

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH
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Unshaken_ Daniel Chapter 9 – Agents of the Apocalypse
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I was 21 years old I was a student at Central Bible College. On the weekends our basketball team would travel to different churches. Our team would form a choir not sure I would call it singing. We would make a joyful noise unto the Lord. We would teach Sunday school and one of us would get to preach. One of the first sermons ever preached from behind a pulpit was at a little country church in Macks Creek, Missouri. I got up and I laid down an entire timeline for the End Times. I was taking a class in eschatology that semester, felt like I had it all figured out. I owe that pastor an apology in the eschaton. Okay, because the next class the next week, my timeline totally changed. All of that to say this, with everything that is happening in our world right now. It just seems like a little eschatology is apropos, and I'll do my best to give us a plotline and a timeline but I do so with a high degree of humility.

I said this two weeks ago, it's not about figuring out who the Antichrist is or when the rapture is going to happen, that isn't the issue. The issue is this, are you ready for the second coming of Jesus Christ? We gotta get our A game on. We are here for such a time is this. We are here for such a place as this. We are agents of the apocalypse. It is our job, to usher in the eschaton to do everything within our power to see his kingdom come; his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let me set the scene verse one of Daniel chapter nine, in the first year of Darius the Mede, son of Xerxes. The year is 539 BC and there is a new sheriff in town now we have already met him. It's Darius, who threw Daniel into lion's den. At this point Daniel has taken more than 80 trips around the sun - been there done that long obedience in the same direction but there is still a lot of gas left in the tank. Listen, I hope this inspires someone - you never age out in the kingdom of God, you are never past your prime.

I love this story about Pablo Casals, one of the greatest cellist of all time, played a concert for Queen Victoria when he was 22. And then played for President Kennedy when he was 86 well into his 80s. He's still practicing four or five hours a day. When someone asked him why he said, because I think I'm making progress. Come on, I love that approach. And I think that's who Daniel is - well into his 80s but he's still learning, he's still studying, he's still praying, he's still prophesying, he is still dreaming.

How do we know this? Verse two, *"In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the sacred books, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah that the desolation of Israel would last seventy years."*

A couple of questions that I've been asking an awful lot in recent weeks; what is God saying, during this season? What is God doing in his church, in this nation? Well, some things I'm pretty sure God is waking us up. God is shaking us up. He is shaking up false securities, false identities, false narratives, false idols, false ideologies. I think that God is activating gifts of the Holy Spirit. I'm believing for a

supernatural demonstration of His love and His power. I think God is calling us to radical repentance. God is reprioritizing prayer. I think God is raising up a remnant. I think God is getting us out of our weekly mindset. Listen, we want Acts 2:47, right, "*God added to the church daily*", while we just do what we do once a week. No, it's not gonna work that way. Listen, it's about finding a daily rhythm in our relationship with God. And then finally, I think God is decentralizing his church once again. You are the priesthood of believers. You are the company of prophets.

We've been studying this Old Testament prophet named Daniel and we're asking this question. How do we cultivate a prophetic imagination? How do we grow in this prophetic gifting? Now Moses said, I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and so that includes you. In Judaism, the prophetic gifting was not reserved for the few the proud the Marines - hoorah. The prophetic gifting was the end goal of mental and spiritual development, maturity equals prophecy. And then we use this gift to speak words of edification, and comfort and encouragement.

Well, this is where I want to go old school. We'll talk about eschatology at the end, but I want to share two best practices that will help you cultivate this prophetic gifting in your life. Two daily habits that listen Daniel models, like Zoolander. There are two things Daniel does every day one is explicit one is implicit. Daniel prayed three times a day like clockwork. And we'll see that in verse three. But verse two is telling. It says that Daniel understood from the sacred books, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah.

Now, let me park mobile right here. I don't want to read anything into scripture that's not there. That's called eisegesis. But I have no doubt that Daniel had a daily habit of getting into God's Word. In Judaism very few things of more importance than the daily study of Torah, according to the Talmud, the study of Torah was considered of more importance than the daily sacrifice. In fact, a single day devoted to Torah outweighed 1,000 sacrifices. The study of Torah was on par with honoring one's parents, which is one of the Ten Commandments and then one rabbinic tradition goes so far as to say that the Gentile who studies the Torah is on par with the high priest.

In Judaism, unique approach to Scripture called 'pardes', it's an acronym. It stands for these four levels of learning or four stages of study. Now listen, the Jewish hermeneutic a lot more about exploration than explanation, a lot more about discovery, then, didactic. You'll find these in your note tabs.

Level one is P'shat. It is the plain reading of Scripture, and this is a great place to start highly recommend a Bible reading plan. In fact, fun fact, I am on day 277 of my daily Bible reading plan, and it has me today the day that I'm preaching this message in Daniel nine. Come on, you gotta love it, what timing and I have found this so many moments throughout the year where it's just right on time. And so if you don't have a plan you can check out youversion online. If you're a little bit more auditory you can check out the dwell app either way, get a plan, work, the plan, but don't stop there. The Bible wasn't meant to be read, by itself. It was meant to be prayed through, meditated on and put into practice.

Now level two is Remez which literally means hint. It's almost like putting something under the microscope or turning a kaleidoscope. Jewish rabbis said that every word of Scripture has 70 faces and 600,000 meanings. One way to reveal those facets is pull out a concordance and go back to the

original languages Hebrew, and Greek. And I've got some good news; you don't have to go to seminary to do this. There are so many unbelievable study tools online; Bible Gateway. Bible Hub, Bible project, great ways to re-learn the Scripture.

The third level is the D'rash. And I would liken this to a Google search that produces lots of links. A lot of hyperlinks between the book of Daniel for example, and the book of Revelation and I'll share a few of those a little bit later on. I think D'rash is connecting the dots between the Old and New Testament and this is one of the most fundamental rules in hermeneutics - let scripture interpret scripture.

And then finally level four is Sud and you can't skip to stage four. You've got to study to show yourself approved rightly dividing the word of truth, 2 Timothy 2:15. This is where we need the quickening of the Holy Spirit. Now a good sermon, it'll give you a level one, level two and level three. Level four newsflash past my pay grade. This is where we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Good news, same spirit that inspired those writers inspires us as readers and so the Spirit of God at work on both sides of that equation, call it a revelation and call it a prompting call it a God idea. We've got to get into God's word. We've got to get God's word into us. And when we do, some good things happen. *"Thy word have I hid in my heart"*, Psalm 119, *"that I might not sin against Thee."*

Sud is about getting truth from here to here, it's a long distance from here to here. It's about getting it from our head to our heart. I think the principles of Scripture then begin to form our conscience and the promises of Scripture; they begin to form our convictions. And that's how you get the mind and the heart of Christ and you become more and more prophetic in the process. And I just pray that right now for every single person who is listening to this message, a cultivation of that prophetic gifting In Jesus name.

What does that have to do with Daniel? Well, verse three is a rather rare occurrence where one writer of scripture references another writer of scripture. Now the catalysts for these different dreams that Daniel has, they're pretty varied, right? I mean, some are the byproduct of prayer and fasting. Some are these angelic visitations, you've got hand writing on the wall, but this one is unique. In this instance, the revelation, I would suggest is the result of P'shat, Remez, and D'rash. And then it results in this Sud where Daniel gets this word from God, we are people at the book. And we've got to keep going back to the book because that's where the Holy Spirit does his best work. And so best guess Daniel is probably studying Jeremiah 29.

Now I'll unpack this a little bit in our Q & A but this is where we get our theology of the city, a false prophet named Hananiah says that they're only going to be in captivity two years. Jeremiah calls them on the carpet says, "No, it's gonna be 70 years". Now, if you have a two year mindset, you aren't even going to unpack your suitcase. But if you have a 70 year mindset, ah, that's a different game. And so Jeremiah says plant gardens and build houses, in other words, don't rent the city, own the city. Put down roots do things that will make a difference 70 years from now. He says, "Seek the peace and the prosperity of the city. What city? Well, he's writing to the exiles in Babylon. We are not just trying to build a church we are trying to bless a city to the third and fourth generation we are playing the long game. We think right here right now. God is thinking nations in generations.

Now, I am absolutely convinced God is making a move right now. I know a lot of us are concerned, 'Wow, what's happening up in here?' You know we would prefer the status quo. No, no, no. We're going to see his kingdom come in some new and novel ways. We are going to see in Jesus name a demonstration, supernatural demonstration of love and power. God is renewing his deeds in our day and our job, come on; our job is to stay grounded in God's good book. Why? Because *"God is watching over His Word to perform it,"* Jeremiah 1:12.

As a church, we are committed to racial unity. We are the peacemakers. We are the ministers of reconciliation. We are praying the pledge one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Our multicultural team, I want you to know, we are leaning in. Like, every day we're leaning into this, every day we are praying into this. You know what there aren't any shortcut solutions. We've got to play the long game. Why, for that third and fourth generation can we believe together, that we will live up to some of the aspirations that we have as a church? But we know what we're aiming at Revelation 7:9, *"Every nation, every tribe, every people, every language, worshipping around the throne."*

Verse three, *"I set my face to the Lord God, to seek him by prayer and petitions, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."*

What do you do when you get a vision from God when God quickens his word when you get a God idea? I think you do this. I think it set you face to seek God by prayer and petition. In my experience, the more you pray, the bigger you dream and then the bigger you dream, the more you have to pray. Listen, it's a God sized dream that keeps us on our knees in daily dependence upon him.

Now the next 17 verses contain one of the longest recorded prayers in the Bible. Wish I had time to unpack this entire prayer. It falls into the category of a communal penitentiary prayer. It's a prayer for mercy. It's a prayer for justice. You read it and you'll find radical repentance. This is huge and radical dependence. Now you'll find an outline in your notes tab. Maybe we'll unpack this in that Q & A but powerful pattern and very timely template for prayer. Four things: you've got a corporate confession of sin. You've got a declaration of God's character. You've got an articulation of Israel's predicament, and you've got a petition for divine intervention. We need to be praying this prayer, right about now.

Now two things that I sense in my spirit; last week I did a two day Silent Retreat, a little bit of ear, cleansing opportunity just to lean in and listen to God. And I felt like one thing that the Lord spoke to my spirit was "Mark, my house will be called a house of prayer for all people." When do you see Jesus most animated in the gospels? I'll tell you. It's when he throws down at the temple. Do you remember this moment? He turns over some tables. He drives out the money changers. I love this. Does it with a homemade whip - jump back Indiana Jones. Now he gets so riled up. Why? Because they have turned the house of prayer into something else. And he says I'm going to take it back to its original intent, a house of prayer for all people - ethnos every language, tribe, people, nation. And I feel like the Lord has spoken a word to me a word to us as a church. If you will turn this into a house of prayer, I'll turn it into a house of healing a house of dreams, a house of miracles, a house of reconciliation for all people. And if you believe that right now, I don't care where you are, would you say, Amen.

Now, that's what Daniel does. Daniel can go to the temple, the temple is 900 miles away and Daniel is socially distanced, okay. What does he do? Check this out. He literally turns his house into a house of prayer. Now there's an idea during this COVID crisis. Listen, Daniel climbs the stairs. He opens the window towards Jerusalem, he kneels next to his bed and he prays three times a day - powerful. Listen, the only ceiling, on your intimacy with God your impact on the world is daily spiritual disciplines. Get enough people praying this way, revival is inevitable. Revival is gonna happen one way or the other.

Gipsy Smith a revivalist hundred years ago said this, "Go home." You're already home. Good start. "Go home, lock yourself in your room, kneel down in the middle of the floor and with a piece of chalk draw a circle around yourself. There on your knees, pray fervently and brokenly that God would start a revival in that circle." Would you draw that circle? Would you believe with me for personal revival in your life, for reformation in the church, for a renaissance in our culture? Listen, we're going to have to redig some ancient wells, we're going to have to rebuild some ancient ruins, we are going to have to retrace some ancient paths.

Now, the second thing that I sense is that God is bringing us into a contending season. We need to press in and pray through we need to pray through until the breakthrough. Now listen, I have no issue with short prayers before meals, okay. I think its good stewardship, I think you ought to eat food while it's hot, this is not the time for intercession, and it's time to eat. Can I get another amen? But there are moments there are seasons, where we need to contend in prayer, where we need to rise up by kneeling down, moments where we need to double down and double over in prayer like Daniel. Psalm 35, "*All my limbs shall say, Lord, who is like you?*" Another translation says, "*All my bones.*"

Now, Jewish rabbis took this literally there was a physicality to their prayer. In Judaism, you have standing prayers, you have bowing prayers where you bow the knee but you also bow your upper body and then there are swaying prayers. Now the first time I went to Jerusalem, you go to the Western Wall, you can't miss this. There's a certain swaying that happens in prayer. I don't think that contending prayer has to be louder necessarily. I don't think it has to be longer. I don't think you have to use King James English, you know, fancy theological words. Listen, some of the most powerful prayers you can pray are one word prayers. And by the way, that's what Daniel does right at the end in verse 19, "*Oh, Lord, hear. Oh, Lord, forgive. Oh, Lord act.*" So simple, so powerful. Wow. Just having this firing in my synapses. There's some hymn we used to sing that 'one word will fell him', the enemy. You go look it up, Google it and help me out. Believe that.

Wooo! Along with that Bible reading plan that I encourage you to download? Listen, can I extend an invitation Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, we gather in an upper zoom hundreds of us if you want to be disciplined in this spiritual discipline of prayer, it's an amazing way to do that. Come on. Daniel had an upper room we have an upper zoom. Let's get our game on.

Now, let me flip this script. Prayer is the difference between you fighting for God and God fighting for you. Some of you you're so tired. You're so discouraged. You've been trying to fight your own battles. Listen, you weren't meant to do that. It's not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Oh, Spirit of God break through, the person who needs it right now break through with hope and love and grace and power. The battle belongs to the Lord.

In this same Psalm, Psalm 35, verse 23. Here's what it says, *"Awake, and rise to my defense."* Here it is, are you ready? *"Contend, contend, contend for me, my God and Lord."* Long before you woke up this morning long after you go to sleep tonight Spirit of God is contending for you with groanings that cannot be put into words. Right now Jesus is at the right hand of the Father contending on your behalf. Two thirds of the Holy Trinity contending to the other third on your behalf this is where our holy confidence comes from. This is what wakes us up in the morning. This is what keeps us going at night far more power, far more authority than you realize.

A little bit of history right here. September 7, 1774 Continental Congress held its first official meeting at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, first official act - prayer. And this was no perfunctory prayer that first session of congress turned into an old fashioned prayer meeting. Ear witnesses said that they heard them praying several blocks away. Eye witnesses said that Henry, Randolph, Rutledge, Lee and Jay were doubled over as they bowed in reverence before God. Not surprisingly, George Washington ended up on his knees, a posture that he was prone to take. The pastor who led the prayer that morning was Dr. Jacob Douche, his text, the very verse that we just cited, *"Contend for me, my God, and Lord."*

Let me switch gears. Verse 21, *"While I was praying, Gabriel, who I saw in an earlier vision came swiftly to me at the time of the evening sacrifice."* Gabriel makes a few cameos, shows up to Zachariah, announces John the Baptist, appears to Mary announces the Immaculate Conception. You know, angels are ministering spirits. By the way I love the fact that he reminds Daniel, you are greatly beloved. Can I remind you today, you're greatly beloved by God? And then reveals this vision to Daniel. Now when you get to the book of Revelation, lots of angels in the outfield, okay? They blow trumpets, they open seals, they pour out bowls of judgment. They bind our ancient enemy and they form this angelic circle of worship around the throne of God.

Let me go to verse 24 *"A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place."*

Now the angel says 70 weeks or 77 and it adds up if you do the math to 490 years. Now let me be honest, we don't know for sure whether to take this literally or figuratively. Seven is the number of completion in Scripture, but one way or the other. God is saying my discipline has to run its course and then Daniel prophesized the rebuilding of the temple. Then we get to the last two verses, and we're going to close with this and we're going to move fast.

Verse 26, *"After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death 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 at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."*

Now this phrase the abomination that causes desolation pops up a few times in the book of Daniel, maybe, just maybe it's time for us to unpack that prophecy. Now, in eschatology stick with me, there is a concept called dual fulfillment, many prophecies fulfilled not once or even twice, some even thrice. Well, one way to think of dual fulfillment is driving towards a mountain range. And from a distance it just looks like one mountain, right? But you get a little bit closer and you realize that they're actually a couple of mountain ranges with a valley in between. A lot of scholars believe that the first fulfillment of this prophecy happens in 168 BC when this little horn that is referenced in Daniel seven, Antiochus Epiphanes invades Jerusalem. Now he plunders the temple, he takes everything okay, including the curtain between the holy place and the Most Holy Place. He sets up a statue to Zeus. And then he sacrifices a pig on the altar and he makes the Israelites eat the unclean parts. He outlaws circumcision. He outlaws the reading of Torah. This is the abomination that causes desolation and if you know your Jewish history, it actually leads to this maccabean revolt.

Now fast forward to the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is speaking apocalyptically of the end times and he references Daniel, and you see this abomination that causes desolation. And Jesus says, pay attention when you see this abomination that causes desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, pay attention. Well, I thought this already happened. Well, that was the first fulfillment, but it's gonna happen all over again in 70 AD when Rome lays siege to Jerusalem they set up an idol to Zeus. They sacrifice sheep, oxen and pigs on the altar. Can you say *deja vu*?

Now I know that this all sounds like history. But listen, history is prophecy. And we'll see this later in the series as we get further into the book of Revelation. Bottom line prophecy is a little bit like jazz, it doesn't really resolve it's kind of like this dangling participle. It's like this hanging chad. What we know for sure is revelation 11:15, *"The kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdom of our Lord and Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."*

I believe that the next plot twist, that the next inciting incident may very well be the rapture of God's church. In fact, can I tell you two things I'm praying a lot? Come, Holy Spirit, and we sang it in the first song, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

First Thessalonians four, we're almost done. *"The Lord Himself will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air."*

That phrase caught up is where we get this idea of rapture. I'll leave this for the Q & A. But listen, I believe in pre-wrath rapture. I think it happens between the sixth and seventh seal in Revelation seven and we'll talk about more about it. Bottom line, don't lose faith in the end of the story. So much for us to look forward to the best is yet to come. God's got this. God's got you. May his kingdom come, may his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, amen