



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## Daniel 9:4-19 English Standard Version January 21, 2018

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 21, 2018**, is from **Daniel 9:4-19** (Some will only study **Daniel 9:4-8 & 15-19**). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Daniel 9:4) I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,**

Daniel lived a holy, righteous, wise, and God honoring life. Therefore, he was most fit to serve as a prophet of God and

a great intercessor while in exile in Babylon. An intercessor in prayer puts himself in the place of the other person or people, and he prays to God as these people should pray to God, but probably do not. Daniel began his prayer by honoring God for His divine nature, God's "great and awesome" nature. God is totally unlike the gods or idols of Babylon or elsewhere. God heard Daniel's prayers, because God kept covenant (His promises) with Daniel and His people. Daniel loved God and kept His commandments. Daniel confessed that God's people had not loved Him and kept His commandments, and Daniel identified himself with his people and their sins rather than pray as the Pharisee in Luke 18:11, 12 — "The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.'"

**(Daniel 9:5) we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.**

Because God is almighty, loving, truthful, and always keeps His promises, He maintains a steadfast relationship with those who love Him and keep His commandments; therefore, Daniel knew he could go to God in prayer. As an intercessor or mediator, Daniel confessed the sins of the people he prayed for or interceded for by standing between

God and God's sinful people. He represented God's people to God in their behalf. He had a humble confidence to pray to God because he had not "sinned," "done wrong," "acted wickedly," or "rebelled" against God as God's people had done, but he did not claim, as the Pharisee claimed, that he was better than others or sinless. Those he prayed for needed his prayers, because they had done many evil things and worse.

**(Daniel 9:6) We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.**

Though Daniel did study and believe the prophets, the vast majority of the Judeans including their leaders in exile had not listened to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others and repented of their sins. They probably ignored Daniel. Daniel did listen to the prophets, particularly to Jeremiah, so he knew the crucial importance of listening to God's prophets, reading their warnings, considering God's timing, and turning back to God. Daniel's prayer described to God the kind of people His people had become, a people who rebelled against God, a people with rulers who also rebelled against God (particularly in Jerusalem before God sent them into exile). All the people of the land stood guilty before God and deserved His punishment. In his prayer, Daniel would not let the people blame their leaders

for their sins; however, their leaders often misled them into sin and rebellion against God. Most of their kings did little to lead God's people back to God.

**(Daniel 9:7) To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.**

All sin is treachery against God and others. In his prayer of intercession, Daniel confessed for the people that God had always done what was right and had judged them and warned them and punished them in righteousness. Daniel confessed what the people should have confessed themselves; that they lived in open shame, because they had abused God's kind acts and had acted treacherously toward God. Daniel's prayer included the Kingdom of Judah that had been taken into exile by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., and the Kingdom of Israel that had been dispersed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

**(Daniel 9:8) To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.**

The whole world looked upon the Jews, the people of Judah, and upon the Israelites, the people of Israel, with total disgust. God's people should have hung their heads in shame, and many did, because they had sinned against God, and the whole world was seeing the consequences of God's just judgment upon them because of their sins. Moses wrote that if God's people rebelled, "You shall become an object of horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you" (Deuteronomy 28:37). God expects sinners to feel ashamed of their behavior and return to Him with repentant hearts.

**(Daniel 9:9) To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him**

Because they had rebelled against God (as rebels who try to overthrow their ruler and his justly established government), Daniel confessed that the people deserved their shameful punishment. Their sins were their own fault; while God treated them with lovingkindness, mercy and forgave them time and time again when they repented. The people did not deserve God's mercy and forgiveness, and they could not earn it. If God showed them mercy and forgiveness, He would do so because of His loving character. He would keep His covenant with them and His promises to them although they had broken their covenant with Him and had not kept their promises to Him.

**(Daniel 9:10) and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.**

The people had lived to please themselves and they did not believe any bad consequences would befall them as God's punishment. Moses, a prophet, had given them the 10 Commandments and other laws. Other prophets had come to call the people to obey God's laws, but the people rebelled and refused to obey God. They thought God would always forgive them, and never punish them.

**(Daniel 9:11) All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.**

By the time Daniel wrote and prayed this prayer, the divided kingdoms of Israel (Israel and Judah) had been destroyed and God's people put in exile and scattered for refusing to obey God. Moses had told them the blessings that would flow from obeying God and the curses God would send upon them if they disobeyed or persisted in disobeying God. They were now suffering the curses they had chosen as a consequence of their transgressions. Moses warned them, "All these curses shall come upon you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed,

because you did not obey the LORD your God, by observing the commandments and the decrees that he commanded you” (Deuteronomy 28:45). Through His prophet, Moses, God gives people a choice, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

**(Daniel 9:12) He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.**

When God fulfills His promises and blesses His obedient children, He confirms His words and promises. At other times, God confirms His Word by bringing His punishment upon the disobedient as He promised. The great calamity was the desecration and destruction of God’s beautiful house, the Temple in Jerusalem. When Solomon prayed, God filled the temple. When the people refused to turn back to obeying God, God departed and sent the Babylonians to destroy the Temple.

**(Daniel 9:13) As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have**

**not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.**

Daniel needed to intercede for God's people because God's people still had not entreated or prayed to God, the true God, to favor them with His blessings. Even in exile, they preferred the pleasures of their sins. Because they refused to reflect upon the fact that God would always be true to His words and His laws, they refused to turn from their evil practices and thus they deserved God's punishment. Moses foretold extensively in many ways about the calamity that would befall God's people if they persisted in their rebellion against God, telling God's people: "The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you shall find no ease, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a languishing spirit. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread, with no assurance of your life" (Deuteronomy 28:64-66).

**(Daniel 9:14) Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.**

When God punishes His people, we learn from Daniel that God also watches over His people while they are approaching punishment and being punished. For example, God watched over His people when God set apart Daniel and Ezekiel to pray for His people and prophecy to His people while they lived in exile. Daniel confessed that God's people rightly deserved God's punishment.

**(Daniel 9:15) And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.**

Through their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, accompanied by signs and wonders worked by God through Moses, God became renowned and was still renowned in Daniel's day. Despite how great and loving God had been to them, His people still sinned and acted wickedly in rebelling against God. Despite all God had done for them, they dishonored God by their sins.

**(Daniel 9:16) "O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.**

God always acts in righteous ways. God was righteous when He warned the Judeans to repent or be punished and when He finally punished them for their unrepentant hearts. He was righteous when angry and righteous when He judged the Judeans for their iniquities. He would be righteous when He freed them from exile. After confessing the sins of God's people, in behalf of God's people Daniel interceded for them by requesting that God bring their deserved punishment to an end. He admitted to God that His people had become a disgrace among their neighbors. Daniel knew from Jeremiah's prophecy that the punishment of the kingdom of Judah would be 70 years and the completion of their 70 years of punishment drew near. Daniel became emboldened by the Scriptures, by the Word of God, by the righteousness of God, and by the Spirit of God to intercede in prayer for God's people, for God to free them from exile (see Daniel 9:2, 9:24).

**(Daniel 9:17) Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.**

Daniel did not make his request to God for his own sake personally or solely for the sake of God's people. Though Daniel prayed for the sake of sinners when he interceded for God's people, he prayed primarily for God's sake, for

God's honor, reputation, and glory to be restored before the world. He prayed for God to be honored by His people and he prayed for God to restore His house, the devastated Temple in Jerusalem, so God's people could worship Him there once again. By God delivering His people from exile, their neighbors would see that God was true to all His promises and He had the power to do whatever He said. God was true to His promises when He punished His people after they sinned and refused to repent, and Daniel knew God would also be true to His promises when He brought their punishment to an end and returned them to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. God still keeps all of His promises, for God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (and as the Son of God so is Jesus Christ; see Hebrews 13:8 — "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever").

**(Daniel 9:18) O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.**

Daniel spoke person to Person with the LORD when he prayed for God to hear his prayers and open His eyes to their situation and the city that bore God's Name. As Daniel concluded his prayer, He acknowledged that the LORD is "our God." He is the God of the Judeans. The

pagan gods of Babylon will no longer their gods. God's people will increasingly recognize the fact that the LORD is their God as God begins to work and restore their freedoms in answer to Daniel's prayers. After emphasizing the righteousness of God, Daniel confessed again that they were not righteous, and they deserved God's punishment. They were undeserving of God's great mercy and it would only be by God's righteousness and mercy that God would end their punishment and restore the city that bore His name.

**(Daniel 9:19) O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”**

After giving the LORD his reasons for God to answer his prayer, in a burst of short exclamations, Daniel summed up his prayer request. God will hear the prayers of a righteous person, but Daniel did not take that fact or his righteous life for granted, for he prayed “Lord, listen!” — “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). Daniel did not take God's forgiveness for granted, even though he knew God would keep all His promises, for after confessing their sins he exclaimed to the LORD “Lord, forgive!” — “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just

and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Daniel knew God would hear his prayers, but he also wanted God’s people to see that God would hear their prayers and act in their behalf for His Name’s sake, for the fact that God’s people represented Him and His city represented Him before the surrounding nations (and they had been disgraceful representatives and their city was a disgraceful representative of the Name of the LORD). With their restoration, the LORD would glorify His Name.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Why did Daniel feel confident that God would hear his prayers when he prayed to God?
2. Do people today, both inside and outside the church, think of sinning against God as acting wrong, acting wickedly, acting rebelliously, and acting treacherously? Why or why not?
3. What can happen when people stop studying the Bible and listening to God’s Word?

4. What does the word “shame” mean? Why does sin bring shame upon God and God’s people as well as the sinner?

5. Why do you think God thought it important to state clearly in the Bible the consequences if His people rebelled against Him as an individual and as a group?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

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