

# CHAPTER 9

In this chapter we have,

**I.** Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews who were in captivity, in which he confesses sin, and acknowledges the justice of God in their calamities, but pleads God's promises of mercy which he had yet in store for them (v. 1-19).

**II.** An immediate answer sent him by an angel to his prayer, in which,

**1.** He is assured of the speedy release of the Jews out of their captivity (v. 20-23). And,

**2.** He is informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ (of which that was a type), what should be the nature of it and when it should be accomplished (v. 24-27).

And it is the clearest, brightest, prophecy of the Messiah, in all the Old Testament.

## THE DANIEL 9:1-3

### DANIEL'S CONFESSION AND PRAYER

We left Daniel, in the close of the foregoing chapter, employed in the *king's business*; but here we have him employed in better business than any king had for him, speaking to God and hearing from him, not for himself only, but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the *oracles* of God were *committed to him*, relating to the days of the Messiah. Observe,

**1.** When it was that Daniel had this communion with God (v. 1), *in the first year of Darius the Mede*, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grandson, Cyrus. In this year the seventy years of the Jews' captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out; so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been ready in that year, and, probably, before he was cast into the lions' den. And one powerful inducement, perhaps, it was to him then to keep so close to the duty of prayer, though it

cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefit and comfort of it.

**2.** What occasioned his address to God by prayer (v. 2): He *understood by books* that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of *the desolations of Jerusalem*. v. 2. The *book* by which he understood this was the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he found it expressly foretold (<sup>290</sup>Jeremiah 29:10), *After seventy years be accomplished in Babylon* (and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the *third year* of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself, <sup>200</sup>Daniel 1:1), *I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you*. It was likewise said (<sup>295</sup>Jeremiah 25:11), *This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation (chorbath)*, the same word that Daniel here uses for the *desolations of Jerusalem*, which shows that he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician, and prime-minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves above their Bibles.

**3.** How serious and solemn his address to God was when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring (for it appears, by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies, that they exactly computed the years of their captivity), then he *set his face to seek God by prayer*. Note, God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to excite and encourage, our prayers; and, when we see the day of the performance of them approaching, we should the more earnestly plead them with God and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and, no doubt, in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business set time apart for an extraordinary application to Heaven on Jerusalem's behalf. God had said to Ezekiel that though Daniel, among others, stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment (<sup>344</sup>Ezekiel 14:14), yet he hopes, now that *the warfare is accomplished* (<sup>302</sup>Isaiah 40:2), his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns it is time for God's praying people to bestir themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and

required from them, besides their daily sacrifice. Now *Daniel sought by prayer and supplications*, for fear lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended, or rather that the people might be prepared by the grace of God for the deliverance now that the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe,

(1.) The intenseness of his mind in this prayer; *I set my face unto the Lord God to seek him*, which denotes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervour of his devout affections, in the duty. We must, in prayer, set God before us, and set ourselves as in his presence; to him we must *direct our prayer* and must *look up*. Probably, in token of his setting his face towards God, he did, as usual, set his face towards Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it.

(2.) The mortification of his body in this prayer. In token of his deep humiliation before God for his own sins, and the sins of his people, and the sense he had of his unworthiness, when he prayed he *fasted*, put on *sackcloth*, and lay in *ashes*, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

## DANIEL 9:4-19

### DANIEL'S CONFESSION AND PRAYER

We have here Daniel's prayer to God as his God, and the confession which he joined with that prayer: *I prayed, and made my confession*. Note, In every prayer we must make confession, not only of the sins we have been guilty of (which we commonly call *confession*), but of our faith in God and dependence upon him, our sorrow for sin and our resolutions against it. It must be our confession, must be the language of our own convictions and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think that he offered up much more largely than is here recorded, these being only the heads of it.

**I.** Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God,

**1.** As a God to be feared, and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of: “*O Lord! the great and dreadful God, that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church's enemies.*” 2. As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon and put a confidence in: *Keeping the covenant and mercy to those that love him*, and, as a proof of their love to him, *keep his commandments*. If we fulfil our part of the bargain, he will not fail to fulfil his. He will be to his people as good as his word, for he keeps covenant with them, and not one iota of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be better than his word, for he keeps mercy to them, something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God's mercy now that he was to lay before him the miseries of his people, and upon God's covenant now that he was to sue for the performance of a promise. Note, We should, in prayer, look both at God's greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

**II.** Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been groaning under, v. 5, 6. When we seek to God for national mercies we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins. These are the sins Daniel here laments; and we may here observe the variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations (for it becomes penitents to lay load upon themselves): *We have sinned* in many particular instances, nay, *we have committed iniquity*, we have driven a trade of sin, *we have done wickedly* with a hard heart and a stiff neck, and herein we have *rebelled*, have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins: —

**1.** That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses: “We have *departed from thy precepts and from thy judgments*, and have not conformed to them. And (v. 10) *we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.*” That which speaks the nature of sin, that it is *the transgression of the law*, does sufficiently speak the malignity of it; if sin be made to *appear sin*, it cannot be made to appear worse; its *sinfulness* is its greatest hatefulness, <sup>487B</sup>Romans 7:13. God has *set his laws before us* plainly and fully, as the copy we should write after, yet *we have not walked in* them, but turned aside, or turned back.

**2.** That they had slighted the fair warnings God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, *rising up betimes and*

*sending them* (v. 6): “We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who have put us in mind of thy laws, and of the sanctions of them; though they *spoke in thy name*, we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, with a universal respect to all orders and degrees of men, to *our kings and princes*, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to *our fathers*, and to all the *people of the land*, whom they had the condescension and compassion to speak to, yet we *have not hearkened to them*, nor heard them, or not heeded them, or not complied with them.” Mocking God's messengers, and despising his words, were Jerusalem's measure-filling sins, <sup>486</sup>2 Chronicles 36:16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on; penitents should again and again accuse and reproach themselves till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. *All Israel have transgressed thy law*, v. 11. It is *Israel*, God's professing people, who have known better, and from whom better is expected — Israel, God's peculiar people, whom he has surrounded with his favours; not here and there one, but it is *all Israel*, the generality of them, the body of the people, that *have transgressed by departing* and getting out of the way, *that they might not hear*, and so might not *obey, thy voice*. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon themselves (v. 14): *We obeyed not his voice*, and (v. 15) *we have sinned, we have done wickedly*. Those that would find mercy must thus confess their sins.

**III.** Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them; and it is evermore the way of true penitents thus to justify God, that he may be clear when he judges, and the sinner may bear all the blame.

**1.** He acknowledges that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is *dispersed through all the countries* about, and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed. God's hand has *driven them* hither and thither, some *near*, where they are known and therefore the more ashamed, others *afar off*, where they are not known and therefore the more abandoned, and it is *because of their trespass that they have trespassed* (v. 7); they mingled themselves with the nations that they might be debauched by them, and now God mingles them with the nations that they might be stripped by them.

**2.** He owns the righteousness of God in it, that he had done them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved

(v. 7): “O Lord! righteousness belongs to thee; we have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments, for (v. 14) *the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he does*, even in the sore calamities we are now under, for *we obeyed not the words of his mouth*, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand.” This seems to be borrowed from <sup><2118></sup>Lamentations 1:18.

**3.** He takes notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what was brought upon them. *In very faithfulness he afflicted them*; for it was according to the word which he had spoken. *The curse is poured upon us and the oath*, that is, the curse that was ratified by an oath in the law of Moses, v. 11. This further justifies God in their troubles, that he did but inflict the penalty of the law, which he had given them fair notice of. It was necessary for the preserving of the honour of God's veracity, and saving his government from contempt, that the threatenings of his word should be accomplished, otherwise they look but as bugbears, nay, they seem not at all frightful. Therefore *he has confirmed his words which spoke against us* because we broke his laws, *and against our judges that judged us* because they did not according to the duty of their place punish the breach of God's laws. He told them many a time that if they did not execute justice, as terrors to evil-workers, he must and would take the work into his own hands; and now he has *confirmed* what he said *by bringing upon us a great evil*, in which the princes and judges themselves deeply shared. Note, It contributes very much to our profiting by the *judgments of God's hand* to observe how exactly they agree with the *judgments of his mouth*.

**4.** He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by despising it. “It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special marks of divine displeasure; for *under the whole heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem*,” v. 12. It is Jeremiah's lamentation in the name of the church, *Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?* which must suppose another similar question, *Was ever sin like unto my sin?*

**5.** He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest; and if they will say *Amen* to his prayer, as it was fit they should if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust: “*To us belongs confusion*

*of faces as at this day* (v. 7); we lie under the shame of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due." If Israel had retained their character, and had continued a holy people, they would have been *high above all nations in praise, and mane, and honour* (<sup>1539</sup>Deuteronomy 26:19); but now that they have *sinned and done wickedly* confusion and disgrace belong to them, to *the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the inhabitants both of the country and of the city, for they have been all alike guilty before God; it belongs to *all Israel*, both to the two tribes, *that are near*, by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes, *that are afar off*, in the land of Assyria. "Confusion belongs not only to the common people of our land, but to *our kings, our princes, and our fathers* (v. 8), who should have set a better example, and have used their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice profaneness."

**6.** He imputes the continuance of the judgment to their incorrigibleness under it (v. 13, 14): "*All this evil has come upon us, and has lain long upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, not in a right manner, as we should have made it, with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.* We have been smitten, but have not returned to him that smote us. *We have not entreated the face of the Lord our God*" (so the word is); "we have taken no care to make our peace with God and reconcile ourselves to him." Daniel set his brethren a good example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example; in their *affliction* it was expected that they would *seek God early*, but they sought him not, that they might *turn from their iniquities and understand his truth*. The errand upon which afflictions are sent is to bring men to *turn from their iniquities and to understand God's truth*; so Elihu had explained them, <sup>1540</sup>Job 36:10. God by them *opens men's ears to discipline and commands that they return from iniquity*. And if men were brought rightly to *understand God's truth*, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step towards this is to *make our prayer before the Lord our God*, that the affliction may be sanctified before it is removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God, to make it answer the end. Those who in their affliction *make not their prayer to God, who cry not when he binds them*, are not likely to *turn from iniquity* or to *understand his truth*. "Therefore, because we have not improved the affliction, *the Lord has watched upon the evil*, as the judge takes care that execution be done according to the sentence. Because we have not been



melted, he has kept us still in the furnace, and *watched over it*, to make the heat yet more intense;” for when God judges he will overcome, and will be justified in all his proceedings.

**IV.** Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of his favour to Israel, and the concern of his own glory in their interests.

**1.** It is some comfort to them (and not a little) that God has been always ready to pardon sin (v. 9): *To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness;* this refers to that proclamation of his name, <sup><3316></sup>Exodus 34:6, 7, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity.* Note, It is very encouraging to poor sinners to recollect that *mercies belong to God*, as it is convincing and humbling to them to recollect that righteousness belongs to him; and those who give him the glory of his righteousness may take to themselves the comfort of his mercies, <sup><3622></sup>Psalm 62:12. There are abundant mercies in God, and not only forgiveness but *forgivenesses*; he is a *God of pardons* (<sup><3397></sup>Nehemiah 9:17, marg.); he *multiplies to pardon*, <sup><2387></sup>Isaiah 55:7. *Though we have rebelled against him, yet with him there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellious.*

**2.** It is likewise a support to them to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt; so far he looks back for the encouragement of his faith (v. 15): *“Thou hast formerly brought thy people out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon? Were they then formed into a people, and shall they not now be reformed and new-formed? Are they now sinful and unworthy, and were they not so then? Are their oppressors now mighty and haughty, and were they not so then? And has not God said the their deliverance out of Babylon shall outshine even that out of Egypt?”* <sup><2144></sup>Jeremiah 16:14, 15. The force of this plea lies in that, *“Thou hast gotten thyself renown, hast made thyself a name”* (so the word is) *“as at this day, even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt; and wilt thou lose the credit of that by letting us perish in Babylon? Didst thou get a renown by that deliverance which we have so often commemorated, and wilt thou not now get thyself a renown by this which we have so often prayed for, and so long waited for?”*

**V.** Here is a pathetic complaint of the reproach that God's people lay under, and the ruins that God's sanctuary lay in, both which redounded



very much to the dishonour of God and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by bringing them out of Egypt.

**1.** God's holy people were despised. By *their sins and the iniquities of their fathers* they had profaned their crown and made themselves despicable, and then though they are, in name and profession, God's people, and upon that account truly great and honourable, yet they become *a reproach to all that are round about them*. Their neighbours laugh them to scorn, and triumph in their disgrace. Note, *Sin is a reproach to any people*, but especially to God's people, that have more eyes upon them and have more honour to lose than other people.

**2.** God's holy place was desolate. Jerusalem, the holy city, was a reproach (v. 16) when it lay in ruins; it was an *astonishment* and a hissing to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house, was desolate (v. 17), the altars were demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes. Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

**VI.** Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyments again. The petition is very pressing, for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with him: "*O Lord! I beseech thee*, v. 16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart's desire and prayer. *Now therefore, O our God! hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication* (v. 17), and grant an answer of peace." Now what are his petitions? What are his requests?

**1.** That God would turn away his wrath from them; that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing: O let *thy anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem, thy holy mountain!* v. 16. He does not pray for the turning again of their captivity (let the Lord do with them as seems good in his eyes), but he prays first for the *turning away of God's wrath*. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

**2.** That he would lift up the light of his countenance upon them (v. 17): "*Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate*; return in thy mercy to us, and show that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well." Note, The shining of God's face upon the desolations of the sanctuary is all in all towards the repair of it; and upon that foundation it must be rebuilt. If therefore its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and

recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles. *Cause thy face to shine and then we shall be saved,* <sup><808></sup>Psalm 80:3.

**3.** That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverance (v. 19): *O Lord! hear; O Lord! forgive.* “That the mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it be removed: *O Lord! hearken and do,* not hearken and speak only, but hearken and do; do that for us which none else can, and that speedily — *defer not, O my God!*” Now that he saw the appointed day approaching he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them and not defer. David often prays, *Make haste, O God! to help me.*

**VII.** Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions. God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him, which is not to move him (he himself knows what he will do), but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency and encourage our faith.

**1.** They disdain a dependence upon any righteousness of their own; they pretend not to merit any thing at God's hand but wrath and the curse (v. 18): *“We do not present our supplications before thee with hope to speed for our righteousness,* as if we were worthy to receive thy favour for any good in us, or done by us, or could demand any thing as a debt; we cannot insist upon our own justification, no, though we were more righteous than we are; nay, though we knew nothing amiss of ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified, nor *would we answer,* but we would *make supplication to our Judge.*” Moses had told Israel long before that, whatever God did for them, it was *not for their righteousness,* <sup><8908></sup>Deuteronomy 9:4, 5. And Ezekiel had of late told them that their return out of Babylon would be *not for their sakes,* <sup><362></sup>Ezekiel 36:22, 32. Note, Whenever we come to God for mercy we must lay aside all conceit of, and confidence in, our own righteousness.

**2.** They take their encouragement in prayer from God only, as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, and therefore from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy, and so give honour to him when we are suing for grace and mercy from him.

**(1.)** “Do it *for thy own sake* (v. 19), for the accomplishment of thy own counsel, the performance of thy own promise, and the manifestation of thy own glory.” Note, God will do his own work, not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake, and so we must take it.

(2.) “Do it *for the Lord's sake*, that is, for the Lord Christ's sake,” for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord (so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it), *for the sake of Adonai*, so David called the Messiah (<sup>3811</sup>Psalm 110:1), and mercy is prayed for for the church for the sake of the *Son of man* (<sup>3817</sup>Psalm 80:17), and *for thy Word's sake*, he is Lord of all. It is for his sake that God causes his face to shine upon sinners when they repent and turn to him, because of the satisfaction he has made. In all our prayers that therefore must be our plea; we must *make mention of his righteousness, even of his only*, <sup>3716</sup>Psalm 71:16. *Look upon the face of the anointed*. He has himself directed us to *ask in his name*.

(3.) “Do it *according to all thy righteousness* (v. 16), that is, plead for us against our persecutors and oppressors *according to thy righteousness*. Though we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of.” Or, rather, by the *righteousness of God* here is meant his faithfulness to his promise. God had, *according to his righteousness*, executed the threatening, v. 11. “Now, Lord, wilt thou not do according to *all thy righteousness*? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promises as thou hast been to thy threatenings and accomplish them also?”

(4.) “Do it *for thy great mercies* (v. 18), to make it to appear that thou art a merciful God.” The good things we ask of God we call *mercies*, because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And, because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion: “*Open thy eyes and behold our desolations*, especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O look with pity upon a pitiable case!” Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God and then left with him.

(5.) “Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to thee. The sanctuary that is desolate is thy sanctuary (v. 17), dedicated to thy honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence. Jerusalem is *thy city and thy holy mountain* (v. 16); it is *the city which is called by thy name*,” v. 18. It was the city which God had *chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there*. “The people that have *become a reproach* are *thy people*, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them (v. 16); they are *called by thy name*, v. 19. Lord, thou hast a property in them, and therefore art

interested in their interests; wilt thou not provide for thy own, for those of thy own house? They are *thine, save them,*" <sup><B39></sup>Psalm 119:94.

## <sup><20></sup>DANIEL 9:20-27

### DANIEL'S PRAYER ANSWERED

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel-grace that is extant in all the *Old Testament*. If John Baptist was the morning-star, this was the day-break to the Sun of righteousness, the *day-spring from on high*. Here is,

**I.** The time when this answer was given.

**1.** It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed and laid a strong emphasis upon: *While I was speaking* (v. 20), yea, *while I was speaking in prayer* (v. 21), before he rose from his knees, and while there was yet more which he intended to say.

**(1.)** He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet further to enlarge upon.

**[1.]** He was confessing sin and lamenting that — “both *my sin and the sin of my people Israel.*” Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God and is ready to confess it; for there is not a *just man upon earth that does good and sins not*, nor that sins and repents not. St. John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves if they say that they *have no sin*, and who therefore *confess their sins*, <sup><G18></sup>1 John 1:8. Good men find it an ease to their consciences to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves; and that is *confessing sin*. He also confessed the *sin of his people*, and bewailed that. Those who are heartily concerned for the glory of God, the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for the sins of others as well as for their own.

**[2.]** He was *making supplication before the Lord his God*, and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for *the holy mountain of his God*, Mount Zion. The desolations of the sanctuary lay nearer his heart than those of the city and the land; and the

repair of that, and the setting up of the public worship of God of Israel again, were the things he had in view, in the deliverance he was preparing for, more than re-establishment of their civil interests. Now,

(2.) While Daniel was thus employed,

[1.] He had a grant made him of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken <sup>2524</sup> Isaiah 65:24, *While they are yet speaking, I will hear*. Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, v. 18, 19. And, *while he was speaking* with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is well pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by angels, but, if we pray with fervency for that which God has promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer; for *he is faithful that has promised*.

[2.] He had a discovery made to him of a far greater and more glorious redemption which God would work out for his church in the latter days. Note, Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace must be *much in prayer*.

2. It was *about the time of the evening oblation*, v. 21. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but, it should seem, the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it, and desired and hoped that their prayer should be *set forth before God as incense*, and the *lifting up of their hands*, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight *as the evening-sacrifice*, <sup>2525</sup> Psalm 141:2. The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice that Daniel's prayer was accepted when he prayed *for the Lord's sake*; and for the sake of that this glorious discovery of redeeming love was made to him. The Lamb *opened the seals* in the virtue of his own blood.

II. The messenger by whom this answer was sent. It was not given him in a dream, nor by a voice from heaven, but, for the greater certainty and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in a human shape, to give this answer to Daniel. Observe,

**1.** Who this angel, or messenger, was; it was *the man Gabriel*. If Michael the archangel be, as many suppose, no other than Jesus Christ, this Gabriel is the only created angel that is named in scripture. Gabriel signifies the *mighty one of God*; for the angels are *great in power and might*, <sup><401></sup>2 Peter 2:11. It was he *whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning*. Daniel heard him called by his name, and thence learned it (<sup><2086></sup>Daniel 8:16); and, though then he trembled at his approach, yet he observed him so carefully that now he knew him again, knew him to be the same that he had seen at the beginning, and, being somewhat better acquainted with him, was not now so terrified at the sight of him as he had been at first. When this angel said to *Zacharias, I am Gabriel* (<sup><4119></sup>Luke 1:19), he intended thereby to put him in mind of this notice which he had given to Daniel of the Messiah's coming when it was at a distance, for the confirming of his faith in the notice he was then about to give of it as at the door.

**2.** The instructions which this messenger received from the Father of lights to whom Daniel prayed (v. 23): *At the beginning of thy supplications* the word, *the commandment, came forth* from God. Notice was given to the angels in heaven of this counsel of God, which they were desirous to look into; and orders were given to Gabriel to go immediately and bring the notice of it to Daniel. By this it appears that it was not any thing which Daniel said that moved God, for the answer was given as he began to pray; but God was well pleased with his serious solemn address to the duty, and, in token of that, sent him this gracious message. Or perhaps it was *at the beginning of Daniel's supplications* that *Cyrus's word, or commandment, went forth to restore and to build Jerusalem*, that going forth spoken of v. 25. "The thing was done *this very day*; the proclamation of liberty to the Jews was signed this morning, just when thou wast praying for it;" and now, at the close of this fast-day, Daniel had notice of it, as, at the close of the *day of atonement*, the jubilee-trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty.

**3.** The haste he made to deliver his message: He was *caused to fly swiftly*, v. 21. Angels are winged messengers, quick in their motions, and delay not to execute the orders they receive; they run and *return like a flash of lightning*, <sup><3014></sup>Ezekiel 1:14. But, it should seem, sometimes they are more expeditious than at other times, and make a quicker despatch, as here the angel was *caused to fly swiftly*; that is, he was ordered and he was enabled to fly swiftly. Angels do their work in obedience to divine command and in dependence upon divine strength. Though they excel in wisdom, they fly swifter or slower as God directs; and, though they excel in power, they

fly but as God causes them to fly. Angels themselves are to us what he makes them to be; they are *his ministers*, and *do his pleasure*, <sup><B></sup>Psalm 103:21.

#### 4. The prefaces or introductions to his message.

(1.) He *touched him* (v. 21), as before (<sup><T></sup>Daniel 8:18), not to awaken him out of sleep as then, but to give him a hint to break off his prayer and to attend to that which he has to say in answer to it. Note, In order to the keeping up of our communion with God we must not only be forward to speak to God, but as forward to hear what he has to say to us; when we have prayed we must look up, must look after our prayers, must set ourselves upon our watch-tower.

(2.) He *talked with him* (v. 22), talked familiarly with him, as one friend talks with another, that *his terror might not make him afraid*. He informed him on what errand he came, that he was sent from heaven on purpose with a kind message to him: “*I have come to show thee* (v. 23), to tell thee that which thou didst not know before.” He had shown him the troubles of the church under Antiochus, and the period of those troubles (<sup><T></sup>Daniel 8:19); but now he has greater things to show him, for he that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more. “*Nay, I have now come forth to give thee skill and understanding* (v. 22), not only to show thee these things, but to *make thee understand* them.”

(3.) He assured him that he was a favourite of Heaven, else he would not have had this intelligence sent him, and he must take it for a favour: “*I have come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved*. Thou art *a man of desires*, acceptable to God, and whom he has a favour for.” Note, Though God loves all his children, yet there are some that are more than the rest *greatly beloved*. Christ had one disciple that lay in his bosom; and that *beloved disciple* was he that was entrusted with the prophetic visions of the New Testament, as Daniel was with those of the Old. For what greater token can there be of God's favour to any man than for the secrets of the Lord to be with him? Abraham is the *friend of God*; and therefore *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?* <sup><T></sup>Genesis 18:17. Note, Those may reckon themselves greatly beloved of God to whom, and in whom, he *reveals his Son*. Some observe that the title which this angel Gabriel gives to the Virgin Mary is much the same with this which he here gives to Daniel, as if he designed to put her in mind of it — *Thou that art highly favoured*; as Daniel, *greatly beloved*.



(4.) He demands his serious attention to the discovery he was now about to make to him: *Therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision*, v. 23. This intimates that it was a thing well worthy of his regard, above any of the visions he had been before favoured with. Note, Those who would understand the things of God must consider them, must apply their minds to them, ponder upon them, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. The reason why we are so much in the dark concerning the revealed will of God, and mistake concerning it, is want of consideration. This vision both requires and deserves consideration.

**III.** The message itself. It was delivered with great solemnity, received no doubt with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark and hard to be understood. Daniel, who understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now honourably employed to make known to the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of, at the end of another seventy, not years, but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for *his people* and the *holy city* — that *they* might be released, that *it* might be rebuilt; but God answers him *above what he was able to ask or think*. God not only grants, but outdoes, the desires of those that fear him, <sup><21></sup>Psalm 21:4.

**1.** The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general, it is *seventy weeks*, that is, *seventy times seven years*, which makes just 490 years. The great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, will lie within the compass of these years.

(1.) These years are thus described by weeks,

[1.] In conformity to the prophetic style, which is, for the most part, abstruse, and out of the common road of speaking, that the things foretold might not lie too obvious.

[2.] To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which is made purely by the sabbath day, and to signify that that should be perpetual.

[3.] With reference to the seventy years of the captivity; as they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so, being now restored to it they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of

it. So much more does God delight in showing mercy than in punishing. The land had *enjoyed its sabbaths*, in a melancholy sense, seventy years, <sup><834></sup>Leviticus 26:34. But now the people of the Lord shall, in a comfortable sense, enjoy their sabbaths seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which makes ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the disposals of Providence, that we might see and admire the wisdom of him who has *determined the times before appointed*.

(2.) The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks are,

[1.] Concerning the time when they commence and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here dated *from the going forth of the commandments to restore and to build Jerusalem*, v. 25. I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus mentioned <sup><810></sup>Ezra 1:1, for by it the people were *restored*; and, though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus, <sup><348></sup>Isaiah 44:28. He shall *say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built*. That was, both in prophecy and in history, the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem; nay, it should seem, this *going forth of the commandment* (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it as of Cyrus's) is the same with that going forth of the commandment mentioned v. 23, which was *at the beginning of Daniel's supplications*. And it looks very graceful that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this but that by this reckoning the *Persian monarchy*, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted but 130 years; whereas, by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it is computed that it continued 230 years. So Thucydides, Xenophon, and others reckon. those who fix it to that first edict set aside these computations of the heathen historians as uncertain and not to be relied upon. But others, willing to reconcile them, begin the 490 years, not at the edict of Cyrus (<sup><810></sup>Ezra 1:1), but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nothus above 100 years after, mentioned Ezra 6: Others fix on the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mnemon, who sent Ezra with a commission, <sup><8108></sup>Ezra 7:8-12. The learned Mr. Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, *pro* and *con*, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves.

[2.] Concerning the termination of them; and here likewise interpreters are not agreed. Some make them to end at the death of Christ, and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude that from this very hour when Gabriel spoke to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, it was exactly 490 years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think, because it is said that *in the midst of the weeks* (that is, the last of the seventy weeks) he *shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*, they end *three years and a half* after the death of Christ, when the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But those who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ read it thus, “He shall *make strong the testament to the many; the last seven*, or the last week, *yea, half that seven*, or *half that week* (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half which Christ spent in his public ministry), shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation.” Others make these 490 years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, because these seventy weeks are said to be *determined upon the people of the Jews and the holy city*; and much is said here concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary.

[3.] Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week; and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else. In the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week Christ preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations were laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

(3.) But, whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough clear and certain to answer the two great ends of determining them.

[1.] It did serve them to raise and support the expectations of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs; the preceding prophets had often spoken of him as *one that should come*, but never was the time fixed for his coming until now. And, though there might be so much doubt concerning the date of this reckoning that they could not ascertain the time just to a year, yet by the light of this prophecy they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find, accordingly, that when Christ came he was generally *looked*

for as the *consolation of Israel*, and *redemption in Jerusalem* by him, <sup><4025></sup>Luke 2:25, 38. There were those that for this reason thought the *kingdom of God should immediately appear* (<sup><4021></sup>Luke 19:11), and some think it was this that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, <sup><4025></sup>Acts 2:5.

[2.] It does serve still to refute and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who *should come*, but still *look for another*. This prediction should silence them, and will condemn them; for, reckon these seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain that they have expired above 1500 years ago; so that the Jews are for ever *without excuse*, who will not own that the Messiah has come when they have gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messiah's being come, and that our Jesus is he, that he came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2. The events here foretold are more plain and easy to be understood, at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold,

(1.) Concerning the return of the Jews now speedily to their own land, and their settlement again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for; and yet it is but briefly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a *commandment shall go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem*, v. 25. And the commandment shall not be in vain; for though the times will be very troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on, and brought to perfection at last. The *street shall be built again*, as spacious and splendid as ever it was, and *the walls, even in troublous times*. Note, as long as we are here in this world we must expect *troublous times*, upon some account or other. Even when we have *joyous times* we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a gleam, it is but a lucid interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will *return after the rain*. When the Jews are restored in triumph to their own land, yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it, *even in troublous times*; nay, the troublousness of the times may by the grace of God contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted the more it multiplies.

(2.) Concerning the Messiah and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that could deliver them from the Roman yoke and give them temporal power and wealth, whereas they were here told that the Messiah should come upon another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome.

[1.] Christ came to *take away sin*, and to abolish that. Sin had made a quarrel between God and man, had alienated men from God and provoked God against man; it was this that put dishonour upon God and brought misery upon mankind; this was the great mischief-maker. He that would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of this. Christ undertakes to be so, and *for this purpose* he is *manifested*, to *destroy the works of the devil*. He does not say to *finish your* transgressions and your sins, but *transgression* and *sin* in general, for he is the propitiation not only for *our sins*, that are Jews, but *for the sins of the whole world*. He came, *First*, To *finish transgression*, to *restrain* it (so some), to break the power of it, to *bruise the head* of that serpent that had done so much mischief, to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men, upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom there, that, where *sin and death* had *reigned*, *righteousness* and *life* through grace might *reign*. When he died he said, *It is finished*; sin has now had its death-wound given it, like Samson's, *Let me die with the Philistines*. *Animamque in vulnere ponit* — *He inflicts the wound and dies*. *Secondly*, To *make an end of sin*, to abolish it, that it may not rise up in judgment against us, to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin, to *seal up sins* (so the margin reads it), that they may not appear or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us, as, when Christ cast the devil into the bottomless pit, he *set a seal upon him*, <sup>610</sup> Revelation 20:3. When sin is pardoned it is *sought for and not found*, as that which is *sealed up*. *Thirdly*, To *make reconciliation for iniquity*, as by a sacrifice, to satisfy the justice of God and so to *make peace* and bring God and man together, not only as an arbitrator, or referee, who only brings the contending parties to a good understanding one of another, but as a surety, or undertaker, for us. He is not only the *peace-maker*, but the *peace*. He is the *atonement*.

[2.] He came to *bring in an everlasting righteousness*. God might justly have made an end of the sin by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it, by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before

God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we have not a righteousness wherein to appear before him. Had we stood, our innocency would have been our righteousness, but, having fallen, we must have something else to plead; and Christ has provided us a plea. The merit of his sacrifice is *our righteousness*; with this we answer all the demands of the law; *Christ has died, yea, rather, has risen again*. Thus Christ is *the Lord our righteousness*, for he is *made of God to us righteousness*, that we might be *made the righteousness of God in him*. By faith we apply this to ourselves and plead it with God, and our *faith is imputed to us for righteousness*, <sup><40B></sup>Romans 4:3, 5. This is an *everlasting* righteousness, for Christ, who is *our righteousness*, and the *prince of our peace*, is the *everlasting Father*. It was from everlasting in the counsels of it and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; and it will be to the end, for he is *able to save to the uttermost*. It is of everlasting virtue (<sup><50D></sup>Hebrews 10:12); it is the *rock that follows us to Canaan*.

[3.] He came to *seal up the vision and prophecy*, all the prophetic visions of the Old Testament, which had reference to the Messiah. He *sealed them up*, that is, he accomplished them, answered to them to a tittle; all things that were written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled in him. Thus he confirmed the truth of them as well as his own mission. He *sealed them up*, that is, he put an end to that method of God's discovering his mind and will, and took another course by completing the scripture-canon in the New Testament, which is the more sure word of prophecy than that *by vision*, <sup><60B></sup>2 Peter 1:19; <sup><30D></sup>Hebrews 1:1.

[4.] He came to *anoint the most holy*, that is, himself, the Holy One, who was *anointed* (that is, appointed to his work and qualified for it) by the Holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received *without measure*, above his fellows; or to *anoint* the gospel-church, his spiritual temple, or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate it to himself (<sup><40B></sup>Ephesians 5:26), or to consecrate for us *a new and living way into the holiest*, by his own blood (<sup><30D></sup>Hebrews 10:20), as the sanctuary was *anointed*, <sup><20B></sup>Exodus 30:25, etc. He is called *Messiah* (v. 25, 26), which signifies *Christ* — *Anointed* (<sup><40B></sup>John 1:41), because he received the unction both for himself and for all that are his.

[5.] In order to all this the Messiah must be *cut off*, must die a violent death, and so be *cut off from the land of the living*, as was foretold, <sup><2518></sup>Isaiah 53:8. Hence, when Paul preaches the death of Christ, he says that he preached nothing but *what the prophet said should come*, <sup><4032></sup>Acts 26:22, 23. And *thus it behoved Christ to suffer*. He must be *cut off, but not for himself* — not for any sin of his own, but, as Caiaphas prophesied, he must *die for the people*, in our stead and for our good, — not for any *advantage of his own* (the glory he purchased for himself was no more than the glory he had before, <sup><4810></sup>John 17:4, 5); no; it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was *cut off*.

[6.] He must *confirm the covenant with many*. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace, since it had become impossible for us to be saved by a covenant of innocence. This covenant he shall confirm by his doctrine and miracles, by his death and resurrection, by the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which are the *seals* of the New Testament, assuring us that God is willing to accept us upon gospel-terms. His death made *his testament* of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed by it. He confirmed it to *the many*, to the common people; the poor were *evangelized*, when the *rulers and Pharisees believed not on him*. Or, he confirmed it *with many*, with the Gentile world. The New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations. Christ gave his life a *ransom for many*.

[7.] He must *cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease*. By offering himself a sacrifice once for all he shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices, shall supercede them and set them aside; when the substance comes the shadows shall be done away. He causes all the peace-offerings to cease when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his gospel to the world, with which the apostles were entrusted, he took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so *caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease*. The apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews shows what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should *hold fast our profession*.

(3.) Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation; and this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah, not only because it was the *just punishment* of those that put



him to death, which was the sin that filled up the measure of their iniquity and brought ruin upon them, but because, as things were, it was necessary to the perfecting of one of the great intentions of his death. He died to take away the ceremonial law, quite to abolish *that law of commandments*, and to vacate the obligation of it. But the Jews would not be persuaded to quit it; still they kept it up with more zeal than ever; they would hear no talk of parting with it; they stoned Stephen (the first Christian martyr) for saying that Jesus should *change the customs which Moses delivered them* (~~404~~ Acts 6:14); so that there was no way to abolish the Mosaic economy but by destroying the temple, and the holy city, and the Levitical priesthood, and that whole nation which so incurably doted on them. This was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could *never be repaired* to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity might not be overmuch lifted up with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because in process of time they would be finally destroyed, and not as now for seventy years only, but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should *never be destroyed*. Now,

[1.] It is here foretold that *the people of the prince that shall come* shall be the instruments of this destruction, that is, the Roman armies, belonging to a monarchy yet to come (Christ is *the prince that shall come*, and they are employed by him in this service; they are *his armies*, ~~412~~ Matthew 22:7), or the Gentiles (who, though now strangers, shall become the people of the Messiah) shall destroy the Jews.

[2.] That the destruction shall be *by war*, and the *end* of that *war* shall be this *desolation determined*. The *wars of the Jews* with the Romans were by their own obstinacy made very long and very bloody, and they issued at length in the utter extirpation of that people.

[3.] That the *city* and *sanctuary* shall in a particular manner be *destroyed* and laid quite waste. Titus the Roman general would fain have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that this prophecy might be fulfilled.

[4.] That all the resistance that shall be made to this destruction shall be in vain: *The end of it shall be with a flood*. It shall be a deluge of destruction,

like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against.

[5.] That hereby the *sacrifice and oblation* shall be *made to cease*. And it must needs cease when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it were so confounded, that (they say) there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron.

[6.] that there shall be *an overspreading of abominations*, a general corruption of the Jewish nation and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it shall be *made desolate*, <sup><5126></sup>1 Thessalonians 2:16. Or it is rather to be understood of the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews (they could not endure them), which *overspread the nation*, and by which it was *made desolate*; for these are the words which Christ refers to, <sup><1285></sup>Matthew 24:15, *When you shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, then let those who shall be in Judea flee*, which is explained <sup><2711></sup>Luke 21:20, *When you shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies then flee*.

[7.] That the desolation shall be total and final: *He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation*, that is, he shall make it completely desolate. It is a *desolation determined*, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it is made desolate, it should seem, there is something more determined that is to be *poured upon the desolate* (v. 27), and what should that be but the *spirit of slumber* (<sup><5118></sup>Romans 11:8, 25), that blindness which has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in? And *then all Israel shall be saved*.