

When Things Aren't Going Your Way

Daniel 9: Standing Firm with God series

by Bill Aumack

We have a problem. 20 minutes left, and this is the most difficult sermon I've ever worked on. And since I spent a lot of time on it, you get to spend a lot of time on it. So we're gonna go a little long. If you have to leave, because you gotta catch the bus or whatever, it's all right, okay? We just wanted to let you know. All right, and it's air conditioned, amen? Amen. All right.

You know, we've been asking a couple questions at the beginning of each week. So I have a couple questions here for you. Remember, yes, no, not sure. Okay, yes, no, not sure.

I could explain the basics of the 70 weeks of prophecy in Daniel chapter nine. Yes, no, not sure. Lots of not sure's. Couple no's, one yes. Okay.

I've heard the 70 week prophecy, but can't remember all the details. Yeah, lots of yeses on that one.

I've heard about some of the issues with this prophecy. I've listened to a pastor, or an evangelist, who's told us about some of the issues with this prophecy. Some yeses there, okay, good, good.

Last question. God corrects his truly connected leaders when they have misapplication of scripture. Yes, no, maybe, some maybes, some yeses, okay.

I'm going to be honest with you, I hope we're going to answer those questions, but as we go through this, I'm going to ask some more questions that I'm not going to answer. Because I want you to wrestle with them, I want you to think about it. What do these things say about God to you? OK, so you have that to look forward to.

Let's open our Bibles. to Daniel, we're gonna start at the end of chapter eight, kind of recap from last week. You remember last week in chapter eight, Daniel has a dream and there's a ram and a goat, and apparently the goat flies because he never touches the earth, and there's a battle and horns break and

new horns grow, and there's 2,300 days and blah.... a lot happens. And Gabriel is dispatched from heaven to tell Daniel what it all means. Okay. And look at the very end. So verse 26 of Daniel chapter 8, and this is Gabriel speaking. It says, the vision of the evening and the mornings that has been given to you is true. but seal up the vision for it concerns the distant future. Verse 27, I, Daniel, was worn out. I lay exhausted for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision. It was what? Beyond understanding.

Gabriel came from heaven to tell Daniel what it means and then Daniel goes, I still don't get it. Okay? Because, I mean, that was a heavy dream. That was a heavy dream. Okay?

So let's dive straight into chapter nine now. Chapter 9, let's look at verses one to four. So 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, I, Daniel, understood from the scriptures according to the word that the Lord had given to Jeremiah the prophet that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years. So I turned to the Lord and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed.

Okay, now I'm going to ask you to remember a few things. What year does this happen? The first year of Darius, right? Anybody know what year that was BC? Remember a couple of weeks ago we talked about when Cyrus and Darius took over Babylon on October 12, 539 BC. So this is a little bit after that. That's kind of the end of the year. So this is probably 538 BC, okay? That tells you where you are in the timeline. Now remember, Daniel went into captivity in 605 BC. Remember, we're counting down towards zero. On 605, he goes into captivity. It's now 538. How many years between 605 and 538? Quick, get out your calculators. 67 years. prophecy is for how long? 70 years. What does Daniel think? It's almost done. Right? It's almost done. Now, Daniel, we don't know for sure, but Daniel was probably about 15, 16 maybe, when he's taken into captivity. 67 years later, how old are you? 80. Old. Right? Sorry for anybody that's 80. But when you're 80, you're old, and it's right there for me.

So he's an old man, and he's like, I've done my time, it's almost time to go home. And so he thinks the prophecy is ending, it's finished up. And so he goes to confess God and he does all the things that they do to show they're really sorry, right? The sackcloth, the ashes, the praying, the confessing. Why would you do that? The prophecy's almost done. And I'm not gonna answer that question. I want you to think about that. Why does Daniel do that? What does that say about Daniel's relationship and how he feels about God? That he would do that for something he thinks is ending anyway? Powerful stuff going on there.

Now, have you ever prayed for something a long time? Who's ever prayed for something for five years? Let me see your hands. 10 years, keep them up. 15, 20, 30, 40. None of us made 40. I guess we're all that young. Daniel's been praying for 67 years! 67 years at this point. There's only a couple of us here that are 67 years old. That's, I mean, that's a whole lifetime of praying. Okay? And so there's a lot going on here. Can you imagine how Daniel feels? It's almost done. We're gonna go home. We're gonna rebuild the temple and the city. Can you imagine the joy, the happiness, how he's looking forward to that? Okay.

Now, I have news for you. So we know that Daniel has a dream here. And the primary message of Daniel 9, I think we have gotten wrong through the years. Because we spend a lot of time talking about, thank you [to tech team]. We spend a lot of time talking about the prophecy and what it means, and this means that, and this means the other thing. That is not, in my opinion, the primary message of Daniel 9. Okay? It's good, we should understand the prophecy. We should spend time working on the prophecy. But the primary message of Daniel 9 is that God is not going to give up on us. That's the primary message. And when you understand that's the message of chapter nine, chapter nine looks really different all of the sudden. So I'm bringing that up here first before we actually get to it, because I want you to look at chapter nine with this viewpoint that God has not given up on us. He hadn't given up on Daniel and the Israelites in 538 BC, and he hasn't given up on us in 2024.

Okay. Now, the next part of Daniel 9 is, in my opinion, the most amazing prayer in the Bible. And we don't spend enough time talking about this prayer

because theologians through the centuries have written a lot about this prayer. And we should do a series on just this prayer because this prayer is pretty amazing and we aren't gonna spend enough time on it this morning. But I want us to spend some time on that. And as we look at this prayer, we have to understand what Daniel is concerned about. Okay? And sometimes in modern Christianity, what is our greatest concern? What's our greatest concern as Christians? Am I going to heaven? Right, how's my relationship? Am I going to heaven? And sometimes we can even get off track and we're not even worried about our neighbors or our family, it's just, hey, am I going to heaven? Did I get it right for me? That is not Daniel's concern. Daniel's greatest concern is God's character.

See, we're more concerned about self than we are about God's character. Daniel was more concerned about God's character. Okay? We're gonna see why here in just a second. But I'm telling you this beforehand, because as we read this, I want you to see how concerned Daniel is about God's character, okay? Did you have that understanding as we go through this? Because we're concerned about me. And we should be concerned about our salvation. That's something we should be careful of and make sure we've worked out. We should be concerned about God's character. Now I myself have said sometimes, I don't need to defend God. God can defend himself, right? How do I defend God? God can take care of himself. But I'm kind of rethinking that here because maybe I don't need to defend God as it were, but maybe I need to help correct some folks that have really twisted views of what God might be like. Because in my experience, the people I've met that have really strange views of God are people who don't know anything about God. They've heard a snippet here and a snippet there and a little bit here and they've put it together and they have this really bizarre view of God. And maybe I should be concerned about helping to straighten those kind of people out, help them have a better view of God. It's not that I need to defend God. but maybe I can help them have a better understanding of God and God's character, okay?

And sometimes we look at these prophecies that we have here and we look at them and we say, you know, I need to understand this prophecy because I need to know when it's time to run to the hills and hide, right? It's Christians, time troubles come, gotta run to the hills and hide. I don't wanna offend

anybody. Man, I hate that question. I just hate that question. Number one. Somebody who's worked in the defense industry and knows what some of the technology we have is, you ain't hiding. There ain't no hiding. I mean, we got infrared that we can tell not only where you slept last night, but the night before. You ain't hiding. And what does that say if you're gonna run away and leave all the other people that still need to hear about God behind? Right? We need to be careful about that. Because a lot of times this stuff was used, we talked about this a little bit in Sabbath school this morning, as fear, as a way to get us to sign up for something. We can guilt people into this. And that's a good way to get people to sign on the dotted line. But you know what? The feeling that you recover the fastest from is fear. And you know this is true, right? You ever startled somebody, right? Your wife's got her head buried somewhere in the kitchen and you come in and say something and she jumps because you startled her. How quickly does she get over that? Very quick, right? That fear spikes and then it goes away. We get over fear very fast. So if we use that to get people to sign on the dotted line and then we get over it, where does that leave us? Not in a good place. So I don't wanna use fear here to help us get over that. Because I don't think God is using these things as a way to fear us, to guilt us, anything like that.

We're already saved! Two? Only two people are already saved? We're already saved! Right? We're already saved. They can't do anything to me. Kill me is the only thing you can do. I'm going to die anyway. The death rate for humans is 100%. That's all they can do to me. Okay, so these are not fears. This is not a fear thing. And God's not... Daniel's not praying for himself, he's praying for his people. So we're gonna read this prayer really quick. This prayer, like I said, is amazing, amazing.

Let's continue. Daniel 9:4, I pray to the Lord my God and confess. The Lord, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

That is the best entrance to a prayer I've ever heard. I have never heard a prayer start out with a better sentence than that one. Right? That is a great opening. What's it say about God? He keeps His covenant.

Says, **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 ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

7 “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants 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** We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, 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 on 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 on 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 on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

15 “Now, 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** 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 ancestors 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, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. **18** Give ear, our 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** Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act!

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

Wow. Wow, Daniel is concerned about God's reputation. Your temple lays in ruins, God, and all the other nations are making fun of you. Say, what kind of God lets his temple lay in ruins? That's not a very good God. Daniel is concerned about what the sins of his people say about God. He's concerned about God's reputation. What an amazing prayer.

How often are you concerned about what people think of God? How often do you pray that your family member, your coworker, your neighbor will have the right view of God? Okay. Let's continue. We could spend a lot more time on that prayer, but that's the prayer. We're going to, your homework is going to be to read that prayer again. All right.

Daniel 9 verses 20 to 23. While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sins and the sins 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. He instructed me and said, Daniel, I have come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision.

Now here's some questions for you to think about. It says that he said that as soon as you begin to pray, he was sent. What does that say about God? God didn't even wait until the end of the prayer. as soon as you were sent. Now that prayer that Daniel just gave is kind of long, you know. So it takes Gabriel some amount of time to get here from heaven. I always wondered that. Here comes the engineer. How long does it take to get from heaven to earth? Now God, that's instantaneous because God can be everywhere at once, but can angels do that? This seems to indicate maybe not. It takes Gabriel some time to get here. And it sends him in swift flight. If you look up that term, swift flight, it says to make weary. Go as fast as you can, wear yourself out. You can wear out angels? I didn't know that either. Right? If you have ever been runners, right, you can sprint for 40 yards or 100 yards. But you can't sprint for a

marathon, right? You've got to pace yourself. But he is sent with the way sprint the whole way.

You are highly esteemed. This word is a word they would have used for great treasure. You are a great treasure. What do these elements tell us about God's character?

Now Gabriel says, I'm here to give you insight and understanding because Daniel has been off base in understanding this 70 years that the prophet Jeremiah talks about. By the way, I want to point out just in case you haven't noticed this, that Jeremiah and Daniel are alive at the same period and then Daniel and Nehemiah are alive at the same period. They're kind of just like one right after each other. These are contemporaries that lived together. And Daniel has not understood correctly what Jeremiah wrote down. So verse 24, he says, 70 7s are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish its transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, and to bring everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and the prophecy and to the anointed most holy place. Can you imagine how Daniel feels because he's 67 years into his exile, he thinks there's three years left and Gabriel says, it's not 70 years, it's 70 times 7. It's four hundred and ninety years! What just happened to Daniel's heart? Right? He was 82, now he's 97, right? Just like, oh. Can you imagine what that does to you? That's hard to comprehend.

And so we've got this 490 years. How many years did God let Daniel misinterpret this prophecy? 67 years. Why? Some of us said that God will correct any misunderstandings of prophecy. Yeah, but he could have done that in year one. How long is 67 years to God? You know, what we think of as a microsecond, you know, just a very small amount of time. All right.

Verses 25 to 27, I'm not going to read all that, but it kind of spells out what these 70 7s are about. There's a first group of sevens or 49 years and then the temple is rebuilt and then there's 62 sevens or 434 years and then there's one remaining seven for the total 70 7s. Okay?

But this starts from the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the anointed one. That's what Gabriel says. And Adventists have a particular view about this, and we're gonna talk about that in just a second. But there's some problems here before we talk about this. Because

there were four commands to rebuild the temple. So which one do you use? And we could talk about all of them, but generally people use one of the last two, because these two are to rebuild the temple. These two are to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. So you usually use one of these two, but you still have two.

Now in Daniel's day, the calendar had 360 days in it. Ours has 365 and a quarter. Now if you're talking about two years, that doesn't matter a whole bunch. If you're talking about 490 years, that's seven years off. So should we convert the days to 360 years or do we leave them at 365 years? There's issues here. This is a difficult prophecy to put together. Okay?

And I have found this picture. It's in your notes, it may be easier to read there than it is up there. But, so we believe that this starts in 457 BC, which turns out to be the third time of the four that I talked about. The third one is 457, that's when the first one to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem is given, and then it's reiterated in 444. Okay? So seven weeks takes us to 408 BC, which is where Jerusalem is finally rebuilt. Then we have 62 weeks, which gets us, excuse me, which gets us to, 27 AD, that little line there by one week would be about 27 AD and then there's one more sevens there, one more week to get us to 34.

Now by the way, you can do all this math yourself, it's really easy. Okay? Because you want to go home and you want to check my math, always check my math. Because just treat it like a number line. BC is negative numbers, AD is positive numbers. So we start at 457 BC negative. If you add 490 to 457, where do you end up? 33 AD. Wait a minute, it says 34 AD. There's no year zero. It goes from you know, 3 BC, 2 BC, 1 BC, 1 AD. There's no year zero. So when you cross over zero, you gotta add one. Okay? That's the only trick you need to do all these numbers yourself and see how these add up. Okay? So, that gets us from 457 to 34 AD. Of course, we've got the 2300 years there just for reference, it takes us out to 1844. By the way, that's not anywhere near the scale. because the 490 is longer than the 810, but there it is. I didn't make the picture.

And there's problems with this, because for this to work out, we need to believe that Jesus died in about 31 AD. And most scholars believe that Jesus

died in either 30 AD or 33 AD, depending on how you use the calendars and convert and all that stuff. Not too many people believe he died in 31 AD, but we need that to be 31 AD to work out. There's problems here.

But now I want to ask a really brutal question, okay? And please know that I'm asking this in the best way possible, but this is a really brutal question. Does it matter to you at all whether Jesus died in 31 AD or 33 AD? I'd say no, not really. Not at this point. To the people in 31 and 33 it did. But at this point, it doesn't really affect me too much. What if that 1844 date wasn't 1844, but it was 1847? Would that affect you too much? No. Not really. Not at this point. So sometimes we can minor in the majors, and we get all worked up about this date and this date and that date and this date and this date, and I'm here to tell you that I don't think this is about dates. It's about God's plan. And God says, I have a plan. Jeremiah says, it's a good plan. And Gabriel comes to tell Daniel, I have a plan. How far away is 1844 from where Daniel is? Gabriel tells him, shut it up and don't worry about it. It's the distant future. And I would think Gabriel at this point would say, shut it up and don't worry about it. It's the distant past. It doesn't really matter whether it's this day or that day or another day. The point is that God has a plan. That's the big message here that God's telling Daniel. Daniel's concerned about God's reputation, and God comes down and says, Daniel, I've got a plan. It's okay. It's okay.

Anybody here lived in kind of a rural part of the country? Right? One person besides me. A bunch of city slickers. When you live in a rural part of the country and you stop and ask directions, it's really different in the country than it is in the city. Yeah? Because when you stop and ask directions in the country, they're going to tell you something like, well, you see, go down this road to Farmers Market and you turn right and you go down to where the old Jones Barn used to be and you turn left. Well, how do I know where the old Jones Barton used to be? And then you go down to the big oak tree with the swing on it and you know, it's much more of a general go this way. If you get directions in the city, right, it's go three blocks to here and four blocks to there and turn on this street. It's much more precise. This message to me is more like country directions. It points us in a way. It gets us to understand some things. It's not a, this happens on this day, this happens on this day, this happens on this day. Okay? We need to be aware of that.

Daniel needed some correction in his understanding and God provided it. And the God that was the God of Daniel, is the same God that will do that for you. Right? He will do that for you. You may not get a personal visit from Gabriel. Like how cool would that be? If you're earnestly seeking, God will provide. And I think that's the big message. And along with this amazing prayer that Daniel prays, I want you to read that prayer a couple times this week.

So reflection, am I earnestly seeking God? Am I open to changing my understanding if God helps me understand something? We've had a very understanding of this prophecy. What if somebody came along and said, we've gotten that wrong? Are we open to changing? The great thing about the Adventist church, in one of my opinions, is that we allow some wiggle room. It's okay if that guy believes something a little bit different than I believe. We don't split the church. Okay, no shade to my Baptist friends, but there's like 9,000 different versions of the Baptist church. Because every time they have a little difference, they split the church. I've always wondered, you know, they start out with one church and they split and this whole tree of splits and splinters happens. And they have all these, does one church way over here believe the exact same thing that one church way over here believes, but we just never noticed because we got there through different paths? We don't do that, right? We allow some wiggle room. And that's a great thing in the Adventist church, okay? So be open to changing your understanding if God gives you something new. Daniel had to take some correction. If Daniel needed correction, what are the odds that I'm gonna need correction? Pretty high.

And your challenge this week, read Daniel's prayer once each day this week, seven times, and try to be more concerned with God's reputation.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this message that we have. This is an amazing, amazing chapter in the Bible, Lord, with an amazing prayer, with an amazing prophecy that helps us understand quite a bit more about your plan. Help us not to get bogged down by the details, but to understand your great love, your great mercy, and how you care for us. Lord, we ask that you be with us this week. Help us to be concerned about your reputation and

what that means. Or we ask you to be with us this week. Keep us safe. Bring us back again. In Jesus' name, amen.