

Lesson for March 8, 2009

Old Testament Survey

The Book of Daniel

Daniel is one of the best-known characters in the Old Testament. Along with his fellow Israelites, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, Daniel's story of being put into the fiery furnace and then into the lion's den is one of the most popular stories in the Bible. These three young men, along with other Israelites, were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar when he conquered the city. These young men were to be taught the ways and language of the Chaldeans (who were astrologers) so they could serve in the king's court. (Daniel 1:1-4)

The book of Daniel is divided into two parts: 1) a historical part in chapters one through six and 2) a prophetic part in chapters seven through twelve. The central theme of the book of Daniel is that the God of Israel controls history and that nations rise and fall according to His sovereign will. The book of Daniel is the Old Testament parallel to the book of Revelation in the New Testament. Both books reveal a lot about the dispensation of the Tribulation and the dispensation of the Millennium. In the book of Daniel we see the manifestation of the Antichrist, the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrections and the judgments.

Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, through a series of events when Daniel was revealing and interpreting the king's dreams about his rise to and fall from power, became a believer. Daniel chapter four reveals the change that took place in the life of Nebuchadnezzar as a result. Nebuchadnezzar did have to learn the same way that many of us do - by being brought to the depths of despair. Because of his continued arrogance, Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom, was driven out of his city and made to live with the animals.

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar got the message that God alone is sovereign. Nebuchadnezzar's response was faith in the Most High (Jehovah) as evidenced in Daniel 4:34-37. The lifting up of the eyes to Heaven is a sign of faith, and notice he began to bless, praise and honor the Lord. The other result of the king's salvation was an understanding of God and His ways. His kingdom was also restored to him and "excellent majesty" was added to him.

Daniel 5 and 6 chronicle the events of Daniel's life under the rulership of Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. Under the rulership of Darius, Daniel was thrown into the den of a lion as punishment for refusing to worship the king. Daniel continued his custom of praying three times per day to Jehovah and refused to obey the decree of Darius. The law of the Medes and Persians had to be carried out despite the efforts of King Darius to overturn it.

As always, God delivered Daniel from the mouth of the lions as he had done from the fiery furnace, and his accusers were devoured by the lions after the king had them thrown into the lion's den. God still delivers believers in this age as they advance toward the goal of spiritual maturity.

The Advance of the Believer in the Church Age
(Hebrews 10:32-39)

“But call to remembrance the days after you were saved or became aware of truth and how you suffered pressures from life in the form of people-testing, system-testing and disaster-testing. In some cases you became a public spectacle to your friends or family, in other cases you suffered ridicule for associating with others of like mind. You also suffered the loss of possessions by your compassion of me while in prison. But you counted the loss of earthly possessions nothing compared to the eternal reward. Therefore, don't cast away as nothing the bold confidence that you have in the Lord which carries with it great eternal rewards. Be patient, the promise of your reward for doing God's will is coming soon. For just a little while longer and our Lord will return in glory. In the meantime, the righteous are to live by means of exercising their faith in God's Word. Failure to execute His plan for our life does not please the Lord. And, we are not of those that abandon God's plan for their life to their own destruction. We are those who exercise our faith in God's plan into the preservation of our lives.” As believers we know that God's plan, His wisdom, His guidance, His divine viewpoint, His love, His justice and His promises are perfect. Failure to execute His plan for our life does not please the Lord and brings divine discipline and self-induced misery.

In Daniel 7 and following, Daniel began to prophesy about coming events, which began the prophetic part of his book. What is somewhat different about Daniel's prophesy is that he saw future events beginning with the Babylonian Empire and ending with the Millennium. Four world empires appear in Daniel's vision, which are like four beasts. The first beast was like a lion with eagle's wings representing the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar. The second beast was like a bear representing the Media-Persia Empire under Darius and Cyrus. The third was like a leopard representing the empire of Greece under Alexander. And the fourth beast was like a beast with iron teeth, exceedingly strong and dreadful representing the Roman Empire (which will be resumed during the Tribulation). Daniel said that he continued to watch until all these Gentile world powers were “cast down” and the Lord Himself ruled the world (Millennium). Daniel also saw and recorded events related to the dispensation of the Tribulation, such as the domination of the believers by Gentile nations and the eventual overthrow of those powers at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Tribulation

The Tribulation lasts for seven (7) years according to Daniel 9:24-27.

- 1) It is the final seven years of Dispensation of Israel
- 2) The first half of the tribulation the following is true:
 - a) The church is gone as a result of the Rapture.
 - b) The Word of God is still here and at least 144,000 Jews are saved. Rev. 7:1-8
 - c) These Jews are evangelists and many come to know Christ through them. Rev. 7:9-14
 - d) Judaism is revived in Jerusalem. Daniel 9:27, 11:31
 - e) Temple worship revived. Rev. 11:1-2
 - f) First of God's judgments occur. Rev.8:7-13
 - g) Two beasts or dictators become evident. Rev. 13:1-10, 11-18
- 3) In the middle of the tribulation the following occurs:
 - a) Satan is cast out of Heaven. Rev. 12:9
 - b) Alliance is made between the two dictators. Rev. 13:2,11,12 Daniel 11:36
 - c) Statue (abomination of desolation) is set up in the temple in Jerusalem. Matt. 24:15 Daniel 9:24 Daniel 11:31 Daniel 12:11 Rev. 13:15
 - d) Israel flees to the mountains for safety. Rev.12:7-10
 - e) Two witnesses begin their evangelism ministry. Rev.11:1-14
 - f) The Mark of the Beast is put into full force. Rev. 13:16-17
- 4) The last half of the tribulation the following is true:
 - a) The world is evangelized by the two witnesses. Rev. 11:1-14
 - b) Last of God's judgments are poured out on the unbelievers. Rev. 9, 11:15
 - c) The Armageddon Campaign begins. Daniel 11:36-45 Rev. 16:13-14
 - d) Fall of the World Church. Rev. 17:15-18, 18:2, 19:2-3
 - e) Second Coming of Christ. Rev.19:11-21
 - f) Armageddon campaign concluded. Rev.14:14-20, 19:17-21
 - g) Satan is bound for one thousand years. Rev. 20:7-8
 - h) Two beasts are cast into the Lake of Fire. Rev. 19:20

Revelation 19:17-21 describes the Battle of Armageddon. It will be the final battle for those upon the earth during the Tribulation. The angel will cry with a loud voice and gather the birds to feast upon the dead after the Battle of Armageddon is complete. The Anti-Christ and the False Prophet will be seized and cast into the Lake of Fire. The remaining unbelievers will be destroyed by Jesus Christ.

Second Coming of Christ

The Second Coming of Christ occurs at the end of the dispensation of the Tribulation. The books of Daniel and Revelation are detailed teachings of the events that will take place during the Tribulation and a brief glimpse of the dispensation of the Millennium.

In Luke 21 Jesus gives us a lot of information about the events leading up to the Second Coming. Fortunately for all believers of the Church Age in which we live, we will not have to go through this time of great persecution and distress. As Church Age believers we will already be with the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven. Many people, including many from the nation of Israel, will immediately trust Jesus Christ as Savior at the rapture of the Church and will become the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (Revelation 7:4) during the dispensation of the Tribulation.

At the end of this dispensation the events that Jesus described will begin to take place and for those who remain on earth these events will be a reality. Some of the key events described by Jesus are:

1. Nations rise against nations, as the rumors of war become a reality.
2. Earthquakes and other natural disasters will begin to take place.
3. Believers will be persecuted by religious and political authorities.
4. Believers will be betrayed by family and friends.
5. Jerusalem will be surrounded by enemies and destroyed.
6. Believers will be captured and killed.

Revelation 19:11-16 describes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation. There is no question that Jesus Christ has come to execute judgment upon the remaining satanic forces, which include unbelievers. The description of the Person on the white horse is clearly a description of Jesus Christ – faithful, true, righteous judge, eyes of fire, crowns on His head, the name written that no man could understand, clothed in a robe dyed by dipping it in blood and His name is called the Word of God.

Jesus will come with His armies of believers and angels clothed in fine, clean, white linens and they will also be riding white horses. Ready for war, Jesus Christ need only speak the word and nations will be destroyed. He will come to execute the wrath of God through fierce battle. And, He will destroy His enemies with a rod of iron and tread them down in battle. He is the Kings of kings and the Lord of lords and no one can stand against Him.