Daniel 9

The Prayer and the Seventy Weeks

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A man who believes the Word prays the Word back to God, and heaven answers by unrolling God's calendar for Israel down to the Messiah — and beyond Him to the end. Sixty-nine weeks have been kept to the day; the seventieth will be too.

THIS EDITION

The 10 October O·I·A notes with the 25 October Deep Dive folded in: the chapter in four movements, the three voices (Tsarfati · MacArthur · Guzik), twenty Hebrew word studies, eight key insights to carry, and six questions for the table.

Ed Smith · Started 10 October 2026 · Deep Dive integrated 25 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: Amir Tsarfati (Discovering Daniel), John MacArthur (Grace to You), David Guzik (Enduring Word) — summarized, not quoted verbatim.

00 The Text

DANIEL 9 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions **Green** Command / instruction **Sky** Key repeated word **Rose** Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing **Amber** Time / place / contrast

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4 And 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;

5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

6 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.

7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8 O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;

21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Marked in the text

v2 seventy years
v2 the word of the LORD
v3 prayer and supplications
v4 covenant
v5 we have sinned
v7 Righteousness belong
v9 forgive
v11 transgressed
v2 desolations *(every occurrence)*
v24 weeks *(every occurrence)*
v18 great compassion
v19 O Lord, hear
v21 evening
v23 highly esteemed
v23 greatly beloved
v24 Seventy weeks
v24 for iniquity
v24 everlasting righteousness
v25 Messiah the Prince
v25 seven weeks
v26 cut off
v26 the people of the prince
v27 of the week
v27 abominations

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 9:2 (KJV)

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof △ the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish ◷ seventy years in the ⟲ desolations of Jerusalem.

Setting. The first year of Darius the Mede, about 539/538 BC (v1) — Babylon has just fallen (ch. 5). Daniel is in his eighties and has been in exile since 605 BC, nearly 67 years. The visions of chapters 7 and 8 (under Belshazzar) lie behind him; the empire has changed hands overnight, exactly as the Scriptures said it would.

What triggers the prayer: Daniel "observed in the books" (*binoti ba-sepharim* — he studied them) the number of years revealed to Jeremiah — seventy years of desolation for Jerusalem (v2; Jer 25:11–12; 29:10). From 605 BC the seventy years are almost up, and Babylon has just been punished as Jeremiah said. He counts, realizes the time is almost up, and turns to prayer.

Structure (four movements).

1. The Book open, the knees bent — Daniel reads Jeremiah and prepares to pray (vv1–3).
2. The prayer: confession (vv4–15) and plea (vv16–19).
3. Gabriel at the evening offering — the answer already on its way (vv20–23).
4. The seventy weeks — God's calendar for Israel (vv24–27).

Two halves: the prayer (vv3–19) and the answer (vv20–27). The prayer is about seventy *years* and the city; the answer is about seventy *weeks* and the Messiah.

- vv1–2 — Daniel reads Scripture.
- v3 — Daniel prepares: prayer, supplications, fasting, sackcloth, ashes.
- vv4–15 — confession: God is great, awesome and covenant-keeping; "we" have sinned.
- vv16–19 — petition: turn Your anger from Jerusalem; let Your face shine on the desolate sanctuary; not for our righteousness but for Your great compassion; for Your own sake.
- vv20–23 — Gabriel arrives while Daniel is still praying, about the time of the evening offering.
- vv24–27 — the prophecy of the seventy weeks.

Who: Daniel; the LORD my God; Jeremiah; Moses; "our kings, our princes and our fathers"; the man Gabriel; Messiah the Prince; "the people of the prince who is to come"; "the many."

Repeated words: we have sinned / iniquity / rebelled / transgressed; Your name; Your city / Your people / Your holy mountain; desolate / desolations (*shamem*, vv17, 18, 26, 27 — the word Daniel prayed with becomes the word Gabriel prophesies with; v2 uses a different word for Jerusalem's ruins, *chorbot*); weeks; righteousness; compassion / mercy; understand (*bin* — v2 "observed," v23 "understanding," v25 "discern").

Lists:

- Confession verbs (v5): sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, rebelled, turned aside.
- Six purposes of the seventy weeks (v24): (1) finish the transgression, (2) make an end of sin, (3) make atonement for iniquity, (4) bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) seal up vision and prophecy, (6) anoint the most holy place.
- Petitions (v19): hear, forgive, listen and take action, do not delay.
- What Daniel asks for (vv16–19): Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain, Your desolate sanctuary, Your people — the land and the temple, not a comfortable exile.

Contrasts: "Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame" (v7). "Not on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion" (v18). Daniel asks about 70 *years*; God answers with 70 *weeks* (sevens). Daniel confesses "we have been wicked" (v15) and in the same hour is called "highly esteemed" (v23).

Time words: first year of Darius; seventy years; "about the time of the evening offering"; "at the beginning of your supplications"; seventy weeks; seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; after the sixty-two weeks; one week; the middle of the week; until a complete destruction.

Terms of conclusion / cause: "because we have sinned" (v8); "for we have sinned" (v11); "because of our sins" (v16); "for Your sake" (v17); "for Your own sake" (v19); "for you are highly esteemed" (v23).

The prayer is built out of Scripture. It opens the way Deuteronomy 7:9 and Nehemiah 1:5 do ("the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness"); it confesses the way Leviticus 26:40 and 1 Kings 8:47 told Israel to confess in exile; and it names the exile as "the curse ... and the oath which is written in the law of Moses" (v11; Deut 28–29). Daniel is praying the Bible's own words back to God. He never once mentions Babylon's cruelty.

Chapter theme (my words): A man who believes the Word prays the Word back to God, and heaven answers by unrolling God's calendar for Israel down to the Messiah — and beyond Him to the end.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 9:24 (KJV)

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Prophecy read rightly drives a man to his knees (vv1–3). Guzik's first point is that prophecy is meant to be understood. Daniel took Jeremiah's seventy years as real, literal years. That one decision governs the rest of the chapter: if the seventy *years* were literal, the seventy *weeks* that answer them must be measured the same way. Guzik notes that Daniel was a busy government official who was still a man of prayer, and that the promise didn't make Daniel passive — it made him pray. God's promises invite our participation. MacArthur adds that sovereignty never cancels supplication; it summons it — the man most certain of God's plan is the man on his face asking God to do it. Tsarfati: when a promise to Israel is coming due, the right response is not speculation but intercession. Daniel prayed Israel home.

Darius the Mede (v1). "Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent," who "was made king" — not Darius I of Persia (522–486 BC) but the Darius of chapter 6: most likely Gubaru, the governor Cyrus set over Babylon, or a throne-name for Cyrus himself. "Was made king" fits a man installed by another.

The seventy years (v2). Measured from the first deportation (605 BC) they run out at the return under Cyrus (538/537 BC); measured from the temple's destruction (586 BC) they run to the second temple's completion (516/515 BC). God kept both ways of counting. 2 Chronicles 36:21 gives the reason: the land "kept sabbath" for the sabbatical years Israel had ignored — seventy years of rest for seventy sabbaths missed, 490 years of neglect. Gabriel's answer will use the same multiple.

The confession (vv4–15). It opens with who God is — great, awesome, covenant-keeping — before it says anything about Israel. Daniel was one of the most righteous men in Scripture, yet he prays "we," not "they." Guzik stresses that Daniel even confessed Israel's *prayerlessness*: all this calamity came, "yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD" (v13). The exile was God keeping His word, the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 falling exactly as written (vv11–12). MacArthur calls this the anatomy of true confession: it names sin with five verbs and no excuses (v5); it admits the sin was against God's revealed Word (v6); it agrees with God's verdict — "Righteousness belongs to You" (v7) — and vindicates God against ourselves (v14); and it refuses to compare, never mentioning Babylon. A man is not forgiven for the sins he explains, only for the ones he confesses. Tsarfati sees the posture Israel will take at the end when they look on Him whom they pierced (Zech 12:10): national confession, led by the righteous.

The plea (vv16–19). The ground of the request is God's character and glory, not Israel's merit: "for Your own sake." Jerusalem is "Your city," the people "Your people," the sanctuary "Your sanctuary," the city "called by Your name" — Daniel reminds God that God's reputation is bound up with God's people, and God loves to be reminded. Guzik notes how the petitions come rapid-fire in v19, from a man who will not take no for an answer. Spurgeon (quoted by Guzik) longed for prayers that went beyond praying

into agonizing. MacArthur: "not on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion" (v18) is the sentence every acceptable prayer stands on — and confession and boldness belong together.

Gabriel, swiftly (vv20–23). The command went out "at the beginning of your supplications" (v23), so heaven moved on Daniel's first word (compare Isa 65:24). Guzik notes the timing: the evening offering, the hour of the afternoon sacrifice (about the ninth hour, three o'clock; Ex 29:39; Acts 3:1). As a young man in Jerusalem Daniel had watched the smoke rise from the temple; nearly fifty years after that altar was destroyed he still kept its hour — and it was the hour when Jesus would die (Matt 27:45–46). Gabriel is the angel of 8:16, and his whole recorded ministry is the coming of Christ: here he dates the Messiah; in Luke 1 he announces the forerunner and the Child. MacArthur's three marks of how God answers: immediately, through His Word ("insight with understanding," not a feeling), and more than was asked. And the man who has just said "we have been wicked" is told he is "highly esteemed" (*chamudot*, treasured) — the honest confessor is the beloved.

The seventy weeks (v24). "Weeks" is Hebrew *shabuaʿ* — a unit of seven, like our word "dozen." Jacob served a "week" of years for Rachel (Gen 29:27–28), and Israel kept sabbatical years (Lev 25). So seventy sevens = 490 years. "Decreed" is *chatak*, "cut" — the 490 years are cut out of history. The address is specific: "your people and your holy city" — Israel and Jerusalem; the church is not the subject. Guzik, citing Talbot, calls it God's calendar for Israel, and he takes the six purposes literally. Atonement for iniquity was accomplished at the cross. The end of sin, everlasting righteousness, sealed-up prophecy and the anointing of the most holy place still await the King's return, so the seventy weeks are not yet complete. Tsarfati asks the plain question: has sin ended in Jerusalem? Then the seventieth week is still ahead — the seven-year Tribulation. MacArthur: history is not drifting toward an end; it is *cut* to a length, and the repair of everything Israel's sin broke runs through a Messiah who dies.

Sixty-nine weeks to the Messiah (v25). Guzik weighs four candidate decrees (Cyrus, Ezra 1, 538 BC; Darius, Ezra 6, c. 520; Artaxerxes to Ezra, Ezra 7, 458; Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, Neh 2, 445/444) and argues that only Artaxerxes' decree to Nehemiah (Neh 2:1–8) actually authorized rebuilding the *city* and its wall — "plaza and moat," a fortified city, "in times of distress" (Neh 4:17). 7 + 62 = 69 weeks = 483 years. The first 49 fit the rebuilding of the city and the close of the Old Testament canon; the next 434 run through the silent centuries to Christ. He presents Sir Robert Anderson's calculation:

- Prophetic year = 360 days (compare Rev 11:2–3; 12:6; 13:5 — 42 months = 1,260 days).
- 483 × 360 = **173,880 days**.
- Decree: Nisan 1 in Artaxerxes' 20th year = 14 March 445 BC → Triumphal Entry 6 April AD 32.
- Check: 476 solar years × 365 = 173,740 + 116 leap days + 24 days (Mar 14 → Apr 6) = **173,880**.

Guzik notes that most chronologists favor AD 30 or 33 for the crucifixion; Harold Hoehner's later reckoning (444 BC → 30 March AD 33) reaches the same 173,880 days with different dates. Either way, the Messiah the Prince arrived on schedule. Jesus held Jerusalem accountable for it: "you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:42–44). *Mashiach* is used of priests and kings throughout the Old Testament, but only here (vv25–26) do the KJV and NASB render it "Messiah," because only here is it plainly *the* Anointed One, dated.

Cut off, and the city destroyed (v26). "After the sixty-two weeks" — after the 69th week, not in it — Messiah is "cut off" (*karat*, used of execution, Gen 9:11; Ex 31:14, and the verb for *cutting* a covenant; Isa

53:8 uses the same picture) "and have nothing" (*ve-ein lo*; KJV: "but not for himself" — both true: He dies with nothing, and not for Himself). Then "the people of the prince who is to come" — Rome under Titus — destroy the city and the sanctuary in AD 70. The order is fixed: Messiah had to come *and die* before the Second Temple fell, which means any Messiah still expected cannot be the one of Daniel 9. The people are first-century Rome; *their* prince "is to come" — a future ruler from that same Roman world, the little horn of chapter 7.

The seventieth week (v27). "He" refers back to the nearest antecedent — the coming prince, not Messiah, who was cut off and has no covenant left to break. Guzik: he makes a firm covenant (*higbir*, makes strong, enforces — not *karat*) with "the many" (*ha-rabbim*, Israel) for one week (seven years), breaks it in the middle by stopping sacrifice — so a temple with sacrifices will stand again — and sets up the abomination of desolation (*shiqquts*, idolatry). Three and a half years: the "time, times, and half a time" of 7:25, the forty-two months of Rev 13:5. Jesus placed this event in the future (Matt 24:15), and Paul describes it in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 — so the text itself rules out Antiochus (who did not come after the Messiah was cut off) and Titus (who made no covenant). The gap between the 69th and 70th weeks is the present age. The clock stopped at the cross and restarts when that covenant is signed. And the last clause is the comfort of the whole book: the desolator meets a destruction "one that is decreed." God has already written the end of the Antichrist.

Three voices on the chapter. Tsarfati reads the seventy weeks as God's calendar for Israel with a seven-year finale still to come, and the prayer as the posture of a nation being gathered home; MacArthur anchors the chapter in the sovereignty that scheduled the Messiah to the day and in the prayer and confession God delights to answer; Guzik walks the arithmetic and the history. All three agree on the sermon: the God who keeps His word to the year keeps it to the day.

Word study (Hebrew):

- **observed / understand — *bin* (H995):** to discern with attention (v2 "observed in the books"; v23 "understanding"; v25 "discern"). The chapter begins with a believer studying his Bible and ends with an angel telling him to understand.
- **supplications — *tachanunim* (H8469):** pleas for grace, from *chanan*; a request with no claim behind it (vv3, 17, 18, 20, 23).
- **great and awesome — *gadol ve-nora* (H1419, H3372):** the God to be feared; Deut 7:21; Neh 1:5.
- **lovingkindness — *chesed* (H2617):** covenant-loyal love; God keeps covenant and *chesed* (v4; Deut 7:9).
- **open shame — *boshet ha-panim* (H1322, H6440):** "shame of face," KJV "confusion of faces" (vv7, 8); set against *tsedaqah*, righteousness.
- **the curse — *alah* (H423):** the oath-curse attached to the covenant (v11, "the curse ... along with the oath," *shevuah* H7621; Deut 29:12–21).
- **compassion — *rachamim* (H7356):** deep, womb-like mercy; plural for intensity (vv9, 18).
- **for Your own sake — *lema'ankha* (H4616):** vv17, 19 — God's glory as the deepest ground of prayer.
- **desolate — *shamem* (H8074):** appalled, laid waste; the same root runs through vv2, 17, 18, 26 and 27.
- **evening offering — *minchat-erev* (H4503, H6153):** the afternoon sacrifice, the ninth hour (v21).
- **highly esteemed — *chamudot* (H2530):** precious, treasured. Heaven's name for Daniel (also 10:11, 19).
- **weeks — *shabuaʿ* (H7620):** a unit of seven.

- **decreed — *chatak* (H2852):** "cut out, determined." It occurs only here in the Old Testament — the 490 years are cut out of history for Israel.
- **atonement — *kaphar* (H3722):** to cover or purge sin by a substitute; the verb of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).
- **Messiah — *mashiach* (H4899):** Anointed One. **Prince — *nagid* (H5057):** a leader or ruler; the word for David (1 Sam 13:14).
- **plaza and moat — *rechov ve-charuts* (H7339, H2742):** open square and cut trench — a fortified city, not just a temple (v25).
- **cut off — *karat* (H3772):** cut down, executed; also the verb for "cutting" a covenant.
- **and have nothing — *ve-ein lo* (H369):** "and there is nothing to Him / no one for Him" (v26).
- **make a firm covenant — *higbir* (from *gabar*, H1396):** to make strong or confirm — an existing arrangement enforced.
- **abominations — *shiqquts* (H8251):** detestable idols (Deut 29:17; 1 Kgs 11:5–7; 2 Kgs 23:13); with *meshomem*, "one who makes desolate" — the abomination of desolation (11:31; 12:11).

Key insights to carry.

1. The chapter is a prayer before it is a prophecy — nineteen verses before the calendar begins (sixteen of them prayer), four verses of calendar. Prophecy understood is prophecy prayed.
2. "Righteousness belongs to You ... to us open shame" (v7) — the whole theology of confession in one sentence: five verbs, no excuses, no mention of Babylon.
3. Mercy, not merit (v18) — *rachamim* is the only ground of prayer; that is what praying in Jesus' name means.
4. The answer left heaven at Daniel's first word (v23; Isa 65:24), and arrived at the hour of the evening offering — the hour the Messiah would die.
5. Seventy years answered with seventy sevens — Jeremiah's seventy paid for 490 years of missed sabbaths (2 Chr 36:21); Gabriel lays out 490 more, cut out for Israel.
6. Sixty-nine weeks landed on the Messiah to the day — from Nehemiah's decree (445/444 BC) 483 years to the Triumphal Entry; Jerusalem was held accountable for not knowing it (Luke 19:44).
7. The Messiah is cut off before the temple falls — *yikkaret*, executed, the verb for cutting a covenant; Isa 53:8 paints the same death. Cross c. AD 32/33, temple AD 70. Any Messiah still awaited is too late.
8. The seventieth week is still future, and the desolator's end is already decreed — his seven years are bounded, his destruction "poured out." God finishes the sentence.

Cross-references: Jer 25:11–12; 29:10–14; 2 Chr 36:21; Lev 26:40–45; Deut 7:9; 28–30; 1 Kgs 8:46–50; Neh 1:5; 2:1–8; 4:17; Ex 29:39; Isa 53:8; 65:24; Zech 12:10; Luke 1:19, 26; 19:41–44; Matt 24:15–21; 27:45–46; Acts 3:1; 2 Thess 2:3–4; Rev 11:2–3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 9:18 (KJV)

18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

Example to follow — Scripture first, then knees. Daniel didn't read prophecy and start speculating; he read it and started praying. That is the order I want for myself and for every study I build: open the Book, believe what it says, then pray it back to God. Prophecy should make me watchful and prayerful, never a date-setter and never apathetic. A promise understood is a promise to be prayed.

Sin to confess — "we," not "they." Daniel was about as blameless as anyone in Scripture, and he still said "we have sinned." I'm quick to pray "they" prayers — about the culture, the church, the men who relapse. Today I own my part: my prayerlessness, my impatience, my quiet pride. "Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame" (v7). And I notice Daniel never explained the sin or blamed Babylon; a man is forgiven for what he confesses, not for what he explains.

Promise to trust — mercy, not merit. "We are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion" (v18). That is the ground every man in recovery and every man in prison stands on — and so do I. We don't come to God with a clean record; we come on His compassion. That is what praying in Jesus' name means.

Promise to trust — God answers at the first word. "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued" (v23). The answer is already moving while I'm still on my knees. And God answered Daniel's question about 70 years with 490 years and the coming of the Messiah. He tends to answer bigger than I ask.

Comfort to receive — the honest confessor is the beloved. In the same hour Daniel said "we have been wicked," heaven called him "highly esteemed." I don't have to clean myself up to be treasured by God; I have to be honest with Him. And the desolator of v27 has his end already "decreed" — if God has written the end of the Antichrist, He has measured whatever I am facing too.

Worship. The Messiah came to the day and was "cut off and have nothing" — He died not for Himself but for me (Isa 53:8). The Bible's most precise prophecy points to the cross, and it was dated at the hour of the evening offering, the hour He died. When I'm tempted to doubt God's Word, I remember that sixty-nine weeks have already been kept exactly. The seventieth will be too.

Command to obey. "So you are to know and discern" (v25). I will keep studying this carefully and teach it clearly, so the men I serve can see that God keeps His calendar, and that their lives are on it too.

Questions for the table.

1. Daniel read a promise about to be fulfilled and responded with fasting and prayer, not a chart. What does God's Word usually produce in you? — *A promise understood is a promise to be prayed.*

2. Daniel, who never bowed to an idol, prayed "we have sinned." Where are you praying "they" prayers when God is waiting for a "we"? — *Confession that points at others is not confession.*
3. "Not on account of any merits of our own." What are you quietly bringing to God as merit? — *Mercy is the only ground I stand on, and it is enough.*
4. The answer was dispatched at Daniel's first word. What are you waiting on that may already be on its way? — *I keep praying as a man whose answer is already moving.*
5. Sixty-nine weeks were kept to the day and Jerusalem missed "the time of your visitation." Where might you be missing what God is plainly doing? — *God keeps His calendar precisely; I want to be watching when He moves.*
6. The desolator's seven years are bounded and his end is "decreed." What evil around you feels open-ended? — *If God has written the end of the Antichrist, He has measured whatever I am facing.*

Prayer. O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness — I have sinned. I don't come on my own merits, but on Your great compassion. Hear, forgive, listen and act, for Your own name's sake. Thank You for the Messiah who was cut off for me. Keep me watching and praying until the last week is done. Amen.