

THE BOOK OF
DANIEL
KINGDOMS IN VISION

GROWTH GROUP STUDY 8

Study 8 - Daniel 9

AIM OF STUDY:

- Be encouraged by Daniel's bold prayer.
- Think through how to read Daniel's 2nd & 3rd vision and in what way such a vision can apply to us as christians today.

MAIN TEACHING POINT:

Daniel bases his prayer on God's mercy.

FOLLOW-UP OF LAST WEEK'S STUDY

Our previous study concentrated on the vision given to Daniel in chapter 7. In chapter 8 Daniel receives a second vision, this time in the 3rd year of king Belshazzar's reign. This time the vision involves the conflict between a charging ram and a male goat with a horn that becomes broken off and then replaced by another horn. Once again, the vision is interpreted for Daniel - each element of the vision corresponding to a particular historical person (see verses 20-25). In verses 17 and 19, Daniel is told that the vision refers to the appointed time of the end. It is probably worth asking at this point, "Which end?" and "The end for whom?". Daniel is also told to "...seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now." verse 26.

The details of a vision such as this are difficult for us to understand but we may be able to get some answers by asking a few questions:

If we think about the vision as it would have been understood but the first readers of Daniel we could ask:

Did the events described here still lie ahead of them or were they actually living them at the time?

Clearly God's people need to have patience and endurance as they wait for the consummation of the kingdom as described in the previous chapter (Daniel 7).

We then as christian readers who live on the other side of the cross from these events. How should we think about and seek to apply this section of the book of Daniel given that in Jesus, the events described in Daniel 7 have already been fulfilled, i.e. Jesus now rules and reigns from heaven? We shall find ourselves asking a similar question as we continue to seek to interpret the subsequent visions that Daniel receives through to the end of the book.

DANIEL 9 - THY KINGDOM COME.....

The exile was above all a theological problem for the people of God. Had God's age-old covenant promises failed? In what sense could God's people be still considered to be a people once they had been thrown out of the land? All the normal covenant markers indicating God's presence with them and his commitment to them - temple, sacrifice, kingship etc were gone.

But Daniel knows from reading Jeremiah's prophecy that the punishment of the exile would be limited. God would forgive and restore his people again. See Jeremiah 27:22, 29:10-14 and Isaiah 40:1-2.

Read through Daniel's prayer in 9:3-19 and fill out the following table:



Content	Verses
Daniel's solidarity with his people	
Indications of God's righteousness	
Indications of the people's unfaithfulness	
Requests that Daniel makes	
Basis upon which Daniel calls on God to act to save	

1. Do you think that Daniel is confident that God will answer his requests positively? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. What encouragement do you find from Daniel's prayer?

Daniel does in fact receive a swift response. Read verses 20-23. In answer to his prayer he is given a 3rd word and vision. (verse 23). See 9:24-27 for the vision itself.

The exact historical details of the events referred to in the vision lie in the future for Daniel. Unlike the vision of the ram, goat and horn of chapter 8, the actors in this vision are not clearly identified and there is no interpretation given. Jerusalem and the sanctuary will be rebuilt but then subsequently destroyed. The theme of ongoing suffering for God's people until the end seems to continue throughout this vision. (verse 26)

Once again, as people living on the other side of the cross, the ongoing suffering of God's people at this time should not surprise us. The return from exile was associated with ongoing suffering for God's people. This must have been quite a shock for the people of God who may have expected a peaceful reestablishment in the land.

HOW DOES DANIEL'S VISION APPLY TO US?

The seeming lack of direct application of the verses from Daniel's vision to us in our day may trouble you. After all, are not **all** Scriptures God-breathed and profitable for equipping us by teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness? 2 Timothy 3:16-17

We need to remember our place in God's overall plan of salvation. A bit like when we read the laws of the book of Leviticus, we know that from where we stand in salvation history, many of the verses do not apply directly to us in our day. We still read them as Scripture but their application to us is nuanced by the fact that we live in a different place in God's plans. In a similar way, the verses of Daniel's vision that we are reading here in Daniel 9 do not apply to us directly in the same way that they would have for the returnee exiles from Babylon.

LET'S PRAY

Daniel's prayer is a great model for our own prayer. As we finish today's study let us pray:

- In the light of God's character and the promises of his word.
- In humble confession before him as we recognise our shortcomings.
- Coming to God on the basis of his mercy and compassion and never with a sense of our own entitlement.