

A Church in Crisis



Week Nine

inTro



Read This Week's

Passage: Daniel 9:1–19

Note: Read the whole chapter, but the focus of your study will be the first 19 verses. We will study the rest in depth in class.

A FAULTY CHURCH?

In the twenty-first century, the faults and foibles of the church have made individuals, both within and without the church, jaded and cynical about the church and institutions in general. There is no question that the charlatans and hypocritical leaders have in many ways caused a black eye to the church's reputation. There is the gut reaction to dissociate oneself and move on; after all, we all have our own problems and issues.

We find in Daniel's prayer, however, an example of not dissociating from a church that is messing up. Instead, the first half of Daniel 9 reveals a stunning identification with a church that is in crisis. Rather than moving away and being indifferent to the church in crisis, Daniel moves toward it and identifies with it on a profound level. Daniel's prayer portrays a vivid example of how we can respond to a faulty church.



inScribe

Write out Daniel 9:1–19 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Daniel 9:1–7. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Daniel 9:1–19. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Have you ever been put off by the faults of people in the church?

How does Daniel's prayer impact you with respect to the faults of the church?³

PRAYING FOR MY CHURCH

The church was in crisis. Because of their unfaithfulness to God, Israel had been taken into Babylonian captivity for almost seventy years as predicted by Jeremiah. Daniel's life stretched the entire seventy years of captivity and he knew that the time period was about to come to an end. In Daniel chapter 8, he heard a time prophecy of 2,300 years and feared that the captivity will be extended beyond the seventy years. Daniel chapter 9 is his prayer to God for his church in crisis.

The longest prayer in the book of Daniel is on behalf of his church. Daniel's prayer was an example of how we are to respond to a church in crisis:

1. *Daniel responded by praying for his church.*

"I prayed to the Lord my God" (Daniel 9:4). Daniel did not slander the church in private conversations or in public discourses; he interceded in prayer to God on behalf of His beloved church.

2. *Daniel's attitude was not "me;" it was "we."*

"We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws" (Daniel 9:5, emphasis supplied). Daniel identified himself with the people of God; He did not dissociate himself from the church. Though a righteous man, he identified himself with the sins of the church. He did not take the position of superiority over his people (the church), but rather came from the posture of being with his people.

3. *Daniel responded by reaffirming the necessity of heeding God's prophets.*

"We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name" (Daniel 9:6). Daniel's prayer brought out that the solution to church's plight was to go back to following the Word of the Lord as given by God's prophets. He acknowledged that the current condition of the people of God came as a result of rejecting His prophets.

4. *Daniel responded with personal self-denial—fasting.*

"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). Daniel was all-in on his prayer for the church, in that he was willing to practice personal self-denial in the form of fasting. Daniel was so fully invested in his burden for his church that it impacted his physical life as well as his spiritual life.

A DEEPER LOOK INTO DANIEL 9:1-9

What is the point of praying for the church if God already has vested interest in His church?

God will not infringe on our free will without our permission. This is true for ourselves but it is also true for others. Intercessory prayer for others gives God permission to move above and beyond what He would otherwise do. Our prayers are authorization for God to move. In Daniel chapter 9, you see God answered Daniel's prayer in giving him prophetic revelation for not only his present church, but also the church until the end of time.

What role does fasting play in the Christian experience?

It is important to remember that fasting gains no "points" with God. Fasting is not to impress God or to earn our acceptance with Him. There are some people who cannot fast for medical reasons. Nonetheless, there are great benefits to fasting. An important aspect to take note of in the Sermon on the Mount is that fasting is equated with giving and with prayer. Christ used the same wording when He spoke on these topics: "When you give alms" (Matt. 6:3); "And when you pray" (Matt. 6:5); "Moreover when you fast..." (Matt. 6:16). Notice Jesus does not say "if" you fast, but "when" you fast.

Fasting brings the physical nature into agreement with your spiritual desire by correlating the dependency of physical food to the dependency on Christ. When fasting, one experiences a physical humbling that is correlated to a spiritual humbling before God. Fasting changes us, our attitude toward God and others.

There are different types of fasting and can involve the eating of simple food. Ellen White states, "Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake... they should set aside days for fasting and prayer. Entire abstinence from food may not be required, but they should eat sparingly of the most simple food." (Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, February 11, 1904)



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Which area of prayer is needed more in your relationship with God?



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Zechariah 1:12–17

Zechariah 7:5

Jeremiah 25:1–10

Jeremiah 29:10

2 Chronicles 36:20–21

Matthew 13:24–30

Revelation 12:13–17

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Daniel 9:1–19?

Review your memorized verse from Daniel 9:1–19.

IDENTIFICATION

Daniel’s prayer encapsulates the spirit of Christ’s love for His embattled church. Daniel intercedes on behalf of his people even as Christ intercedes on our behalf before the Father. Daniel asks for the mercy of God on behalf of his people even as Jesus pleads mercy on our behalf. Daniel identifies himself with God’s people’s sins; Jesus becomes sin for us and identifies Himself with us.

The church is portrayed in Scripture as the bride of Christ. Though it has its faults and shortcomings, it is still the apple of God’s eye. As Ellen White states, “Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12).

Daniel exhibits the spirit of Jesus and gives us a picture of the love of Christ on behalf of His church. It is the same spirit that we, as Christians living in the end of time, are to have as the church goes through the final crisis.



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Where do you see Jesus in Daniel 9:1–19?

←
What is He saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study
of the chapter, what are
personal applications you are
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in church life
participation and attendance?

DOING THE WILL OF GOD

Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant. We are sorry that there are defective members....While the Lord brings into the church those who are truly converted, Satan at the same time brings persons who are not converted into its fellowship. While Christ is sowing the good seed, Satan is sowing the tares. There are two opposing influences continually exerted on the members of the church. One influence is working for the purification of the church, and the other for the corrupting of the people of God....

Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin....

There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; and for any man to call the attention of the world and other churches to this church, denouncing her as Babylon, is to do a work in harmony with him who is the accuser of the brethren.... The whole world is filled with hatred of those who proclaim the binding claims of the law of God, and the church who are loyal to Jehovah must engage in no ordinary conflict... Those who have any realization of what this warfare means, will not turn their weapons against the church militant, but with all their powers will wrestle with the people of God against the confederacy of evil.

Those who start up to proclaim a message on their own individual responsibility, who, while claiming to be taught and led of God, still make it their special work to tear down that which God has been for years building up, are not doing the will of God. Be it known that these men are on the side of the great deceiver. Believe them not. (*Our Father Cares* by E. G. White, p. 84)

SEEKING TO KNOW GOD

In answer to his petition, Daniel received not only the light and truth which he and his people most needed, but a view of the great events of the future, even to the advent of the world's Redeemer. Those who claim to be sanctified, while they have no desire to search the Scriptures or to wrestle with God in prayer for a clearer understanding of Bible truth, know not what true sanctification is.

Daniel talked with God. Heaven was opened before him. But the high honors granted him were the result of humiliation and earnest seeking. All who believe with the heart the word of God will hunger and thirst for a knowledge of His will. God is the author of truth. He enlightens the darkened understanding and gives to the human mind power to grasp and comprehend the truths which He has revealed.

(*The Sanctified Life* by E. G. White, pp. 48–49)



inquire

Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



What is the general attitude of culture to the faults of the church?

What is the general attitude of Christians to the faults of the church?

When your local or global church is in crisis, what is your natural response?

What are ways in which we can constructively respond to the faults of God's church?

How do you think that Jesus feels about the faults of the church?

What do you think Jesus' attitude is about our own personal faults?

Why do you think Daniel fasted for His church?

Where did Daniel's love for His church come from?