



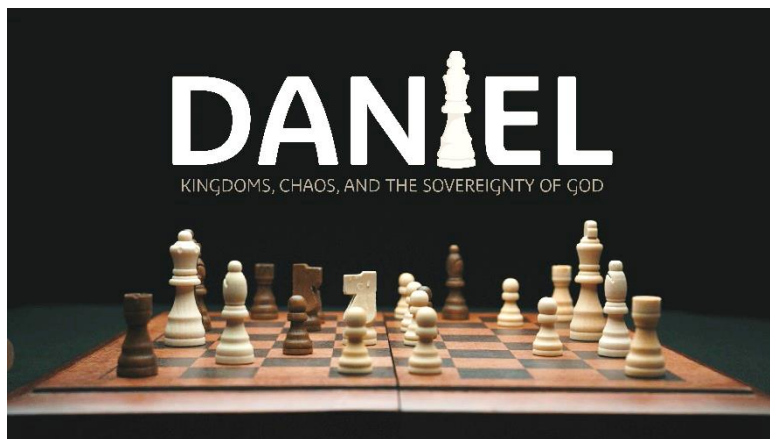
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

How To Prepare For the End Times

DANIEL: Kingdoms, Chaos and the Sovereignty of God

Daniel 9:1–19

Tim Badal | March 17, 2024



Turn in your Bibles to Daniel 9. We're in a series titled "Kingdoms, Chaos and the Sovereignty of God." In the first six chapters of the book of Daniel, we looked at Daniel's experiences as an Israelite exile in Babylon. He's living in a pagan land, never knowing whether at any given moment he'll be dead or alive because of the whimsies of pagan kings. Yet Daniel proves to us, in our world in our day, that no matter how dark our culture becomes, we can model faithfulness and integrity. We can model spiritual fidelity in our worship of our God in heaven, leaving the circumstances of our lives in His hands. Daniel did that well.

Then as we turned the page from Daniel 6 to Daniel 7, we found that most of the second half of this book is dedicated to Daniel's dreams and visions. Some of these were fulfilled in the future near to when Daniel saw them, involving the future of the people of God. We'll see that this morning. We also believe as a church that some of these predictions have yet to be fulfilled in our own future time. As we continue to navigate these waters, we will be considering how we should prepare ourselves to live in these last days. This question has become a phenomenon in our world now. Both in the context of churches and in the American public as a whole, we are now infatuated with doomsday prepping. That actually started in the early 20th century with the stock market crash in 1929. People began to not presume upon tomorrow, instead putting together plans for how they would live if the world around them fell apart.

This again became prevalent during World War II, then it hit a fever pitch around 1962 during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis. At that point, people began to dig holes in their backyards, building bunkers for the impending nuclear holocaust anticipated during the Cold War.

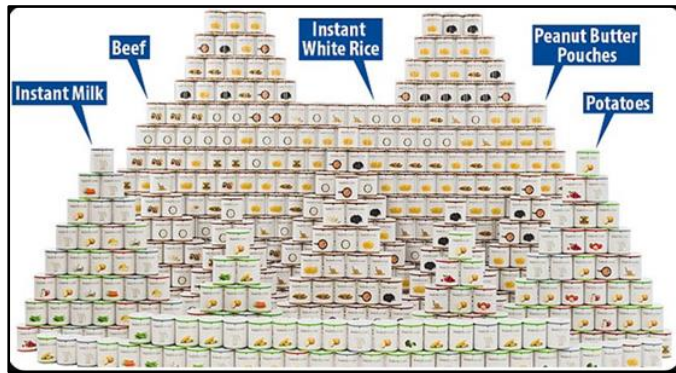
Then another upswing came at the turn of the century with the Y2K threat. Some of you will remember that the world was going to fall apart when we transitioned from 1999 to 2000, because the computers wouldn't be able to adapt to the change. Then we had 9/11, which reignited those fears again. Now, just in the last few years, the covid pandemic has us once more thinking about what we will do when everything around us goes haywire.

This is why programs like one on the National Geographic channel called "Doomsday Preppers" is a blockbuster. People love to see how people are getting ready for the Apocalypse. There have been four seasons describing the creative ways people have prepared themselves for human apocalypses and yes, even a zombie apocalypse.



There are also books to be found on Amazon. One of them is called *Doomsday Prepping 101: A Practical 10-Step Plan to Prep Like a Pro*. It will give you step-by-step instructions on how to get your life and house in order.

What I love best is that a place as mainstream as Costco has put together a “Doomsday Apocalypse Package” that will cost you \$6,000 and feed a family of four for a year. It will give you everything you need in canned foods. Just make sure you don’t bring



your hybrid to pick it all up, right? We are worried about the future. Are we prepared for the days ahead?

As a church that’s now been focusing on the subject of the end times, no doubt you’re beginning to think, “How do I prepare? Maybe we need to change that media room into a stockpile room in our basement. How much water do we need on hand? Do we have batteries? Do we have enough canned foods?”

If you feel that’s the best way for you to prepare, I will leave it to you. But I don’t think that’s what God prescribes regarding how we should prepare. In fact, in Daniel 9, we are given five ways to

prepare for the end times—and they’re going to surprise you. Nowhere does Daniel talk about canned foods, flares, emergency kits. He talks about getting our hearts right with God. Daniel says we need get ready for what God is going to do in the days before us.

Now, if anybody could have been a doomsday prepper, it would have been Daniel. He had seen visions and dreams. He had seen kingdoms come and kingdoms go. Daniel had experienced what God said was going to be in the future. At times, he was anxious and even sick to his stomach. At times Daniel was appalled by what God revealed to him. Then at the end of chapter eight, Daniel says this: “*And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king’s business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.*” So Daniel went on with his life. As we study the book of Daniel, we need to realize that’s what we need to do as well. We need to know what God has in store for us and what He has prophesied regarding our future. We also need to go about living in the present, doing the work He’s given us to do.

Specifically, as we anticipate His coming, God says we should watch, we should pray, we should live upright and holy lives until He comes, and we should evangelize the world so all may know that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus also asked this question: “When I come, will I find faith in the world?” (Luke 18:8). It seems God is more concerned about our spirituality than He is about our emergency preparedness with canned food and bottled water. Daniel 9 is giving us a model for what our preparations for the last days should look like. It involves five things that we will see in the text.

Living in these last days means we study the Scriptures.

The first way we should prepare for our future and for the end of days is to study the Scriptures. Notice what it says in Daniel 9:1-2:

¹ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— ² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Daniel was about to receive more prophetic words about the future. As we read in chapter eight, he did not understand what God had already shown him, even after an angel had given him some interpretation. We’re like Daniel; we also don’t understand all of this. If you think you do, if you have all your end-times ideas knit together perfectly, you’re probably beyond Daniel, so maybe you should pull back some of those assumptions or presumptions.

Again, verse one gives us a time stamp that is important. Daniel was probably in his late 60s or early 70s when he began to seek God’s truth in the Scriptures. For our reference, Daniel 9 was situated in the historical events of Daniel 5. The Medes and Persians had overtaken Babylon, right after God wrote a warning on the wall. This was a year later and Daniel was then under the leadership of Darius. If you try to connect this to a point in recorded history, you need to know that there were a number of rulers named Darius and most of them came after Daniel’s lifetime. This could cause some disconnect if we think this Darius was King Darius I or II spoken about in other places in the Scriptures. This Darius was the provincial ruler over Babylon and it appears he was the general who took over the land, as recorded in Daniel 5, and helped occupy Babylon.

Now, the king over the Medo-Persian empire was Cyrus. He was still advancing his empire, so this province was under a temporary government. This was during the first year of this temporary government—538 B.C.—when Daniel was searching the Scriptures. We read that he was studying “the books.” These were the books of the patriarchs and prophets that had been written up to that point by people who had been inspired by God. This included the Law, which we’ll see referenced later in this chapter, and also the messages of the prophets, in particular Jeremiah. There are a few things we can draw from this focus on God’s Word, things Daniel modeled that should be practiced by us as well.

1. He was committed to the Word even in a life of hardship.

I can’t tell you how many people have told me the reason they’ve given up on God and His Word is because bad things have happened to them and they blame God for them. I can understand, knowing the tragedies, attacks and abuse many have encountered. Maybe that describes some of you here this morning. Life has been hard, and the last person you want to turn to is the God Who allowed all those hard things to come to you. But Daniel did not allow his hardships to make him bitter; instead, he turned to the Word of God and allowed it to make him better. He didn’t deconstruct his faith; rather, he continued to delight in the Word of the Lord.

2. He was committed to the Word even though he had studied it before.

Daniel was an old man and had been part of many Bible studies. He had listened to his parents and his youth group leader in his younger years, before he was exiled to Babylon. He had probably spent time with Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and other faithful Israelites during the exile. So he knew well the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets, but he still continued to search the Scriptures to learn more from God, even as an old man.

As I get older and am getting close to my sixth decade, Bible study tends to become routine. I feel like I’ve been there and done that. As I’ve spent time studying with you over the last 20 years, we have gone through 23 of the 66 books of the Bible, verse by verse and word by word. Daniel is now number 24. At times we talk about the same themes and express the same ideas, so it can become altogether routine. But Daniel is encouraging us, even as we grow older, to continue delighting in the Law of the Lord and meditating on it day and night, as the psalmist says. Don’t let the Scriptures become routine to you. As Daniel studied the Scripture, new revelation was given to him. He was learning new things and we should as well.

3. He was committed to the Word as the key to understanding his place in God’s world.

Daniel did not presume that someone else could give him the answer. He could have asked the kings for advice because they were in his life; they were the movers and shakers of the world. He could have talked to the satraps and governors because he was their peer; they were the wisest men in the kingdom. He could have gone to the magicians and enchanters; the men who counseled the kings. He could have gone to others in the kingdom for a sense of what public opinion was concerning what was going to happen. But Daniel did none of these things. Instead, he went to God’s Word.

I am here to tell you, there are a great many voices and influencers in our world today who have lots to say about what will happen and what we need to do about it. But we need to silence a lot of those voices and instead allow the Word of God to speak more loudly in our lives. If you look back at the other voices you have listened to compared with the Bible, which one would win? Think of all the podcasts and TV programs you listen to. All the books you’ve read. Do any of them eclipse what you’ve learned from God’s Word this week? Could it be that today is the first time this week that you’ve had God’s Word opened up to you? If that’s the case, then you’re altogether ill prepared for the future. How ironic is it that you think you’re better prepared because you’ve been listening to the pundits, commentators and podcasts. You think you’re doing it to prepare better, but they have no idea what’s going to happen. Only God does. God says, “I have this all figured out. Turn your attention to Me.”

4. He was committed to the Word even though he was well acquainted with signs and wonders.

Finally, and I think this is altogether important for our day. Daniel committed himself to the Scriptures, even though he was well-acquainted with signs and wonders. Can we be honest? Although Daniel’s life was really, really hard, Daniel had some pretty awesome things take place in his life. Daniel had seen firsthand God at work in his life. He had seen God take care of him when he chose to eat vegetables and drink water, making him healthier and wiser than all the others who ate the king’s food. Also, remember how Daniel was given insight into the king’s dream, not only to be able to interpret what it meant, but even to know the actual dream itself.

In Daniel 3, no doubt Daniel knew that his three friends chose to not bow down to the idol and were then thrown into the fire, only to be spared by God and even visited by God Himself in the furnace. They came out praising the name of God.

In Daniel 5 we saw Daniel at a party that initially he had not been invited to, but there he interpreted the writing on the wall written by what appeared to be God's own hand. Then as an old man, Daniel was thrown into a lion's den. Instead of devouring him, the lions simply purred throughout the night. However, as soon as his enemies were thrown into the pit, they were devoured. Daniel had seen God show up in supernatural ways.

We have a propensity to say about Daniel and other Bible characters, "If I had that experience, I would be really faithful to God too. If I had that experience, I would do great things for God too." But even though Daniel had these experiences, he wasn't seeking further experiences. Instead, he was devoted to reading the Scriptures—the same Scriptures you and I have in our hands this morning.

Daniel knew God's truths 600 years before Paul wrote this about God's Word in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."* Why do God's people lack nothing? Because they have been thoroughly equipped. That word 'equipped' in the Greek is a traveler's word that means packing what is needed for a journey.

Some of you will be traveling over spring break and you will mentally think about where you're going as you pack in preparation. You might check the weather apps to know what clothes you'll need, what activities you'll be able to be part of. You will put into that suitcase everything you need so you are thoroughly equipped for that trip.

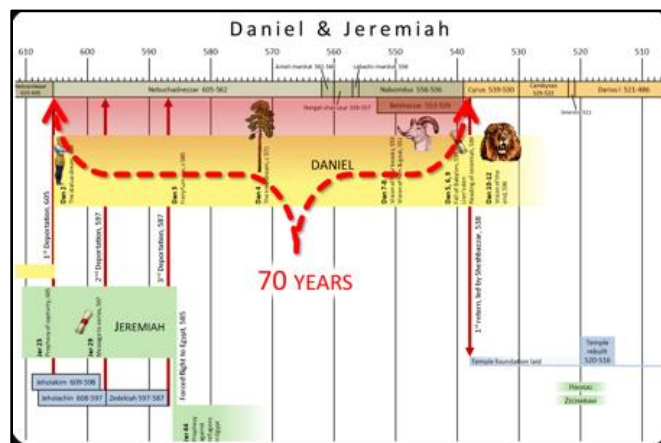
This kind of preparation was important in Paul's day, because there wasn't a Walmart or Walgreens in every town. If a person was not thoroughly equipped, they would not be able to deal with what would come. The Bible is able to provide us with everything we need for our journey.

Daniel is showing us that the way to be thoroughly equipped is by the study of the Scriptures. As Daniel read the books, he came to the words of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 25:11-12, we also can read what Daniel read: *"This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy 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 an everlasting waste."* Twice we see the phrase "seventy years." They knew there would be ruin and waste and desolation for that length of time in Israel, but then something was going to change. Daniel then would turn to Jeremiah 29:10 to see that phrase for a third time, *"For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon..."* Where was Daniel? He was in Babylon, but it was no longer ruled by the Babylonians; it was then ruled by the Medes and Persians. Things were a little confusing for him, but he continued to read what God promised: *"I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."* Daniel probably asked, "What does this mean in God's chronology?" Similarly, you and I want to know where we are in God's chronology in our day. As Daniel kept reading, he saw this in verses 12-14:

¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Living in these last days means we pray with purpose.

Daniel had thought Babylon was the end of the story, but now he realized that God had another plan, requiring him to pray and seek God's face. Just to clarify, Jeremiah had been a contemporary of Daniel for a short period, but he was in the generation before Daniel. In other words, Jeremiah was old when Daniel was young and their lives overlapped for maybe 20 to 30 years. Jeremiah wrote these words before the people were deported to Babylon. Jeremiah 25 was written in 605 B.C.



Fast forward to the reign of King Cyrus in 538 B.C., and that means 67 years had elapsed since Jeremiah's prophecy. Daniel realized they were three years from the end of the exile. So what did he do? He prayed with purpose—that's the second thing we also need to do. Notice what it says in verse three: *"Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession."* Daniel didn't know exactly the timing, but he did know it was time to prepare by praying. This is vitally important.

After we study the Scriptures—which is what we're doing in this series—and try to discern what God is saying to us as His people, we then need to pray. And we aren't just to pray generic and obvious prayers, but we need to pray with purpose. Look again at how Daniel prayed. Like him, we have sought God in prayer and have even pleaded with Him for mercy. But how often do we pray with fasting? This is both an Old Testament and a New Testament practice, so it applies to us today. We need to refrain from eating and other similar comforts, instead dedicating the time we would give to those things to the Lord.

A big portion of Christendom during the season of Lent is foregoing comforts for the sake of greater spiritual discipline. Whether you agree that this is something everyone is called to do, that is the purpose of Lent. If we believe what we're praying for is so vitally important, we're going to give up things we enjoy in order to dedicate ourselves to prayer. There have been times in my life when I've sensed a greater need to pray about specific things than to do things like watching media or eating. I gave those up for a season, because I wanted God to know how sincerely and urgently I was seeking Him regarding these things.

Daniel however did something else we no longer do, nor is it something that's prescribed in the New Testament for Christians to do. He put on sackcloth and ashes. In other words, people in the Old Testament would put on abrasive clothing and pour a gravel-like substance over their bodies. This was again communicating the idea of foregoing comfort, along with symbolizing the realization that we bring nothing to God with our requests. It was a way to approach God in humility, as if to say, "I know my place and that I deserve nothing from You. I am but ashes, the dirt of the ground."

As we'll see in Daniel's prayer, his posture was one of complete humility, demonstrating that he realized Who God was and who he was. He knew he was completely dependent on God's grace and mercy. Let me ask you this: when was the last time you prayed with that kind of intensity and urgency? This might seem bombastic, but I think it rings true. The reason why we don't pray like this is we don't see God as the One Who is fully in control. We think we have some control over our situation, so instead of busying ourselves with prayer, we busy ourselves in the circumstances of our lives. We try to hold our little kingdoms together because we think that's something we can do. We can't.

The people who pray as Daniel did recognize they control nothing. They realize Who their God and who they are, that they are like dirt. It's no wonder that usually the prayer warriors in a church are the elderly. A lifetime gives a person a long time to realize how much they are not in control, that they don't have it all figured out. That's why the senior saints among us get on their knees and say, "I have nothing to bring to this situation and know that only God understands what should be done. That's why I'm petitioning Him. I will seek Him." We don't pray, because we think we don't need to, that we can do what only God can do. Daniel realized who he was and how helpless he was.

Living in these last days means we get right with God.

Along with prayer, Daniel also sought to get right with God. Beginning in verse four, he made this confession:

⁴"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶We 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. ⁷To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. ⁸To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. ⁹To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him ¹⁰and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

¹¹All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. ¹²He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. ¹³As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. ¹⁴Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and

has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. ¹⁵ And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

How does Daniel pray? First, he prays with the realization that all of his life was lived, in the words of the reformers, *coram deo*—before the face of God. Daniel knew he and the other people of God had lived openly before God and they still did so treacherously. Even though they realized God was watching, they didn't care. "Watch my sin, my perversion. Watch my lying mouth. I don't care."

Daniel opened his prayer by declaring bad news. He spoke in five different ways about the sins of his people. He fleshes out their disobedience. We often pray and ask forgiveness for the sin of throwing a rock into the water. What I mean by that is, "God, I'm sorry I threw that rock into the water." But Daniel gives us the biblical model for repentance, which describes the ripple effect of that splash touching more people than he could even know. In other words, our sins and our treachery impact far more broadly than we think.

In fact, Daniel uses five different words for the concept of sin. In verse five he says, "*We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.*" Then he adds a sixth word in verse six: "*We have not listened to your servants.*" He's not just adding up words because some teacher told him to. Instead he's trying to describe the depths of his sin and the sin of the people of God. "We have sinned and missed the mark."

He then continues, "Not only have we missed the mark, we saw what was right and we did wrong on purpose. We acted wickedly." That word speaks of perversion. It's not just missing the mark by a little, but by a lot. Then he says, "We rebelled. We didn't listen to the men You sent. We didn't listen to You. The prophets told us what Your will and Your warnings were, but we didn't buy them." He finishes with this: "We turned aside from Your commands." In other words, "We fell in love with something else. God gave us His Law and commands, but we became enamored with the things of this world. We stopped listening to God." Daniel identifies this as treachery and wickedness.

Notice, he wasn't just pointing his finger at others. Thirteen times in this prayer he uses the plural word "we." He puts himself into the group of sinners. Now, it's important to know there are two men in all the Bible—other than Jesus—about whom nothing negative is written. There's nothing that we can question about their character. Those two men are Joseph in Genesis 37-50 and Daniel here in his book. These men were holy and upright. Were they perfect? No. Daniel was saying to God, "You know my heart. Maybe no one else thinks I've done wrong, but You know how I've lamented and complained about my circumstances. I realize I'm part of the problem here too; I am not part of the solution." Thirteen times he puts himself with his people. Why does he do this? Number one, he wants to identify with his people because he loves them. Number two, it's a mature view of things. He recognizes he is a sinner. He realizes he too has missed the mark. Twice in these verses it says that he and they should be filled with shame.

We live in a time and place when shame is said to be a terrible thing to feel. We don't want our children to feel shame; we don't want adults to feel shame. Nobody should ever be ashamed. Well, I'm here to tell you that we should all feel ashamed. Every man, woman and child should feel ashamed, because God gave us this world and a relationship with Himself, but we did not appreciate it. Instead, we acted wickedly and treacherously, turning aside to other loves and away from the Creator who made us.

Because of this, we should feel deep shame. We've turned our back on the One Who gave us life. Our Father in heaven gave us everything we need, but we, like the prodigal son, took it and wasted it on all kinds of things. Now we find ourselves in the mire of this world and we should be ashamed. As sinners, we should face this reality.

And there's more. Jesus Himself came and died on the cross. Hebrews 12:1-2 says He scorned the shame. He took our shame. Shame is the distance between us in our sin and a holy God. That valley, that chasm between us, is the valley of shame. But by the grace, mercy and loving forgiveness of God, Jesus came to die, and in doing so He spanned that chasm. His death, burial and resurrection gave Him the right to bring those who are in shame to a place of utter forgiveness.

So do we now live in shame? No. But we cannot know the good news without the bad news. Daniel begins his prayer with the bad news, then leads to the good news, which is that God still has mercy and love in His heart. Even after all the wicked things we have done, there is still opportunity for us to turn from our sin and turn our lives to King Jesus.

So Daniel gets right with God. He realizes that he can't ask anything of God until he first repents. Brothers and sisters, the reason we do not see God acting as He did in the times of Daniel and the times of the disciples is because we do way more requesting than we do repenting. Let me say that again. Our prayers are all requests, but rarely are they repenting. When we gather in small groups, we say, "Who has a prayer request?" I have a lot of requests. But what small group have you been part of where they say, "Hey, it's time to pray and I want to repent"? Oh, you can't do that. Who says you can't do that? We need to repent.

We're the teenager who's going to Mom and Dad saying, "Give me the keys. I'm going out tonight." You've forgotten that last night you were brought home by the police because you broke curfew, trespassed and did all manner of wrong things. You messed up the car. And now you have the audacity to go to your parents with a request for the keys? What that good parent will say is, "Absolutely not. No." Similarly, God is saying, "I will not give you what you're requesting until you get right with Me." The book of James says, "Why do we ask? We will not receive, because we ask with wrong motives."

Living in these last days means we ask Him to act.

So if we're going to ask God to act—which is the fourth thing we do to prepare—we have to get right with Him first. Daniel gets right with God, then in verse 18 he says, *"O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness."* We do not deserve the opportunity to ask God for anything, but we still do ask, because we know Who God is. He is a loving, forgiving and kind God.

Daniel continues in verse 19, *"O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."* He asks God to act.

No doubt in a room filled with this many people, we need God to act in some pretty powerful ways this week. So before you start asking God to act, would you start asking for forgiveness? Would you start repenting? Would you allow God to remind you of the bad news? But don't stay there. Also be reminded of the truth that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, even the chief of sinners like me and like you. God wants to forgive you and show you His love.

Living in these last days means we leave it in the Lord's hands.

When we allow this process to run its course, God says, "I'm ready to listen." Then when we ask Him to act, we leave it in His hands. Daniel prayed to God, then left it with God, little knowing the answer was on its way. We'll pick that up next week, where the answer comes in verse 20. Not only will he get the answer to his question, he's going to get so much more. The last part of Daniel 9 is one of the most action-packed and involved passages of Scripture.

I wrote something down that I want to close with this morning. There is much to be appalled by with our world today. There's plenty to be anxious about with the problems and issues our world faces. There's a ton to be angry about, in the many details of what we see in our world. But instead of preparing for the end times by being appalled, anxious or angry, might we as a church and as a people be active. Might we be active in studying the Scriptures and praying with purpose, active in getting right with God, active in asking God to act in big and small ways, then leaving it in the hands of the Lord Who does right and knows right, trusting Him every step of the way.

Can we do that this morning, this week? Can we do that in this time we're calling the last days? If we will follow Daniel, then we will honor God in the good and the bad that the Lord may bring our way.