

DANIEL:
A MAN GREATLY BELOVED
Bible Studies Giving an Overview of the
Book of Daniel

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DANIEL:
A MAN GREATLY BELOVED

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1. DANIEL CHAPTER 1:

WHEN TO SAY 'NO'

Introduction

'In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it' Daniel 1.1.

The *Book of Daniel* commences at the time when God's prophesied judgment finally came on the land of Judah. From the time God called the Children of Israel as His special people they had been clearly warned: obey and be blessed – disobey and you will come under judgment.

God gave clear, unmistakable guidelines to follow. No nation on earth had such a wonderful opportunity of peace and prosperity like the Children of Israel. Obedience to God meant a unique relationship with Him and gracious provision for them. They experienced this so clearly in the times when they were loyal to Jehovah God. He was totally faithful to His Word at all times. Never was a people so blessed spiritually and providentially as the Jewish nation when they followed the Lord.

But for many years, prior to this terrible judgment, the Jewish nation had turned over to idolatry. In their false security they thought God would not destroy His special city Jerusalem despite their disobedience. 'Surely when the Lord sees the Temple under threat He will save us. We have the Temple in Jerusalem and, despite the syncretism of our worship, God will never destroy Jerusalem.'

The Children of Israel had had similar thinking when they lost the battle to the Philistines in *1 Samuel 4*. 'Bring the Ark of the Covenant! Just let us see it in the camp visibly, then we will win the battle. We do not need to repent, or humble ourselves, or pray.' The Lord in His

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sovereignty allowed the Ark to be captured by the Philistines. They needed to learn the lesson that relationship with God Himself was the most important thing.

But here, in their hypocrisy, they presumptuously trusted their privileged, providential relationship with God. They worshipped idols and their immorality, injustice, oppression, stealing, and lying went on unabated. Yet they were still trusting in the building of the Temple in a superstitious manner as an alternative to real repentance. They despised the continual warnings of faithful men of God like Jeremiah, who preached time and time again. The people rejected all warnings and exhortations to repent and humble themselves before Almighty God.

However, the first verses of the *Book of Daniel* teach us that God is not mocked. Finally, God brings down His hand of wrath. The land of Judah is shaken and Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed. Remember – special cities or special buildings like the Temple are not more important than God’s honour, despite the fact that they had been places of great blessing historically. It is not the building but the God of the building Who is important.

This lesson still has not been learned. Much of the dispute in the Middle East is over who owns the so-called ‘holy sites’, while the soul is neglected.

‘And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god’ Daniel 1.2.

Nebuchadnezzar in his pride saw this Babylonian victory as proof that his god was more powerful than Jehovah God. The Babylonian army had their own proud, aggressive agenda in taking the Jewish nation captive. The arrogance of the Babylonians was seen specifically

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in taking the holy vessels and placing them in their temple. It is significant as to where Nebuchadnezzar put these vessels – in the land of Shinar.

'And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar' Genesis 10.10.

'And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there' Genesis 11.2.

The sacred spot for the Babylonians was where they first showed open rebellion against Almighty God! They mistakingly thought this act would demonstrate their superiority over Jehovah God, but it is very clear that the army of Babylon, despite what they thought, were not controlled by their own gods. They were still under the sovereign power and will of Almighty God, Who used them as His rod of destruction. Behind all these events, the *Book of Daniel* teaches that:

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.*

William Cowper, 1731-1800

The Babylonians had no idea they were actually serving the purposes of the Lord. God is in control, whatever. Remember (and I say this with reverence) God always comes out on top as He is in control. Later we will see how God allowed them to go so far and no further with the vessels they had so proudly taken. We can see in these opening verses that nations, leaders, and governments are actually in His hand. This gives us great assurance.

Separation according man's wisdom

'And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish,

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but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans' Daniel 1.3-4.

Nebuchadnezzar had a policy for captives: take the cream of them and assimilate them into the Civil Service. Nebuchadnezzar ordered his servant Ashpenaz to choose young men of the Jewish captives in whom were no physical blemish, who were good looking, intellectual, quick to learn, and suitable to serve in the king's palace. They had to be the best. These men were to be trained in the culture, literature, and philosophy of the Babylonians. Training included astrology, legends, science, and mathematics. They were to be 'Babylonianised'. The king wanted them alienated from the Lord and marinated in Babylonian culture so that they would be pliable. The king had their bodies: now he wanted their minds also. They were to be in total captivity, as we are by nature to Satan.

Amongst the young men thus sought out were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, all just fourteen years of age. These four young men were given new names according to the Babylonian culture:

- Daniel, meaning 'God has judged' became Belteshazzar, meaning 'keeper of the hidden treasures of Bel';
- Hananiah, meaning 'Jehovah has been gracious' was to become Shadrach, meaning 'May Marduk, the sun god, inspire and protect';
- Mishael, whose name meant 'Who is like God?' was to be called Meshach, an ancient rendering of the name for the god Venus; and
- Azariah, meaning 'Jehovah has helped' became Abednego, 'the servant of Nebo, the shining fire'.

So Nebuchadnezzar took away from each of these four men their real names referring to Jehovah God, and surplanted them with

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names which referred to his gods. God records their stand under their old names.

These four young men understood their position and the pressure they were under to compromise. They were now in captivity, being instructed in the Babylonian culture. According to Satan's plan he wanted them on the road to total subjection to him, and separation from God. They had been cruelly separated from their parents, and now Satan desired them to be separated from God.

Nebuchadnezzar was intent on Babylonianising them. Here were four young men in a vulnerable position, torn from their homes and parents, not in a prison but in a palace. Here in a way was one of the great tests. Surrounded with opulence, authority, grandeur, power, and the latest the world had to offer, Satan was coming to them with an assortment of temptations – materialism, idolatry, pride, and self-importance. In a Babylonian power bubble Nebuchadnezzar wanted his young men to view life as a Babylonian would view it.

The battle of Babylon is a picture for us of how Satan is attacking young Christians especially today. Satan wants to retake control of their minds, their philosophy, their decision-making, and their outlook. He knows if he can recapture a young believer he has taken away their usefulness for the Lord and their peace too. Here we are given an example of how four young men took a stand for the Lord in a wise manner. Here is encouragement to live for the Lord when the media and society are screaming at us to mind other things.

Separation according to God's wisdom

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king... But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he

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drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself' Daniel 1.5, 8.

Daniel was a wise young man, very mature and careful not to bring dishonour upon his God. He had learned from the testimonies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David. He had also learned from Solomon's departures. Daniel did what he could do for the government under captivity as long as it did not offend Jehovah God. He was not anti-everything – Daniel did not object to everything! Gaining knowledge of the practices of the Babylonian Empire was not, in and of itself, offensive to God. In fact, we know the Lord blessed him with his three friends in their studies as they stood for the Lord in Babylon. A lot of what Daniel was learning was of great mathematical, scientific value, and real academic, intellectual value. The Babylonians were very intelligent people: not all their learning was idolatrous. So Daniel did not bring the name of his God into disrepute by making everything a 'no surrender' issue.

This is an important matter to learn as we seek to be the salt and light in a pagan society as today. We see this in the testimony of Paul who could minister in different nations and cultures with understanding. For example, Daniel decided to leave the renaming issue unchallenged. If they called him by a different name this did not affect his relationship with God.

Let us learn from Daniel here, and be wise in the way we stand for the Lord. Daniel and his friends only made a stand when God's honour was at stake. This is an important principle. But living in a pagan world, there inevitably came a time when Daniel had to say 'no'. Remember, we need as much wisdom for when to say 'no' as when to say 'yes'. I am not advocating compromise but rather a respect for the discernment of mainline issues.

So why was the issue of the food and wine so important to Daniel

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and his friends? It was not the nature of the food; it was not because Jews could not drink wine, albeit some meat was forbidden.

Firstly, the problem was that the food and wine had been offered up to idols, so the meal was taken as form of worship. Interestingly the Babylonians were far more ready to give thanks publicly to their gods for their food than today's Christians are to say grace publicly to Almighty God for theirs. Yet these can be God-given opportunities. I was talking to a brother recently who had to attend a public function and was asked to say grace, a witness to him being known as a believer.

Here Daniel and his friends had a problem. To partake of the meal in such a fashion would be to defile themselves before God – here was a mainline issue. Because the meal was an act of worship to the pagan gods, partaking of that food would be viewed as joining in.

Secondly, to eat directly from the king's table was also to state absolute and total subjection to his authority, to acknowledge dependence upon him, and allegiance to his gods. It was a mainline, fundamental problem for these young men.

'...and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'
2 Corinthians 6.15-16.

Now this test was not like later ones, in the fiery furnace and the den of lions; but it nevertheless was an important test, and one in which Daniel and his friends must make a stand. We sometimes wonder how we would stand if called to give our life for Christ. To answer that question we need to ask, 'How are we faring in the test God is allowing for us today?' When I look back over my secular working life, I

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have to confess that I failed the Lord at times by not separating from the world. This separation includes our conversation, what we join in with, and knowing when to walk away from an issue which is dishonouring God. As we make a stand by God's grace on the essential issues of today we will be strengthened for the essential issues of the future.

Another point we can draw from the testimony of Daniel and his friends is to stand on the line we have drawn. We can also learn to be graciously firm and polite about the stand we make. Notice how respectfully Daniel speaks to his superior, with no sign of youthful arrogance but just a simple firmness and confidence in Jehovah God.

'Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants' Daniel 1.12-13.

So Daniel's attitude and integrity spoke to the leader. A further lesson is to start as we mean to go on. This is particularly applicable when entering university, college, at school or at work.

'Them that honour me I will honour' 1 Samuel 2.30.

'And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat...And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus' Daniel 1.15, 21.

Daniel and his friends were given greater health and strength than their colleagues. They dedicated themselves to their studies as part of their witness and service for the Lord. They were given greater wisdom and knowledge by God Himself, and came out top of the class. God does not do things by halves!

'And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king

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enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm' Daniel 1.20.

God is able to make His people stand and shine even in places of evil. The Babylonian gods were mystically thought to give wisdom to their followers, but they were no match for the wisdom of the Almighty God Who endowed these young men in a remarkable manner. God can do this; He can raise up people in authority. This is for our encouragement. The powerful Babylonian Empire, which seemed invincible, came and went. God's Kingdom, represented by these young men, remains today. This give us assurance and comfort.

Those young men understood God was calling them to be faithful in what they had been called to in the here-and-now. Such people could be used of the Lord and taken into greater usefulness for Him. Their great secret was that they were filled with the Spirit of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to Whose coming they looked forward. How different was the attitude of these young men to that of their own captured king!

'And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; and he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon; and changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life' 2 Kings 25.27-30.

2. DANIEL CHAPTER 2:

THE GREATEST KINGDOM OF ALL

Introduction

In this chapter we see the remarkable way in which God reveals the inability of man without God and the ability of man under the power of God. We also see the revelation of the Lord regarding the forthcoming history of the world and the promise of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The inability of man without God

‘And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof’ Daniel 2.1-6.

A disturbed king

King Nebuchadnezzar by this time was developing a mighty kingdom and reputation. Under the sovereign, permissive will of God the Babylonian Empire grew to reign over the known world.

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'Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory'
Daniel 2.37.

The king invested immense resources of material wealth and human wisdom and academia in building Babylon. Eventually Babylon became a wonder of the world for its beauty, architecture, university of learning, and wealth.

The king was a devout worshipper of the so-called gods Marduk and Nebu. He was secure in his growing kingdom: no one dared usurp his authority. He was respected and admired. King Nebuchadnezzar was confident, self-assured, and successful; he was the great mover and shaker of his day. He was king of a triumphant nation feeling good about itself. I am sure the king felt in control and proud. He was the most powerful man in all the world. He had great riches, he had great authority, and he had great respect. When Nebuchadnezzar spoke people listened.

But one night God, in His sovereign permissive will, touched his life with a dream and shook his whole being. God can do this at any time to any person – God simply touched his life and disturbed his spirit; he was anxious. The Word of God tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had a particular dream which troubled him greatly. God, in His sovereignty, allowed this dream to really get to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar now had a problem; he was so troubled his spirit left him.

Later Daniel explained to the king the nature of his problem:

'As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass'
Daniel 2.29.

He was now troubled about things to come – the future, his kingdom, his power, failure, death, and captivity. A terrible thought now

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disturbed him: What if his throne was not secure? What did the future have in store for him? Here was a king forced to face in his thinking the fear of the unknown future without God in his life.

God is sovereign and can touch the lives of the most powerful people on earth. God has different ways in which He speaks to people. Generally speaking God speaks through His Word. He speaks through the testimony of believers, through preaching, and through the testimony of His creation. But God has other ways of speaking to people too. Sometimes God speaks through illness, disappointment, loss, bereavement, or as here, through a dream. The important point to remember here is what the dream ultimately led Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge. It brought Nebuchadnezzar finally to acknowledge that God is the true and living God over all.

At this stage Nebuchadnezzar was trapped in his mind by the sovereign power of God without realising it. God would not allow this dream to fade into oblivion. God had a purpose He was working out for His glory.

Where can an unbelieving pagan king go in trouble? The king went to the wise men of earth, but he did so knowing they were not trustworthy. What a sad reflection of the advice of the world. Deep down we know the advice of the world is not totally reliable. So the king was forced in his mind to test their sincerity. He determined to know the true interpretation of this dream. He knew the method of his wisemen and astrologers. They could make up something which they thought the king would like to hear but he knew they needed something to work on in the first place.

Evidently in those days there were so called 'dream manuals'. These gave long lists of dreams with their considered interpretation. So, tell us the dream and we will look it up in the manual! But here the king was asking them to do something which was, for them, impossible. They could only make up an interpretation according to the manual if

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they knew the contents of the dreams. But only God can reveal secrets such as this!

The king was greatly disturbed mentally and this made him irrational, angry and extreme. He was helpless to help himself; no one else could help him; he was desperately disturbed in his spirit. He was indeed a profound example of the inability of man without God in his life when facing a problem that is not going away. He was deeply disturbed and troubled.

'How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors' Psalm 73.19.

Desperate men

'The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon' Daniel 2.10-12.

For his wise men and astrologers this situation was changing from abundant riches to death. The important men of the kingdom were totally and utterly helpless; they faced certain death. How interesting to see that their lifeless idolatry, their worship and dependence on false gods, and their natural wisdom had no answer to save them!

There are times when we see how desperately vulnerable men without God are in this world. In a moment what seems to be a life of riches, comfort, and security can be changed into fear and death. This is a picture of the utter inability of man when faced with an impossible challenge – no one can do this! In the king's presence were the elite of his kingdom, his chosen top men, driven to desperation!

The ability of man with God

‘Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king’s guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel’ Daniel 2.14-15.

Men dependent upon God

In this chapter we can see a total contrast between desperate men having no answer to their desperate situation and the man of God, Daniel, together with his friends who, under the same death threat, reacted totally differently. Here the Lord gives us a picture of unbelievers in a crisis and how, by contrast, believers behave in a crisis. Daniel and his friends faced the executioner in the same way as the wise men and astrologers. There is a similar picture in the New Testament when Paul showed Christian courage when other men’s hearts failed them for fear in the storm (see *Acts 28*).

Daniel’s counsel

The first point we can notice is that Daniel by his actions demonstrated calm, and by his words, wisdom. Imagine the effect Daniel’s witness must have had upon Arioch. Arioch was no doubt a hard man. Death to Arioch was no big deal as long as it did not affect himself. He was the captain of the king’s guard, the captain of the king’s secret police. He was used to sending people to their death – it was just another day’s work to this man. But today he came across a man who was different; a man who was calm, who spoke with authority, and asked him a searching question: ‘Why is the king’s decree so urgent?’ Daniel spoke to Arioch in such a way and with such authority in his voice that Arioch was compelled to give Daniel the real reason for the death sentence. How we react to trouble and danger does speak to others.

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Daniel's courage

'Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation'
Daniel 2.16.

Here was a situation which demanded action and courage. Daniel went in to the king and asked for time to tell the interpretation. Daniel's courage and counsel as a believer in God brought calm into a desperate and dangerous situation in the same way as Paul brought authority and calm on board the ship in the terrible storm in *Acts 28*.

A believer's testimony: prayer

Daniel was a blessing and a saviour in his intercession to save lives before the king.

'Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon' *Daniel 2.17-18.*

Daniel went to his friends, explained the situation, and exhorted them to pray for God's mercy. They were in danger of losing their lives but knew the answer to their need was the mercy of God to be made known to them; so they asked God for His mercy regarding the secret. They cast themselves upon the mercy of God for Him to deal with the secret in His way and thus save their lives. This is the real heart of dependence upon God: we simply cast ourselves upon His mercy concerning our problem. God, in His great mercy, revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel in a night vision.

Praise

'Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom

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and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter'
Daniel 2.19-23.

When our prayers have been answered the first priority is praise. We can learn from Daniel's example regarding the priority of praise. When God comes and answers prayer, render to Him first the honour due to His name! This was the testimony of Noah, whose first action on coming out of the Ark of deliverance was worship.

But how did Daniel praise God? His praise was absolutely and totally God-centred. He ascribed greatness to his God for His name, wisdom, might, sovereignty, revelation, knowledge, light, gifts, and His answer. From Daniel's example we can see the priority and purpose of praise unto God.

The greatest kingdom of all (*Daniel 2.26-31, 36-47*)

Daniel was taken to the king and stood before him as a man of God filled with the Spirit of God. He ascribed honour to God, not only with his believing friends, but now in front of the king. He reminded the king of the helplessness of man and testified of the great God of Heaven Who had revealed the secret to Daniel.

There is a God in Heaven Who reveals

'But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days' Daniel 2.28.

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The revelation of God's love in Christ Jesus

Daniel did not bring honour to himself but pointed the king to God. He was a true ambassador. From this desperate situation, when it seemed as if the remnant of God's people were going to be destroyed, comes a wonderful revelation which speaks of the coming of the glorious Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Into a hopeless situation by man's standards, enters the Almighty God. He not only puts the king of Babylon on his rightful place on his knees, but through this dream reveals His glorious purposes in Christ Jesus the Lord and His kingdom: the 'stone' which crushes all the kingdoms of this world! Let us rejoice in this truth.

'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever' Daniel 2.44.

So God transformed this situation for His glory. As Daniel looked back, he could no doubt see the hand of God in the dream, and the hand of God in the revelation. He looked forward by faith to the hand of God working for its fulfilment.

Let us be assured of this one thing from this chapter: God's Kingdom will never be destroyed! The four kingdoms mentioned in the dream, representing Babylon, Persia, Rome, and Greece, were eventually crushed. So this pattern continues throughout history. An earthly kingdom rises and falls, but God remains the same and His Kingdom in Christ Jesus grows. God's Kingdom remains and even amidst persecution continues to grow and will cover the earth. This does not mean that all people will be saved but that people from all nations will hear the Gospel and be brought into this growing Kingdom. It is this Kingdom alone which will stand in the latter day with Christ upon the earth.

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'For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth' Job 19.25.

Daniel 2 is meant for the encouragement of believers. God is in control; He can bring the greatest king in the world on to his knees trembling before Him. He can reveal His sovereign, permissive will in history which has been proven beyond all doubt to be true. Above all He points us to His Kingdom in Christ Jesus which is with us today. It is the greatest Kingdom of all. To be a member of this Kingdom in Christ, like Daniel and his friends, is of the greatest worth, which is forever. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' Matthew 25.34.

3. DANIEL CHAPTER 3:

THE WAY TO FREEDOM THROUGH THE GATE OF FAITHFULNESS

Introduction

We start by setting the scene in our minds of this great event in the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.

- He was the most powerful man in the world at that time.
- He was a man consumed with the world, his ego and his idols.
- Like so many people, when in trouble he needed God and a man of God like Daniel, but when self-confidence is restored God is forgotten, and pride and ego take over.

The dream had revealed to him a huge image made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay. So now Nebuchadnezzar, in his pride and rebellion, builds an image for himself made of solid gold. This image was made to promote himself. The image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up depicted his kingdom that he thought would not be crushed.

While no doubt impressive to the human eye, its size is significant: sixty cubits by six cubits. The number six in the *Book of Revelation* is important. The antichrist also had a statue and the beast's number we are told is 666. So here in this image is something demonic, devilish, totally connected with idol worship and Satan.

This event, the dedication of the image, was a multinational extravaganza attended by the important people of the day. The climax to the occasion was for Nebuchadnezzar to have the satisfaction of thousands of his subjects bowing down to his image. For the vast majority of the attendants representing the kingdom of Babylon this presented no problem. They were caught up in idol worship. But there were three men who were not willing to dishonour God in such a manner.

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They were the remnant, the non-conformists Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But the punishment for non-conformity to the king was the fiery furnace. Humanly speaking it spelled certain death at the hands of a man obsessed with himself and his kingdom. The choice before these men was to either obey the most powerful man on earth, or God!

Today the Bible speaks to us in the here-and-now. The image is before us. The reality of the world in which we live is that we are being bombarded with temptations. For a Christian believer the temptation to go with the flow of worldliness is a real battle. It is a relentless stream, it is a powerful stream, the voice of conformity to the world.

Worldly success and ambition are often realised by being approved by man and through compromise. The job you so much want, the deal you are relying on in your business: Satan says, 'Just oil the wheels a little, bow down to compromise, bow down to the worldly friend, bow down to the image, give in to the temptation.' The furnace before us includes rejection, ridicule, hatred, loss, loneliness, disappointment, misunderstanding, and loss of reputation.

The Bible speaks to us today to encourage us, to help us, and to guide us. What can we learn from the testimony of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

Faithfulness

These men realised that above all they were called to be faithful to God, to be approved by God. It is sometimes helpful if we can focus on the high calling of a Christian to be faithful. We may refer to the message of Christ to the Church at Smyrna.

'And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things

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which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death' Revelation 2.8-11.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego literally stood up for God. Three lone men among thousands conspicuously standing while everyone else knelt down to worship the king and his idol! This is sometimes our greatest fear – to stand out in the crowd. To dare to be different is so hard sometimes.

Then we often realise, like these three men of God, that when we do make a stand for conscience sake it creates severe opposition and even hatred. Here Nebuchadnezzar was angry; he lost his self-control.

What was the secret of their faithfulness and self-control?

- They were men who had real faith in God.
- They believed that He could deliver them in the fiery furnace if it was His will.
- They submitted to the sovereign will of God.
- They were not hesitant or cautious to answer the king in this matter.

C H Spurgeon once said: 'Your duty is to do the right; the consequences are with God.' Now this is so helpful for us to realise, because we are prone to speculate on the consequences. We know what is right in our conscience, but we picture in our minds the consequences. But we are not responsible for the consequences: we have to hand them over to God.

Corrie Ten Boom wrote in her book *Each New Day**:

‘A missionary wrote me: “Sometimes adversity tempts me

* *Each New Day*, Corrie ten Boom, Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, ISBN 978-0-8007-2252-4

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to discouragement in the face of seeming failure. But I take courage and press on anew, as I remember that God does not hold me responsible for success, but for faithfulness.”

Jesus did not say, ‘Well done, thou *successful* servant’, but, ‘Well done thou good and *faithful* servant’ (see *Matthew 25.21*). These men of God did not follow God because they knew they would be delivered but because they knew they had to be faithful. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lived by this principle. Our calling, like theirs, is to be faithful whatever the cost, whatever the outcome!

Sometimes it is helpful for us to consider what is known as holy logic. For these men of God it was better to face a holy God in peace even if they lost their lives than to save their lives for a time and face Him in terror when eventually they had to die through old age.

*‘Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me’
Matthew 16.24.*

Freedom

This is one of the amazing truths coming out of this account. Bound by the king and Satan, they are thrown into the furnace; the end of the men, the king thought. In the fire they received the deliverance. It was not before the fire, but in the fire!

*‘Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’
Daniel 3.24.*

It was in the fire they realised their freedom.

‘Lo, I see four men loose’ Daniel 3.25.

Satan’s bonds were loosed! There is a wonderful freedom given to the people of God who remain faithful – the answer of a good conscience before God. What price can we put on a right relationship with God? It was the thousands of people who had bowed down to the idol who were the slaves. Do we not realise the terrible consequences of being a

slave to Satan? What price can we put on freedom? Do we realise what freedom is? Our freedom is in Christ.

Fellowship

Now in this account we read of something most remarkable.

'He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' Daniel 3.25.

In the Old Testament we read of times when the Son of God appeared upon earth prior to His incarnation.

'And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord' Genesis 18.22.

Here in this account we have another of those remarkable times when the Son of God appeared. These three men of God enjoyed fellowship in the fire with Jesus Christ.

'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' Isaiah 43.2.

'There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother' Proverbs 18.24.

God does not promise that we will not have to go through the fire, but He does promise He will be with us as we pass through the fire. It was in the fire they had the fellowship.

Conclusion

The mighty power of Satan and the world came head to head with the almighty power of God. As the men of God came out of the fire not a hair of the head was singed, nor their clothes burned, nor was there upon them the smell of smoke. The only thing to get burned away were the ropes of Satan.

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Here is our confidence: God is more powerful than Satan, and God always does what is right. The pathway of freedom and fellowship is known with God by walking through the gate of faithfulness.

Their temptation – to save their situation, jobs, salaries, reputation, and lives, but to sacrifice their conscience.

Their triumph – freedom, fellowship, a new opportunity for service.

Their motive – faithfulness to God.

Their testimony – usefulness was enlarged after their deeper experience of the power of God.

*‘For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee’
Isaiah 54.10.*

Let us remember with God’s help, it is better to be faithful than famous.

4. DANIEL CHAPTER 4:

THE PRISON OF PRIDE AND THE FREEDOM OF HUMILITY

There was one great characteristic in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar which gave him his greatest problem. His problem was his pride. His pride imprisoned him to view life only through his selfish opinion. Whatever other difficulties he may have had in life with other people, the greatest problem was himself. Nebuchadnezzar's pride proved a barrier to any spiritual blessing in his life whatsoever – it imprisoned him.

Finally God, in His sovereign will and purpose, intervened in the life of Nebuchadnezzar to reveal the truth about Himself as God, and also to reveal the truth to Nebuchadnezzar about his own self. To do this God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar in an extraordinary manner to bring him to his knees.

This chapter is a vivid example of how the sovereign God has the power at His disposal to bring the most powerful and the most proud man in the known world to his knees in humility and prayer. It is a reminder to us that, however powerful a natural man becomes even as a world leader or king, God in His sovereignty can put His divine hand upon that person. God is in ultimate control of all things and none can stay His hand.

I would like to consider first of all the problem of pride in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, and secondly the blessing that comes with humility.

Pride hardened Nebuchadnezzar's heart

God spoke personally to Nebuchadnezzar in many ways through the testimony of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: their testimony of wisdom, of integrity, of humility, of dependence upon God, of faithfulness, and of the power of Jehovah God Who spoke through

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His servants. The personal witness of these godly men no doubt spoke to Nebuchadnezzar, but pride quenched its light.

Pride hid the real weaknesses of Nebuchadnezzar's life

It was evident that Nebuchadnezzar's pride acted as a barrier between his mind and his heart. When in personal trouble Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated his weakness and vulnerability, but when delivered his pride once again took control.

Following the revelation of his first dream Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed that God is the greatest God. Following the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego he proclaimed that God is the greatest deliverer. But in the end these just proved to be words following events that had impressed him. His pride would not allow him to admit his own inner weakness, or to face up to the real issues of his personal life. It was his pride which stopped him acknowledging the truth, and pride which puffed up his ego.

Pride caused Nebuchadnezzar to hate any opposition

Nebuchadnezzar was a tyrant; he ruled by fear.

'And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down' Daniel 5.19.

His pride meant that any whiff of opposition to his rule was stamped upon severely. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to his idol, he was beside himself with rage. He was a slave to his pride. His pride made him irrational.

Pride caused Nebuchadnezzar to hanker after praise

We all like to be praised in some way or another. Praise can be an encouragement for us in a healthy way. But to demand praise, to expect praise, to be fed by praise, is another sign of the slavery of pride. Pride enslaved him and governed him.

The Prison of Pride and the Freedom of Humility

Pride caused Nebuchadnezzar to honour himself

The image set up in the plain of Dura was simply to honour himself. Pride sought all the while to draw attention to himself.

Pride blotted out from Nebuchadnezzar the heart of God's message

God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar again through the second dream. He was exhorted by Daniel to change his arrogant ways of oppression, and to show mercy to the poor.

'Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity'
Daniel 4.27.

Nebuchadnezzar's pride was like a black cloud covering the light of God's truth. His pride made him disregard the warning and live on his self-belief. This was the year of God's grace; because of his pride Nebuchadnezzar continued after the warning. Pride opposes and covers what is good and what is the true reality about ourselves.

Pride proved to be his undoing

The big 'I' finally proved his undoing.

'At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?'
Daniel 4.29-30.

The moment of his greatest pride was the moment of his greatest humiliation. While the Word of God gives us this extreme account on the life of the most powerful man on earth at that time, the same motivation of pride can be found in each one of us.

- Pride hardens the heart;
- Pride blots out our weaknesses from our sight;

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- Pride hates anyone to stand up and oppose us;
- Pride seeks after praise in various forms;
- Pride seeks self-honour;
- Pride blots out God's gracious message to us;
- Pride, unchecked and unrepented of, will prove our undoing.

God humbled Nebuchadnezzar – humility made Nebuchadnezzar look in the right direction

The first evidence of Nebuchadnezzar's humility was evidenced by the direction in which he looked.

'And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven' Daniel 4.34a.

One of the first signs of real humility is when we start to look away from self, our possessions, and our so-called rights, and look unto God. Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled bodily and mentally by God. The same God who had allowed him such power now allowed him such degradation.

At the set time appointed by God in His merciful judgment, Nebuchadnezzar looked up to Heaven. For the first time Nebuchadnezzar turned to God. Finally he really came to God, but he came emptied of self, emptied of pride.

'O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee' 2 Chronicles 20.12.

'I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them' Psalm 34.4-7.

The Prison of Pride and the Freedom of Humility

Humility made Nebuchadnezzar praise and honour God

He praises God as the most High, he praises God as the One Who lives forever.

‘...and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation’ Daniel 4.34b.

He honours God! This is the sign of true humility before God; all the glory, all the praise, all the honour directed to God.

‘Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake’ Psalm 115.1.

Humility made Nebuchadnezzar understand his position

The once most powerful man in the world says man is insignificant.

‘And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?’ Daniel 4.35.

‘Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing...It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in’ Isaiah 40.15, 22.

Humility made Nebuchadnezzar appreciate God’s sovereignty

Here, coming from the lips of Nebuchadnezzar, is one of the greatest statements of God’s sovereignty in the whole of the Old Testament.

- He controls His army in Heaven (v35). Nebuchadnezzar knew all about armies, but now he knows of the greater army of God in Heaven.
- He controls the inhabitants of the earth (v35). He has a divine right to do whatever He pleases.

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Humility made Nebuchadnezzar appreciate God for Who He is

'At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase' Daniel 4.36-37.

- His works are truth, His ways are justice. This is a statement of faith in God from a man who had experienced the awesome hand of God's judgment.

Humility made Nebuchadnezzar want everyone to know of God's greatness

Can you imagine the stir this account must have made in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom? Nebuchadnezzar was willing that everyone should know that God had humbled him, God had dealt with him, God had laid him low and raised him up again. Nebuchadnezzar now praised, honoured, extolled, and lifted up God to all the world. Nebuchadnezzar's message was to all people. It is to us today.

Application

Let us examine our lives. Is pride a problem for us? Do we identify in our life with some of the characteristics of Nebuchadnezzar's pride? Is God laying us low?

- Let us humble ourselves before God.
- Let us come before God in prayer with confession.
- Let us not let pride stand in the way of blessing.
- Let us come before God asking Him to remake us and remould us according to His beauty and grace in Christ.
- Let us remember God remakes what He has broken.

5. DANIEL CHAPTER 5:

THE 'STOP TIME' OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Introduction

Historians record that at the time of this ungodly feast made by King Belshazzar the Babylonian Empire was already in a precarious position. Yet here, despite the great danger bearing down upon them from the armies of the Medes and Persians, Belshazzar remains in the capital city of Babylon in the forlorn hope that no army would gain access into the city.

Belshazzar considered himself secure in the massive city of Babylon hidden behind its great walls. He considered himself secure because of its wealth and position, and also as he looked after his friends. This may well explain the thinking behind this lavish feast he made for those close to him, a feast to which Daniel, the man of God, was not invited.

The friends we most like to be with indicate where we are in our spirit and relationship with God. What about us? Are we like Belshazzar? Is all our security wrapped up in this world? The army was marching towards Babylon; danger was near, yet Belshazzar just kept partying. Belshazzar's appointment with death was approaching, symbolised by the advancing army. So for us the army of death is nearer to us now than when we woke up this morning, an unstoppable army which will usher us from this world into the next. What is the next world for us? How are you preparing for it?

'For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and knew not until the flood came,

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and took them all away; so shall also will the coming of the Son of man be' Matthew 24.38-39.

The testimony of an arrogant man living in rebellion against God

Belshazzar was the son of King Evil-Merodach and the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar. There were three Babylonian kings during the first period of the captivity of the Jews according to Jeremiah.

'And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him' Jeremiah 27.6-7.

Belshazzar, the third Babylonian king, was a man who lived in total rebellion against God. He was the man who shook his fist at God and suffered the consequences. Belshazzar had grown up as Daniel and his friends were displaying their faith in God. He would have been aware of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. He would have known of what happened to his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, and how Daniel had interpreted the dream.

'And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this' Daniel 5.22.

Yet Belshazzar never made personal contact with Daniel and his friends when he was in power. They were not required in his palace. At the time of this feast he had to be reminded of Daniel's existence.

'There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made

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master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers'
Daniel 5.11.

If a man has no time for God, he does not have time for God's people. He wanted Daniel out of sight, out of mind. This in and of itself is testimony to the way man rebels against God. Belshazzar had no time for God and subsequently no time for Daniel. When all was going well he had no need of Daniel, he did not fit in with his plans.

So it is with us when we are in rebellion against God. Maybe it seems we are even prospering in so doing, yet the army of death, like the approaching army of the Medes and Persians, is getting closer every minute. (See *Psalms 73*.)

Belshazzar shut out from his mind the awesome testimony of the way God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar. Despite that warning the conduct of Belshazzar at the feast showed his total rejection of God. Drinking to excess makes people bold; it makes people sin more readily; it makes people say things which lack caution. Here we have a vivid picture of what is considered in the world as having a good time, a good party.

- Plenty of alcohol is essential for the world to have a good time; for example at Christmas time sales of alcohol are mind-boggling.
- Immorality is another essential ingredient for the man of the world to have a good time, but it leads to broken homes.
- Man-made gods are part of man's essential need to worship something or someone, so idolatry must be part of the party.

The consequence of these so-called 'good' times is arrogant rebellion against God. Belshazzar had no fear of God in his life and consequently he had no respect for the holiness of God. This was clearly evidenced in taking the vessels of the Temple. It was of no great significance that the vessels were of gold and silver: the significance was what the vessels symbolised. The vessels came from the Temple in

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Jerusalem and symbolised the holiness of God. They had been consecrated for the worship of Jehovah God, yet Belshazzar desecrated these vessels by drinking from them in an ungodly manner at the same time as praising his man-made gods.

So we have a picture of arrogant man going along in his way, stopping at nothing in his rebellion against God.

The reality of arrogant man confronted with the Word of God

God is a God of mercy and a God of love. He says He takes no delight in the death of the wicked (*Ezekiel 33.11*). For many years God had given time for Belshazzar to consider His dealings with his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar of all people had been warned; God is not mocked. But in every unbeliever's life there is a time when they cross the line from God's mercy to God's judgment. God says:

'...Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed' Job 38.11.

Man is confidently arrogant against God until God intervenes.

Consider this amazing picture. One minute there is an ungodly party going on with ungodly conversation, ungodly songs, ungodly entertainment, and ungodly actions. Suddenly God breaks in on man's 'good time' party and stuns them into silence. Not only that but the leader and instigator of the party ends up a shivering wreck! This is how soon the arrogance of man falls down against one action by God.

None of his worldly counsellors have the answer to the words of God. The answer to the Word of God cannot be found here! We can learn from this event the impotence of man when confronted with the intervention of God. However arrogant man may be in his way, in his inventions, or in his words against God, it only takes four words from God written on a wall to make them shake in their boots.

'Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts

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troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another' Daniel 5.6.

We should certainly fear God, but never fear the wicked. We can also understand that God can intervene in the most evil situations. God cannot be shut out, whatever man is up to. Man cannot say to God, 'You cannot come into this situation'; man cannot say to God, 'Mind Your own business!' The opposition of evil is very much God's business.

We can also learn that God is pleased to convey His truth through men and women. God could well have bypassed Daniel on this occasion but Daniel is called into this den of iniquity to speak boldly for God. This demonstrates that when the need arises we may be called to speak for God in the most difficult place. The last place in Babylon Daniel would have wanted to be was at that party, but it was to that party that Daniel had to go and convey God's truth. Imagine the sight – a sober, godly man standing in front of the king and a thousand of his lords. It was only a man with spiritual discernment that had the answer to this fearful man's question.

The judgment against the arrogant man

The questions Belshazzar asks confirms that he really does know a good deal about Daniel.

'Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?' Daniel 5.13.

This makes him even more responsible for his previous rejection of Daniel. But Belshazzar had not wanted him around until his time of need. Before this he did not want a prophet of Jehovah God in his palace. Out of sight, out of mind! But while he had shut out Daniel from his life, he could not shut God out of his life: the day of reckoning came.

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Daniel explained to him the meaning of the words.

- *Mene* – God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. God has the control to start and to stop your reign. God has the power to stop our lives at any time.
- *Tekel* – You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. God has weighed up your personal life and it does not satisfy His standards. Belshazzar, you have spent your life rejecting God, and now finally the day of reckoning has come. Belshazzar, you have been weighed in the balances and been found wanting! The day of reckoning is coming to us each. When God weighs our life in the balance who will take the weight of our sin? Has the weight of our sin been taken by Christ?
- *Peres/Upharsin* – Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar, God not only finishes your kingdom, He knows who is going to start the new one.

Conclusion

The testimony of Belshazzar is a solemn warning about the great eternal danger of rebelling against the Lord. God has His 'stop time' – God has ordained a line which if we cross we will undoubtedly come under His judgment. Each day we are walking closer to that line. As we walk God does not leave us without witness. He has given Creation, conscience, the Gospel, the Cross, and the testimony of others. Belshazzar had the warning of his grandfather, the testimony of man against God:

‘...but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified’ Daniel 5.23.

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The awesome reality is that we are responsible before God. When God works no one can stop Him.

'In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old' Daniel 5.30-31.

There is a great need of repentance!

6. DANIEL CHAPTER 6:

DARING TO BE DIFFERENT AND STAND ALONE WITH GOD

We now consider the testimony of the man of God, Daniel. He was converted at a young age and by God's grace had a faithful testimony to the end of his life. He was taken captive as a young man into Babylon and set apart for special training. As a young man he made a stand for the Lord and the Lord honoured this stand. Daniel was a young man of courage who dared to be different. He prospered by the Lord and became one of the greatest leaders of his generation, but as a believer. This study establishes the point that true Christianity requires courage.

Daniel's career

'Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him' Daniel 6.3-4.

Daniel's career could be summed up – he honoured God and God honoured him. It was a partnership which reveals God's interest in a person both practically and spiritually. Daniel was a man who had retained his integrity and remained loyal to his God. Daniel chose from the beginning the pathway of loyalty to God rather than compromise to man. It is said that every man has his price, but not the man of God, Daniel.

At the beginning of this chapter we are shown one of the ways in which Daniel honoured God in his witness. Part of his effective

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witness was his dedication to duty. He distinguished himself above his colleagues. He was obviously a hard worker, an efficient leader, someone who excelled in his job. His witness was in hard work. He used the talents God gave to him, and in using those talents he was greatly respected.

Basically, Daniel was a dependable man; he was a man the king could trust, a faithful man. However devious and scheming people may be, what the world really needs is people who can be trusted. Daniel was a model for us of the godly person at work. He worked with all his heart as though he was working for the Lord. It started at the beginning of his career. In Chapter 6 we find him still the same at over eighty years old.

‘But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself’ Daniel 1.8.

He is an example for us to follow. But remember, Daniel also had an example to follow – the testimony of Joseph.

Application: Our actions speak louder than our words. The world may not understand the doctrine of Christianity, but the witness of Christianity can clearly be seen.

The test of Daniel’s integrity

‘Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him’ Daniel 6.4.

Now Daniel was not perfect (*see Daniel 9.3-5*). He was what he was by the grace of God. He did not serve the king in his own strength but regularly and daily sought the Lord for grace, strength, and wisdom to serve.

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Daniel's critics

'Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree'
Daniel 6.5-9.

Satan knew in this situation only a policy of open confrontation would be sufficient to destroy Daniel. A scheme had to be worked out. Daniel's first loyalty to God must bring him into open confrontation with his loyalty to the king. Satan accomplished this position in two ways.

a. Pressure

Imagine the scene: one hundred and twenty princes and two presidents surrounding Darius, putting him under great pressure. This is often how Satan works; he uses people in a way to pressurise leaders into wrong decisions. We see this in government. People with different interests have lobby groups. They apply pressure to make our leaders take decisions that suit their particular interest.

Here jealousy ruled the day. No way was a Jewish captive going to be in a position of such authority! So the first priority is to bring pressure upon the situation. This is one of Satan's tactics – make a quick decision; do not allow the person to think too carefully about the decision; create an atmosphere of pressure. So the king was faced with

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one hundred and twenty-two men united in their desire to ‘con’ the king and kill Daniel.

If the king had thought carefully about what was being said he would have discerned deceit. The ungodly leaders used the word ‘all’, but the ‘all’ did not include Daniel. Why did he not look for Daniel? If he had taken time to properly consider Darius would have realised that Daniel would never recommend such a decree. Decisions taken under great pressure are seldom good decisions. Daniel was a type of Christ with the leaders surrounding him seeking his destruction.

‘The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed’ Psalm 2.2.

b. Position

The next tactic of Satan is to make the king feel important by flattery, boosting his ego, and making him feel ‘Number One.’ For thirty days the king was to be made the earthly representative of the gods. Any prayer to these gods should only be made through the mediation of the king. So King Darius was made to feel important. This law was purposely presented to him to make him feel the importance of his position.

So let us beware when proposals are put to us which feed our pride, make us feel important, and exalt self. Darius was being told he was to be considered as a god. The deification of a king was the greatest honour man could place upon him.

Now Satan had successfully brought about a situation which meant Daniel was put in a position of either obeying the king and save his life, or of obeying God and lose his life. Daniel simply did what he had been in the habit of doing since a teenager; he followed God, he trusted in God, he obeyed God – it was simply a way of life. Daniel had a life-long habit of saying ‘no’ to sin. Continually saying ‘no’ to sin develops resistance to sin; giving in weakens our resistance to sin.

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Surely this should be our ambition: a way of life which remains steadfast in the good times and the bad.

Daniel's commitment

'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime'
Daniel 6.10.

Daniel, despite the law, continued to obey his God and prayed as he had since his conversion. Daniel had a clear choice: to remain a godly man and face death, or compromise his faith, behave like an ungodly man, and live. There is such a thing as holy logic and Jesus teaches it.

'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it' Matthew 16.25.

Daniel was a godly man in an ungodly city. Babylon depicts sin and idolatry and humans acting independently from God, eventually bringing about their own destruction.

When Daniel prayed he looked towards Jerusalem. This was not only because it was his real home, but because of what Jerusalem symbolised. Jerusalem was called Zion, the city of our God. Babylon was a city destined for destruction, while Daniel looked to Jerusalem, a city destined for salvation, where God had demonstrated to them time and time again that He was God.

The New Testament picks up the same picture of two cities in the *Book of Revelation*. Babylon symbolises humanism, living a man-centred life, rather than a God-centred life.

'And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all'
Revelation 18.21.

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Jerusalem symbolises God dwelling with man in Christ. It stands for a God-centred existence.

‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away’ Revelation 21.1-4.

Jerusalem was the city where God had and would fulfil His promises concerning the Messiah, the Saviour. Here we have the Gospel of God’s grace seen and believed in by Daniel. (Note also *Daniel 7.13.*) When Daniel prayed he prayed by faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as his Saviour.

Daniel showed his commitment by praying regularly with purpose. He prayed by faith, and he prayed with respect on his knees.

‘Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime’ Daniel 6.10.

Here lies the secret behind Daniel’s strength – serious prayer! Here is Daniel at the age of eighty. What will be your testimony at eighty years old? Will you be just a number among the world, or will you be a man or woman of God who stands out from the crowd daring to be different? Satan knew that the Church depended on people like

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Daniel, going down on their knees in their weakness and pleading for God's grace to help in time of need. For example, Mary Queen of Scots said she feared the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand.

Praying with purpose means praying with eternity in view. Daniel had the big eternal picture – Jerusalem, where the Messiah would come, and the symbolism of the eternal city. His enemies only had the time-picture of Babylon in view.

Daniel's courage

Daniel was not just a mechanical robot in the sovereign purposes of God without feeling or responsibility. Daniel was no doubt severely attacked by Satan, tempted to give in, tempted to compromise, tempted to give up on prayer for thirty days. It is amazing that Daniel braved the lions' den, but what is more amazing is how Daniel kept praying!

Daniel would have felt the hurt, injustice and power of these attacks. It has been suggested that the greatest den was not the den of lions but the room in which he prayed. It was likely that when Daniel was at prayer the greatest spiritual onslaught came upon him, like the experience of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt' Matthew 26.39.

Daniel, like his Lord, remained steadfast; he remained faithful to Jehovah God. The great work of faith is that Daniel kept praying. We are not told what he felt like, just that he kept on praying. The greatest statesmen in the world was on his knees.

Daniel understood the value and importance of prayer and dependence. The courage to obey God comes from a settled understanding the God is really in control.

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Daniel's conviction

We cannot really be true people of courage without conviction. Daniel had conviction in his life. He had no doubt in his mind that Jehovah was the one and only true and living God. He believed that He was the sovereign God, He was almighty. Daniel believed that he had no alternative but to trust and obey. This is one of the great points coming from Daniel's testimony, the no alternative steadfastness of Daniel's life. For Daniel there was no alternative to obedience, despite pressure presented to his mind by Satan. For this man of God there was no alternative. His faith meant the steadfast conviction that God was God. That God must be obeyed formed the resistance to the evil one.

It was not Daniel's personal strength but his personal belief and conviction which proved his resistance. He looked to the One Who could save him, the One Who could deliver him, the One Who would do what was right.

Being convinced of God's greatness and sovereignty and our responsibility to that conviction. This was a test of what Daniel really thought about God.

Daniel's comfort

'Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt' Daniel 6.21-22.

God did not promise Daniel that he would not have to enter the lions' den, but Daniel knew that God would be with him in it. God does not always deliver from trouble but always grants His presence in trouble. Daniel spent a glorious night in God's presence. The surroundings were no barrier to the presence of God. The lions' mouths

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remained shut, reminding him of his security in the Lord. Daniel considered communion with God most precious. He would rather have that than life itself. His victory cry of faith was, *'My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths.'* Many people believe, and I think rightly, that Daniel experienced the very presence of Christ with him in the den. Just as Christ was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, so Christ was with Daniel in the den of lions. What a Saviour! What a Friend is this! What security in Christ from the evil power of Satan! Someone has said about Heaven, 'All I need to know is that Jesus will be there.' As we face the future here on earth, all we need to know is that we will experience the presence of Jesus.

'My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths.' Satan is a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour. God has sent His Son who has shut the lion's mouth for all those who trust in Him. We can be eternally secure from the roaring lion, Satan, only in Christ.

It is the man or woman of God like Daniel who actually makes a lasting impact for good in this world. We are still talking about Daniel. Whoever takes time out to talk about Darius or his so-called wise men? Millions of people take time out to speak about Paul. Who takes time out to talk about Agrippa or Felix, the ungodly rulers of his day? Billions of people today take time out to talk about Jesus. Whoever takes time out to talk about unbelieving Herod who sought to kill Jesus? Whose example are you going to follow?

Do you desire to be a person of courage with God's help like Daniel, or are you making a conscious decision to keep your head down and go with the crowd? What would happen to you if such an edict was made today – no praying to God, no worship, no going to church for thirty days? Would this have an impact? Would you dare to be different and make a stand or be willing to go with the crowd? Maybe you

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would escape being different for the Lord by going with the crowd. One day we will have to meet the Lord. Will we, in God's strength, dare to be different and follow the Lord?

7. DANIEL CHAPTERS 7-12:

GOD IS IN CONTROL

We are now going to take a general overview of these final chapters of the *Book of Daniel* to see something of their teaching. This study is based on selected portions of the second part of the *Book of Daniel*: 7.9-28; 9.24-27; and 12.1-3, 13. These portions are chosen to demonstrate that God is in control overall and He will work out all His purposes.

The divinely-inspired literature style of the second part of *Daniel* is also found in the *Book of Revelation*. Both these books use symbolism to proclaim a profound message of warning and encouragement. The literature is often prophetic, future events being recorded before they occurred.

Written under divine inspiration it is meant to assure us in times of trouble that God knows and cares. He is most assuredly working out His purposes for the Church in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Remember history is in God's hands! All events are steadily bringing His purposes to pass. In His own time He will end the rule of evil and bring in His everlasting Kingdom in the new Heavens and the new earth.

People who stand alone for God, like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, always need encouragement. While there is a growth of evil, God's care for His people assures us that evil will not finally prevail.

These chapters have a grand purpose

The first chapters of *Daniel* have shown us how to stand alone for God. The remaining chapters show us why it is worthwhile to stand for God. This is demonstrated by the effect some of the prophetic visions had upon Daniel. He realised they were of immense significance, sometimes beyond his understanding. However, when he was

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given in God's grace a clear understanding of their meaning, he was fearless in proclaiming it faithfully before kings.

Remember how Daniel stood so boldly alone in the blasphemous court of Belshazzar? By that time Daniel had already been given a dream and a vision from the Lord (see *Daniel 7-8*). Twice he had been reminded that all events in human history do nothing but serve God's purposes. It was decreed by God that the Babylonian Empire would be followed by the Empire of the Medes and Persians. Daniel knew, also by revelation, that the Medo-Persian Empire would be overthrown. So he stood before Belshazzar and boldly predicted the imminent death of the king. It was done with bold humility and yet with supreme confidence in the sovereign God. So he predicted the capture of the Babylonian Empire by the Medes and Persians. As Daniel stood before Belshazzar he looked beyond a man to the sovereignty of God. Daniel had supreme confidence that God was God, and that God was in control.

This is a vital point for faith to lay hold of. The revelation in Chapter 9 had exactly the same affect upon Daniel. He now knew for certain that the Jews would return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem. Eventually the people of this city would witness firsthand the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord. It was revealed to Daniel that for certain the all-conquering Messiah would come to this earth in God's time, that He would be cut off and die not for Himself but for the purpose of redemption. There was a future to look forward to for all of God's people. Why should he then be ashamed to belong to them?

Here is another vital point to remember. Daniel knew it was better to be on God's side in God's family however difficult the situation, than to have an easier life outside God's family just for temporary benefits.

The final three chapters, Chapters 10-12, were given to him at the age of 86. Here again we can see a grand purpose for Daniel of deep

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encouragement. When he perhaps would be surrounded by doubts, he is given this glorious vision of the Son of God Himself. He saw with fresh emphasis that human history is ruled by God in Christ even to the very end. It was revealed to Daniel prophetically of the rise and fall of man-made empires. He saw that it is God's principle to break evil when it is at its height. Evil wins many battles but will never win the war.

'Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth'
Genesis 11.9.

'And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord'
Exodus 14.4.

'...they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will' Daniel 4.25.

'O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?' 2 Chronicles 20.6.

God's Word is to be used for encouragement

Believers learn from the *Book of Daniel* not only how to stand alone for God, but why it is so important and ultimately worthwhile to do so. There was terrible persecution for the faithful Jews during the

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reign of Antiochus Epiphanes BC175-164. Evidently during this period the *Book of Daniel* proved to be their chief comfort. Hundreds of copies were secretly distributed, and proved of great encouragement not to yield to the forces of evil, for God will be victorious.

'These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' John 16.33.

'And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming' 2 Thessalonians 2.8.

Conclusion

Let us remember that the *Book of Daniel* reminds us that God is God and will prove His majesty and power. The Church, even though it will come under increasing oppression, will ultimately certainly be victorious in Him. God will not allow any one of His people to perish eternally. Everything ultimately will turn out for God's honour and glory.

God's sovereignty, glory, love, and justice will shine like a beautiful rainbow in front of the dark cloud of evil. Although evil is present in this world and often seems to have the upper hand, God has a divine care and a divine purpose for His people, and evil will not finally prevail. Despite the arrogance of evil men, there will come a time when God will speak the Word. Evil will be crushed and His everlasting Kingdom will be established in the new Heavens and the new earth.

This is the vital fundamental point to always bear in mind: God is in control whatever arrogant man may think. God will prove His majesty and power. Everything will turn out for God's great, mighty, and pure glory.

'But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days' Daniel 12.13.

8. DANIEL CHAPTER 7:

IT WILL ALL TURN OUT RIGHT IN THE END

The vision

Often when we dream we soon forget what we have dreamed. After some minutes, some hours, some days it fades into oblivion. But here, while on his bed, Daniel had a dream which was so vivid in his mind and had such an effect that he wrote down the main facts.

1. The stirring of the great sea

‘Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea’ Daniel 7.2.

The wind came from all directions at the same time and stirred up the great sea. What an awesome sight this must have been in his dream! When the wind blows from one direction powerfully the sea can be in a turmoil, but here the four winds meet and crash together with great force and churn up the sea.

Here we have a picture of the stirring up by evil forces, the stirring up of evil upon mankind. Evil is present in man because of the Fall, but Satan with his evil forces causes evil in mankind to be stirred up. It can be stilled!

2. The four beasts

‘And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another’ Daniel 7.3.

a. The lion with eagle’s wings

‘The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it’ Daniel 7.4.

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This is thought to symbolise the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. The symbol of a lion with wings is well known in excavations in Babylon. A great change came over the empire of King Nebuchadnezzar. It started off aggressive and animal-like, and then towards its end had become decidedly humanised. Nebuchadnezzar in the first part of his reign seemed to fly about around the known world devouring whom he chose. With his success came arrogance. God judged him and would not allow him to be restored until he acknowledged the sovereignty of God. In the second part of his reign he reigned more like a human being, he was more compassionate. This affected the remaining Empire of Babylon until its fall.

b. The bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth

'And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh' Daniel 7.5.

The picture here is of an animal ready to go forward. When Daniel had this dream the Medo-Persian Empire was preparing to march forward and break in upon the scene. The Medo-Persian Empire was hungry for conquest having an insatiable desire to devour. The three ribs may speak of the three empires this army conquered: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.

c. The leopard with four wings and four heads

'After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it' Daniel 7.6.

The number four in the Bible is often used to indicate the world. Scripture speaks of the four corners of the earth. This third beast relates to a third kingdom which would arise which would conquer swiftly. It would gain world dominance. This speaks of the Greek

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Empire under Alexander the Great. He rapidly expanded his empire through the known world.

d. An indescribable monster

'After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns' Daniel 7.7.

The fourth beast is so terrible Daniel can only describe certain characteristics. It was dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong, having huge iron teeth, devouring, breaking, and trampling. This is speaking about the Empire of Rome. The Roman Army was terrible in its destruction, well known for its terrible treatment of the Christian Church. This monster had ten horns. These are speaking symbolically about the empires which have proceeded from the Roman Empire. Europe has its origins in Rome.

e. The little horn

'I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things' Daniel 7.8.

This little horn represents the final stage in history, what is known as the 'last times'. It represents a man who appears to be supernatural. He will say pompous things; he will intend to change times and law; he will persecute God's people; he will speak blasphemous words; he will be totally anti-Christ.

'Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth

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himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God' 2 Thessalonians 2.3-4.

The application

Daniel is shown that above all these awesome truths about the history of mankind, God is God. He is shown as the Lord on the throne. When everything seems impossible, and evil appears to have won, suddenly God will appear in His glory.

'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' Daniel 7.13-14.

It appears that before the end of time there is going to be a terrible onslaught upon Christianity until Christ comes.

'I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom' Daniel 7.21-22.

Up until the end of time the Church will continue to grow, even amidst terrible persecution, but its freedom to witness in this world with the Gospel outwardly as a recognised religion will be crushed.

'And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time' Daniel 7.25.

Nevertheless the Gospel will continue to be preached throughout

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the world under this persecution. There will be a vibrant underground Church, for Jesus is Lord!

'But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart' Daniel 7.26-28.

9. DANIEL CHAPTER 8:

THE AWESOME ACCURACY OF GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

It is evident and certainly taught by gifted biblical scholars that historical events have a pattern to them. For example, in the *Book of Judges* we see a clear pattern: God's grace → the falling away of the Children of Israel → God's judgment → repentance of the Children of Israel → God's mercy and the renewal of fellowship.

Throughout history the Church experiences the continual patient grace, judgment, and mercy of God. Historically we know that empires come and go. We know terrible individuals like Antiochus Epiphanes rise up and terrorise great numbers of people. In the past one hundreds years we have had Stalin, Ceauşescu, and Hitler, but eventually they are put down. While there is a pattern throughout history in the battle against good and evil, *Daniel 8* teaches that God's prophecies are also proven to have a direct link to particular times, events, and people. It deals with particular prophecies for particular set times in history known and permitted by God.

The events predicted in Chapter 8 are proven to have occurred at the particular time ordained by the unseen God. Such fulfilments as prophesied in the *Book of Daniel* actually provide helpful evidence for the truth of God's Word.

'And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt' Exodus 12.41.

In this vision Daniel was transported in the Spirit to the city Susa. Susa, after the collapse of the Babylonian Empire, became the capital of the Persian Empire. Daniel sat down by Ulai which was a huge canal connecting two rivers.

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The ram and the goat

'Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven' Daniel 8.3-8.

Daniel saw a ram with two horns one of which grew larger than the other. There can be no speculation as regard who this ram symbolises.

'The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia' Daniel 8.20.

At the beginning the Medes were the stronger partner in the empire at the time when Darius was king, but eventually the Persians got the upper hand and Cyrus took the throne. So the horn which came up later and outgrew the other relates to the Persian side of the empire.

The characteristic of the ram was to be aggressive, and they gained much territory to the West, North, and South. History proves that

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nothing much was gained towards the East as foretold in Daniel's dream. But suddenly the ram is challenged by a goat rushing in from the West, coming so fast it seemed to be flying across the surface of the earth. There can be no doubt that this relates to the Greek Empire.

'And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king' Daniel 8.21.

The goat attacks the ram and totally crushes it. This is the complete defeat of the Medo-Persian Empire. The Greek King Alexander was extremely proud of his achievements and military conquests, yet at the height of his pride he was cut down.

After his reign the Greek Empire eventually divided into four parts: Macedonia under Cassander, Asia under Lysimachus, Syria under Seleucus, and Egypt under Ptolemy. None of these four empires became great as was the previous united Greek Empire.

The little horn, the evil king

'And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered' Daniel 8.9-12.

Out of one of these kingdoms an evil king grew in power. He had a terrible objective ultimately to attack God's people in their land, the land of Canaan. This refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, who arose from the Seleucid quarter of the Greek Empire. He spoiled Egypt with an

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immense army, then he took Elymais and Armenia. After this he invaded Canaan. Josephus the historian states:

'And there would arise from their number a certain king who would make war on the Jewish nation and their laws, deprive them of the form of government based on these laws, spoil the Temple, prevent the sacrifices from being offered for three years. These misfortunes our nation did in fact experience under Antiochus Epiphanes just as Daniel many years before saw and wrote would happen.'

Even the period of time was foretold.

'And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed' Daniel 8.14.

From 171-165BC the Jewish nation was attacked by this evil king. During the final three years of this the Temple was desecrated with heathen sacrifices as testified by Josephus. This was a terrible period for the Jewish nation; truth was cast to the ground, and evil was without restraint. His attack against the children of Israel is described in verse 10:

'And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.'

These were crimes against the people of the Lord. Finally the Maccabean Revolt put a stop to these sacrifices and the evil king was struck down in 164 BC, not by man, but by God. Historians tell us that he died from a terminal illness, the man who had aggressively spoken out against God!

'And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand' Daniel 8.25.

The Awesome Accuracy of God's Foreknowledge

Conclusion

- *'Without hand'* v25. Who can withstand the Prince of princes, the almighty power of God?
- *'Which was told is true'* v26. God's Word is fulfilled.
- *'Shut thou up the vision'* v26. Have respect for God's Word.
- *'Daniel fainted, and was sick'* v27. Daniel was overwhelmed by the awesome sovereignty of God.
- *'I rose up, and did the king's business'* v27. Daniel was strengthened by God.

'Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men' Colossians 3.22-23.

10. DANIEL CHAPTER 9.1-19:

THE MAN OF GOD AT PRAYER

In this chapter we see the precious characteristics of a man of God in prayer. Daniel has now been walking faithfully with his God many years. He is a man greatly beloved of God, under the wonderful, embracing, eternal love of God. Daniel shows how this love of God shone in his heart by his loving response of respect in prayer.

This prayer is one of the greatest examples of real intercessory prayer in the whole of the Word of God. Let us learn a little from a man who had been walking with God for sixty-eight years.

What was the inspiration for his prayer?

The Word of God applied to him personally by the power of the Holy Spirit was the inspiration for the prevailing prayer of Daniel. Remember, we are never too old to study the Word of God. Daniel is over eighty years old. He was fourteen years old when he was taken captive and took his stand for the Lord. The Word of God was still of vital importance for his spiritual life.

No doubt Daniel had read the Word of the Lord given by Jeremiah the prophet before, but it was on this occasion that part of the prophecy came home to him with great power.

‘Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the

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millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years' Jeremiah 25.8-11.

'For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive' Jeremiah 29.10-14.

To help him understand the will of God, the purposes of God, and to pray with understanding, Daniel needed to study the Word of God. He needed to pray using the Word of God. The Word of God applied to him personally by the power of the Holy Spirit was the inspiration for the prevailing prayer of Daniel.

Often people make the promises of God excuses for doing nothing, having a fatalistic approach to the fulfilment of God's purposes. Daniel's approach was different. The promise was the inspiration to pray earnestly for its fulfilment; the promise was the reason for the prayer. God had promised – Daniel prayed for the fulfilment of the promise.

Praying according to the will of God is finding out from the Scriptures what God has promised and praying it. God has promised that His Word will not return unto Him void, or fruitless: then we should pray for God's Word to have effect. God has promised that the Gospel will extend to the ends of the earth: then we should pray for it to do so.

What were the chief characteristics of his prayer?

a. Humility

‘And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes’ Daniel 9.3.

Position in providence did not mean Daniel felt he was exempt from demonstrating humility. Here was a man, second only to the king, humbling himself before God. Daniel was in this prayer with his whole heart. His whole being was taken up with seeking God in humble prayer. Daniel understood the Jehovah God was an awesome God and pride had no part in prayer.

‘For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word’ Isaiah 66.2.

‘Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words’ Daniel 10.12.

‘Now, as always, God discovers Himself to “babes” and hides Himself in thick darkness from the wise and the prudent. We must simplify our approach to Him. We must strip down to essentials (and they will be found to be blessedly few). We must put away all effort to impress, and come with the guileless candour of childhood. If we do this, without doubt God will hear our prayer.’ A W Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*.*

b. Commitment

Fasting, sackcloth and ashes mentioned in *Daniel* 9.3 also describe Daniel’s commitment to prayer. He prayed at this special time with an intensity; he was very serious about his praying.

* *The Pursuit of God*, A W Tozer, Christian Publications, 1982, ISBN 0875093663

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Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime’ Daniel 6.10.

c. Direction

Daniel had no doubt in his mind to Whom he was praying. In verse 3 Daniel tells us he set his face toward the Lord God. This symbolised his trust in God and his hope for the future. Here is what we can describe as faith with direction. Let us set our face toward the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

d. Adoration

‘...and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments’ Daniel 9.4.

Remember, Daniel was a man who walked in close communion with his God, but this did not mean the removal of awe and reverence. The reverse was the case. The closer Daniel got in his walk with God, the greater his sense of awe and wonder at the wonderful works of God: a God Who keeps His promises, a God Who had promised judgment and had kept His promise, a God Who promised deliverance and would keep His promise.

‘Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a

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great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground'
Daniel 10.5-9.

e. Confession

'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments' Daniel 9.5.

The point we can notice here is the way Daniel includes himself in the confession. This is an important point. We become so deflective sometimes when considering the state of the Church. Daniel did not blame their captors for their suffering but he understood the responsibility lay clearly with themselves. Jesus reminds the Pharisees how efficient and ready they were to spot the speck in another's eye while forgetting the plank in their own eye. Daniel confesses in a specific way the sins of the nation:

- Confusion: *'O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee'* Daniel 9.8.
- Rebellion: *'To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him'* Daniel 9.9.
- Despised God's law: *'...neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets'* Daniel 9.10.
- Wandered from God's way: *'Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law*

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of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him’ Daniel 9.11.

- Disobeyed God’s voice: *‘Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice’ Daniel 9.14.*
- Done wickedly: *‘And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly’ Daniel 9.15.*

f. Supplication

‘O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name’ Daniel 9.16-19.

Daniel does not generalise in his confession, neither does he generalise in his supplication. He uses phrases such as ‘Turn away Thine anger’, ‘Shine upon Thy sanctuary’, ‘Hear’, ‘See’, ‘Forgive’, ‘Listen’, ‘Act’, and ‘Do not delay’.

Whas was the assurance and basis of Daniel’s appeal before God?

a. God’s might and power

‘And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth

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out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly' Daniel 9.15.

b. God's mercy and forgiveness

'To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him' Daniel 9.9.

c. God's righteousness

'Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice' Daniel 9.14.

'O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies' Daniel 9.18.

d. God's honour

'O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name' Daniel 9.19. (See also verse 15.)

Conclusion

- The inspiration for prayer – the Word.
- The characteristics of prayer – humility, commitment, direction, adoration, and supplication.
- The assurance and basis of prayer – God's power, mercy, righteousness, and honour.

11. DANIEL CHAPTER 9.20-27:

THE MESSIAH PROMISED

We have considered Daniel at prayer. While Daniel, the man greatly beloved of God, was praying to God he had another visit from the Angel Gabriel. The Angel Gabriel had been sent on a mission to give Daniel understanding of the vision.

We can notice it was when Daniel began to pray, at the beginning of his supplications, that God sent forth Gabriel on this mission from Heaven. Here Daniel was undoubtedly assured of one great fact – God was listening to his prayer.

When we humble ourselves before God, when we adore, confess, and make our supplication, when we plead the character of God's mercy, and love and desire His glory, God hears and answers according to His perfect wisdom and truth.

Here Daniel was privileged to be the recipient of a glorious message of hope. The message revealed to Daniel was that God was working out His purposes under a set time that could be looked forward to by faith.

'...but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law' Galatians 4.4.

The fullness of God's time: God's sovereign will harmonised with time.

The Angel Gabriel announced to Daniel after the period of sixty-nine weeks and during the seventieth week:

- Sin is going to be dealt with;
- Righteousness will be brought in;
- Prophecy will be fulfilled;
- The Messiah will be anointed.

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Gabriel explained to Daniel how these seventy weeks would be broken up. In the Hebrew the word translated 'week' can be equated to a period of seven. If this verse is translated in this manner, seventy times seven equates to a figure of 490. This period of time in proven history harmonises perfectly with the years between the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the death of Jesus Christ.

1. Jerusalem to be rebuilt = 49 years

Within 49 years (seven times seven) of the first command going out to rebuild Jerusalem, the city was rebuilt under the ministries of Zerubabel, Ezra, Nehemiah and others.

2. Jerusalem rebuilt to the commencement of the ministry of Jesus = 434 years

This second period is the Inter-Testament period of prophetic silence between the Old and New Testaments, broken by John the Baptist heralding the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (434+49 = 483).

3. The death of Jesus Christ = 7

After the seven and sixty-two 'week' periods, each 'week' representing seven years, there is then the final 'week' of seven years, bringing us to 490 years (483+7 = 490).

'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate' Daniel 9.27.

In the midst of this final 'week', after three-and-a-half years, Jesus Christ is 'cut off, but not for himself' (Daniel 9.26) – pointing to Calvary.

At the end of the final 'week' prophesied, the early New Testament Church is established in doctrine and practice. The apostles

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announced by inspired teaching that the future now lay not only with the Jews but also the Gentiles. But Jerusalem again would come under the judgment of God because of its rejection of the Messiah. This happened in AD70. An army came in like a flood and wreaked havoc and destruction in Jerusalem.

*‘And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down... When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)’
Matthew 24.1-2, 15.*

We can show this prophecy was fulfilled and proven in history.

The great principle underlying this teaching is that God was working to a fixed programme. Its fulfilment was predestined according to His sovereign will and God’s plans were being fulfilled. Yet the greatest comfort and assurance is what the programme of God involved, as we have already seen:

- Sin is going to be dealt with;
- Righteousness will be brought in;
- Prophecy will be fulfilled;
- The Messiah will be anointed.

Today, this passage assures us of the sovereign power and love of God, but it warns us also that God will judge those who reject Christ Jesus. This passage assures us for our encouragement that God is the God of the past, present, and future. It serves to demonstrate that for sure the Christian hope is laid up in Christ.

The past, the present, and the future

In Christ sin is dealt with and righteousness brought in. We are

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righteous in Him because of what He has done in the past – our sin has been dealt with at the cross. We receive the blessing of His righteousness now by faith – the present. We will enter into the glorious realisation of it in the future in the new Heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Peter 3.13). Christ had been anointed by the Father as Lord of all. This happened in the past, we believe it by faith in the present, and we will enter into the glorious realisation of it in the future. The time is determined by God – the reconciliation is provided by God.

Uniquely favoured of the Lord

'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision'
Daniel 9.23.

The Lord loves all of His people equally in Christ Jesus the Lord with an everlasting love. They are eternally secure in His love and totally saved and accepted through His only beloved Son. They each have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, each having been born again spiritually with a new nature. Every one of the Lord's people are greatly loved of the Lord with His infinite love.

However, there are those called by God who are, while here on earth, particularly gifted and equipped by God, especially favoured with a intimate fellowship experienced with God here on earth. They are greatly beloved in communion and insight. We can consider men of God like:

- Abraham – given a special gift of faith;
- Moses – given a particular understanding of the law;
- Jacob – especially favoured with grace;
- Joseph – especially gifted with the skill of leadership;

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- David – given special spiritual experience, as seen through the *Psalms*;
- Isaiah – given a special insight into the Gospel;
- Jeremiah – given a special ministry of warning;
- John – especially favoured with fellowship with the Lord;
- Paul and Peter – deeply taught in doctrine.

In the history of the Church we have the Early Church Fathers – Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Whitfield, and Spurgeon. These men were especially gifted; men who evidently enjoyed a very close and favoured walk with God. They were appointed, anointed, and placed by God in His perfect timing to fulfil His sovereign purposes. We thank the Lord for such men and, while they were not infallible, we do well to take note of their teaching.

Here Daniel is not only greatly loved like us; he is greatly beloved. ‘Beloved’ has the meaning of special favour and communion with God. Daniel, the man of prayer, was a man uniquely favoured of the Lord in visions and their interpretation.

12. DANIEL CHAPTER 10:

DANIEL MEETS THE MESSIAH

Daniel is now well over eighty years old, and still the man of God is seeking the Lord in prayer and fasting.

'In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled' Daniel 10.1-3.

There is always something very profound and precious when talking to an aged believer walking faithfully. We read, at the beginning of this chapter, at the time the vision came Daniel was mourning and was cast down. He had given himself over to sincere and deep humiliation.

Why should Daniel be so sad at this time? The promise of return from captivity was working out, in that the decree had gone out over two years before. The Jews could now return freely to Jerusalem. Daniel, according to God's will, was kept at court where his witness continued to bring honour to God's name. But the general response to this opportunity from his fellow countrymen to return had been weak. In reality only a few exiles made the long journey back to Jerusalem. The majority had settled in exile in Babylon and had little or no inclination to return. Only a relatively small number of people had availed themselves of the God-given opportunity to return. Those who had returned were discouraged in the work. They faced unprecedented difficulties in their task of rebuilding the city and the temple.

Yet Daniel had been praying three times a day towards Jerusalem.

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The situation may have seemed far removed from what he expected the response and rebuilding to be like. Daniel was not bitter, not full of self-pity, but he was sad and thus gave himself to prayer and fasting. The answer when we are sad is not to give up on prayer, but to be more earnest in prayer.

But Daniel was brought to the realisation in this chapter of something of the terrible nature of the opposition to good. Although there was discouragement, Daniel was brought to see something of the struggle between good and evil. He had received a vision that deeply troubled him about the future, understanding its deep significance.

Now Daniel was a mortal man to whom were revealed tremendous truths about the battle between good and evil. God is sovereign over all history, yet at the same time Satan persecutes and wars against the Lord's people. We are given an insight into this fact in the *Book of Job*, being shown what was behind the deep trial of Job: Satan attempting to prove the eternal Covenant of Grace between God and Job was breakable and worthless.

The point here is, as Paul said, the battle is far more than a battle of flesh and blood, as it were, limited to man. There is a far greater battle going on in the angelic realm as we wrestle against sin and evil. It is actually a battle against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places (*Ephesians 6.12*). Behind all evil in this world is Satan, his evil angels and evil spirits influencing men and women against the Church. The battle against the Lord's people and His Church is far greater and beyond our limited comprehension. But only a few people like Daniel, for example, are given a deeper insight into these tremendous issues. We are simply told here in *Daniel 10* that the battle is real and it continues on.

Seeing the Lord

'And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; then I lifted up

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mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude' Daniel 10.4-6.

In his vision Daniel has a heavenly Visitor, someone in dazzling splendour. There standing before Daniel was the most glorious sight he had ever beheld, far greater than anything he had seen manufactured by man. Daniel had witnessed and been alongside kings arrayed in natural glory, pomp, and ceremony, but at no time did their appearance and presence cause Daniel to go down on his knees in worship. But this Man was different. Daniel was aware of the presence of the Lord before him and was humbled.

This was what is known as a 'theophany', a pre-incarnation appearance of Christ the Messiah to Daniel. When Christ appeared like this to utter solemn truths to men and women of faith it was always a holy time. He appeared at such times in the resemblance of His glory and majesty, proclaiming His deity and authority.

'...saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle' Revelation 1.11-13.

'And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man' Acts 9.7.

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'Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river' Daniel 12.5.

Responding to the Lord

'And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling' Daniel 10.7-11.

Here in this chapter our attention is brought to the glory of the Son of God and the wonder of His majesty. When God appeared to the prophets and the apostles in such a manner it was always an awesome experience. As the aged believer is alone with the Lord, the strength goes out of his mortal body. He prostrates himself before the Lord in worship. This confirms to us that this is the Son of God, not simply an angel, for we are forbidden to worship angels.

Sometimes we hear men and women talk irreverently about their fellowship with the Lord, as though He was at their beck and call and communicates on their level according to their whim and demand. But when men and women have a glimpse of His unveiled splendour, like Daniel did, then the deeply-taught people of God fall at His feet.

Learning from the Lord

See *Daniel 10.11-21*.

In his vision Daniel was touched by the hand of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. What is the significance of this? Here the hand of God signified care, compassion, love, and wisdom. What a mercy when we are touched by the hand of God in the Person of Jesus Christ the Lord! Let us notice what such a touch means in terms of spiritual experience.

- Encouraged by God – *‘And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling’ Daniel 10.11.*
- Assured by God – *‘Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words’ Daniel 10.12.*
- Taught by God – *‘But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days’ Daniel 10.13-14.*
- Strengthened by God – *‘Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me’ Daniel 10.18-19.*
- Liberated by God – *‘...and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me’ Daniel 10.19.*

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- Blessed by God – *‘Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince’ Daniel 10.20-21.*

Returning to verse 11: here it is said of Daniel he is greatly beloved, meaning greatly esteemed of God. How amazing is this, for only in Jesus Christ can it be said of us that we are greatly beloved! Daniel had a Christ-like character. His life was moulded by God and His Word – *‘accepted in the beloved’ Ephesians 1.6.*

Note again the similarity with the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, the touch of Jesus.

‘And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid’ Matthew 17.7.

These remaining verses, viewed as a complete unit, shew us God’s provision of understanding for Daniel.

The first lesson Daniel learned was about the pleasure of the Lord because of his attitude and desire in prayer. It was not just that Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks, however sincere and right this was. There was something in addition to his words and actions. The secret we can learn here with Daniel is his attitude and desire in prayer.

The second lesson Daniel learned in his encounter with the Lord was the spiritual battle going on against evil spirits and evil influence. Daniel must know that the Lord and His mighty angels are at war with the devil and his angels. Michael the Archangel, the glorious angel who fights on behalf of God’s people against evil, is called to assist. Daniel must know that behind every evil scheme of man, the devil has his influence.

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'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil' Ephesians 6.11.

The third lesson Daniel must learn is the continuation of the warfare. When the battle with the prince of Persia is over then the prince of Greece will come. This reminded Daniel of the continual nature of the warfare. We are continually battling against the devil and his angels. There is, at this moment, warfare going on in spiritual places politically and spiritually in the world. Working in the Lord's work will always be a battle. Satan is awesome in his evil ways, and is behind the sin in this world. We need to remember who the enemy Number One is; who is the one working behind the opposition. The spiritual conflict demands urgent prayer. Our Lord is glorious and is actively involved in defending, teaching, providing, and blessing His people.

The fourth lesson Daniel experienced was the need for God's help not only to hear the Word of God but to receive it. The Word of God was central to the purpose of his dreams. They were not mute visions. The visions were supported by the mighty power of the Word of God.

Conclusion

One final comment on *'Michael your prince'*. There are two views on who Michael is. Some say he is the archangel who defends the Church, leading the pure angels against evil.

'And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people' Daniel 12.1.

In *Daniel 10.13* Michael is referred to as one of the chief princes, as being one of a number rather than unique as God is:

'...but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.'

In *Jude* Michael is referred to as the archangel:

'Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee' Jude 1.9.

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And in *Revelation 12.7* the reference is to Michael and his angels:

'Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.'

However, some believe Michael is Jesus Christ as the Head of the angels. Personally I feel we need to be careful limiting Christ to the form of an angel in any permanent sense. He is equally God made Man, and as such is unique and higher than the angels. Michael is referred to as an angel. God is above all the angels and is referred to as being the Prince (Ruler) of princes in *Daniel 8.25*:

'He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.'

It seems to me that Michael the archangel serves the triune God as the leader in the great battle against evil. He is the defender of the Church in the spiritual realm, serving God in the realm of the principalities and powers. Gabriel the archangel also serves God, but his role appears to be as His messenger to God's people.

13. DANIEL CHAPTER 11:

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Daniel is given insight into events in the world before they form history in the knowledge and experience of man. *Daniel 11* shows that God already knows exactly what is going to happen beforehand. Not only this but, in a wonderful and mysterious way, He then overrules for His honour and glory.

This chapter is one of the most remarkable in all the Word of God for its accurate foretelling of events to come. Simply reading it through is a constant voice to us that God knows all things. Historians have proved it is possible up until verse 35 to fit each verse with an event in history, demonstrating how God's foreknowledge is indeed awesome and perfectly true.

In the last verse of the previous chapter we are told, *'I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth'* (*Daniel 10.21*). So century by century God's Word of Truth continues to be vindicated. But the more the Word of God is vindicated, the more men rise up against it and attempt to prove its inaccuracy. We need to be bold in our belief in and adherence to the Word of God, for this is the revelation of God's truth, God's salvation, and God's purposes.

This chapter is just one of the evidences of its awesome accuracy and power. Who else but God could foretell in such detail events to come? Many have tried and failed miserably. Only God and those inspired by the Holy Spirit of God could foretell in such a manner.

There are principles for the Church that we can learn from this chapter.

1. Be encouraged

Given the fact that God knows all that is going to happen for good and for bad, we can be assured that God is building His Church

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exactly according to His sovereign will. He is building in the midst of the confusion and turmoil of a sinful and hostile world. God's glory is magnified in the way that He builds His Church under seemingly impossible circumstances, and in the manner in which He builds under opposition and persecution. The first principle we can learn is that God allows His Church to grow in a way that magnifies His glory.

2. Be assured

The next principle is to remember that God is directing the affairs of this world even though He cannot be seen, even though it seems Satan has the upper hand, and is going up and down and round and round the world. He is causing havoc, and we wonder where God is in the situation. This chapter encourages us to realise nothing surprises God. God can overrule any situation for the furtherance of His purposes and glory.

For example, the King of Babylon previously had no idea of this when he attacked Jerusalem, but actually he was ensuring the fulfilment of God's judgment upon His people who had turned to idolatry. God is not the author of evil, but He is the Ruler over evil, and indeed the only limiter of evil!

Much of this chapter describes the events that would occur from the time of Xerxes, the fourth king of Persia, to Alexander the Great, Ptolemy I Soter, Seleucus Callinicus, Antiochus III the Great, and evil Antiochus Epiphanes. The final verses are thought to speak of the Roman Empire under the Caesar dynasty. However, as I have said before, these events in history have a repeat pattern. These final verses are thought to speak in a deeper manner of the final days at the end of the world wherein there will be mighty power against God and His Church, but ultimately this power shall come to an end. Always remember God knows the future. For example, He knows what will be the state of His Church in Europe in fifty years time, if He tarries. He knows where the opposition will come from, how it will come, and

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from whom it will come. So even though God cannot be seen and it appears to our mind that God is nowhere in the situation, nevertheless be encouraged – God is on the throne. The Church continues to grow amidst the disturbing events in the world. See *Acts 14.19-28*.

3. Be courageous

Persecution and opposition can have a remarkable effect upon the people of God. Under the grace of God it strengthens them and makes them true soldiers of Christ. While opposed they record glorious victories, spiritually and providentially. There is strength in the Word:

‘And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries’ Daniel 11.32-34.

‘And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name’ Acts 5.40-41.

‘...strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness’ Colossians 1.11

The courage of the Church of the living God is demonstrated the most when it is under persecution.

4. Be aware

The ‘glorious land’ referred to in verse 41 is thought to be the land of Judah in the days of the Roman Empire:

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'He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.'

We then have a reference also to the 'glorious holy mountain' in verse 45:

'And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.'

This is thought to refer to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. However, as previously mentioned, these events prefigure a far greater issue of good and against evil – the power of evil against the Church of the living God on the earth. The whole world was created by God; it is His glorious land. However, this glorious land that God has created is under the curse of sin, and evil abounds more and more. The Church in the glorious land created by God is the real target of Satan's attack.

'And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' Revelation 12.17.

Previously we mentioned the antichrists which are in the world. These are forerunners of the great antichrist which will come towards the end of the world.

'Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God' 2 Thessalonians 2.3-4.

'Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time' 1 John 2.18.

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At the end of this chapter it is prophetic of the last days. The great antichrist will be terrible both for his fury and for his deceit:

‘And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things’ Daniel 11.36-38.

‘But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him’ Daniel 11.44-45.

Conclusion

The chapter concludes with the assurance that the antichrist will come to his end. God has ordained that His Church will grow amidst opposition. This chapter assures us that God has a perfect knowledge of all events. He will build His Church in Christ in the midst of world events.

14. DANIEL CHAPTER 12:

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO ENDURE TO THE END

The *Book of Daniel* traces his life from the age of 14 in Chapter 1 to this final chapter where he is now 86 years old. He has fought a good fight of faith; he has stood for the truth and been strengthened and kept by God's power.

Chapter 12 continues with prophetic utterances about the last days. **Things are not going to get easier for the Church, but more difficult**

'And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book' Daniel 12.1.

The Bible teaches us that the Church will grow and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (*Matthew 16.18*). God's Kingdom will continually be increasing but, as we get nearer the end of time, persecution against the Church will get greater and greater. The true Church will be considered by the world as a non-entity. Its influence in the world will have been shattered, together with its structure as an outward body. The world will consider it has succeeded in wiping out the witness of the evangelical faith. It will become, of necessity because of the terrible persecution, an underground Church terrorised by evil.

We reiterate this point: the glory of God is magnified as His Church grows under suffering. The heart of the Christian faith – the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – teaches us this truth. Principalities and powers were defeated through suffering; eternal death was defeated through suffering; Satan was defeated through suffering. If

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Christ had not suffered and died He would not have risen again. The suffering was part of God's plan. His glory is magnified in a way totally opposite to how we would expect. It is in weakness and persecution that God's strength is made manifest.

'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you...For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal' 2 Corinthians 4.7-12, 16-18.

Towards the end of the world there will be an ever-increasing amount of knowledge, yet a great lack of wisdom.

'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased' Daniel 12.4.

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' Psalm 111.10.

So people will be very clever and immersed in many inventions and discoveries, although for the most part unwise. Yet the Word of

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God has a wonderful promise to those who walk with Him. Despised, persecuted, and shattered by the world, but precious in God's sight, they will shine like stars.

'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever' Daniel 12.3.

The Bible is clear; all hell will be let loose on the Church and it will seem as though God is never going to appear. Yet when all seems impossible, and it seems that the world has the victory, God will come.

'At that time thy people shall be delivered' Daniel 12.1. The victory will be all the more glorious set against the impossible situation from which it came.

'Every one that shall be found written in the book' Daniel 12.1. Everyone who has been saved by the precious blood of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has their name written in God's Book of Life.

How may we know our names are written in the Book of Life?

a. By trusting in the promises of God in His Word, given to all those who come to Him by faith.

b. By the witness in our heart that the Holy Spirit is working. Do we love God? Do we long to know more of His presence in our heart? Does our heart respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Does our heart warm under preaching with power? Do we enjoy the fellowship of God's people? Do we look forward to Heaven? Do we have a desire to serve the Lord, to turn many to righteousness? Do we have a respect for His Word, understanding its value to the soul and for the Gospel of Jesus Christ? At the end of the world all that will really matter is having my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life; being right with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Resurrection is certain for the just and the just

'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt' Daniel 12.2.

The resurrection day will be the day of the great and eternal, unchangeable divide. Some will be raised to everlasting life and some raised to everlasting contempt.

'And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats' Matthew 25.32.

'Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation' John 5.28-29.

'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works' Revelation 20.13.

The blessed people are those who endure to the end

'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased...Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days' Daniel 12.3-4, 12.

We read of the wise being those who turn many to righteousness. The wise here are those who, at the end of the world, amidst the great persecution are holding fast to the way. When thousands are succumbing to the way of the world, the wise the righteous shall hold

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on their way. When it is almost impossible to spread the Gospel they persevere and do what they can where they can. The wise here relate to the preachers who hold to the truth and preach the truth and hold to the doctrines of grace.

Daniel is told to shut up the book – seal all this up. This does not mean the book was not to be read: rather the reverse. In Persian culture once a book had a wide circulation they ensured that one copy was sealed and put in the library. This was for future generations. These matters concerning the end times must be known.

These truths are given and find their ultimate fulfilment in the context of increasing knowledge. The end of the world will be a time when knowledge increases, when there are many inventions and discoveries. So today we see access to knowledge is so much easier than it was. The internet has opened new avenues of increasing knowledge. There has never been a time of such access to knowledge as in our day and age. People run to and fro overwhelmed with knowledge, but yet we lack wisdom, for the wise are those who hold to God's Word and seek to do His will.

'Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished' Daniel 12.5-7.

The One on the river is the Lord Himself. He lifts both hands in a solemn action that reveals he is speaking by His name, by His authority as Lord. When the final antichrist in all his evil tyranny and power

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has risen to a crescendo in his attack on the Church, when the power of the Church is scattered, then the Lord will come and these things shall be finished.

'And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time' Daniel 7.25.

Daniel did not understand everything about what was said to him but he was told to go his way and accept that there were things that his finite mind could not cope with or contain. But those wise ones living in the end times will finally understand the words of this prophesy in its fullest meaning. So, for example, it is difficult for us to understand what verses 11-12 mean:

'And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.'

However, those living in the end times will understand them and what the days relate to.

So we come to the final point. Perseverance in the way carries the promise of eternal inheritance.

'But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days' Daniel 12.13.

It is the faithful ones who endure to the end in Christ's strength. Blessed are they who endure to the end.