

Not In My Wildest Dreams

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- [0 : 00] Would you sit down and take out your Bibles? Sorry, that sounded a little aggressive. Would you please have a seat? Take out your Bibles. And you can turn to Daniel chapter 9.
- Daniel chapter 9. And Jenny, please come and read for us. Jenny is going to read, but she's not starting at the beginning.
- So you can look for her down around verse number 16. Daniel chapter 9, starting at verse 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.
- 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, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear.
- [1 : 04] 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. 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. 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, 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.
- Thanks, Jenny. Daniel chapter 1 describes Daniel and the other exiles with the words, without blemish.
- And in chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image, to his idol, even though everyone else bows.
- In chapter 5, after the Babylonian kingdom is overthrown, Daniel merits a place in King Darius's cabinet.
- [2 : 19] And in chapter 6, those who seek to destroy Daniel have to admit that the only accusation that could possibly stick to him was how devoted he is to his God.
- In chapter 7, the Jews are called holy ones, saints. In the first eight chapters of Daniel, God's people are consistently the good guys.
- And the worldly kings and their wise men are the bad guys. The Jews are faithful. Well, the pagans, remember this, they are beastly.
- But all of this changes in Daniel chapter 9. The other night, my family was watching an episode of a series that we have been watching.
- And when the episode began, it was very clear in the opening scene that something was wrong. The chronology was wrong. What we were seeing on the screen was out of sequence with other episodes that we had already watched.

[3 : 37] And then we learned that this was a flashback. We understood, once we got back into the real timeline, that what we had seen was intended to show us something in the past.

It's a flashback to help us understand something from the past. Daniel 9 can feel a little disorienting like that opening scene of a movie or a chapter in a book that you can't quite piece together at first.

Because the chronology and the events don't seem to match up with what you've already learned. We expect that God's people are faithful in a foreign land.

And we're inclined to forget that they are in that foreign land because of their sin. Listen to what happened during the first year of the reign of King Darius.

In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, by descent Amid, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, 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, 70 years.

[5 : 04] Now, we don't know for sure what Daniel was reading, but perhaps he read Jeremiah chapter 25 and verse number 11.

It reads like this. This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years.

Or perhaps he was reading this text. It's a bit more well-known. Jeremiah 29, verse 10. For thus says the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise, and bring you back to this place, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. So Daniel is reading scripture. We know he's reading from the prophet Jeremiah, and he recognizes that the time has come for God's word to be fulfilled.

70 years. And yet, Daniel was just recently installed as one of three high officials in the new kingdom of Medo-Persia.

[6 : 28] This seems out of place, doesn't it? Something doesn't seem right. The exile should be coming to an end, and instead Babylon has fallen, but another kingdom has taken its place.

What is going on here? How does Daniel respond? How would you respond? When you see a promise in God's word, a promise that does not seem to be your reality, how do you respond to that promise?

Do you just, you know, shrug your shoulders and move on? Give it a passing while God is sovereign, so I don't know.

It is true. God is sovereign. But God's sovereign purposes revealed to us in Scripture are not excuses for laziness. They are incentives for action.

How does Daniel respond? Daniel responds by praying. Verse 3. Then I turned my face to the Lord, to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

[7 : 46] He is serious about this. This is not some passing little momentary prayer that Daniel offers and moves on. Fasting, sackcloth, ashes.

He's skipping meals in order to pray. Sackcloth and ashes remind us of mourning, brokenness because of sin.

Verse 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, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.

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.

And do you see why Daniel 9 feels a little bit out of place? I thought God's people were the good guys. They're supposed to be the faithful ones, the ones who are above reproach, without blemish.

[9 : 00] And yet Daniel is urgently confessing his sin and the sin of the people. What have they done? They have sinned. They have done wrong. They have acted wickedly.

They have turned aside from God's commandments. All of this sin occurred despite the prophets God sent to warn them.

The people of Israel, the Jews, are all guilty. It's like a big glob of peanut butter on a piece of toast that you can scrape right up to the edge of the toast.

Nobody is excluded from this. Everyone is guilty. All of the people are covered in guilt. But despite the clarity of God's commands, they continue to willfully choose to disobey him.

Look at verse 7. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness. But to us, open shame.

[10 : 09] As at this day, to the men of Judah, to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, everyone is included in all the lands to which you have driven them.

Why? Because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To us, O Lord, belongs open shame. To our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness. Why? Because we have rebelled against him 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.

Daniel knows that he and the people have sinned. And so he is not at all surprised by the exile. God did exactly what he promised to do.

Verse 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.

[11 : 21] Why? Because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us. In other words, God said he was going to do this, and he did.

And our rulers who ruled us 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.

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.

We have not repented. We have not turned from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. 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.

When was the last time you talked to God like this about your sin?

[12 : 32] Has it been a while? Have you ever been honest with God about your sin? Sin makes you foolish.

Sin is insanity. It is the ultimate disconnection from reality. Don't forget, the opposite of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity in chapter 4 is not his mindset before he received the mind of a beast.

The opposite of his insanity is the sanity that he received by being able to see himself as a sinner, humble and broken before God who rules over everything.

Sanity for sinners begins with an honest look at your own heart. An honest look at your own heart that leads to a humble accounting of your own sin, an acceptance of God's truth, that even the smallest sin as you might perceive it is grounds enough for God to eternally banish you from his presence.

This is sanity about sin for sinners like you and me. When was the last time you talked to God like this about your sin?

[13 : 59] Having confessed sin, Daniel makes his request. Verse 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, O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because of our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.

Now, therefore, O Lord, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary which is desolate.

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.

O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, pay attention and act, delay not for your own sake, O my God, because of your city and your people are called by your name.

On the basis of God's promise to Jeremiah that the time of exile would end after 70 years, Daniel asks God to keep his word.

[15 : 52] Daniel makes his appeal not on the basis of the people turning over a new leaf.

Did you notice that? It is not because they are doing more, trying harder, and getting better at it. They are still sinners in need of mercy. The basis of his appeal is God's promise to restore his people to their land.

Children, I wonder if you ever speak this way. I hope you do it honorably, but I wonder if you ever speak this way to your mom or your dad.

Dad, you promised. Mom, you promised.

This is how Daniel approaches God. Lord, you promised. You promised that you would show us mercy.

[17 : 08] You promised that you would forgive us. You promised to deliver us from our enemies. You promised to restore us to our land. Lord, you promised. Faith is not about asking God for bigger and bigger requests.

Faith searches the Scripture to discern what God has already promised, and faith asks God to act in accordance with his promises.

friends, we should not ask for less than that. And would we ever dare ask for more? More than what God has promised us?

Verse 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, 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.

He made me understand, speaking with me, and saying, O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.

[18 : 41] 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. Do you see that what Gabriel says? God didn't delay, Daniel. as soon as you started praying, as soon as you started appealing to God and saying, Lord, you promised God dispatched me to come and to reveal this to you.

Why the urgency? Why is heaven so eager to respond to Daniel? Daniel? Well, Daniel is right to be making this request to God on the basis of his promise.

But here's the thing, Daniel's request, it's far too small. you ever been driving perhaps down the interstate and way off in the distance you see one of those wind turbine things.

There's probably a more technical term for that, but you see like one of those windmill, wind turbine type things where they're generating energy from the wind and you see it way off in the distance.

[20 : 13] Maybe you see a whole bunch of them. And then as you continue to drive and you get closer and closer and closer and closer, you realize that what looked fairly small off in the distance, you could go like this in your windshield and it would fit.

Suddenly as you get closer to it, it's massive, bigger than you could ever have imagined from way back there. so big that one of those blades has to be put on a single truck to get it out there.

Heaven rushes to let Daniel in on a big secret. A secret that is bigger than any request that Daniel could ask for here.

Someone is coming, someone who will bring forgiveness and salvation and restoration, but not just for the Jews, but for people, for sinners like you and me.

Heaven hurries Gabriel as a messenger to Daniel because God's answer is greater and better than Daniel's request.

[21 : 29] God's text. Now, before I make any additional comments, you should know that this next portion of Scripture is the most difficult portion in Daniel to interpret.

And as a result of that, there are a variety of interpretations. So while I believe that what I'm about to tell you is a faithful, biblical interpretation of this text, you should know this is not the only way that this text is interpreted.

And so humility to learn and wisdom to discern and grace to disagree applies to me and to all of us. Is that all right? Okay.

In Matthew 18, Peter asks Jesus a question. He says, Lord, how many times do I have to forgive my brother when he sins against me?

Do I have to forgive him seven times? I suspect that Peter thought seven was quite a few. Jesus tells Peter that he needs to forgive his brother 70 times, seven times.

[22 : 49] Did Jesus mean that Peter ought to track the offenses and his forgiveness on some kind of spreadsheet? He's checking off the number of times and when he gets to the 491st time, he can just say, well, that's 491, I'm not forgiving.

Is that what Jesus is saying to him? No, right? We understand that Jesus has in mind with this 70 times seven some kind of an indefinite number of times that is still somehow based on the number seven.

Jesus gives Peter an intentionally indefinite quantity because Peter and you and me should not be tracking the number of times we have forgiven.

We should keep on forgiving. And it appears that a similar concept to this happens in verse number 24. Gabriel is not speaking here of a literal 77 day periods.

Most interpreters agree that the scale that Gabriel is using here is seven years and not seven days. But it also seems that the primary emphasis in verse 24 is not the beginning of this 77s and not the end of the 77s and not even really how long this 77s lasts.

[24 : 16] The primary emphasis here are the events that happen during these 77s. Look what happens verse number 24.

70 weeks Gabriel is speaking. 70 weeks 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 profit, and to anoint a most holy place or a most holy one.

Six events, six earth shattering events occur during this time period. First, transgression is finished. Sin, in other words, will be sealed up.

Sin will be hidden as though it no longer exists. You know those t-shirt guns that they use at sporting events where they shoot t-shirts out in the crowd?

Okay, imagine this for just a minute, that you take one of those t-shirt guns, and it's a powerful one, souped up, and you slam a dirty diaper down into that t-shirt gun, and then you pull the trigger, and you shoot that thing as far as it can go, so far that if it were to go any further, it would start coming back around to you on the other side of the world.

[25 : 57] Transgression is finished. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgression.

second, sin is ended. Think of sin like a massive chain that connects a large boat to its anchor. During this time period, sin's power is snapped, the chain of sin is broken, and as a result, sin no longer holds sinners captive.

Third, iniquity is atoned. To atone means to cover, to cover, to pay for. Imagine if Corey is at the grocery store, and the person ahead of him in line is paying for their groceries, and as they're checking out, they go to swipe their card, and the card just gets declined, declined, declined, declined, over and over.

And Corey, being a kind and gracious person, says, look, I'll cover that. I will pay your debt.

Put that on my card. Iniquity is atoned. We're not talking about groceries here in the text, we're talking about iniquity, about rebellion that is in all of our hearts.

[27 : 16] It is atoned, it is covered, the debt is paid, everything that is owed is completely satisfied, and you walk away free with everything that you need.

Fourth, everlasting righteousness is brought in. this is not some kind of squishy self-righteousness. This is everlasting righteousness, and notice, it is brought in.

It's not righteousness that you can stir up, it's righteousness from outside of you. It is brought in. Fifth, visions and prophets are sealed.

Think about when you get one of those save-a-date cards for a wedding, and you get the card, and you are to save the date, you are intended to mark your calendar so that you don't schedule anything else on that date.

The visions and the prophets of the Old Testament are like that save-the-date card. They are pointing forward to a future date when someone would come who would do all of these amazing things recorded in verse 24.

[28 : 33] But listen, once the wedding happens, you don't have to save the date anymore. You don't need to be told about the wedding and what you should wear and where the registry is and how to get your hotel.

You don't need any of that anymore. Why? Because the wedding has happened. What was foretold has become reality and is now history.

Do you see that? When this time arrives, the visions and the prophets who were pointing forward to this time, they're redundant.

Prophecy will be reality and reality will become history and finally during this time, a most holy place or literally the holiness of holiness will be anointed.

verse 25 and 26. These seventy sevens are divided. The distinguishing characteristic of the first seven sevens is rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and that is followed by sixty two sevens until the coming of an anointed one, even a prince, who will be cut off and then Jerusalem will be destroyed again.

[29 : 58] Look with me at verse 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 and then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat but in troubled time.

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, its end shall come with a flood and to the end there shall be war, desolations are decreed.

now in Hebrew there is a specific set of words that is used to describe the making of a covenant.

We would call these words an idiom and in Hebrew it gets translated this way to cut a covenant. covenant. You don't make a covenant, you don't write a covenant, you cut the covenant.

And what's interesting is that in verse 27 there's some words about a covenant but it is not the cutting of a covenant, it's not the normal words that we would expect in the Hebrew language, it's something other than that.

[31 : 31] This covenant is not established, in other words it's not cut, because it already exists. but during this time period the covenant is executed, in other words it takes effect.

It's like when you go to the, I just lost it, the title company, the title company when you go to close on your home, when you show up they're not printing out all of the documents that you need to sign, they have already printed up all of those documents, all of that is already there.

What does it need? It needs signatures, right? Those things can't be enforced yet, even though they already exist. But when they put them in front of you and everybody signs the agreements, now these covenants are enforced, they have been executed.

executed. This covenant in verse 27 is new, not because it's newly established, it is new because it is finally executed and takes effect.

Verse 27, and he, he shall make a strong covenant. I think the idea there is he shall enforce this covenant, covenant.

[32 : 57] He shall execute this covenant with many for one week and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abomination shall come the one who makes desolate until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

who makes this covenant. Well, I don't know for sure, but I know this.

One day, early in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, he visits the synagogue and they hand him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and Jesus flips through the scroll.

Oops, I'm going the wrong way. Oops, no, that was the right way. To get, because they're going right to left, so he's flipping through the scroll and he finds himself the place that reads like this.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me. when Jesus finishes reading, everyone stares at him.

[34 : 18] They understand exactly what Jesus has just claimed. They understand that he has claimed to be the promised Messiah, the one that Isaiah wrote about, the one that Daniel wrote about.

I believe that Jesus is the anointed holiness of holiness that's described in verse 24.

Jesus is the anointed one. He is even the prince who abolished the curse that has separated mankind from God since the garden of Eden.

Daniel prays, Lord, Lord, you promised. And it's as though God responds, oh Daniel, you have no idea what I am about to do through my son, Jesus.

What I am about to do is so much greater, so much better than what you have asked for. My beloved Daniel, transgression will be finished.

[35 : 38] The chain of sin will be broken. Iniquity will be paid in full. How does this happen? How is the curse of the garden abolished?

Daniel doesn't tell us because Daniel doesn't know. But God's word tells us this in Hebrews chapter nine.

Jesus has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Chapter nine and verse 15, therefore he, Jesus, is the mediator of a new covenant. Chapter 10 and verse 14, for by a single offering, he, Jesus, has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us for after saying, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds.

[36 : 46] And then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Halfway through Daniel's 70th seven, Jesus dies on the cross and Jesus doesn't make a new covenant, rather he puts into effect the covenant God made long ago.

Jesus' death is like God's signature, executing the new covenant and because the new covenant is now enforced, animals, sacrifices that are part of the old covenant are invalid and illegitimate and worthless.

And yet what happens even after the death of Jesus, even after the veil of the temple is torn, the Jews continued to try to offer Old Testament, Old Covenant animal sacrifices.

What an abomination to God. Returning to the Old Covenant when the new covenant is freshly signed, freshly executed by the blood of his son.

[38 : 05] What an abomination. These sacrifices continue until the temple and Jerusalem are destroyed and made desolate by the Roman Emperor Titus in approximately 70 A.D.

God's answer to Daniel's prayer was greater and better than his request.

God made good on his promise. God kept his word. God sent Jesus and Jesus fulfilled Daniel's prophecy of the 77s.

And as Daniel looked forward to what God would do, we are privileged to look back at what God has done in Christ. And by seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy in Daniel chapter 9, God lifts our chins and he raises our eyes so that we're not looking just right here, but we are seeing the big picture, getting God's perspective on what is happening.

We, the church, the bride of Christ, we await our bridegroom. And with Daniel, we say, Lord, you promised.

[39 : 33] You promised to return to take us to be with you. You promised to wipe away every tear from our eyes. You promised to right every wrong. You promised to end injustice and grief and pain and death.

You promised resurrection. You promised glorified bodies fit to worship you for all eternity. Lord, you promised a new heaven and a new earth.

You promised to return, Lord. And so he has. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 37.

for yet a little while. And the coming one will come. And he will not delay.

But my righteous one shall live by faith. May God keep us faithful faithful.

[40 : 38] As we wait and watch and work and worship right here in a foreign land. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. And thank you for giving us attentive hearts, open minds to hear and to receive.

Holy Spirit, would you please take away anything of this teaching that was untrue, unhelpful, not founded, not based in your word, anything that would be distracting to us in our discipleship, in our pursuit of holiness, in our pursuit of the gospel and seeing others saved by the power of Jesus.

Take it away, please, Holy Spirit. Help us to understand exactly those things you have for us here. Help us to be the kind of people who are eager to pray, Lord, you promised, searching out the promises of your word and appealing to you, good Father, to keep them for your glory and our good.

Father, would you please, by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us as we take a few minutes now to prepare our hearts to celebrate communion together.

[42 : 16] Perhaps even as we have read in Daniel's prayer, there is a need for being honest about our sin. Maybe we have been foolish about our sin.

Maybe we've been acting like we are insane related to sin and we need to have an accounting with you, a humble, honest conversation with you about our sin.

Would you please help us as we take a few moments right now and do that? Father, we remember the promise of your word from Romans chapter 8.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Christ. And so for those of us who are in Christ, we claim your grace of forgiveness.

We plead the blood of our Savior Jesus. And we recall that we are still in need of being saved to the uttermost. But we plead your promise.

[43 : 23] Lord, you promised to save us to the uttermost. Please save us that way. Please keep us faithful until you return and take us to be with you.

Father, would you please save a sinner this morning who has come into this place not expecting to be confronted with the truth of your word. And the Holy Spirit is doing business with their heart.

Perhaps they are feeling the conviction of the gospel, a recognition of their need of a Savior for the first time. Blessed Holy Spirit, may make Jesus beautiful and compelling as he is to us.

Grant life, grant faith, and repentance so that sinners respond by repenting and believing this glorious gospel. It is for the fame of Jesus we pray, for his great glory, and for the coming of his kingdom we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.