

## Daniel 9:1-19

**Daniel 9:2,3 In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes...**

The reign of Darius the Mede over Babylon was simultaneous to that of Cyrus the Persian over Babylon. Darius was a king set over Babylon but under the authority of Cyrus. Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 followed the events described in chapter 5 but the command by Darius that put Daniel in the lion's den is not dated. Could Daniel's prayers for Jerusalem have been the burden that was on his heart when he prayed in defiance of Darius' order to pray to no god but himself? This seems possible. Daniel's prayer of chapter nine would have needed to have occurred soon after Darius (and Cyrus) came to power in Babylon since it was in the first year of Cyrus reign that he declared that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Daniel's prayer asks God to have mercy so that His city can be restored, Cyrus' declaration was

an answer to the prayer that took place within the year. It may have even happened immediately after Daniel prayed.

Daniel's proactive prayer was inspired by the prophecy of Jeremiah which stated that Israel's captivity in Babylon would last for 70 years. (See 2 Chronicles 36:21-23, Jeremiah 25:9-12, and Jeremiah 29:10). This brings up the question as to whether there is a relationship between the fulfillment of the prophecy and Daniel's prayer. Looking back on the event would we be prepared to say that the human means through which God worked to fulfill His word was as much Daniel's prayer as it was the edict of Cyrus the Persian emperor?

From Daniel's perspective in the moment the prophecy inspired the prayer. Daniel did not seem to view the prophecy as independent of the principles of the Mosaic covenant but instead dependent on them. The promise of a return to the land required the appropriate repentance and change of mind that the covenant law declared must precede such an experience of forgiveness and restoration. If this was what was needed then Daniel was on board for that. It seems that Daniel did not have a fixed view of prophecy (if God has said that He will do something then He will do it no

matter what) but instead, Daniel seems to have had a more fluid view (if God has said that He will do something then I better take care of business so that it in fact will take place).

Daniel's prayer was an urgent confessional in which he cried to God for immediate mercy. He did not make excuses for himself or for the people of Israel. He admitted that they had only gotten what they deserved when Jerusalem fell and they were carried into captivity. He avoided any sense of entitlement. Daniel's prayer did not cite Jeremiah's prophecy as a rationale for God to act and to release His people from their captivity. He simply begged for God's mercy. He put the state of the city and the people before the Lord and sought respite and forgiveness. He appealed to God with an argument as to what was good for God's name.

This mature prayer was a response to scripture and came after a life of deep experience of relationship with God. Daniel had walked through the many challenges described in the narrative portion of the book. Daniel's perception of the sovereignty of God may reflect his frame of reference - his heritage and an experience of life under many kings.