

# EAGLES RENDEZVOUS

## UNRAVELING THE FUTURE STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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### Pray or Panic? (9-10)

#### Daniel 9:1-2

*1 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom - 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.*

*3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame-the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. 8 O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. 9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; 10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. "Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. 12 You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. 14 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him. 15 "Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. 16 O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us. 17 "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. 18 Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. 19 O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."*

20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill - 21 while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. 23 As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: 24 "Seventy `sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. 25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven `sevens,' and sixty-two `sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two `sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one `seven.' In the middle of the `seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Daniel's immediate concern is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the end of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. The first year of the reign of Darius is 539 BC, which is approximately the 69th year of Daniel's own captivity. Many scholars hold the view that Cyrus appointed Darius to rule over the Babylonian part of the Medo-Persian Empire until Darius' death, after which Cyrus himself assumed the reign and issued the edict for the return of the Jews to their homeland. There are two instances in Jeremiah's prophecy that mention a period of seventy years for the duration of the captivity. In Jeremiah 25:11-12, we read: "This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,' declares the LORD, 'and will make it desolate forever.'" He obviously knew about the letter Jeremiah had sent to the captives, and probably possessed a copy of it. In it Jeremiah corrects the view of some false prophets who predicted the immediate return of the captives. He told them to settle for an imprisonment that would cover several generations. He advised them to build houses, get married and have children and grandchildren, and to work for the prosperity of their enemies.

Daniel's understanding of the prophetic Word brings him to his knees. Being a prophet himself, he had experienced physically the effects of receiving divine revelation. Whenever God had drawn aside the veil to allow him to look in the future, it had overwhelmed him and made him physically ill. Daniel, therefore, approached prophecy with great caution. He understood something of the principle of prophecy, of the way it operates, and of the responsibility of the person who is confronted with it. Daniel comprehended that God wants us, as human beings, to actively participate in the fulfillment of prophecy. Daniel knew that the reason for the Babylonian captivity had been the sin of the people of Israel; they had defiled the Promised Land. He was aware of God's warning, given through Moses: "If you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you." If God's people were to return to their land, the sin that had caused their eviction must be dealt with.

This is the reason Daniel sought God in prayer. This attitude made Daniel “highly esteemed,” or “greatly beloved” in God’s eyes. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* makes the following excellent observations about Daniel’s prayer: “In the appreciation of a poem, play, or painting, the greatest value is to be received by simply taking the creation as a whole. Just so Daniel’s prayer should be studied as a whole. The prayer was a providential means of accomplishing what was already determined. The names of Deity employed are significant. Daniel reminds God that both Jerusalem (v. 18) and the Jews (v. 19) are called by thy name. He addresses the Lord as Lord God (*‘adonay ‘elohim*), (v. 3) and LORD God (Yahweh *‘elohim*, v. 4). ... Daniel’s conception of God shows balance between the great and dreadful God (v. 4...) and a God of mercies and forgiveness (v. 9...).”

Note what light this chapter casts on prayer. Observe: (1) Daniel’s prayer was a persistent, 6:1-10; cf. 9:1-3). In over sixty-nine years of waiting, the prophet had not lost hope. (2) He had determination (v. 3). He showed humility (v. 4). Note how he associated himself with his people in their sins (v. 5). He made confession (verses 4,5). He displayed submission (v. 14) and engaged in (v. 7) petition and (v. 8) intercession. Like Moses, Daniel as intercessor carried on argument with the Almighty, on several grounds: God’s people were a reproach among the heathen (v. 16); God was known to be merciful (v. 18); and God’s reputation was at stake (v. 19).

Daniel’s knew that what had happened to Israel was the fulfillment of a warning God had given them through Moses. He also knew God’s promise in Leviticus: “You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers’ sins they will waste away. But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.”

We can easily distinguish two parts in this prayer: confession of sin: verses 4-14, and a plea for mercy: verses 15-19. This prayer was not for any personal favors Daniel sought from God. When he prayed for the fulfillment of God’s promise to end the captivity after seventy years, he did not envision the possibility to return himself to the Promised Land. Daniel prayed for his nation and his people as a member of the nation and the people. When we seek to God for national mercies we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins.

Daniel’s reference to God’s covenant has a profound significance. The Hebrew word for covenant is *beriyth*. It literally means: “to cut into pieces,” and it refers to the way a compact was made by passing between pieces of the flesh of a killed animal. This is illustrated in the way God made His covenant with Abraham: “So the LORD said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.’ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a

covenant with Abram..." The killing of the animal signified that the covenant was a covenant of blood. Both parties indicated that they identified themselves with the slain animal to the point that they would agree to being cut into pieces if they broke the agreement. In God's covenant with Abraham, only God passed between the pieces. The ultimate meaning of this clause was beyond the horizon of Daniel's field of vision. This man of God could not have foreseen how seriously God took His obligation in the deal. He did not know that God would ultimately identify Himself with the slain and cut-up animal in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. It is not inadvertent that this chapter finishes with a covert reference to the death of the Messiah; but this also Daniel cannot have understood. For us who do understand, the opening words of Daniel's prayer: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love," acquire a depth of meaning that is beyond words. It is God's love and faithfulness, the way He took upon Himself the consequences of the broken covenant in the humility and brokenness of Jesus Christ, that makes Him such a great and awesome God.

Daniel uses four different Hebrew words to identify Israel's sins: *chata'*, which means: "to miss," referring to the act of sinning. The word *`avah*, translated "done wrong," means: "to make crooked." It refers to the sinful nature of the human soul. It carries the meaning of perversion, as in: "I sinned, and perverted what was right." *Rasha'* implies a violation of the law which leads to condemnation. And *marad* stands for "rebellion." The development from sin as merely missing the mark to open rebellion manifested itself particularly in the attitude of Israel towards their prophets. I and II Kings are written from the point of view of the kings' attitude toward God's prophets. The captivity was ultimately the fruit of rebellion against God's revelation of Himself exemplified in Israel's consistent refusal to pay attention to the prophetic word. From Daniel's confession we learn that the rebellion against God had not been limited to only one or two strata of Israel. From the kings to the common people, everyone had stubbornly turned away from God in willful opposition.

Daniel had never personally committed any of the sins that led to the captivity of the nation of which he was a part, yet he identified himself with the sins of his people. In matters of reconciliation. This is the attitude one should take. In confessing the sins of the nation as his personal sins, Daniel contrasts God's righteousness to man's unrighteousness. The Hebrew word he uses is *tsedaqah*, which refers not merely to a condition or an attribute but to acts of righteousness. Compared to God's acts of righteousness, man's acts amount to criminal neglect or worse. The words "covered with shame" are the rendering of the Hebrew *bosheth paniym*, which literally means: "shame faced." The mention of shame recurs in Daniel's prayer. Most human beings have the awareness of not being what they are supposed or meant to be. Our efforts for self-realization and self-fulfillment are proof of this. Almost everybody has a vague sense of inadequacy. Shame comes in when we realize that our inability to measure up to God's glory is in fact rebellion. In vs. 7, Daniel speaks not only in behalf of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, but also of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The people of the Northern Kingdom had been led into captivity to Assyria some two hundred years before. Daniel stands here in the gap of all of Jacob's descendants. Yet, Jerusalem and its inhabitants seem to occupy the center of Daniel's thought, not only because it was the capital, but because it was the place of God's revelation on earth.

Being himself a member of the royal family, Daniel speaks particularly of the sins of the kings and princes, of those who ought to have led the people in the paths of righteousness. Verse 9 reads in the NIV: “The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, *even though* we have rebelled against him.” The RSV, however, reads: “To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness; *because* we have rebelled against him.” The Hebrew word that accounts for this difference in translation is *kiy*, which can be rendered “forasmuch,” but also “yet,” or “yea.” The question is, should God punish us or should He forgive. God’s righteousness demands punishment, but God’s love grants forgiveness. C. S. Lewis once stated that the one word that makes the difference between Christianity and all the other religions of the world is “grace.”

There is no record of any of Israel’s kings who ever obeyed this command. The only king who showed any interest in the Book of the Law was King Josiah during whose reign the book was rediscovered while the temple was repaired. The very fact that a copy of the Book of the Law had to be rediscovered proves how much the written Word had been ignored.

In the last five verses of his prayer, Daniel appeals to God’s power, His righteousness, His glory, and His compassion. In referring to the exodus from Egypt, Daniel may have had in mind another prophecy God had given to Jeremiah: “ ‘So then, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when people will no longer say, ‘ ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ ‘ but they will say, ‘ ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ ‘ Then they will live in their own land.’ ”

The reference to Israel’s birth as a nation, which is what the exodus was, contains an allusion to God’s covenant with Abraham. It provided Daniel with a strong basis for his argument in prayer. The difference between the exodus from Egypt and the return from Babylonian captivity is in the fact that the captivity had been a punishment for Israel’s sin. This could not be said about their sojourn in Egypt. But then, Daniel’s prayer was a prayer of confession. An appeal to God’s righteousness could not be made without an understanding of the principles of atonement. Righteousness without atonement equals punishment and ruin. The profound meaning of the covenant, as we saw above, was that an animal died and was cut up in pieces. Identification with the victim meant not only that both parties accepted the consequences of breaking of the terms of the covenant, but also an acceptance of the principle of substitution. Another creature took the place in punishment for the offender. In their rebellion, Israel had withdrawn themselves from under this protecting umbrella and thus they had become the direct target of God’s wrath.

In his prayer, Daniel brings himself and his people back under the protection that God’s covenant provides. The final appeal is to God’s compassion. The Hebrew word rendered “mercy” is *racham*, which literally means: “the womb.” It refers to the love of a mother for her unborn baby. The same word is used in the story of the two prostitutes who came to King Solomon with their two babies, one dead and one alive. When Solomon ordered the live baby to be cut in two, we read: “The woman whose son was alive was filled with *compassion* for her son and said to the king, ‘Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!’ Daniel must have had a profound insight into the character of God to be able to make such an appeal. He understood that God was deeply involved in the suffering of His people. The prayer ends with

the emotional outburst: “O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.” Daniel’s cry was not an effort to move God to compassion; it was proof of the fact that God had moved Daniel’s heart with His compassion. That is what intercessory prayer is all about. Daniel’s prayer did not move God to end the captivity; God moved Daniel to pray, so He could end the captivity.

### **The Intervention of Gabriel 9:20-23**

Daniel was still praying when the angel Gabriel appeared to him. The text states that Daniel directed his prayer to God’s “holy hill.” This may mean that his face pointed in the direction of Jerusalem. We saw before that it was his habit to pray in front of a window that opened toward Jerusalem. Earlier in this chapter, he referred to Jerusalem as “your city, your holy hill.” It can also mean that Daniel understood that the actual Mount Zion was not on earth but in heaven. Gabriel appeared around the ninth hour, which is three o’clock in the afternoon, which was the time of the evening sacrifice. There had, of course, been no sacrifice since the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. But Daniel had, obviously, never abandoned the schedule. Daniel recognized Gabriel as the one who had appeared to him in the vision he recorded in the previous chapter.

In the New Testament, Gabriel was in charge of bringing the announcements of the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and of Jesus to Mary. Gabriel came “in swift flight,” which is the way most versions render it. The point to be made is obviously that of great speed. We could probably read that Gabriel came “out of breath.” Gabriel’s speed and the immediate answer to prayer stands in sharp contrast to the long delay in the next chapter. There, the answer was not given until three weeks of fasting had elapsed. We could ask here why there was such a hurry in this case. Daniel had probably been in prayer no longer than nine hours. One reason may be the fact that Daniel had humbled himself so deeply before God in confessing the sins of his people as his own sins. God was, so to speak, in a hurry to lift Daniel up from the ground and tell him how much He loved him. Daniel experienced the truth of James’ words: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

Gabriel’s task was also to give Daniel insight into the meaning of the vision he was being given. The word used here is *sakal*, which is the word used consistently in Proverbs for “wise.” It is the insight that comes from the fear of the Lord. While, in connection with other visions, Daniel seems to have been left in the dark here for God to give him understanding.

The NIV is the only version that uses here the words “seventy sevens” as a translation of the Hebrew *shib`iyim shabuwa`*; most versions content themselves with the rendering “seventy weeks.” TLB reads: “490 years.” One of the questions to be determined is whether Gabriel spoke of a period of 490 days or 490 years. The general consensus of Biblical scholars is that “years” are intended. The best argument for the interpretation of “seventy sevens” as seventy times seven years is found in The Book of Second Chronicles, where seventy years is equated with a “sabbath rest.”

Daniel’s prayer had been focused upon the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy that the captivity

would end after seventy years. The answer to his prayer goes well beyond that period to a multiple of seventies in which a greater fulfillment to end a greater captivity is announced.

### **Daniel 10:1-21**

*1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision. 2 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. 4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, 5 I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. 6 His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. 7 I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. 8 So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. 9 Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. 10 A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.*

*12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. 14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come." 15 While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. 16 Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. 17 How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe." 18 Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. 19 "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength." 20 So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come 21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.)*

Verse 1 could be an introduction by an editor to notes left by Daniel. Daniel may have kept a diary of his spiritual experiences, which was discovered after his death. The same can be said about the dream and vision recorded in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 even states: "He wrote down the substance of his dream."

Daniel's fast was not a complete one but more an abstinence of the things that make life pleasurable. This is a very commendable discipline, which enhances gratitude for the blessings the Lord gives us in daily life. Daniel's abstinence suggests that he enjoyed life and that he had enough control over his habits to keep the right perspective. As long as we keep our priorities

straight and realize that God is the source of all our blessings, we can allow ourselves to enjoy them.

The words: “it concerned a great war” are the translation of a concept expressed in the one Hebrew word *tsaba*, which literally means “a regiment organized for war.” Daniel receives his vision on the twenty-fourth day, which is three days after he had ended his fast. In the previous chapter, Daniel’s confession of sin and contrition had prepared the way for the issuing of Cyrus’ edict; here the fast complements the execution of the edict. As we shall see in the following chapters, the answer to the prophet’s prayer would far surpass anything he asked for.

No reason is given for Daniel’s being at the bank of the River Tigris, which was about forty miles east of his place of residence. He may have been on government business, which would explain the company in which he traveled. These details given indicate that Daniel was physically present at the place mentioned; he was not transferred spiritually to it as the case in the vision at the side of the Ulai canal in chapter eight.

The person Daniel saw was, evidently, an archangel since he states to be associated with Michael. The person who appeared here to him seems to have been a stranger to the prophet. The archangel appeared dressed in the garment of a priest. The NIV states that his belt was made “of the finest gold.” The Hebrew text reads literally: “fine gold of Uphaz”; Uphaz probably being a place of renown for its gold. Chrysolite is the rendering of the Hebrew *tarshiysh*, which is usually translated: “beryl.” The reference to gems in the description of a person seems to be an effort to express the divine character.

The voice of the archangel is said to be “like the sound of a multitude.” “Multitude” is the usual translation of the Hebrew word *hamown*. Interestingly, Daniel’s companions were unable to see the archangel, although they experienced the terror of the charged ambiance of the vision. Daniel was the only person who was “tuned in” sufficiently to observe this spiritual reality. His fellowship with God had been developed to the point that he was able to hear the voice of God when he was spoken to.

The vision affected Daniel to the point that he fainted. His spirit may have been attuned to this spiritual reality; his body was not. The NIV describes Daniel’s reaction: “My face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.” Even the divine touch is not sufficient to restore Daniel immediately to a condition in which he stopped trembling. The archangel had to touch him three times before he was able to stand up and take in what was being said to him. Daniel’s age would account, up to a point, for his slow recovery. But the main reason given for his reaction is fear. A certain measure of fear in divine encounters is healthy.

As in the previous vision, the archangel addresses Daniel as “highly esteemed,” or “greatly beloved.” The content of those words seem to have a stronger effect upon Daniel’s physical condition than the touch. Daniel’s physical strength increased when he heard that God loved him.

We must not interpret the archangel's remark that only Michael, Israel's protecting angel, supported him in the struggle against the territorial spirits of Persia and Greece, as a complaint directed to the heavenly hierarchy. We cannot suppose that the heavenly house would be divided against itself and that the angels would be tied up into strife and competition. The statement merely indicates that the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, may play a dominant part in the fulfillment of God's plan for our planet.

## **APPLICATION**

1. We cannot \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Our prayer should be based \_\_\_\_\_.

3. At the heart of our Christian faith is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Even the strongest \_\_\_\_\_.

