

### 335 “Read it till you weep, David”

In these Weekly Reflections we occasionally mention Frank Paine (1906-1983) who, with Arthur Ware (1885-1978) and four other colleagues, spent many years studying God’s use of Time within the Bible, the subject known as Bible Chronology; (see [www.shiloah.co.uk](http://www.shiloah.co.uk), best in Google Chrome). The results of their labours, under the patient guidance of the Holy Spirit, were and are remarkable, and remain as relevant for God’s people and the wider world as ever in these wild days of “confusion of faces” (Daniel 9.7, KJV).

In his later years Frank corresponded with many people around the world concerning the things of God. In one letter written in March 1973, Frank wrote these simple words to a friend in Florida concerning Daniel Chapter 9 - “I always get blessed by reading Daniel’s prayer – read it till you weep, David”.

Daniel was in exile in Babylon with God’s covenant people the Jews. He knew God’s promise in Jeremiah 25.11, that the exile was to last seventy years, and now those seventy years were “nearly up”. So Daniel prayed, pouring out his heart in repentance for his wayward people as he asked the Lord, “How much longer?”.

And, as Frank Paine and many others have found, what a prayer it is! Daniel “set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes ...” (9.3, KJV). He meant it, and he showed the Lord he meant it.

He acknowledged the Lord as “the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments” (v 4). Therein lies the old, vital, unavoidable, biblical key to our seeking God’s help and blessing – a healthy understanding of God’s nature and character, and of the grounds by which we may approach Him.

Daniel fully confessed the sins of the people – sin, iniquity, wickedness, rebellion, disobedience, ears stopped to the many divine words of warning, trespass, transgression, prayerlessness (vv 5-15). He accepted that all the punishments that had since happened to the people – exile, confusion, curse, evil, reproach, desolations - were a direct and just result of their wilful conduct against the Lord with whom they were uniquely linked by the covenant promises (vv 7,8,11-18).

He then pleaded for the Lord's forgiveness, not on the grounds of the people's righteousness (v 18b) but rather on the grounds of – "thy righteousness ... thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain ... thy sanctuary ... for the Lord's sake ... the city which is called by thy name ... for thy great mercies ... for thine own sake ... for thy city and thy people called by thy name" (vv 16-19).

He finished – "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God ..." (v 19).

And the Lord did hear! He had heard indeed since the first words of Daniel's prayer (vv 20-23), and through Gabriel He then gave Daniel, and the rest of us, one of the most crucial prophetic passages of the whole Bible (Daniel 9.24-27), the seventieth week of which is yet to come.

Now there are clear parallels between Judah in exile on the one hand and the United Kingdom in these extraordinary days on the other - not an exact fit of course but with more than enough similarities for us to pay serious attention.

Frank Paine's colleague Arthur Ware wrote these words to the then Archbishop of Canterbury in November 1960, which clearly make the point: "Britain is the only great power that still officially honours the work of God's Holy Spirit at the Reformation four hundred years ago ... as a nation we have an established Protestant Succession and the national Church is bound by Parliament to the Reformation Prayer Book and the Thirty-nine Articles. These facts carry immense weight with Almighty God Who has been able to preserve us as a nation from many calamities thereby, and this in spite of the gross unfaithfulness of large numbers to Reformation principles".

"These facts" are still in place constitutionally, though sixty more years of national, Judah-like disobedience have now passed since Arthur Ware's letter. In our present chaotic situation we are surely seeing the divinely-allowed consequences, and perhaps now too the start of divinely-wrought judgments, regarding the deeply sinful "leave-God-out-of-it" approach of British governments over the years (egs., Isaiah 9.16 & 10.1 / Jeremiah 2.13 / Luke 12.48b).

Daniel prayed to the Lord God earnestly and honestly. We pray to just this same Lord God but now with the blessing of our access to Him being via our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the "Messiah the Prince" of

Daniel 9.25, and in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8.26-34, and 35-39 while we are there!).

We do well, in Frank Paine's words, to read Daniel's prayer "till we weep", and we do well to lift that same prayer to the same Lord God for our own nation at this time – perhaps even till we weep.

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