

Studies in Daniel #6 - Repentance

The overall theme of Daniel is: **God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.** Dan. 4:3, 4:34, 6:26, 7:14, 7:27, Ps. 145:13

In the first three lessons, we looked at who God is: the source of wisdom and knowledge and the revealer of secrets, that he is absolutely sovereign, and that he has an eternal kingdom. We also looked at the need for complete loyalty and obedience to God, and then at humility vs. pride.

Theme #6: Repentance

What is repentance? In Hebrew, the word is shuv (rhymes with shoot), which means to turn back or return. In the NT it is metanoeo (rhymes with better an echo), which is "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins" (Thayer's Lexicon). While in the NT, the command to repent is primarily addressed to us as individuals, in the OT it is frequently addressed to nations or cities (e.g., Israel, Judah, Nineveh). It is this kind of repentance that we see in Daniel 9. He surely walked in personal repentance, but here he is addressing the sins of the whole nation and people, confessing on their behalf. This would be somewhat similar to us asking God to forgive us for the national disgrace of abortion, even though all or most of us are not personally guilty of it.

Current events can easily be recognized as a national chastisement or punishment, and as Christians we should look to the Word, and especially Dan. 9, for help in knowing how and what to pray. The reasons and circumstances are quite different, and yet we need to know how to pray concerning our national sins.

In recent years it has become fashionable on the left to try to force confessions that have nothing to do with personal sins, on behalf of people who did not personally suffer. i.e., black reparations, white guilt, male dominance, etc. Obama went around the world apologizing for how rotten America is. Now children in schools are being forced to confess their white privilege, and boys and men are being demonized in schools and universities by the feminist left. In business, people who do not tow the anti-white, anti-male line are being forced into reeducation through "multicultural awareness training." Leftists since the election have even suggested openly that Trump defenders should have their children removed, and sent to reeducation camps.

We reject such false confessions, and yet we do live in a nation with sin on every hand, and we want to pray for God's mercy. How do we pray God's mercy on a land when the sins are not necessarily our own? Daniel was in a similar situation. He himself was certainly not the cause of the national calamity falling, or being extended through those 70 years. He was personally one of the most righteous men in history – Ezekiel 14:12-20 "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD." Yet he prayed a prayer of repentance on behalf of his people.

In chapter 9, Daniel realized from the prophecies of Jeremiah that the captivity in Babylon would be for 70 years, and was therefore just about complete. He then set his face to seek God in earnest, "by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (v. 3) Note that he did not consider the 70 year limit to be automatic, as if it would just happen "poof" with no repentance or prayers for deliverance.

How and what did Daniel pray?

1. He began by recognizing and confessing God's omnipotent greatness, and his covenant mercies upon those who love him and keep his commandments, 9:4

2. He confessed the sins of Israel/Judah – 9:5 “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled ...”
3. He confessed that they had not hearkened to the many warnings of the prophets (9:6).
4. He confessed that the judgment of captivity was just, because God is righteous, and that their sins had brought them “confusion [shame] of faces”. 9:7-8
5. Yet he believed that God is merciful and willing to forgive – 9:9
6. He acknowledged the cause of their cursed position as being their own sins – rebellion, disobedience, ignoring God’s voice and his commanded ways, departing from his law. 9:9-12
7. In spite of the warnings, they had not prayed to God and turned from their iniquities to understand the truth. That is why the calamities befell them – God is righteous, and they had not obeyed his voice. 9:13-14
8. He remembered how God is the one who brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, which made their sin and wickedness the worse. 9:15
9. Then he called on God for deliverance (9:16-19)
 - a. According to your righteousness
 - b. Turn away your anger and fury from Jerusalem
 - c. We have become a reproach to all that are about us.
 - d. Hear the prayers and supplications of thy servant. Make your face to shine upon your desolate sanctuary in Jerusalem.
 - e. Incline your ear and hear; look and behold the desolations. The city is called by your name.
 - f. We ask not these mercies for our righteousness, but for God’s mercy.
 - g. God, forgive us. Hear us and do it now, for your own sake and for the city and people that are called by your name.

Surely our repentance must start with our own personal sins, because “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me” (Ps. 66:18). Only then can we begin to come to God for mercy on the behalf of our nation. If every Christian would just get serious with God and repent and confess their own sins, think of the effect it would have on the whole nation. Then we would be in a position to pray for the whole nation, like Daniel did, and as Abraham did for Sodom. Nevertheless, we must not wait for everyone else to do it. Let us start with ourselves.

2 Chr. 7:13-14 – “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

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