

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

What do you hope for? Bigger house, healthy children, better economy, warmer relationships? This is an important question, because what you hope for determines what you pray for, and what you pray for determines the very trajectory of your life. Daniel's amazing life was directed in large part by the things he hoped for, namely the glory of God and the well-being of God's people. Let's make some important observations from our text:

Daniel 9:1-27

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—**2** in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. **4** I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **5** we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. **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** To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. **8** To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. **9** To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him **10** and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. **11** All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. **12** He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us,¹ by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. **13** As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. **14** Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. **15** And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 “O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. **17** Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord,² make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. **18** O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. **19** O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, **21** while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. **22** He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. **23** At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

24 "Seventy weeks³ are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.⁴ **25** Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again⁵ with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. **26** And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its⁶ end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. **27** And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week,⁷ and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

I. God wants us to pray (vv. 1-19)

God takes great delight in our prayers, especially when they are in accord with God's Word (cf. I John 5:14,15). Lets notice two things about Daniel's prayer.

A. Our prayers must be in accord with the promises of God.

Note that Daniel prayed because he had read the promise of God in Jeremiah's prophecy that God's people would return from exile after 70 years (v. 2). Whenever God promises something to us, that should prompt us to pray.

B. Our prayers must be in accord with the righteousness of God.

Note that Daniel wove together in his prayer two major themes: our sin deserving of God's chastening, and God's perfect righteousness in all that He does. When Daniel pleads for God's people, then, it is on the basis not of our righteousness or deserving, but rather on God's righteousness alone.

II. God graciously answers our prayers. (vv. 20-23)

Notice that God answers Daniel's prayer before he even says the Amen! Gabriel tells Daniel that he is heard because he is greatly loved. The Bible teaches us that we, too, are greatly love. We must cultivate this truth in our hearts. When we pray, our Father listens!

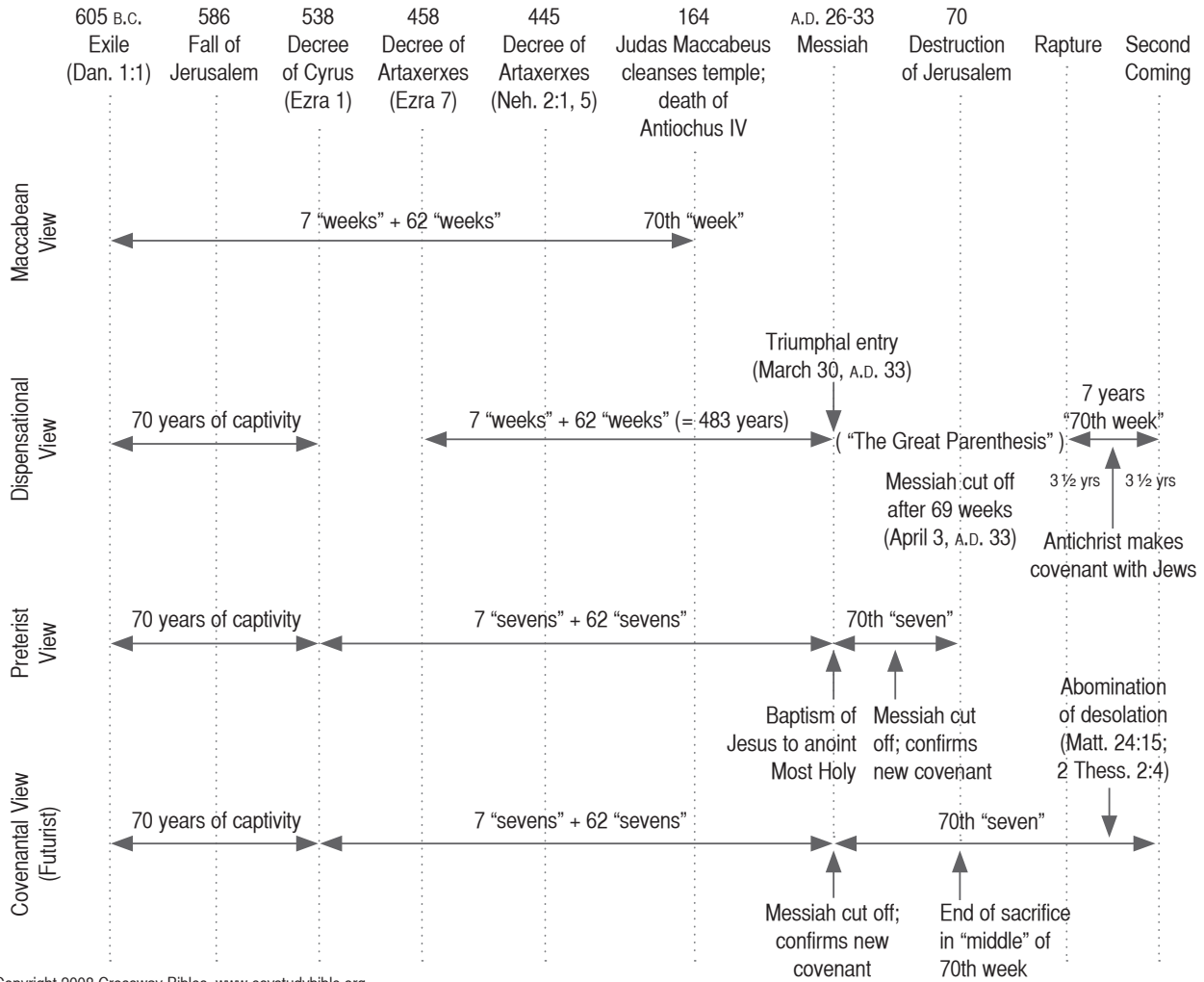
III. God gloriously answers our prayers. (vv. 24-27)

Daniel was praying about the return of the exiles to the City of God, based on a promise in God's Word. This was wonderful. What Gabriel tells him, however, is that God wants to reveal an even greater reality to him, namely, that God has an even larger, grander scheme decreed for God's people, which encompasses all of human history, and which also brings ultimate vindication, joy, and rest to the people of God. It's not just about 70, but rather 70 7's. There are many differing interpretations of vv. 24-27 (see four main views illustrated below), but v. 24 shows the main blessings which the Messiah brings with Him:

1. to finish the transgression,
2. to put an end to sin,
3. to atone for iniquity,
4. to bring in everlasting righteousness,
5. to seal both vision and prophet, and
6. to anoint a most holy place.

All of these things are accomplished by our Saviour and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The 70 Weeks of Daniel 9



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Discussion Questions

1. What are the promises God has made to us which should prompt us to pray? Knowing these promises, how then should we pray?
2. On what grounds do we ask God to answer our prayers? (cf. vv. 16-19). Why is this important?
3. Why is God eager to answer our prayers? Why do we typically have a hard time believing this?
4. How does our vision of the end of time change/influence our prayers?

Going Deeper

1. In view of Daniel 9, what can/should you do to enrich your own prayer life?