

Kingdom Down #9 - How To Lived When the Future is Clearly Fuzzy

- All right, who's ready for a high impact, clear, life changing sermon? Okay. That's probably not gonna happen, just to let you know. I'm exhausted, I'm aging a dog ears. I was preaching on the Mexican border last night, I'm allergic to being 49, I'm gonna try my best pray for me. We're in Daniel chapter nine, huge, long chapter, massive prayer, ends with a prophecy, what could possibly go wrong? Here we go. Alright, we're in Daniel nine. And if you are new, we're taking 12 weeks to go through each of these 12 chapters of this Old Testament book of Daniel. It's about five or 600 years before Jesus was born. It's about two and a half thousand years in the past. And some of you would ask, how could a book this old have any application in my life? Well, this week is really, really significant in Daniel nine, because they are getting ready to move, to relocate. And guess where we find ourselves? The fastest growing city and county in America. How many of you are new in recent weeks, months or years, you're new to the valley? You've moved, you know exactly what this is like. And some of you are visiting and you're considering moving as well. Well, God's people have been living for 70 years, far away from home, and they're getting ready to pack up and head home, back to their hometown, and to begin worshiping God in the temple and preparing for the coming of Jesus, which is the whole point of all of human history. And what God is going to do is, He is going to not only address their outer life, but their inner life. Because you can change your exterior, but if you don't work on the interior, nothing changes. This is why people who move think, "Well, if we move, we'll get a fresh, clean start." Not if you don't have a fresh, clean heart. That's how this works. You can be married and say, "We're fighting a lot, "let's go get a new house." And guess what? You pick up the fight in the new house. You can have a really difficult season of life, but unless you change some of your thinking and behaving, you can move to another city, and nothing changes other than your address. And so what God is doing here, He's wanting to deal not only with the external which is important, but also the internal. And He does through His servant Daniel, a very godly man, who at this point has been alive for almost 70 years far away from home, at this point, he's in his 80s. And we pick it up in Daniel 9:1, and we're gonna start looking at Daniel having a Bible study, same thing that we're doing here today. And my question to you would be, how's your Bible study going? Let's look at how Daniel's Bible study is going. Daniel nine, one and two, "In the first year of Darius." "The son of..." A guy whose name starts with A, "By descent to Mede, who was made king." I don't know how to say all these words, I'll just be honest with you, pig Latin is my second language. "Who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, "in the first year of his reign, "I, Daniel, perceived in the books." So he's studying the books of the Bible. "The number of years that according to the word of the Lord "to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass "before the end of desolations of Jerusalem, "namely, seventy years." Here's what he's doing, he's studying the book of Jeremiah, and he reaches a point that I'll share with you in a moment, and he determines, "Oh, it says that after 70 years, "we get to go home." And he's doing the math, he's thinking, "We're almost there, "there's only a couple of years left." He was taken captive as a teenager, here, he's in his 80s, almost 70 years have passed and he is finding revelation in the word of God. The moral of the story is, if you want a word from God, get into the word of God, that's what he is doing. And I wanna share something

with you that I think is really, really exciting. He is reading the book of Jeremiah, and it is the word of the? The word of the Lord to Jeremiah. This is dual authorship, no other book is like the books of the Bible, that not only is Jeremiah speaking, but God is speaking through Jeremiah. This is Jeremiah's voice, but these are God's words. This is how God works. What God is telling us here, is that Jeremiah is speaking the very words of God. The thing I wanna tell you is this, behind all of the human authors of the word of God, is ultimately the God of the word, who is speaking through those human authors, that this is a sacred book, that this is the only perfect thing on the earth. And when God wants to speak to you, He does so, most clearly through the Scriptures, and I need you to know this. This is why we go through books of the Bible, This is why we don't skip verses in the books of the Bible. That's why I'll even preach things that I don't know what they mean, they're still awesome and true, okay? And that's what you're gonna see at the end of this sermon, just as a little teaser. So, where does he study in Jeremiah? I believe there are two places, Jeremiah 25:8 through 12, I believe this is where Daniel is doing his Bible study. "Says the Lord of hosts." That's the God who rules over the unseen realm of angels and other divine beings. "Because you have not obeyed my words, behold, "I will send Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, "and I will bring them against this land "and its inhabitants. "This whole land shall become a ruin in a waste, "and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon." How many years? 70 years. 70 years, the clock is set. "Then after 70 years are completed, "I will punish the king of Babylon "and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, "for their iniquity, declares the Lord, "making the land and everlasting waste." While they were at home in Israel, God raised up a prophet named Jeremiah to predict the future. And God said through him, "a nation is gonna rise up called Babylon, "they're gonna have a king named Nebuchadnezzar. "He is going to march in "and he is going to conquer my people and my nation, "this will be my discipline for their sin. "Through my servant Nebuchadnezzar, "they will be taken away for exactly 70 years, "and then I will allow them to return home." This is before all of that happens, because the God who knows the future rules the future and reveals the future through Scripture and His prophets. And how many of you... This is incredible specificity, like, we don't know who's gonna win the election, we don't know who's gonna win the World Series, we don't know what we're gonna have for dinner. There's not a lot of things that we're confident about in the future and God knows everything in perfect detail. The point is, you don't need to know everything, you need to know the one who does. And that's the idea there. And He reveals bits and pieces, so that we can grow in our trust of Him. I believe the other place that Daniel was looking was Jeremiah 29:10. "For thus says the Lord." When? How many years? 70. It can't be 69, it can't be 71. It's exactly as God says, God's in the details. "When 70 years are completed for Babylon, "I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise, "and bring you back to this place." Daniel is reading this in his Bible study, and he does the math, he's like, "It's almost seven years, we're right there." But the people aren't ready. They're not ready to return and open up the temple, which was their version of the church. They're not ready to worship God, they're not ready to witness to others about God, and they have not been obedient to the word of God, so they are not ready for the future that God has planned for them. The same is true for all of us in varying degrees in various times and in various ways. And so what Daniel is going to do, he's gonna intercede and pray. We'll deal with that in a moment. Regarding Bible study, number one, Even those who write the Scripture, need to study the

Scripture. Think of it, Daniel is the godliest man on earth in this day, he is the wisest man on earth in this day, angels visit him when he has a Bible study, you'll see it in a moment. He actually is writing a book of the Bible, if there was anyone who perhaps could say, "You know, I just don't feel "like I need to do a lot of Bible study, "I feel like I'm doing pretty good on my own." It could be Daniel. And the reason for his greatness, is his great commitment to the word of God. If a guy who writes the Bible, needs to study the Bible, we all need to? Study and read the Bible. Number two, there is new revelation in old Scriptures. Daniel would have been familiar with Jeremiah, he would have already read and studied him, this was not his first time through the writings of the prophet Jeremiah in that book of the Bible. And he gets new revelation from old Scriptures, this is true for all of us. I've been a senior pastor about half my life, 25 years, preaching through books of the Bible, week after week, year after year, there are parts of the Bible that I've studied over and over and over, and I'm here to report that when I study them, I still learn new things. You know why? Because this is a supernatural book, through which God speaks. And ultimately, the Bible it says, "Is living and active." If you have a relationship with anyone who is living and active, you keep learning new things about them, so it is with the God of the Word, He's living an active, His Word is living and active. And the more that you study His word, the more He reveals to you. So don't just assume because you've been through a section of scripture or a book of the Bible, that you have excavated all the gold that is there in, there are still more treasures to be found. Third thing, I would just encourage you as well, read the Bible and then pray. Hey, this is gonna be the pattern that Daniel sets for us. In just a moment, we're gonna read his lengthy prayer. But he starts with Bible study and he stops and prays. This is how we have a conversational relationship with God, He speaks to us through His Word, we speak to Him through prayer. Many of you know this, but let me say, not many do this. Hey, it's not just knowing, but doing in which the blessing is to be found. And what he does, he's reading and then he stops to pray. Some of you who struggle with prayer, you're not sure how to pray or when to pray or what to pray. Start by reading your Bible, and then as God strikes your heart or opens your awareness, just stop and talk to Him conversationally. God it says here that you forgive. Well, God, there's some things I really regret and, I'm struggling to believe that you forgive me, in specific. So I'm gonna talk to you about this. So that I can experience your forgiveness. God it say's here that, you'll never leave us or forsake us. And God, I'll just be honest, I feel really alone. It is a hard season for me. And I don't know if anybody's with me or for me, but it says here that you are, and so God, I wanna talk to you about this and I want you to make this revelation a reality in my life. Okay? It's just, it's as God speaks to you, you speak to Him, that's the relationship and it's conversational. Bible study and prayer, this is how it works. And so we're gonna read Daniel's prayer, we look at his Bible study and then we're going to examine his prayer. And what's curious is, he writes his prayer down. You know why? So that we could eavesdrop on his conversation with God, and we could be encouraged by God answering his prayer. Here's what I'm telling you, sometimes you need to write your prayers down, journal them out. So that when God answers them, it can build your faith. Family friends, then can see that you have prayed and see how God has answered. We have laid a little jar that we put on our table some years ago when we first moved to the valley. It's a little mason jar, we had all the kids write out prayer requests and put them in there. I found that jar not too long ago, started looking at it. Please give us a school, answered. Please give us friends, answered.

Please let us plant a church, answered. Please give us a building, answered. Please give us nice people, thank you for being nice people, answered. We prayed very specifically and now we see that God answered all those prayers. And I hope and trust and pray, what it does for our kids, is it builds their faith. The God who answered prayers in the past, will answer prayers in the future. And how many of you would love to have a little journal from a parent or a grandparent or a great grandparent, that was recording some of their prayers and then how God answered them, that would be a family treasure. This is what Daniel is doing, He is recording for us his prayers and then reporting the answer, so that we might share in his hope. Now, let me just tell you this, this is a long prayer. And I'm gonna read the whole thing, it's five slides long. I think this is a new record for me, right? If I pass out, somebody come up and finish, okay? We're just gonna go through the whole thing, and then I'll summarize it. "Then I turned my face to the Lord God." And this is the language of friendship, face to face. God wants to meet with you face to face. "Seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting." We'll talk about that. "And sackcloth and ashes." That is recognition of sin and the need for repentance, we'll talk about that. "I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession." That's acknowledging wrongdoing. "Saying, 'O Lord, the great and awesome God, "who keeps covenant." We'll talk about that. "'And steadfast love with those who love Him "'and keep His commandments, we have..." What's the word? We've sinned, he just owns it. "And done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled." He has all kinds of different words, to speak of this reality. "Turning aside from your commandments and rules. "We have not listened to your servants the prophets." God you sent people to talk to us, and we weren't gonna listen to them. "Who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, all the leaders, and all the people of the land. "To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness." Everything you do is right and good. "But to us open shame." We've really failed. "As at this day to the men of Judah." That's God's people. "To the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel." That's the people of God. "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. "To us, Oh Lord, belongs open shame, "to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, "because we have sinned against you. "To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, "for we have rebelled against Him "and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God "by walking in his laws, which he said before us "by his servants, the prophets. "All Israel." Everybody, no exception. "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." It tells us Jeremiah writes Jeremiah, and Moses writes the first five books of the Old Testament. "The servant of God had been poured out upon us "because we have sinned against Him. "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 has been done against Jerusalem. "As it is written 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. "Therefore, the Lord has kept ready to calamity "and has brought it upon us, "for the Lord our God is righteous "in all the works that He has done. "We have not obeyed His voice. "And now, Oh Lord, our God, "who brought your people out of the land of Egypt." What he's saying is, God, in the past when we did evil and got ourselves in trouble, you got us out, we need you again. "With a mighty hand and have made a

name for yourself, "as at this day we have sinned." There's the word again. "And done wickedly. "Oh Lord, according to all your righteous acts, "let your anger and your wrath "turn away from your city, Jerusalem, your holy hill." That's where the temple was. "Because of our sins, "and the iniquities of our fathers, "Jerusalem and your people "have become a byword among all who are around us." Last slide. "Now therefore, O God, listen." God please listen. "To the prayer of your servant "and his pleas for mercy." Give us what we don't deserve, not what we do deserve. "And for your own sake, Oh Lord." Because we're your people and your name is at risk. "Make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, "which is desolate." God, you're not even being worshiped in the temple, can we fix that? "Oh 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 please before you "because of our righteousness." We're good people who have earned this. "But because of your great mercy." You're a great God. "O Lord, hear, Oh Lord, forgive, "Oh Lord, pay attention and act." We need you to show up. "Delay not, for your own sake, Oh my God, "because your city and your people are called by your name." Long prayer, passionate prayer, tearful prayer, earnest prayer, heartfelt prayer, emotional prayer. Four things that are significant to Daniel's character and consistency. At this point, he has been walking with God faithfully through his teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and now he's in his 80s. Number one, he surrounded himself with godly friends. We met these guys earlier in the book, they pray together, they serve together and they suffer together. Ultimately your life is largely defined by the company you keep. This is why we tell our kids when they're little, pick good friends. When kids go into high school or college, pick a good friend group. When you're single, graduated, living on your own, make sure you find God's people and do life with them. When you're a young married couple, it's finding the couples that you'll do relationship and life with. When you're a parent and you've got little kids, who are our friends? And who will our children grow up around and see modeling from? When you're older, who will speak into our life and allow us to do the same with them? Daniel's friends have departed from the scene at this point, maybe because they're passed away, he's now in his 80s. He's probably done the funerals of a lot of his friends, but nonetheless, he started with godly friends. Number two, he is a man who is ultimately committed to the study of God's Word. We just saw this, he's in his 80s, he's been studying the Bible for almost 70 years, just in Babylon, and he had many years before that in Israel. He spent his whole life studying the Bible. He is a man who is consistent in Scripture. And here's what's amazing about you and I, we have more revelation than Daniel did. He didn't have the completion of the Old Testament, he didn't have the coming of Jesus, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His death on the cross, His resurrection from death. He didn't see the church birthed, believers meeting on Sunday. He didn't get to see everything that we do, he didn't have any of the New Testament. He was looking down the corridor of history saying, "Jesus is coming, and I see some of the details." We're looking in hindsight saying, "Wow, we now know more than Daniel did." And so if he was motivated to study the Scriptures about Jesus first coming, we should be really motivated to study the Scriptures about Jesus Second Coming. Thirdly, this might be a bit of a shocker for you and a brand new concept. You read earlier with me that he was in prayer and what? What else was he doing? Fasting. Somebody's like, "What is that strange word?" It's not eating. Okay, and we're Americans, right? We invented Costco, we buy food by the pallet, okay? I mean, we are now at the point that you can order your groceries and

have them brought to you and not burn the calories to go get them, that's America. Okay? We invented the all you can eat buffet. Some of you are like, "I know exactly how many shrimp "I can fit in this body. "I went to the casino and confirmed it." Okay, you know. We tend to eat our way through life. And sometimes fasting is stopping the routine of life, and resetting relationship with God. And what can happen is, when we're in stress, or duress, we tend to self medicate with what? With food. We tend to self medicate with food. And when stress or duress comes, sometimes it's better to too fast, to focus on God, to say, "Things are not normal, "I need to be more aware of my dependency upon God, "and spend time in prayer." Bible study, prayer and fasting, oftentimes go together. Things need to stop for a season, so that I can meet with the Lord and hear from the Lord. Bible study, prayer, and fasting. And what Daniel is doing is, he is fasting, he is taking time to focus on his relationship with God and to make sure that his heart is right in the presence of God. And what's really curious is, I don't know if you've seen this, a lot of the new research that's coming out, says that intermittent fasting is really beneficial. Have you seen this? It's on the internet, so I know it's true. And... But what they're saying is, that intermittent fasting has a lot of benefits, it resets the body and it can help reset, for example, the immune system and it's good for you, it's cleansing. The point is, God tells us to do things that are good for us, tells us not to do things that are bad for us, and eventually the research catches up with the word of God, that's the point. So he's praying and he's fasting. And then lastly, what he is doing here as well, not only does he have good friends, studied the Bible, fasts, he prays, he prays. And I'll be honest, when I first became a Christian, I really didn't understand the purpose of prayer. For many people, I think this is very confusing. When I was a new Christian, I was like, "Why do I pray? If God knows everything, why does He need to hear from me?" What I realized is, God doesn't need prayer, I do. God will be fine tomorrow, whether or not I pray. I'm not gonna be okay tomorrow, if I don't pray today. Prayer's something I need, not something that God needs. And in prayer, you're not telling God something he doesn't know. God's not in heaven going, "You did what? "Aaargh!" Like, He knows, right? In prayer, what you are doing is you're inviting God in to the circumstances that He already knows about. And what happens in prayer, it reveals our heart, and our motives, and our desires, and our fears, and our longings. Sometimes when we're praying, "I'm like, "Okay, that's what's in there, "I didn't know that, I need to bring this before the Lord "so that He can help me with this." Daniel is praying. Just a few brief things on prayer, you can pray out loud, God hears, but God also knows the longings of your heart and the thoughts of your mind, so you can pray silently. Let's say for example, you're in school and you got to take a test, you can pray silently. Sometimes there are things that are just between you and the Lord. Satan, and the demonic realm, can overhear our words and they can observe our actions, but they can't read our thoughts and minds. And so prayer becomes a private, secure communication channel with God, especially in times of hardship and warfare, quite frankly. You can pray when you're sitting down. You could pray when you're standing up. You can pray by kneeling, which is humility. You can pray when you're laying down. Maybe you go to bed and pray or you wake up in the middle of the night, you can pray. One of my favorite things to do is walk and pray. I'm not one of those guys who could just sit there all day, I'm fairly active and I like to get out and do things, so I'll walk and pray. And what I've learned to do, is put earbuds in, so that people don't think I'm crazy in my neighborhood. They're like, "Oh, he's taking a call." I am. The Lord called and we're having a chat, okay? So I put the earbuds in, then

I don't look like a crazy person, it just looks like I'm on an appointment, which I am. And praying is something that naturally flows out of Bible reading. And just that's what happens here in the life in the example of Daniel. Now, a couple of things as well about Daniel's prayer. He speaks of bad news and good news. Christianity is bad news and good news. The bad news is who we are, the good news is who God is. Sometimes you will hear, "We just need to inspire people and motivate people." Let's do that after we've told them who they really are. Because our hope for people is not in people, our hope for people is in God. That we are bad, and God is good. We are the problem, God is the solution. We made the mess, He fixes it. Hey, that's the essence of Daniel's prayer. So let me start with the bad news of who we are, and then get to the good news of who God is. Daniel's speaking of sin, and he's using a whole constellation of different words in the original Hebrew. He's talking about acting wickedly, wandering from the path, missing the mark, evil, rebellion, treachery, all of this language is to say, sin is so complicated, it's so multifaceted, it's so nefarious, that language strains to give us the full perspective on how truly awful our behavior is. It's humbling, and it's revealing and it's clarifying. And what Daniel does as you read his prayer, he identifies himself with the people who are sinful. He says, we. Question, is Daniel a good guy? He's a good guy. I mean, he's the godliest guy alive on planet Earth, right? So, that's something. He could pray, "God, I'm part of this nation that's cursed "and I wish the people were like me, "so it wouldn't be so bad." But he doesn't do that. He says, "We have sinned, we have failed, "we have fallen short, we have acted wickedly, "we have acted treacherously." We. Because here's what happens, you either look down on others or you look up to God, right? If you're just looking down on others, you're like, "I wish you guys were like me, "then everything would be awesome, 'cause I'm awesome." You look up to God, you're like, "Rah, rah, we all have a problem." God is good, we are not, God is perfect, we are not, God is loving, we're not, God is forgiving, we're not, God told us what to do, we didn't do it. He doesn't look down on others, he looks up to God. This is the difference between the prayer of a repentant person and a religious person. A religious person, they will pray about everybody else's sin. A repentant person will also pray about their own sin. Daniel has to choose, am I... Do I categorize myself with God or the people? What does he decide? I'm with the people, I'm down here with the sinners. That's a repentant pur. It doesn't matter how godly you are, how long you've been a believer, how much Bible you know, there's always something in your life to work on. There's always progress to be made. This is why the Christian faith requires tremendous humility. God, here's what I need to work on next. God, here's what I need to change next. God, here's where I need your help now. You may be a very mature, seasoned believer, there are still things that God is revealing that he needs to work in and that you need to take account for. We don't talk much about sin in our culture, people don't like it. Daniel here is a politician, actually working for the government, this would not be a party platform to win the nomination. Well, we'll just pray about everybody's sin, and see if they'll repent. What we tend to do instead with our sin, in our day, is a couple of different things. Number one, we deny it. "I didn't do that." Yes, you did. "I didn't say that." Yes, you did. "Well, that's not what I meant." "When you yelled at me and cursed me out, "I'm not sure I was supposed to take that as a hard hug. "I don't know how to interpret the data." We deny things, true or false? We deny it. Don't deny it, you deny it, that's what I'm telling you. Okay, number two, how about this one? Instead of repenting of it, we hide it. Like, I'll just sneak, I'll do things that people can't see and hopefully

God doesn't see, so, it's hidden. Try to hide our sin and not get caught, this leads to sneakiness and double living. In addition, number three, we make excuses. There's always the possibility of making an excuse. Right? Let me just give you some, I was? Tired. Oh, well then do what you want. "I was hungry." Okay, do what you want. "You frustrate me." Oh, okay. So if you didn't frustrate me, I wouldn't be frustrated, I'm kind of a victim. you need to repent. So you chuckle, 'cause you're married, okay? You chuckle 'cause you're married. You're like, "That's what they do." We can always make an excuse, right? We can say, "Hey, I just yell and I'm passionate, 'cause that's my heritage." Or, "Hey, I'm not emotional, I'm German." We always have a reason, an excuse, to make for our behavior. Number four, we blame. You can always find somebody or something to blame, right? Oh, it's the culture, we always blame Satan, that's always the great go-to. Yeah, the devil. yap. Poor me, yap. We can blame, we can blame anyone or anything. In addition, we normalize it. Well, in high school, you know, every kid experiments with weed and gets drunk, I mean, that's high school, that's one of the classes, isn't it? Substance abuse, isn't it like a two credit class that all the kids take? You go to college and well, you're gonna deny your parents faith and rebel for a while, 'cause it's college. Then you're gonna graduate and you're gonna live with your boyfriend or girlfriend. You know why? Cause that's normal. Let me tell you this, everything out there is abnormal, everything in here is normal. Okay? That ultimately, this tells us the character of God and the world as God intends it to be, and when we stray from that, even if it is the majority, it is abnormal because it's not according to God's design. And then additionally, what we then do after we normalize it, we celebrate it. I'm not ashamed of who I am. I'm being true to myself. As the casino ad says, "You do you." That's a bad idea. You get cuts in the line to hell for that, okay? You don't say, "Who am I? "And what do I want? "I need to be loyal and true to me." You say, "Who is God? "And what does He want? How do I be loyal and true to Him?" Okay? And that ultimately, what he is doing here, Daniel is... He is dealing with sin. He is owning it, he is accepting it, he is naming it. You can't do that unless there is a God who forgives and helps. You can't, because otherwise, you have just... You have acknowledged catastrophe and the state of emergency, and if there isn't help on the way, you're doomed. The good news is as Christians, is that not only does the Bible tell us who we are, it tells us who God is. And I will tell you after preaching the Bible for 25 years, I would submit to you, these are the two most important things you can learn. Who is He? Who am I? Who is He? Who am I? I am a sinner. Who is He? Daniel tells us in his prayer, a lot about God. What he says, that God is loving, that God is relational, that God is compassionate, that God is forgiving, that God doesn't give up. I would submit to you, that God is like a father who is perfectly, continually, eternally devoted to his kids. I've got five kids, three boys, two girls, no matter what they do, I'm still their dad, I still love them, my heart is open, my arms are open, my life is open to receive them, to bless them, to forgive them, to help them. It doesn't matter where they go, it doesn't matter what they do, the one thing that will never change is the love of their father, for my kids. You are the children of God, God's heart toward you, is a father's heart. That's why Jesus taught us to pray our? Father. It's to remind us, okay, we have a dad who loves us and doesn't disown us. Here Daniel is praying, trusting in that relationship that is secure. And this is really significant, he uses the language of covenant, that's the word that he uses. Most of our relationships are contractual not covenantal. Meaning, if you do this, I do that. If you don't do this, then I don't do that. It is my behavior toward you, my relationship with you is conditioned on

your performance. Covenant is not like that. God's heart toward you is not changed by your heart toward Him. God's actions toward you are not determined by your actions toward Him. That ultimately God loves you, whether you love Him or not. God pursues you, whether you want Him to or not. If you are a child of God, God is working on you, whether you want it or not. His heart doesn't harden toward you, His behavior doesn't change toward you. And it's hard for us to conceive of this kind of loving relationship. Because most of the time when we do something wrong, somebody changes their heart toward us. They harden their heart, they close their heart, or they get an angry heart and fight back. God's heart is unchanged. Your heart does not change God's heart, God's heart changes your heart and His heart for you never changes. That's the language of covenant, in the Hebrew, it's the old word, hessed. And it's translated in various English translations, covenant love, loving kindness, mercy, steadfast love, loyal love, devotion, commitment, loyalty and reliability. There's a little kids Bible, called the Jesus story book Bible, we read to the kids a lot growing up. And it says that, "This is God's never stopping, "never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love." I'll read that again. You're the children of God. Let me just read that over you, like I used to read it to my kids. "Never stopping, never giving up, "unbreaking, always and forever love." When I tuck my kids in, I'd read them that and I'd say, "That is the Father's heart toward you. "That is your father's heart toward you." You need to know, that's the Father's heart toward you. The bad news is, we're bad, the good news is, God's good. That's the good news. And what Daniel is serving as here is an intercessor. The people are not all owning their sin. God knows their sin, they don't own their sin, so Daniel comes in as an intercessor. He takes the word of God and brings it to the people, he takes the sins of the people and brings them to God. That's an intercessor. You'll hear Christians talk about intercessors. Interceding is a ministry. And what Daniel is doing here, is he is serving as an intercessor for the people of God. How amazing would it be to have Daniel as your intercessor? I have good news. You have a better intercessor than Daniel. Who intercedes for you? Jesus. I'll prove it to you, it's a verse in Hebrews 7:25, "He is able to save to the uttermost, "those who draw near to God through Him, "since He always lives to make intercession for them." Jesus is God. Jesus died for your sin. Jesus reveals the father heart of God. Jesus rises from death, Jesus returns to his throne. Sometimes we have this misunderstanding that Jesus worked, now He's in heaven doing nothing, and eventually, He'll come back and finish His work. Right now, His work is to love and serve you. He is interceding, He is interceding. Right now, the Lord Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, and He is bringing your needs and your fears and your struggles, to the Father. That's why He taught us to pray in His name. We pray in Jesus name because we give our requests to Jesus, who is our intercessor, and brings them to the Father on our behalf. Right now, Jesus is talking to God the Father about you. "Here's what they need, here's where they're struggling, "here's where they need help, "Father, what should we do for them?" What's amazing is God doesn't get overwhelmed and God doesn't get exhausted and God doesn't get over extended. Some of you think, "Well, I can't bother God with that." God's not bothered. He's all powerful, He can handle it. God's all knowing, He already knows it, Right? God is not overwhelmed by you, God is not too busy for you, God is not exhausted by you, God has not given up on you. And the reason this is hard for us, is we live in a world filled with finite beings, and and we cannot count on everyone all the time, in the way we can God. I'll give you an example. I tried to break up with my internet service

provider this week, and I realized... I tried to divorce them, and what happened was, I found out that it's like leaving a cult, they will not let you out. My internet provider is not working very well, so I try to log on to their website to break up with them, and I can't, because my internet does not work very well. I log on and finally I get on to their website and I'm looking through all their questions, all their pages, how do I stop giving you my money? That's my big question. And they don't answer that question, they answer everything else. So finally, there's a little chat, you know, chat, and I know that's a Russian bot, that's gonna hack my data and undermine our election. I'm wondering, do I have a chat with this Russian bot? But I'm in a desperate place. So I tell the Russian bot, I need to stop my internet provider and they say, "Sorry, we don't understand that question." Like, how do I get this to end? And they're like, "Oh, you need to call." I've been looking for the phone number for over an hour, I finally pick up the phone number, and they say, "Thank you for calling, "if you would like faster response, "go to our website." Okay, I can't because my internet stinks, that's why I'm calling, okay? So they say, "Your wait time will be 57 minutes." This is not like my God, who hears and answers prayer quickly. This is nothing like my God. So I'm waiting, they put on the music. That music is to torture you, so that you hang up the phone and they can continue taking your money. About 30 minutes into the call, they hung up on me. I literally thought, "Thank you Lord, "you don't have customer service, we have Jesus." Amen? Thank you Lord Jesus, that the line is never busy and we're not on hold, and when we ask something, you can handle it and deal with it immediately. Man, you and I are always looking for help, and I'll tell you what, Jesus is really, really helpful. And you bring your requests to Him, He brings them to the Father and you'll see in a moment here, supernaturally, then He hears and answers prayer, He's happy to serve. Let me make one other leadership and love lesson here. Let me ask two questions, back to Daniel, he's interceding for the people, is he responsible? Let me ask it a different way. Is it Daniel's fault, that the people are sinning and rebelling? It's not his fault. They've been sinning and rebelling a long time. If you wanna know why, why God sent him here for seventy years, it's because God told him, "Okay, here's how it works. "I made a seven day week, you work six days "and take a Sabbath day. "And then the land, you work six years "and give the land a Sabbath year." They didn't take their Sabbath day, and they didn't give the land it's Sabbath year. They kept working because you can make more money and be more profitable, if you disobeyed God. That's what they think, that's what we think. So they don't Sabbath and they don't let the land Sabbath, because it is profitable to them, and they get away with it for 490 years. If you get away with something for 490 years, you feel like, I think I got away with it. God comes and says, "Well, you've disobeyed, "you've not taken your Sabbath "or given the land it's Sabbath. "For 490 years, you were supposed to rest the land "every seventh year, how many years do you owe me?" 70. "Therefore, since you won't stop going to work, "I am going to take you away." Okay? "I'm going to take you away from the land "because that is your job, "and you won't stop working your job. "You need to take a break and meet with me." 70 years, they're held in captivity. Daniel reads Jeremiah, 70 years is almost up, it's time to go back. Point being, this is not Daniel's fault. He was born at the tail end of the 490 years of sin, it had been going on for a long time before he showed up, and when it all goes down, he's a teenage kid, he's not the king, he doesn't have any power. It's not his fault, but does Daniel make it his responsibility? Yes. Because this is leadership and this is love. The biblical definition of leadership and love, is taking responsibility,

even when you're not at fault. Did Jesus do that for us? Is it Jesus fault that we've sinned? No. But did He make it His responsibility? Yes. He came, He lived, He died, He rose. He lives to make intercession. It's not His fault, but because of love as our leader, He's made it His responsibility. Let me give a quick parenting lesson here. Men, this is what it means to be head of household. Doesn't mean you're the boss or the bully, it means sometimes it is at least in part, our fault. Even if it is not our fault something happens in our family, it's still our responsibility. There's an example of this, Daniel here is acting like a father with a family. The kids haven't repented yet, so dad will repent, so that his heart remains warm toward the children, asking the father to warm the children's heart. Job does this in Job chapter one. His kids throw a party, Job's unsure what happened, the kids aren't ready to apologize and repent to God, Job says, "Well, I'm their dad." So he repents to God, confesses their sins, says, "My kids have done this, "God, I'm bringing their requests before you "and I'm asking you, to cause their heart to open up "to join me in repentance." He prays for his children. He doesn't say, "Well, they're 18, "they make their own decisions, "and I have nothing to do with them." He doesn't baby them, but he loves them and he leads them. I'll give you an example practically, of what this looks like. Some years ago, we've got the five kids, I won't tell you which one. One of our kids was stubborn and like their dad. Okay, I'll just say that. They were a little more difficult, we had compliant children and then we had my children. So this was one of my children, and they were being defiant and disobedient, they were not obeying. And their heart just grew more hardened and the more we gave them rules, the more they? Rebelled. "Cause rules without relationship equal rebellion. So what parents sometimes do at this point, we do something crazy called reverse psychology. Okay, if you're gonna disobey, I'm gonna tell you to do a naughty thing, and then you'll disobey and do the right thing, which is crazy. Hey, don't read the Bible, don't eat your vegetables, don't stop tormenting the cat. Right? That's reverse psychology. That's crazy. So, the kid wasn't obeying, I wasn't gonna try reverse psychology, God brought to mind, intercession. I held the kid, and I started to pray over them. First thing they did was start hitting me. This is a test, this is only a test, right? You know what the difference is between a terrorist and an angry child? Size, that's the only difference. Kids freaking out, I am interceding. "Okay, God, I can't change this child's heart, "but I have a heart for this child, "please change this child's heart. "Holy Spirit, I don't know why they're so frustrated, "please calm them down, please help them, "God, please convict them, "please cause them to agree with you, "please cause their heart to change, "their behavior to change. "God what they're doing is not good for them." I'm trying to lovingly calmly pray over my kid. They stop fighting and finally kind of settle in and then they start crying. 'Cause God touched the heart. I can't touch the heart, but I can touch the one who can touch the heart. Okay? That's intercession. You're not listening to me, my heart is for you. I'm gonna bring your heart to Him and ask Him to change your heart, that's intercession. This is what happens when we pray for people, it's really remarkable. One of the things that God is doing on Wednesday nights with the men, we pray together, and for many of the men it's the first time they've ever prayed in their whole life. A couple weeks ago, a guy told me this story, he's like, "I showed up, nobody ever prayed for me, "I never prayed for anybody, these guys prayed for me, "it was weird." It's always weird at first. Okay? He said, "But you know, "I came back. "And then I watched the guys pray "and then after a few weeks, "I decided, okay, I'll pray." He said, "I prayed for the first time in my life." He said I went home and told my

wife, "Hey, I prayed." She's like, "Really?" She's like, "Will you pray for me?" He's like, "Oh, no. Ah, Oh no." He said, "So, I didn't know "if I was gonna do a good job or a bad job, "but I tried." He said, "So I prayed for her." Guess what she did? She cried. When your wife cries, there's two kinds of tears, good tears and couch tears. Couch tears mean you're gonna sleep on the couch. Good tears, is when you've touched her heart. Sometimes the shortest distance between two people is prayer, the best way to connect with people is prayer. And when you can't change someone's heart, you touch the heart of God and ask Him to touch their heart. And that's what intercession is, that's what Daniel does. Oh boy, 11 minutes left. Holy smokes. I still got two sections, including a prophecy. Okay, I'll read fast. GOD LOVES US AND SENDS US A HELPER. "While I was still speaking and praying, "confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, "and presenting my plea before the Lord my God "for the holy hill of my God, "while I was speaking in prayer." He hasn't even finished this prayer, who shows up? Gabriel, who is? An angel, who he's already shown up before. He doesn't even ask who are you? He is like, "He's back." You know, your life is awesome, when Gabriel just hangs out with you, that's amazing. "Whom I had seen in the vision." Here comes the angel. "At first came to me in swift flight." He's in a hurry. "At the time of the evening sacrifice. "He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "'O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight "'and understanding. "'At the beginning.'" When? "'At the beginning of your plea.'" As soon as you started praying, it was answered. The prayer is answered before it's finished. That's amazing. "'At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, "'I've come to tell it to you, for you are..." What? "'Greatly loved. "'Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.'" Firstly, when you pray, here's good news, God hears. See, Daniels praying and he doesn't know, like, is this going beyond the roof, the ceiling? Is this going anywhere? Are we doing anything? Even in our day, people will talk about, well, you need to have positive self talk. You know what? More than just talking to yourself, talking to God is really helpful. That ultimately, there is a world that we don't see, that is real as the world as we do see, in that realm and reality, is God with angels and other divine beings. We've seen the watchers and the holy ones and the angels and Michael and Gabriel, which are the only two named angels in the Bible. And all that is happening in the unseen realm, and prayer actually leaves this realm, it goes into that realm. And then God hears, convenes His divine counsel, all of His divine servants, and then assigns them as messengers and ministers to go help and serve His people on the earth. You need to know that when you pray, God hears and answers, and that also singing is a form of praying. This is why we sing and pray and worship. That's why at the end of our service, the prayer team will be upfront. It's why most of our singing happens after the sermon. We want you to hear the word of God and then respond with powerful worship, so that God can work in your heart. And what happens when we pray and worship, we reach into that unseen realm, and we welcome it into our life. This is why people of prayer and people of worship, tend to see the supernatural more consistently than those who do not. Because they believe in a supernatural God, and they welcome Him into their life and circumstances. And what happens here, he gets the angel Gabriel. Now some of you will ask, how come I don't get an angel? Well, let me say this, you may have. Hebrews one, says that, "Many of us have entertained angels unaware." When they come on a mission, they're not trying to draw attention to themselves, they're trying to refocus attention on the Lord. So they-- I believe when we get into the presence of God, I believe we will see some things in

our life, and God will reveal some things that He was doing, that we were unaware of. I believe that the angel Gabriel probably won't show up in your life with a name tag and make it real obvious. But I believe that when all is said and done, you might see that angels did visit and answer prayer, and they just came incognito, 'cause that's what soldiers on mission often do. And here's good news, He has a problem, he is praying and what he receives is a helper. His helper is Gabriel, your helper is the Holy Spirit. God, when you send a prayer, God doesn't necessarily have to send an angel, but He always sends the Holy Spirit, the third member the Trinity, the same power that empowered the life of Jesus. John 14:26, Jesus says, "The helper, the Holy Spirit, "whom the Father will send in my name, "He will teach you all things." And the first thing that He wants to teach you, is that you are greatly loved. You are greatly loved. You're not just loved, you're greatly loved. Imagine how amazing this was to Daniel, if he looked at his life, would he come to the conclusion that he was greatly loved? My nation was conquered, I am a slave, they have castrated me, forced me into demonic studies, and I've been away from home, serving evil kings as a single man and castrated slave, for almost all of my life, and I am greatly loved. That must mean that Satan and demons greatly hate him, which may explain why some of his life is hard. Just because life is hard doesn't mean that God hates you, it may mean that God loves you, and the enemy of God hates you. You are greatly loved, if you don't feel it. You are greatly loved, if you don't see it. You are greatly loved, if you don't know it, you're greatly loved. The man whom Jesus called the one that He loved was John. There was a guy in the New Testament and He's friends with Jesus. And the Bible says he's the one whom Jesus loved. And he goes on as an old man, to write first, second and third John, guess what he calls the Christians? Beloved, greatly loved. The first thing that God wants to reveal to you, is that you are greatly loved. That no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, this is a God whose heart has not changed toward you, and you are greatly loved, and He is there to hear and to help. Amen? This changes the internal environment. If they will receive the love of God, it will prepare them to relocate. You can change your address, but if you don't change your heart, you can't change your life. Okay? And then lastly, he's gonna close with a prophecy. Oh boy. Okay, this, I don't know what this means, I don't. Some of you are like, "I do." No, you don't, no, you don't. Okay, "70 weeks are decreed." So he's talking about the first and second coming of Jesus, I think, in one prophecy, so it's a little complicated. "70 weeks are decreed about your people, "your holy city to finish transgression, "to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, "to bring in everlasting righteousness, "to seal both vision and prophet "and to anoint a most holy place." God's got a real to do list. "Know therefore and understand "that from the going out of the word "to restore and build Jerusalem "to the coming of the anointed one." That's Jesus. "A prince, "there shall be seven weeks. "Then for 62 weeks it shall be built again "with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. "After the 62 weeks an anointed one shall be cut off." That's Jesus dying. "and shall have nothing. "And the people of the prince who is to come." I believe that is the antichrist. "Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. "It's end shall come with a flood, "and to the end there shall be war. "Desolations are decreed "and he shall make a strong covenant "with many for one week, "and for half of the week, "he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. "And on the wing of the abominations "shall come one who makes desolate, "until the decreed and is poured out on the desolator." How many of you are glad you don't have my job? Amen? I don't know what that means. What? Tell me. I don't know what that means either, I was hoping he

would tell me. But what I can tell you is this, is who is it talking about? Jesus Christ. I believe that there are things as Christians that we should hold in the closed hand, we believe these, open hand, it couldn't be this, it could be that. This is about Jesus first coming, and Jesus second coming, that I am clear on. In addition, as we look at this prophecy, there are many people who love God, believe the Bible, and they end up with all kinds of different conclusions. Because there are all kinds of questions here. Every potential answer has something in it that I believe is a weakness. Here are the questions. Are these events past history or future prophecy or a combination of both? Number two, are these numbers 70 times seven, literal or symbolic? Is it really 490? Or is it symbolic like Jesus said, "Forgive your enemies 70 times seven." Which was symbolic. In addition, number three, are the sevens weeks or years? If it's 70 times seven, is it 490 weeks? Or is it 490 years? There's a debate over that. In addition, how long is a year? Is it a 360 day Jewish year or a 365 day lunar year? Lastly, the other interpretive issue, multiple decrees went forth to rebuild Jerusalem. It says here that, "The clock will start, "when the decree goes out." Which decree? Every one of these, how you answer them puts you in a different conclusion. What is it? We'll see. We'll see. We'll see. Now here's what I do know, that Jesus accomplishes all of these. Finishing transgression, He brings an end to the rebellion. Put an end to sin, He will come again to stop the evil in the world. Atoned for iniquity, He died on the cross for our sins, paying our debt to God. Bringing in everlasting righteousness, that will happen with a second coming, to seal the vision of the Prophet, He will fulfill all biblical prophecy perfectly, and anoint a most holy place. When He comes back, everything will be as God intended and God predetermined and God prepares us for and God plans. Now here's what we can do when we reach these difficult parts of the Bible. Number one, we can skip it. Many pastors do, they preach Daniel one through six, and move on. And I understand that, it's complicated. Number two, we can get really dogmatic. I know exactly what it means. I have an entire chart I wrote on an ammo box with a crayon, and as I was taking my family up to Prescott, with all of our prepper supplies, and we are hunkered down for Armageddon I can give you the time. See, you laugh, but that's Prescott, okay? You just know, have you been up to the White Mountains? Those people are there. Tinfoil hats, bomb shelters, I have to say, if the end of the world comes I want out. I don't wanna be drinking my own urine and watching zombie apocalypse. I wanna go see Jesus, I'm just telling you how I want it to go down, okay? Like, hey, you're all gonna die. Cool, no more taxes, I'm out. I'm going home. I don't wanna be the last man standing. I'm good, I'm good, I'm good, I've dealt with enough, I'll just tell you right now. You know, but what happens is, people then who think that they know, they get very dogmatic about things that haven't happened. Let's be dogmatic about things that have happened, like the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And let's wait and see what happens for the things that have not yet happened. Like, it's fun to argue over who's gonna win the Super Bowl and the election, well, we'll see. I know Jesus is gonna do everything the Bible says, just like the Bible says, and, we'll see. My point is, I am not on the planning committee, I don't have a date on the calendar, I'm on the welcome committee, When He comes back, I got my kazoo ready to go, I'll be real happy, okay? I will cut my cake, I will whack my Piñata, I will dance my dance, I will sing my song. Welcome back Jesus. I don't know what the day is, but my point is to be ready every day, 'cause we know not the hour or the day, okay? And so that being said, it makes sense to me why the Bible says, we see in part, we know in part, it's like looking through a fogged window. You're like, I see it, but it's

not totally clear. That's because the righteous live by faith, not by sight. We have sight for things in the past, we have faith for things in the future. I don't know exactly when or how, but I know who, His name is Jesus, He is alive and well, right now, He lives to make intercession, He is coming again to judge the living and the dead, to establish the eternal kingdom of God and put an end to all the shenanigans and has blessing for all of the saints. That I know, and I'll see you there. Until then, what we do is we pray and we worship and we bring our request to God. We open the word of God, we respond to God through worship and prayer. And in so doing, we're preparing ourselves for Jesus second coming. Lord Jesus, come quickly. We come to you now in prayer saying, thank you. Thank you that we don't need to know everything, we just need to know the one who knows everything. And that, Lord Jesus, as long as we're with you, we're good. We're better than good, we're great. Lord Jesus, please prepare our hearts, to move to that eternal home. God, I just-- It's revelation that the Holy Spirit just came and I haven't even thought about this. Lord God, you were preparing their hearts to go home. You're preparing our hearts to go home. This is not our home, we're far away from home. And, Lord God, we need to be ready to go home. So Lord God, we come now to pray, we come out of worship, we come now to partake of communion, to repent of our sin, through the partaking of communion, to enter into the unseen realm through prayer and worship, and to invite our king and His kingdom and His Helper, the Holy Spirit into our presence, that we might be prepared for Jesus, who could come at any day. So, help us to be ready on every day, in Jesus good name we pray, Amen.