# Daniel 9:1-19 - Repentance for the Nation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=no1v8ZxfDEc>

As you watch that video, you can almost imagine seeing Lincoln’s proclamation for the first time. And with only a couple minor tweaks, you can also see that it applies to today. Let me highlight some phrases.

*By the President of the United States of America*  
  
**A Proclamation**

Whereas the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, has by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation; and

Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord;

And, insomuch as we know that by His divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do by this my proclamation designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this 30th day of March, A. D. 1863, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-seventh.

Change the CIVIL WAR to COVID-19 and the 1863 dates to 2020 and it could have been a modern proclamation. Lincoln does not say the civil war is a judgment of God, but does say that we it is appropriate to consider that it is a possibility. Likewise, I cannot say that the crisis we face is definitely because of God’s judgement, but neither can I definitively say that it is not.

Daniel was in a similar situation. He was in a prosperous kingdom, which was a vasal state to the Medo-Persian empire, but he was not a citizen of that country. He was an exile from Israel, which had been conquered by the Babylonians and then inherited by the Medo-Persians.

Joshua led the people of Israel into the promised land about 1250 years before Christ. For the next 250 years, they were led by the prophets. For about 100 years they were unified under kings Saul, David and Solomon. The divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah continued for 200 years until Israel was exiled into Assyria. 180-200 years later, the kingdom of Judah was conquered and exiled into Babylon. For 700 to 750 years there was a Jewish kingdom, three times the history of the United States. During that entire time, they followed a pattern. 1) They were faithful to God, he blessed Israel and they prospered. 2) They became self-confident and started to view their prosperity as the result of their own efforts. 3) They neglected their relationship with God. 4) They accepted the philosophies and religions of the nations around them. 5) God removed his hand of protection and they suffered financial calamities, famine, evil rulers, and attacks by enemies. 6) When they were nearly hopeless, they listened to God’s prophets and returned to His word. 7) After a time of national repentance, God would raise up a godly leader and as they returned to God, He restored their nation. The cycle would then begin again.

During the last of these cycles, the prophet Jeremiah had predicted that Judah would not only be oppressed, but that they would be removed from the land for 70 years, to make up for the 490 years in which they had not given the land its sabbatical rest. It was about this time that Daniel and his friends were deported to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar. Raising to power under Nebuchadnezzar, Danial also was exalted under Belshazzar and eventually under Darius and Cyrus. Now an old man, Daniel was still reading the scriptures and God revealed that the time of exile was nearly done, but before it was done there would need to be a time of national repentance.

From this prayer, we learn that repentance begins with a person, in repentance, giving attention to God. We then learn that repentance is admitting specific sins. Genuine repentance properly views our position relative to God. Repentance confirms the discipline. Finally repentance appeals to God’s attributes and not our own.

## Repentance Begins with a Person Daniel 9:1-3

“**1** ¶ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans —  **2** in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. **3** So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

Daniel observes. Daniel gives attention to God. There will never be a successful time of American repentance unless individual believers first repent.

Daniel didn’t just say a prayer or two. His lifestyle became one of repentance. Sackcloth and ashes were a sign of mourning that in Jewish Tradition. It can be mourning for the death of a loved one, or mourning when one recognizes the loss of a relationship. For the first seven days of mourning, one avoids bathing, shaving, & jewelry and instead focuses on the depth of loss that they have. For the next three months, a Jewish mourner avoids all mirrors and makes a special effort to learn passages of scripture that were important to the person they lost. Until this time no makeup is worn, the ashen look ensuring that even if they sweat they would not appear to be anointing themselves with cosmetic oils. The last phase of mourning lasts until 12 months after the loss where they avoid all festive occasions, large gatherings and live music.

In our repentance, how will we change our lives to demonstrate our sorrow over sin?

## Repentance is Admitting Specific Sin Daniel 9:4-6

**4** ¶ I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, **5** we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. **6** "Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

Daniel is very specific in his statements, using technical terminology to describe the ways the country has turned from God…these phrases refer to leaving the things we know God has commanded, twisting the truth, condemned the innocent as guilty, refused God’s leadership and refusing to look to God.

Some people agree, in principle, that they are sinners, but never take time to examine how they are falling short of God. It has been said you can only expect what you inspect. If you expect your heart and thoughts to be purified, you must inspect them to see how you are doing. Admitting sin requires specifics.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg chapel, starting the protestant reformation. One of the things that drove him to study the scriptures and learn about God’s grace is that he was terrified by his own sin. He would sometimes spend 6 hours confessing his sins to another priest, only to come back a few minutes more because he realized he had forgotten something. In studying scripture, he realized, we cannot enumerate every single sin we do, but we can confess our specific sinful motivations. Being specific does not mean sharing EVERY detail.

Lincoln did a great job of laying out the specific sins of America in the 1860s. Do the same specifics need to be addressed today or do we need to make a new list?

## Repentance Views our Position Relative to God Daniel 9:7-10

**7** "Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day — to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. **8** "Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. **9** "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; **10** nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

Notice the comparison…righteousness, compassion and forgiveness of God vs. our shame and disobedience. Ture repentance comes when a person or nation recognizes God for who He is and recognizes that their failure is not just a mistake or a difference of opinion, but an afront to the character of the infinite perfection of God.

If we aren’t shamed by our sin, then we haven’t truly repented. But even in the abhorrence of sin, Daniel also recognizes the mercy of God. The shame of sin need not be permanent because God’s forgiveness is infinite.

Has your sin caused you shame or are you making excuses? Has our national sin caused us shame or are we prideful in our rejection of God’s standards?

## Repentance Confirms the Discipline Daniel 9:11-14

**11** "Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. **12** "Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. **13** "As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. **14** "Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.

Imagine prisoner A goes in front of the parole board. They come in and tell the board, “You need to let me go. I’m innocent. I was unjustly convicted; I don’t deserve to be here.” Later, prisoner B goes in front of the same parole board. He says, “I am so sorry for what I did. My victim should not have been treated that way. I deserved to be placed here in prison and you are justified if you decide to leave me here, but I put myself at your mercy in asking for release.” Which prisoner do you think is more likely to be paroled? Which one is less likely to commit another crime in the future? Which one has truly repented?

True repentance on behalf of our country, or on our own behalf, requires that we recognize that God is just in the ways he chooses to punish and discipline us for our sin. We embrace the discipline, not because we enjoy it, but because we know God uses it for our righteousness as we let Him.

How can we embrace God’s discipline on behalf of our country?

## Repentance Appeals to God’s Attributes Daniel 9:15-19

**15** "And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day — we have sinned, we have been wicked. **16** "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. **17** "So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. **18** "O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. **19** "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name."” (Da 9:1-19 NAS95)

Not once does Daniel imply that Israel has earned mercy. Instead, he reminds God of who He is. He asks for reprieve in accordance with God’s righteous acts. He asks God to listen for God’s sake and not his own. He asks for God to be glorified through His forgiveness. He points to the misery of God’s temple and the city that is identified with Him.

America was once a Judeo-Christian nation. Not because every person in the nation was a Christian. Not because the government forced people to follow Christ or to pray in schools. It was a Christian nation because the principles on which our laws and communal decisions were made were principles of scripture. Most people outside of the US still think that America is a Christian nation, but also see America as decadent and hedonistic. Because of that, they also think that those sins are characteristic of Christianity.

As we pray in repentance for our country, let us appeal to God because of His Glory. As our country continues in sin, people use that sin as an excuse to reject the things of God. We obviously want the people of America to repent because we want to see them saved. We don’t want them to have eternity in hell. But we can also pray for the repentance of our country because we desire to see THE WORLD reached by the gospel. America may or may not become a nation of Christians, but as God moves, perhaps our self-indulgence will not be a hindrance to others hearing the good news.

[Closing in corporate prayer for the repentance of our nation and for God to restore His hand of blessing.]

# Daniel 9:1-19 - Repentance for the Nation

## Repentance Begins with a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Daniel 9:1-3

There will never be American repentance unless \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ first repent.

In our repentance, how will we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ our lives to demonstrate our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ over sin?

## Repentance is Admitting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sin Daniel 9:4-6

You can only expect what you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Admitting sin \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ specifics.

Being specific does not mean sharing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

## Repentance Views our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Relative to God Daniel 9:7-10

If we aren’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by our sin, then we haven’t truly repented.

The shame of sin need not be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because God’s forgiveness is infinite.

## Repentance \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Discipline Daniel 9:11-14

True repentance requires that we recognize that God is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

How can we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s discipline on behalf of our country?

## Repentance \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God’s Attributes Daniel 9:15-19

As we pray in repentance for our country, let us appeal to God because of His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

We can pray for repentance of our country because we desire to see \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ reached by the gospel.