

# **“Prayer That Shakes Heaven and Earth”**

Allan Pole on Saturday evening, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022



Theme: We can bring heaven to earth when we pray.

Text: Daniel 9:1-27

Here's a thought: John Wesley concluded, “God does nothing on earth save in answer to believing prayer.”

Stephanie Hertenberg shares this story in “3 Times Prayer Changed History” (<https://www.beliefnet.com/inspiration/3-times-prayer-changed-history.aspx>):

In May 1940, Adolf Hitler unleashed his troops against France and Belgium. The Allied troops in the Nazis' path were surrounded by the Germans on three sides with the sea behind them. The Allies were trapped, and everyone knew it. German High Command boasted that their troops were “proceeding to annihilate the British Army,” and Prime Minister Winston Churchill was preparing himself to deliver the news that more than 300,000 soldiers had been captured or killed.

Late that month, King George VI called for a National Day of Prayer. The British people devoted themselves entirely to prayer for the day. Congregations swelled and queues formed outside churches. At the same time, the military decided to evacuate all the soldiers it could. Unable to field enough military ships to carry all the endangered troops, a call went out asking for the aid of any vessel willing to cross the English Channel and assist in saving the trapped men. More than 800 vessels answered the call.

Even as the Allies raced to mitigate what seemed like a certain catastrophe, Hitler called his troops to a halt. For three days, Nazi tanks and soldiers stood idly by as the Allies frantically evacuated their men. At the same time, poor weather grounded the Luftwaffe and allowed Allied soldiers to reach the beaches, and the evacuation, without hindrance. The evacuation itself took place on unusually calm seas.

The “Miracle of Dunkirk” was just that, miraculous. To this day, historians are baffled as to why Hitler suddenly called a halt to his advance when victory was all but assured. The German generals

themselves were clueless as to why they were not allowed to chase down and obliterate the Allies.

King George and the British people humbled themselves and prayed.

About 600 years Before Christ, there lived a man who made prayer a priority. Over the years, he learned how to shake heaven and earth with his prayers.

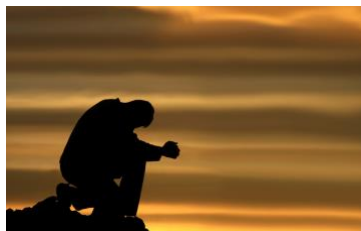
Let's look in on him in Daniel 9:1-27:

1 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom – 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 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. 7 “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame - the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. 8 O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. 9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; 10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. 12 You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. 14 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him. 15 “Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. 16 O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us. 17 “Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your

desolate sanctuary. 18 Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. 19 O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.” 20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill – 21 while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He instructed me and said to me, “Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. 23 As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: 24 “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. 25 “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” NIV

Earthshaking prayer includes:

### **Our Confession**



Darius the Mede had just conquered Belshazzar and the Babylonian empire. Many people wondered about the future with this massive shift in power. Amid the significant upheaval, Daniel turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and sackcloth and ashes. He wanted to know how these changes would affect His people. We might say, “Lord, what about us?”

It was coming up to 70 years since the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. Daniel left as a teen, but his heart still ached for his people and homeland. Even though Daniel had risen to prominence in the kingdom of his captors, he had not forgotten where he belonged. Jerusalem and Judah were not only Daniel's physical home; they were the spiritual home for him and the fellow children of Abraham.

We see many examples in the Book of Daniel of how the man Daniel was a man of prayer. He and his three friends sought God's face when King Nebuchadnezzar threatened to slay all the magicians and counsellors (2:16-23). Daniel made it a habit to pray three times a day (6:10-11), even when it was illegal to pray to anyone other than the king. Daniel had received several overwhelming visions, but he asked the Lord to show him what they meant (chapters 7 and 8). Prayer was a crucial part of Daniel's life.

Daniel refers to the prophet Jeremiah's letter (see Jeremiah 29) sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Daniel ponders Jeremiah's prophecy that they would be in captivity for 70 years.

Daniel responds to this prophecy by humbling himself before God, denying himself food, wearing uncomfortable sackcloth made of coarse goat or camel hair and putting ashes on his head to express burial or decay. Even though heaven esteemed Daniel greatly, he set it aside to identify with the Jewish people and their sins. I think of Jesus, who demonstrated the same heart, coming into the world and becoming one of us.

Notice that Daniel prays in the first-person plural rather than the third-person plural. In other words, he prays "we" rather than "they." Daniel shook heaven and earth with prayer by recognizing and confessing his place before God. He did not come to the Lord with an attitude of entitlement, feeling like he and his people deserved better. To admit sin is to agree with God that it's ugly and offensive. Daniel did not point fingers at others but acknowledged that he was a part of his people's rebellion. He resisted the temptation of self-righteousness and pride by putting on the attitude and garments of repentance and humility.

Who does a squirrel go to for confession? A chip-monk.

What a tremendous example Daniel sets for us! We need to identify with the sins of our church, family, business, school, community, region, province and nation. Those who shake heaven and earth with their prayers first take a look in the mirror and shake off their self-righteousness and pride. When we understand the holiness of God, we echo the words of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6:5:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the

LORD Almighty.” NIV

Daniel expresses this same attitude here in the second half of Daniel 9:18, “We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.” Daniel makes the righteousness and mercy of God the basis of his prayer. God’s character provides a strong foundation for prayer because He who is perfectly holy can sniff out sin a mile away. Let’s not forget that when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, even though God went “looking” for them in Genesis 3:9, He knew why they were hiding. Adam and Eve had not yet realized the liberating power of confession. Instead, they tried to justify themselves and blame someone else.

Skip Moen concludes:

If prayer is ultimately about walking naked in the Garden in conversation with the Lord, then how disturbing must it be to God when we attempt to converse with Him while we are clothed in deceit and disobedience. It’s enough to make Him walk away.

Knowing how Daniel prayed regularly three times a day (Daniel 6:10), I have a hunch that he confessed the sins of his people and pleaded for mercy from heaven consistently. Jesus taught about the importance of persistent prayer in Luke 18:1-8:

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ 4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” 6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” NIV

We should not give up on our prayers until we receive a reply from the Lord. The angel Gabriel told Daniel in verse 23, “As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.” There can be a variety of reasons for the timing of God’s answers, but let’s remember the words of the Apostle John in 1 John 5:14-15:

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him. NIV

We can shake heaven and earth when we align ourselves with the Lord’s plans

by confessing our waywardness and by praying for His will to be done here and now.

What is the Lord's will for the world, our country, province, community, family, friends, church, business and ourselves? There is no need to delay! Let's humble ourselves, confess where we miss the mark and pray His will over us.

Earthshaking prayer includes:  
Our Confession  
and

## **Heaven's Reply**



I am sure that Daniel hoped Jerusalem and his homeland of Judah would be restored and rebuilt. God did not provide the answer for which Daniel hoped and prayed. The temple in Jerusalem was in ruins, and the sacrifices had ceased, but Daniel observed the tradition of praying at the time of the evening sacrifice. While Daniel was praying, the angel Gabriel who appeared as a man in Daniel 8:16, shows up again in Daniel chapter 9. The Lord sent Gabriel to reveal to Daniel what was to come for his people. Some restoration was coming, but there were more consequences for generations of rebellion.

Seven here refers to the weekly cycle that includes a Sabbath rest day. Seven could refer to seven days or years depending on the context, but it relates to years in this passage. Because the people of Judah had disregarded the Sabbath, God would give the land rest by removing those who worked it relentlessly. The people of Judah would be taken captive for 70 years, so from Daniel's perspective, there was still some time to go. In the book of Nehemiah chapter 2 and onward, we read that the king of Persia permitted Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem later in 444 B.C. However, Gabriel's explanation to Daniel far surpasses the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Nehemiah.

Many classes, sermons and books theorize how this would unfold, but here is the simplest explanation I could find from the Moody Bible Commentary:

There will be a period of seven weeks of years (49 years) followed by sixty-two weeks of years (434 years), making a total of 69 weeks of years or 483 years from the decree until the coming of Messiah the Prince. The seven-week period (49 years) most likely pertains to the time it actually took from the issuing of the decree until the restoration of Jerusalem. The total of 483 years (69 weeks) should be calculated as specific biblical/prophetic

years of 360 days each [according to ancient calendars]. The starting point of the prophecy would have begun on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 444 B.C., followed by 69 weeks of 360-day years or 173,880 days, and culminated on March 30<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 33, the date of Jesus the Messiah's triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Luke 19:28-40.

The debate continues over how to interpret the 69 weeks and the 70<sup>th</sup> week particularly. Some would say Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection or the Romans' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. fulfilled the 70<sup>th</sup> week. Others would say that we live in the gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week, but the ascension of the Antichrist and seven years of great tribulation will fulfill the prophecy. I am not as convinced as many popular Evangelical preachers are about the details of Daniel's 70 weeks. Still, I am sure that the God of heaven and earth has a plan to fulfill His timetable.

A girl asked, "What are your plans today?"

A boy replied, "My friend and I will buy some glasses."

The girl persisted, "And after that?"

The oblivious boy answered, "And after that, we'll see."

Daniel prayed fervently and consistently, knowing that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. I get the impression that Daniel played an essential role in seeing the restoration of Jerusalem within this time frame. What if Nehemiah had not prayed to the Lord and asked the king of Persia to permit him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? God's plans and the choices of human beings work together in mysterious ways. We can shake heaven and earth when our fervent prayers align with God's objectives.

John Wesley concluded, "God does nothing on earth save in answer to believing prayer."

Let's get sick and tired of half-hearted prayers! Let's tolerate passivity no longer! We don't necessarily need to shout and froth at the mouth when we pray – although it might involve shouting. People can whisper while praying fervently (compare Hannah, who prayed for a son in 1 Samuel 1:13). It certainly means that we shake off the apathy that comes from being enamoured with this world and get a hold of God's perspective and plans. The Bible repeatedly demonstrates that prayer plays a crucial role in seeing the kingdom of heaven come to earth. Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

We tend to think the people in the Bible were extraordinary or super-spiritual. James 5:13-18 refutes this theory:

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let

him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 17 *Elijah was a man just like us.* He prayed earnestly that it would not rain [to punish King Ahab, Queen Jezebel and Israel for their idolatry and wickedness], and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. NIV

Elijah was a man *just like us*, and he prayed *earnestly*. We ordinary people must call on the extraordinary God with passion and determination. Half-hearted prayers do not shake heaven and earth. Assertive, front-footed prayer warriors take ground in the kingdom of heaven.

We don't understand plenty of things, but let's move forward with what we *do* understand. Will we commit to humbly confessing the sin of our nation, to which we have all contributed? Will we continue to pray until God answers and intervenes?

Earthshaking prayer includes:

**Our Confession**

and

**Heaven's Reply**

We can bring heaven to earth when we pray.

