christ can never come short of the goodness of God. But this is not at all what Paul is saying. Note, the text does **not** say, **“If we believe not, yet He will remain faithful to US.”** His faithfulness is to Himself, for He cannot deny **“Himself.”**

God has revealed the destiny of those who **“believe not.”** Jesus said, **“If ye believe not that I am He, ye will die in your sins”**(John 8:24). Satan, who is **“the god of this world,”** has **“blinded the minds of them which believe not”** (2 Cor 4:4). **“Unbelievers”** will have their part **“in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”**(Rev 21:8). The one who **“believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16), is **“condemned already”**(John 3:18), and **“the wrath of God abideth on Him”**(John 3:36). For God, therefore, to bless such people, keeping their salvation secure, would require that He **“deny Himself,”** and He cannot do that!

Consider what those who affirm **“God cannot deny Himself”** means He can never do anything but save those who once believed, though now they **“believe not.”** Behold, what have they said! They have affirmed, **“If we are erratic, God will also be unpredictable.”** Even Daniel, living prior to the fuller disclosure of the purpose of God, knew this was not true.

The truth Daniel here acknowledges (that God keeps covenant and mercy with those who love Him and keep His commandments) has been confirmed in Divine history. What will men do with the remarkable amount of evidence that attests to the truth of this statement – a description of the unchangeable nature of God?

- ☐ Adam and Eve were thrust from the Garden because they did not keep His solitary commandment (Gen 3:24).
- ☐ Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land because he infringed a single commandment (Num 20:12).

FAITH RECKONS ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD, APPEALING TO WHAT HE HAS PROMISED TO DO. IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT SUCH PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED WITH A FIRM RESOLVE TO SERVE THE LORD AND SEEK HIS FAVOR.

Divine nature. Such a notion is utterly foolish.

KEEPING COVENANT AND MERCY

“ . . . keeping the covenant and mercy . . . ” Other versions read, **“keeping His covenant,”** ^{NKJV/NASB/NIV} This is not referring to the covenant made at Sinai, but the one made with Abraham (Gen 17:2-9). The covenant at Sinai was broken by the people (Jer 31:32). **The one made with Abraham was not broken, and Daniel knew it.**

Here, a strong appeal is made to the faithfulness of God. Unlike some contemporary theologians, Daniel refused to think of God as abandoning the commitments made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Prior to his death, when Moses spoke to the people, he referred to God as **“the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy”** (Deut 7:9). These are the exact words of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple: **“who keepeth covenant and mercy”** (1 Kgs 8:23). When

Faith reckons on the faithfulness of God, appealing to what He has promised to do. It is to be understood that such prayers are always accompanied with a firm resolve to serve the Lord and seek His favor, just as our text confirms.

LOVING GOD AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

“ . . . to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.” Other versions read, **“who keeps His covenant of love with all who love Him and obey his commands”** (Dan 9:4).

Here is another appeal to the nature of God. Not only is He a great, eternal, faithful God, keeping His covenant, He does so toward those who **love Him** and **“keep His commandments.”** Right here God defines the borders of His dealings with men. God is faithful to fulfill His good promises **only to those who love Him and obey His commands.** Thus Paul writes, **“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the**

- ▣ Over six hundred thousand people who were delivered from Egypt were forbidden to enter the promised land because they did not keep God's commandments (Josh 5:6).
- ▣ King Saul was deposed from the

throne upon which God had placed him because He did not keep God's commandments (1 Sam 15:26).

- ▣ The Babylonian captivity was brought about because Israel did not keep the commandments of God (Jer 25:12).

Let no one question that God is only committed to keep His covenant and show mercy to those possessing a love for Him, and who maintain their hold on His commandments. God has never said or acted in contradiction of this reality. Those who have failed to see Him in this way are simply blind to who He really is.

WE HAVE SINNED

"⁵ We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments."

Like a true intercessor, Daniel now identifies with the people for whom he prays. He has not been noted for rebellion, but they have. He has not lived in transgression, but they have. Yet, because he belongs to the nation, and because he seeks their betterment, he takes their sin, as it was, upon himself. He prays as David did (Psa 106:6), and Nehemiah as well (Neh 1:6), confessing for the people, "*we have sinned!*"

It is of particular importance that we behold how the waywardness of Judah is described. No appeal is made to emotional or physiological disorders. There is no appeal to difficult circumstances, or the failure of others to help them. One of the ways to recover from spiritual setbacks, disobedience, drawing back, etc., is simply to call sin what it really is.

SIN AND INIQUITY

"We have sinned, and have committed iniquity . . ."

It may all seem unnecessary, but sin must be acknowledged. It is only "*IF we confess our sins*" that God "*is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

Here is something that Adam and Eve are never recorded as saying, although I do not doubt such an acknowledgment was made. Even men like Pharaoh and Balaam said "*I have sinned*" (Ex 9:27; 10:16; Num 22:34).

Other individuals who made this confession include Achan (Josh 7:20), king Saul (1 Sam 15:24), David (2 Sam 12:13), Judas (Matt 27:4), and the prodigal son (Lk 15:18). **Not all of them profited from their confession because their hearts were not right with God.** Such confessions must be accompanied by faith and a resolve to

WICKEDNESS AND REBELLION

" . . . and have done wickedly, and have rebelled . . . "

Wickedly

These words are the prelude to recovery, and will in no wise be ignored by God. The same nature that would not allow Him to overlook their sin, will not

IT IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE THAT WE BEHOLD HOW THE WAYWARDNESS OF JUDAH IS DESCRIBED. NO APPEAL IS MADE TO EMOTIONAL OR PHYSIOLOGICAL DISORDERS. THERE IS NO APPEAL TO DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, OR THE FAILURE OF OTHERS TO HELP THEM.

forsake the path of disobedience.

To say "*we have sinned*" is an acknowledgment of going astray, missing the mark, and being headed in the wrong direction. To have "*committed iniquity*" is to deliberately corrupt life through self-will, living for self rather than for God, and seeking the gratification of corrupt desires rather than seeking to please God.

The blame for sin belongs with man, and Daniel knows it. In this expression he acknowledges his people have left the path on which they were placed, and have sought their own wicked interests. The last seventy years have been spent in bondage in a strange land for that very reason. Daniel sees this and is moved to pray.

permit Him to ignore the confession of that sin. They pray in the words of the Psalmist. "*We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly*" (Psa 106:6). Later, Daniel uses these words again: "*we have done wickedly*" (Dan 9:15). He does not say "We have made mistakes," or even "We have not done right." His confession correctly assesses their deeds as having been "*done wickedly*." The NASB version reads, "*we have been wicked*." The NIV waters the words down too much by reading, "*we have done wrong*."

The word "*wicked*" means to deliberately **violate** the word of the Lord. It is to willingly do something that God has condemned, and thus become condemned because of it. Righteousness is

God-centered. Wickedness is self-centered. Wickedness is intentionally leaving the path of righteousness. It is sinning by choice, even when the right was known and clearly understood. Wickedness is “sinning greatly.”^{NLT}

We live in a day when much can be gained from absorbing this text. Individuals, families, congregations, cities, and even whole countries have fallen upon hard times because of their own iniquity. It is time to return to the Lord, bringing words (Hos 14:2), as these people did.

Rebellion

Sin is never an innocent thing.

In Jeremiah’s day some actually “taught rebellion against the Lord”(Jer 28:16). One man who is particularly named in this matter is “Shemaiah the Nehelamite . . . he hath taught rebellion against the LORD”(Jer 29:32).

Now, Daniel acknowledges this despicable trait among the people – his own people. It must have been painful for him to do this, but in his heart he knew it had to be done. This was God’s view of the people, and the prophet acquiesces in it.

DEPARTING FROM PRECEPTS AND JUDGMENTS

“ . . . even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments.”

and done perversely, and done wickedly, and rebelled, **to turn aside from Thy commands, and from Thy judgments.**”^{YLT}

☐ **Second**, from the evidential point of view, their departure from the Lord’s precepts and judgments **CONFIRMED THEY HAD**, in fact, sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly and rebelled against the Lord. As our blessed Lord said, “*For every tree is known by its own fruit.*”

Precepts

Other versions read “commandments,”^{NASB} “commands,”^{NIV} “orders,”^{BBE}

The word “precept” means commandments, command, mandate, or rule. Through these “precepts” the Lord directed the people how to live. Jesus referred to a “precept” when he spoke of Moses’ direction for giving a bill of divorcement. Of that law He said, “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you **this precept***” (Mark 10:5). Also, when referring to Moses reading the Law to the people, the Spirit says, “*For when Moses had spoken **every precept** to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people*” (Heb 9:19). Now Daniel acknowledges that the people had scorned those precepts, and thus departed from them – not the least of which regarded the land sabbaths. Their refusal to keep this commanded had resulted in the Babylonian captivity.

Judgments

Other versions read “ordinances,”^{NASB} “laws,”^{NIV} “rules,”^{ESV} “rulings,”^{NJB} and “regulations.”^{NLT}

These “judgments” had to do with carrying out the Law. They covered everything from offering sacrifices for sin to how to deal with transgressors. Included were rules concerning clean and unclean foods, dealing with landmarks, observing certain feasts at specific times, honoring land sabbaths, the examination of lepers, and the likes.

Daniel now confesses the

SIN IS NEVER AN INNOCENT THING. DEPARTING FROM THE LORD DOES NOT TAKE PLACE INADVERTENTLY OR ACCIDENTALLY. REBELLION, INSURRECTION, A REVOLT, AND AN UPRISING AGAINST THE GOD OF HEAVEN ACCOMPANIES EVERY DEPARTURE FROM HIM.

Departing from the Lord does not take place inadvertently or accidentally. **Rebellion, insurrection, a revolt, and an uprising against the God of heaven accompanies every departure from Him.** There is resistance, stubbornness, and obstinance in rebellion.

Rebellion is of such a serious nature that it is written, “*rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*” (1 Sam 15:23). In rebellion there is a certain bitterness against the Lord because His directives chaff against the soul and irritate the mind. In the notable prayer recorded in the book of Nehemiah reference is made to Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness. “*And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage*” (Neh 9:17). Their appointment never materialized or was effective, but it is noted to show to what extent the flesh will go to fulfill its own will.

Other versions read, “*even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances,*”^{NASB} “*we have turned away from Your commands and laws,*”^{NIV} and “*scorned your commands and regulations.*”^{NLT}

There are two views seen in this expression.

☐ **First**, the people, from their own viewpoint, had sinned, committed iniquity, did wickedly, and rebelled **IN ORDER THAT** they might depart, or turn away from the Lord’s precepts and judgments. It is not possible to ignore what God says without doing such things. That is precisely why leaving the path of Divine utterance and direction is so serious. Two particular versions emphasize this point. “*We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, **even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.***”^{WEBSTER} “*We have sinned,*

people had no care for the applications of the Law, choosing instead to do their own pleasure.

It would be refreshing, indeed, to hear of an awakening some place in our country where such candid confessions

were being made. Perhaps some fasting, a book burning, and some genuine tears of contrition.

WE HAVE NOT HEARKENED

“Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

The sin of the people had been greatly compounded because of the ministry of the holy prophets.

HEARKENING TO THE PROPHETS

The holy prophets played an indispensable role in the life of Israel. They were sent by God to speak against their sins and spark a return to the Lord. Much is made of this in the Word of God

One remarkable reference to the failure of Israel to hearken to the prophets is found in the book of Nehemiah. In this particular text, the people are praying, speaking almost identically as Daniel. *“Yet many years didst Thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by Thy spirit in Thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.”* The continued existence of Israel was not, and is not today, the result of any faithfulness or worth on their part. It is strictly due to the forbearance of God and His respect for the promise given to Abraham (Gen 26:24; Rom 11:28).

When the history of a person or people is said to be *“many years”* of Divine *“forbearance,”* it is **not** good. Some versions use the word *“patience”* instead of *“forebear.”* I see *“forbear”* as a much stronger word. The meaning of *“forbear”* is to delay judgment, to defer wrath, and to extend the time allotted for repentance. It is much larger than the English word *“patience,”* which leaves the impression of tolerating, or putting up with recalcitrant behavior.

God did not thunder at them from heaven, but *“testified against”* them *“by”*

His *“Spirit,”* which was *“in His prophets.”* Notice how the people of Nehemiah’s time take the matter back to God. **He** is the One who testified. It was **His** Spirit that brought the message. And, it was **His** prophets that delivered **His** words to the people.

The message of the prophets was always timely. Six times Jeremiah declares God *“sent”* the prophets *“early,”* in plenty of time for Israel to respond and

church as a whole is in a weakened state, miserably divided, and abysmally ignorant of the Word of God.

Let no person imagine for a single moment that God is indifferent to this situation! Nor, indeed, should we be incapable of tracing many of the woes that have befallen the church directly to its own withdrawal from the Lord. Considering what has been prepared for the saints, the abundance of

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES ALONE WAS 318 YEARS (1368 TO 1050 B.C.). THE PERIOD OF THE KINGS LASTED WELL OVER 400 YEARS (1010 TO 586 B.C.). THAT IS OVER 700 YEARS OF DIVINE FORBEARANCE!

recover from their sin (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:29; 35:15; 44:4). Once he even says they were sent *“daily”* (Jer 7:25).

These faithful testimonies were not for several weeks or months, but for *“many years.”* The period of the Judges alone was 318 years (1368 to 1050 B.C.). The period of the Kings lasted well over 400 years (1010 to 586 B.C.). **That is over 700 years of Divine forbearance!** How modest is the expression: *“many years.”*

What About the Church?

One can only surmise the attitude of God toward the church, which has been in existence for over 2,000 years. Stern rebukes were delivered to the church for its retrogression beginning in the middle of the first century. Toward the end of the century, the Lord Jesus Himself solemnly rebuked five of His churches in the book of the Revelation. Yet, this very day, the

truth made known to them, and the indwelling Spirit, it is completely inexcusable for any degree of spiritual retardation to be found among them.

They Did Not Hearken

Now Daniel confesses the people did not hearken to the Prophets. That is, they did not pay attention to them, but ignored their solemn words. The testimony of the prophets was open and extensive – to their *“kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”* Their message was not ambiguous, and was delivered in the name of the Lord. Yet the people chose to ignore what the Prophets said.

Those of Nehemiah’s time also referred to the people’s refusal to listen to God. They added, *“they would not give ear.”* Other versions read *“would not listen,”* but more is involved than that. The idea is that they would not submit their capacity to hear and understand to

the Living God. They would not give Him their minds, or submit to Him their capability to hear, weigh, ponder, and respond. They did not yield their decision-making abilities to God.

The Stewardship of Capacities

The abilities to pay attention, hear, and listen with resolve are capacities that are given to every person. It is part of being created in the image of God. Everyone submits these abilities to someone. Some give them to the world:

someone is a matter of the greatest gravity. Those who imagine God never says anything bad about anyone will certainly have great difficulty with this text.

Jeremiah told the people, "*The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city*" (Jer 26:12). Ezekiel was told to "*prophesy against*" Israel (Ezek 4:6; 6:2; 11:4; 13:2; 21:2; 34:2). Even before they entered the land, Moses testified against the people. "*I call*

speaking against those who insist on forgetting Him and going against His Word.

Why the Prophets Spoke

God's purpose for speaking against His people was not merely to give vent to His anger – a tendency that is found in man. Rather, it was "*bring them back*" to His Law (Neh 9:29).^{NKJV} It was to bring them back to a point where they thought first of God and His Word, for **in order to sin, one must forget both God and His Word**. It is written that Israel "*forgot the Lord their God*" (Judges 3:7). They also "*forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them*" (Psa 78:11).

How vividly God spoke through Hosea about this matter. "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children*" (Hosea 4:6). The "*lack of knowledge*" among the people was not due to the lack of any reminders on God's part! They chose to forget His Law in preference of their own evil ways.

God testified "against" the fathers in order to awaken them to the due consideration of His Law. He did this because He prefers mercy to judgment. Thus we read, "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon*" (Isa 55:7). **Surely there are valuable things to be learned by the church in this text – those who have been given infinitely more advantages than were ever realized under the First Covenant.** Judgment begins with the house of God (1 Pet 4:17).

THE ABILITIES TO PAY ATTENTION, HEAR, AND LISTEN WITH RESOLVE ARE CAPACITIES THAT ARE GIVEN TO EVERY PERSON. IT IS PART OF BEING CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD . . . HOWEVER, IF THE CAPACITY TO HEAR AND RECEIVE IS NOT GIVEN TO GOD, IT WILL BECOME THE BASIS FOR CONDEMNATION.

entertainers, philosophers, theologians, politicians, etc. However, if the capacity to hear and receive is not given to God, it will become the basis for condemnation.

The prayer in Nehemiah adds that the Prophets testified "*against*" the people. Other versions read "*admonished them,*"^{NASB} "*warned them,*"^{NIV} "*gave witness against them,*"^{BBE} and "*protested among them.*"^{GENEVA} The idea is that of repeatedly confronting the people with their sin – over and over. They were out of synch with the God of heaven, and He would not allow them to continue without facing them with their transgression. It should be alarming to any believer to hear of God testifying "*against*" a people or an individual! For God to speak "*against*"

heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed" (Deu 4:26).

To "*testify against*" relates to part of Jeremiah's commission: "*to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down*" (Jer 1:10). It is confronting people with their sin and confirming their nearness to Divine judgment.

You may recall that Jesus told three different churches that He had "*somewhat against*" them (Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira: Rev 2:4,14,20). Although this is an often neglected ministry in our day, it is God's manner to

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

"⁷ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the

inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them,

because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee.⁸ O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes,

and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee."

RIGHTEOUSNESS BELONGS TO GOD

"O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee . . ." Other versions read, *"Lord, you are righteous,"* ^{NIV} *"Righteousness is on your side, O Lord,"* ^{NRSV} *"Thine, O Lord, is the righteousness,"* ^{DARBY} and *"Lord, You are in the right."* ^{NLT}

One of the measures of a person is how they respond to the chastening hand of the Lord. Solemnly we are told, *"Despise thou not the chastening of the Lord"* (Job 5:17; Prov 3:11; Heb 12:5). I fear that such unlawful responses have been dignified by the wave of psychological babble that is filling the church these days. Those who say "God can handle your anger," or "It is all right to be angry with God," are leading people astray, and contributing to the hardness of their hearts. Righteousness belongs to God, even if He sends Nebuchadnezzar against them to carry them away to a seventy-year captivity in a heathen land.

Daniel does not respond with anger toward God, as some unthinking people do in our day. He does not cry out "Why, Lord?" Instead, he confesses the righteousness of God in punishing the people for their iniquity. Moses was right in his song, and the people know it: *"a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He"* (Deut 32:4). God Himself declares, *"there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me"* (Isa 45:21). Satan is *"the god of this world"* (2 Cor 4:4), but he is in no way *"just,"* not even with his own children. **Daniel, therefore, refuses to credit God with wrong doing, overlooking them, giving the enemy too much power, or punishing them too long.**

Daniel reasons as their father Abraham did: *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (Gen 18:25). They knew *"the Lord is righteous in all of His ways"* (Psa 145:17), even when they are against His people.

In this text *"right,"* or *"righteousness,"* does not mean the response of God conforms to some moral code. **Rather, it is "right" because in God's dealings with Israel He has been faithful to Himself – faithful to**

His own unchangeable nature.

The Divine Nature Declared

The Lord has plainly declared His nature. He is not only abundant in goodness and truth, gracious, merciful, and longsuffering (Ex 34:6b). He not only keeps mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sin (Ex 34:7a). He also *"will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation"* (Ex 34:7).

He will not gloss sin, or sweep it under the rug. **His nature will not allow Him to overlook sin, and it will not forbid Him to show mercy on those who call out to Him!** But with Daniel, this is not a cold and calculating theology. He has connected this truth with the circumstance of the people. He

confession is made. *"Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day"* (Ezra 9:7). David put the thoughts of *"confusion"* and *"shame"* together in the 44th Psalm. *"My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me"* (Psa 44:15).

The idea conveyed in this phrase is that of a deep and profound shame that is displayed in the countenance. All confidence has been flushed from the individual, and no strength remains in them. A sense of their wrongness and transgression has permeated their entire being. It is a state similar to that of Cain, when his countenance was *"fallen"* (Gen 4:6).

HE WILL NOT GLOSS SIN, OR SWEEP IT UNDER THE RUG. HIS NATURE WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO OVERLOOK SIN, AND IT WILL NOT FORBID HIM TO SHOW MERCY ON THOSE WHO CALL OUT TO HIM!

sees that God has conducted Himself toward them in strict keeping with His own nature. This is a most marvelous perception!

All of this presumes a considerable knowledge of God. **Those who are fundamentally ignorant of God cannot draw conclusions like this.** They do not have the faintest idea if whether the things that have occurred to them are right or wrong. They cannot pray properly because of this, nor can they correctly assess their lives.

CONFUSION OF FACES

" . . . but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day . . ." Other versions read, *"shame of face,"* ^{NKJV} *"open shame,"* ^{NASB} *"covered with shame,"* ^{NIV} and *"the look of shame."* ^{NJB}

The expression *"confusion of face"* also occurs in Ezra, where a similar

Note, Daniel says this condition **belongs** to them, while righteousness belongs to God. The people were wrong, and Daniel sees it. That is another reason why he is fasting with sackcloth and ashes.

A SCATTERED PEOPLE

" . . . to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them . . ."

The appropriateness of *"shame of face"* belongs to the people as a whole, not just the ones in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had left some people in Judah, appointing Gedaliah to be over them (2 Kgs 25:22). **Those people may have been allowed to remain in the land, but shame of face belong to them as well!** No matter where the people were located, whether in Judah, the city of Jerusalem, any place throughout all Israel, Babylon,

or other countries, all of them had reason to be ashamed and disfigured in their countenance. *“Confusion of face”* belonged to them.

BECAUSE OF TRESPASSES

“O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.”

And why is it that *“confusion of face”* belong to the whole of the people? Was it just that God has dealt harshly

toward them? Indeed, it is not. It is because of they *“sinned against”* God personally. Daniel is speaking as David did when he was awakened with a sense of guilt *“Against Thee, **Thee only**, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest”* (Psa 51:4).

Sin must be seen in this light. It is not simply doing something that is wrong – or going beyond an established boundary. **Sin proceeds from the**

carnal mind which is “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). **It is an aggressive attack upon God’s person, even though it is utterly futile.** Those who sin against God may appear to be getting by with it. However, an ultimate confrontation looms on the horizon of time – a time that has been appointed by God. **At that time it will be made quire clear that the commandments of the Lord were right, and that all infractions of them were acts of hostility against Him. He will overcome!**

GOD’S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

*“**To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him.**”*

Unbelief would have despaired over the circumstances Daniel has confessed. Such deplorable conditions appear utterly hopeless to the carnal

ability to confer these upon men, but that He is **inclined** to do so. In revealing Himself to Moses, the Lord declared His Person by saying, *“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for*

Great Mercy

God not only has mercy, He has **“great mercy.”** Thus we read, *“The Lord is longsuffering, and of GREAT mercy”* (Num 14:18). When God revealed His glory to Moses, the very first trait He accented was *“merciful”* (Ex 34:6).

“Merciful” means **filled** with mercy. *“Great mercy”* accents the abundance of mercy. We are told that God is *“plenteous in mercy”* (Psa 86:15), and *“of great mercy”* (Psa 145:8). David confessed, *“The LORD is gracious, and FULL of compassion; slow to anger, and of GREAT mercy”* (Psa 145:8). When Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist, her neighbors and cousins heard *“how the Lord had showed GREAT mercy upon her”* (Lk 1:58).

MERCY IS NOT AN EASY WORD TO DEFINE. IT IS MORE LIKE A CROP THAN A SINGLE FRUIT, AND A STOREHOUSE THAN AN INDIVIDUAL COMMODITY. IT INCLUDES THE IDEAS OF BEAUTY, FAVOR, GOODNESS, KINDNESS, AND PITY.

mind. But Daniel sees beyond the circumstances, even though they were just, and beholds God Himself. A ray of hope is seen by the Prophet, and he takes hold of it by faith.

MERCIES AND FORGIVENESS

“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses . . . ” Other versions read, *“compassion and forgiveness,”* ^{NASB} *“God is merciful and forgiving,”* ^{NIV} and *“to have mercy and to pardon”* ^{NJB}

By saying *“mercies”* and *“forgiveness”* **belong** to the Lord, Daniel is confessing the Lord not only has the

thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:7). **That is God’s nature, and Daniel is depending on the presence of those qualities in Him.**

The prayer of Nehemiah’s people has some striking resemblances to this expression: *“ . . . but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness . . . Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God”* (Neh 9:17,31). **Daniel is now appealing to that mercy and Divine desire to forgive.**

Mercy is not an easy word to define. It is more like a crop than a single fruit, and a storehouse than an individual commodity. It includes the ideas of beauty, favor, goodness, kindness, and pity. ^{STRONGS} **Beauty** is involved because it throws a spotlight on God’s comeliness (Isa 33:17). **Favor** accents His inclination to lovingly bless and improve (Psa 30:5). **Goodness** makes known how He brings advantage, helps, and sustains (Num 10:32). **Kindness** emphasizes His tenderness and gentleness (Issa 54:8). **Pity** involves stooping to help the afflicted, and being touched with their condition (Isa 63:9).

God is too little known for His

great mercy. Therefore, He has so blessed His people, being tolerant of their waywardness, in order to make His mercy the **better known.** That is something of what is involved in the expression, “*for Thy great mercies’ sake.*” In His approach to Israel He was making known how merciful He is. Now, Daniel has seen this. In confessing it, He is seeking for the mercy of God to be upon the people in their full recovery.

If one wanted to make an appeal to the Law itself, and to the strict adjudication of what is right and just, a case could be made for utterly destroying Israel. In fact, many within the church think this is what God actually did following Israel’s rejection of Christ. Unlike them, the people in our text no doubt knew of the many expressions of God on this subject. Prior to the Babylonian captivity God said through Jeremiah, “*For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end*” (Jer 4:27). Again, in judgment God said, “*Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end . . . Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you*” (Jer 5:10,18).

It is no wonder that the Lamentator cried out, “*It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not*” (Lam 3:22). That is precisely why Ezekiel prophesied, “*Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters*” (Ezek 14:22). And again, Isaiah acknowledged that God had not utterly destroyed the people: “*Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto*

Gomorrah” (Isa 1:9).

God said He would “*utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven*” (Exo 17:14). But He did not do so with Israel. In fact, after promising He would make a New

and “*merciful*” are not synonymous words. Whereas the word “*gracious*” emphasizes the DOING of good, the word “*merciful*” emphasizes compassion. **Love moves God to be gracious, His great compassion constrains Him to be merciful, pitiful, and forbearing.**

LOVE MOVES GOD TO BE GRACIOUS, HIS GREAT COMPASSION CONSTRAINS HIM TO BE MERCIFUL, PITIFUL, AND FORBEARING.

Covenant with Judah and Israel, He pledged, “*Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD*” (Jer 31:26-37). Daniel now confesses that in doing this, God was considering His own great mercy!

A GRACIOUS GOD. The attitudes and works of God are supported by His Person. He did not “*utterly consume*” Israel because He is gracious. In the Law, God made a point of this by saying, “*I am gracious!*” (Ex 22:27). The word “*gracious*” involves activity, and is more than a mere attribute. It means God is **inclined** to stoop to lift, help, and recover – like the good Samaritan. He is **disposed** to be kind, and to lavish His love upon men – a love that brings benefits and advantages that cannot otherwise be obtained.

A MERCIFUL GOD. “*Gracious*”

God has affirmed He is “*merciful*” (Ex 34:6). Moses told the people God would not forsake or destroy them because “*God is a merciful God*” (Deut 4:31).

THOUGH WE HAVE REBELLED

“*. . . though we have rebelled against Him.*” The survival of the people was not owing to their toughness, or to any strategy they had developed for surviving in a foreign country. **The presence of rebellion in them had robbed them of any wisdom or cunning.** The fact of the matter was that God has graciously sustained them, going no further in the chastising of them than was necessary.

It is one thing to faint under the chastening hand of the Lord. **It is quite another to view a remnant of people as evidence of the great mercy of God, and a reason to seek His forgiveness.** It seems to me that there is room for a lot of this kind of preaching among God’s people.

NOT OBEYING AND THE CURSE

“¹⁰ *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets.* ¹¹ *Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey*

Thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.”

Daniel continues with his

confession, declaring the completeness of their disobedience and rebellion against God. He is not, however, complaining, but is rather acknowledging the need the people have of mercy and forgiveness. His understanding of God is what compels him to pray in this manner. After all,

there were times when they rallied behind the Judges, and some of the kings as well. However, any such obedience was the exception, not the rule – **and obedience that is the exception does not count with God.**

Those who would dare to live sporadically before the Lord, with occasional efforts to obey, and an effort to not be too bad, are in for a rude awakening. **Such fits and starts are not even received by God.** In God's assessment of Israel He ignored the infrequent peaks of goodness in their history. He said, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom 10:21). Moses said, "Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day

But Daniel adds one other interesting thing. He does not refer to God's laws given at Sinai, but the ones "He set before us by His servants the prophets." They were the same laws, to be sure. However, the prophets applied "His laws," bringing them to bear upon specific situations. Some examples should serve to establish this point.

▣ "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from

statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek 18:5-9).

The prophets placed God's Law before the people in a practical way, showing at what points they had failed, and what the Lord really required of them. But the people disdained the prophets. God regarded this disdain to be against Himself personally. He does not charge them with simply not listening to the prophets, but with **not walking in His laws.** Whoever is sent by God to the people is to be regarded the messenger of the Lord Himself.

ALL ISRAEL HAVE TRANSGRESSED

"Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice . . ."

The sin of Israel was unanimous. They "all" transgressed, broke, or violated the Law of God. They did so collectively, as a group.

While sin is personal, it is not confined to the individual alone. Whole bodies of people can sin together as Israel did. The church in Ephesus sinned together, leaving their "first love" (Rev 2:4). The church in Pergamos sinned together, tolerating some among them who held to the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes (Rev 2:14). There are still churches that are joined in their disobedience. **They are in the throes of spiritual death together, and they must repent together.**

THE OATH THAT IS WRITTEN

" . . . therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him."

The reprehensible conduct of "all Israel" has brought down the wrath of God – a God that is longsuffering, merciful, and given to forgiveness.

The words employed by Daniel are most arresting: "therefore the curse is poured upon us, AND the oath that is written." Other versions read, "curses and sworn judgments,"^{NIV} "the curse has been let loose on us, and the oath

THOSE WHO WOULD DARE TO LIVE SPORADICALLY BEFORE THE LORD, WITH OCCASIONAL EFFORTS TO OBEY, AND AN EFFORT TO NOT BE TOO BAD, ARE IN FOR A RUDE AWAKENING. SUCH FITS AND STARTS ARE NOT EVEN RECEIVED BY GOD.

that I knew you" (Deu 9:24). Daniel now prays from that perspective.

WALKING IN HIS LAWS

"Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets . . ."

Obedience is not a step, or a series of steps. It is not a mere routine. Technically, the Jews did keep some of the feast days and other sundry laws. As astute Jew could probably have sited a number of obedient deeds found in the history of Israel.

Note how Daniel speaks of obeying the voice of the Lord: "to walk in His laws." In other words, they did not live within the framework of "His laws." **In their hearts, and in their deeds as well, they conducted their lives without regard for what God had commanded them.**

thine own flesh? (Isa 58:6-7).

▣ "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

▣ "But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, hath walked in my

recorded in the law of Moses,"^{BBE} "the malediction, and the curse, which is written in the book of Moses, the servant of God, is fallen upon us,"^{DOUAY} and "the curse and imprecation written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have come pouring down on us."^{NJB}

The Lord had been quite clear about the penalty for failing to walk in his laws. However, the people had not taken Him or His prophets seriously, and thus the windows of heaven were open, but not to bless them. Some of the curses, together with the oath of the Law, that were poured out upon them are mentioned in the 26th chapter of Leviticus. Here is a sampling of those strong incentives.

- ▣ "I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that shall waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you shall sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies shall eat it up" (Lev 26:16).
- ▣ "And I will set My face against you so that you shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when no one is pursuing you" (Lev 26:17).
- ▣ "If also after these things, you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze" (Lev 26:18-19).

- ▣ "And your strength shall be spent uselessly, for your land shall not yield its produce and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit" (Lev 26:20).
- ▣ "If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins. And I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie

hands" (Lev 26:23-25).

- ▣ "When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied" (Lev 26:26)
- ▣ "Yet if in spite of this, you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with wrathful hostility against you; and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. 'Further, you shall eat

THE LORD HAD BEEN QUITE CLEAR ABOUT THE PENALTY FOR FAILING TO WALK IN HIS LAWS. HOWEVER, THE PEOPLE HAD NOT TAKEN HIM OR HIS PROPHETS SERIOUSLY, AND THUS THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN WERE OPEN, BUT NOT TO BLESS THEM.

deserted" (Lev 26:21-22).

- ▣ "And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. 'I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy

the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you shall eat" (Lev 26:29)

Many of the details of the Babylonian captivity are not spelled out in Scripture. However, it is evident from the nature and content of Daniel's prayer that the people paid a tremendous penalty for their willing waywardness. **It should be evident to us that God's nature does not allow Him to be tolerant of willing sin.**

CONCLUSION

There are certainly some significant things to be learned from this text. For the sake of brevity, I will only give three of them.

First, it is imperative that we see the Lord's hostility against sin – particularly when it is found among those to whom He has revealed many things, and to whom He has sent many messengers. **The nature of God has**

not changed. He is no more tolerant of sin today than He has ever been. I realize that no small number of false doctrines have been concocted by men to modify the saints view of sin. Any teaching that trends to make sin less serious than it really is, is not of God. God "cursed" Jesus because of sin (Gal 3:13), making Him to "be sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21). If He did this to His only begotten Son when the sins of others were placed

upon Him, what will be the lot of those who have chosen to live in sin, all the while ignoring the Savior?

Second, sin must be repented of, and the mercy of the Lord diligently sought. Let us have done with any glossing of sin, or assigning its reality to any source other than rebellion against the Lord. **The church must provide an environment where the conviction**

of sin can become a reality, and the confession of it encouraged. This is particularly true of public sins.

Third, when it becomes apparent that something that God has promised is about to take place, it is time to seek the Lord. **We must steadfastly resist any tendency to think “Whatever will be will be!”** Daniel saw the captivity was coming to a close, and set His face toward the Lord. He acknowledged the sin and unworthiness of the people, pleading for the mercy of the Lord. He did not rest in a time table, even though such a table had been revealed. Rather, He trusted in the Lord to respond to a plea for mercy.

We are living in a time when this kind of prayer is most appropriate. We are in a nation that is rapidly descending into the quagmire of transgression, even though it has worn the name of Christ, and claimed to trust in God. Let no man think for one moment that such affirmations are taken lightly in heaven.

We are also confronted with a church that is miserably divided, with differing and conflicting doctrines, and dominated by lukewarmness and carnality. It may very well be that we are about to witness the conclusion of the “fulfillment of the Gentiles,” the time when “the full number

of the Gentiles has come in”^{NIV} (Rom 11:25). Jesus spoke of a period he defined as “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). **Those who behold indications of this, ought to give themselves to prayer, seeking the mercy of the Lord.**

As Amos said, “it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant” (Amos 5:15). How appropriate Hosea’s words is here. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you” (Hosea 10:12).

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/24/2003. We will continue in our overview of Daniel, reviewing verses 12-19 of the ninth chapter. The title of our lesson is, “**DANIEL’S INTERCESSORY PRAYER, #2.**” Daniel continues to carefully and insightfully recount the involvements of the Babylonian captivity. In this part of his prayer, he pleads for the Lord to do what He had promised. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH’s Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA’s Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Jonathan (Jonstalk@aol.com), Eva (EvaBlakely@aol.com)
Adah Hutchcraft (ALHutchcraft@milligan.edu), Jason Hutchcraft (hutchcraftj@esr.edu)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

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