

Daniel's Prayer

***Key Verse: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him."
—Daniel 9:9***

***Selected Scripture:
Daniel 9:4-14***

years since Daniel and the rest of the Israelites were taken into captivity by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar, who had conquered and defeated the nation of Israel. The Babylonian empire itself had now been conquered by the Medes, and Darius, "of the seed of the Medes," was king "over the realm of the Chaldeans." (Dan. 9:1) Daniel knew there was great significance to this passage of time. He said, "I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."—vs. 2

Indeed, Jeremiah had prophesied that Israel would be desolate for seventy years, serving the kings of Babylon during that time. He further prophesied that when the seventy years was over, the kingdom of Babylon would be defeated and, as a result, the Israelites would soon be allowed to return to their land and their holy city, Jerusalem.—Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10

Daniel also knew that God had allowed Israel to go into Babylonian captivity because they had been unfaithful and disobedient to their covenant. He realized that, although the end of the seventy years signaled a favorable opportunity to go back and reestablish their

IT HAD BEEN SEVENTY

nation, rebuild Jerusalem, and reconstruct their temple, a change was needed in the hearts of the Israelites in order for their return to be blessed by God. Daniel offered a humble prayer of confession, with the hope that the people would repent and that God would forgive them.

“I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” (Dan. 9:4-6) The Key Verse of our lesson points out Daniel’s recognition of God’s great mercy and forgiveness, though they had been a rebellious people. In verse 13, Daniel spoke of their need to “turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.”

There are several important principles contained in the above words of Daniel’s prayer, of which God’s people today should take note. First, it is God’s desire to keep his covenant, as well as his mercy, for those who love him and are making a sincere effort to keep his commandments. Second, since we realize we cannot keep his commandments perfectly, we should be quick to confess our faults to God and seek his forgiveness, as Daniel did on behalf of the people. Third, we should consider the instructions of the Scriptures—the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles—and not ignore them as unimportant. Fourth, we must turn away from sin and serve righteousness and truth. Only after putting forth our best efforts in these ways can we expect to receive a full measure of God’s mercy and forgiveness. ■