

Prayer – the Mystery and the Marvel

Daniel 9:1 – 23



James 5:16

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

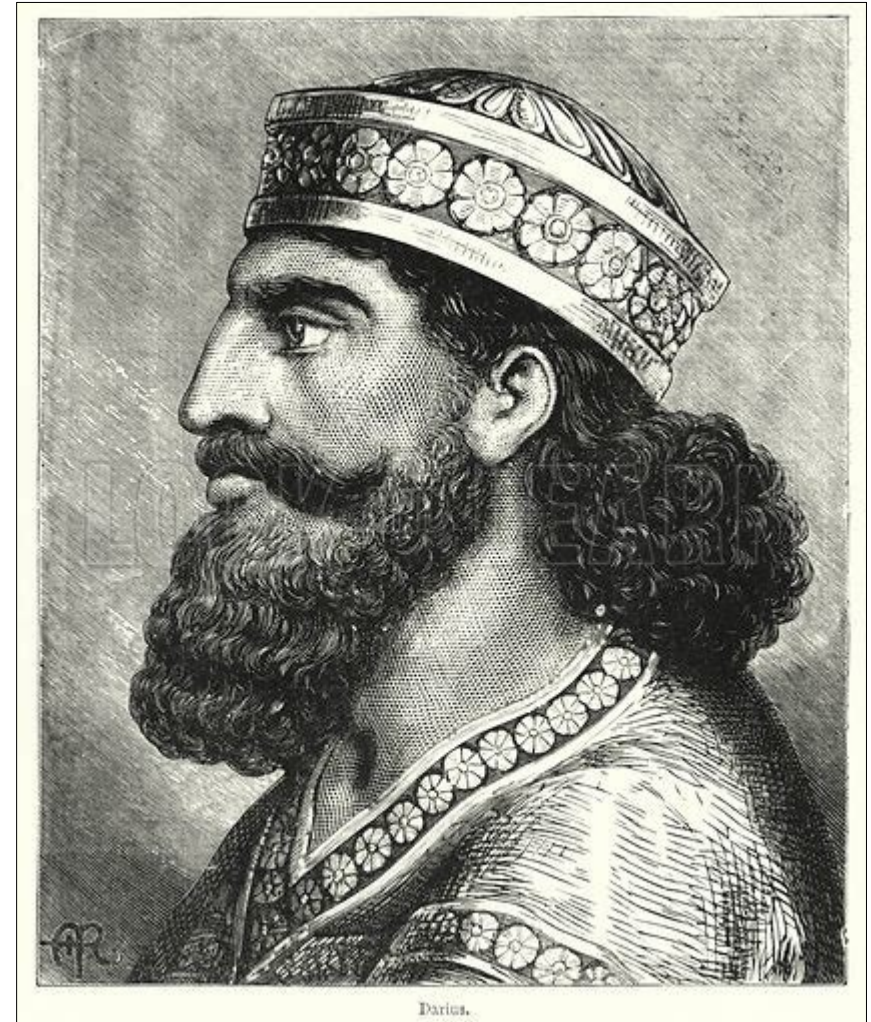
In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom-- in the first year of his reign,

The situation: a very significant time

The Babylonian empire had just ended and the Medo-Persian empire had replaced it

The date : 539 BC about 11 years after chapter 8

Darius the Mede was possibly another name for Cyrus or the name of Cyrus's general who captured Babylon.



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.

Reading the scriptures (note his view of Jeremiah's prophecy = the word of the Lord) Jeremiah 25:11-12

A straight-forward reading 70 years for the desolation to last - time was nearly up!

This was a promise in God's word.



So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Daniel's response to God's promise → action rather than fatalism

He got serious – he asks God for something coming in the right attitude - humbly



I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed..

Prayer based on his personal relationship – the Lord MY God

Acknowledge the state of things contrasted to God's holiness.



The Prayer

"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands,

cf. Our Father in heaven

The greatness of God is his first thought
And God's great love for his people



we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 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.

cf. Forgive us OUR sins

He identifies with his people

Us versus they?

Looking back over the state of nation and exiles
(supposed to be God's people and witness!)

How far can we identify with the past sins of our nation?



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. O LORD, we and our kings,
our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we
have sinned against you.

cf. Hallowed be your name

Righteous in how God dealt with us
Shamed, scattered sinners



The real cause was not the Babylonian expansion
but our unfaithfulness.

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving,
even though we have rebelled against him;

cf. Forgive us our sins

Rebellion is a terrible sin - we think we know best?



we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.

Disobeyed his clear instructions repeatedly given in the Law of Moses, the prophets eg. Elijah, Isaiah, Amos, Ezekiel etc.



Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

"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. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster.

God has kept His word given in the warnings for disobedience.

The curses for breaking the law were given in Deuteronomy 28:15 ff. and Leviticus 26:14ff



Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.

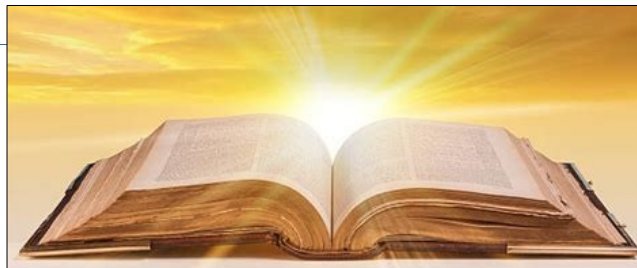
Although other places were destroyed by the Babylonians, no other city had been so highly favoured as Jerusalem, and therefore its judgement was unique also.



Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favour of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.

The law also promises God's favour to the truly repentant

Deuteronomy 30:1-3 "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you."



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.

God is righteous and he means what he says.

We cannot blame God for what has happened. It was all our fault by our disobedience.

1 John 1:8-9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



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.

Daniel remembers what God had done for them in the past
– he showed his glory.



O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill.

As you acted in the past, do it again.
It is your city and your honour that is at stake.

AGAIN

Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

We have been the cause of ridicule and by implication have brought dishonour to your name.



Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant.
For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate
sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and
see the desolation of the city that bears your Name.

Please act for YOUR sake.
Glorify your name by looking on us in favour.

Numbers 6:24-27

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."*

So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous,
but because of your great mercy.

We claim no merit of our own.
We cast ourselves on your great mercy.

A Plea For
Mercy



O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act!

Earnest prayer has 'O's in it.
He believes that God can not only hear his prayer
but also He can do something in response.



For your sake, O my God, do not delay,
because your city and your people bear your Name."

For your honour, Lord.
The city and the people BEAR God's name
They are the Lord's representatives.

*2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors
for Christ, God making his appeal through us.*



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-- 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.



A flying angel Gabriel brings an answer at a significant time - 3.00pm.

He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.

*Isaiah 65:24 Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.*



1John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Expecting Answers

1John 3:20-23 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.



Daniel's Ingredients for answered prayer?

A humble attitude (we can be confident in the Lord).

A real sense of need.

Scripture inspired reading.

Pleading God's promises.

Remember his past mercies.

Persistence.

Submission to God's will.

Thankfulness.



Learning from Daniel

Luke 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

