

Preparation For The End Times: Lesson 2

Daniel & The End Time

Memory Text: “The king answered Daniel, and said, ‘Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.’ ” (Daniel 2:47)

Setting The Stage: Have you ever been caught unprepared? Maybe it was for a test, or for a meeting. Perhaps you were supposed to put dinner together, it’s time to put it on the table, but you’re not ready and now you have hungry faces staring at you. Did you ever get a flat, put the spare tire on, put off getting the tire repaired, then get a flat with your spare tire, and left without a spare? (I’ve never had that experience; I just wanted to see who here would do something like that!)

Twice (and I don’t share this proudly), I knew it was time to change the timing belt on the car. I put it off, put it off, and then, ping, ping, ping, the engine ceased. One of those times I was driving through VA on I-81. Not a good idea. Suffice to say, we weren’t going to make it to our destination that day. The other time happened up the street. It’s been said time and time again, “If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.”

And like in real life so in spiritual life. Many have failed to make the necessary preparation for eternal life. They have gone to their graves without Christ and without the assurance of the gift of everlasting life. The tragedy is that no one need be unprepared to meet God in the judgment. “He that has the Son has life.” (1 John 5:12) It’s not complicated.

Well, what about last-day living? Is something more required of God’s people than perhaps at other times? When you read the prophecies, and you read about the beast, the image to the beast, and the mark of the beast, you realize things are going to heat up. The world will go through a “time of trouble such as never was.” Generally speaking, the event is actually not as great as the anticipation felt ahead of that event. Normally people sweat bullets about something, then come to realize that the something wasn’t so bad after all. But when it comes to final events, what will be experienced will be much greater than what was anticipated. Now I don’t know if that’s because anticipation among God’s people will be affected by degrees of apathy or other things. But whatever the reason, we can be assured that what is coming is very serious.

Now, I’m not saying panic. I’m not saying worry. We’ll talk about that today. But when we see what’s coming we get the sense that a special type of preparation is needed—a preparation that goes beyond merely believing that Jesus lived, suffered, died, and rose again. If you’ve accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, then that’s wonderful and sufficient for knowing you have a place prepared for you in heaven.

But when we consider that every devilish deception and device will be thrown at God's people in the final days of earth's history, in an effort to separate them from their faith and trust in God, then we realize and begin to understand the importance of Paul's words when he said, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Cor. 13:11)

So what's it going to take to "be a man" in these last-days—to be prepared to stand through the mark of the beast issue?

The book of Daniel is a collection of prophecies. The prophecies tell us roughly when certain things are going to happen. But the book is also a collection of stories, and those stories tell us how to live in the time the prophecies point to. So what can we learn from the stories of Daniel that will help us know what special preparation is needed to live through the end time?

Sunday – Faithful In What Is Least

Daniel 1: Luke 16:10

We know the story well. Judah had not been faithful to God. As a result, they became exposed to their enemy. Babylon, the kingdom of the north, besieged Jerusalem. The princes, the flower of the youth, were taken back to Babylon to be employed in the king's service. Daniel and his three friends were a part of the captives taken. They will be re-educated in the schools of Babylon. They will undergo a name change to reflect their loyalty to Babylon and their gods. They will be introduced to a new way of living, a new lifestyle.

Daniel 1:5-15. Why did Daniel and his friends choose to resist the king's diet, but not resist their name change or the education they were to receive? Why didn't Daniel just submit to the diet of the king rather than risk the head of the chief of the eunuch's who had shown him favor? After all, what a person eats really doesn't matter, does it? Or does it?

Daniel was a youth in a foreign land, and still he maintained his spiritual scruples. But Daniel knew that if he was going to maintain them he needed to be faithful in the small things. But this small thing had big consequences didn't it. One compromise on principle now would make it easier to compromise on principle later. Life consists of many small matters. A compromise on many small matters leads to a compromised life.

What principle was Daniel obedient to? He was obedient to particular health laws he had been taught from the scriptures since he was a young boy. He wasn't going to defile his body with unclean meats and alcoholic beverages (Lev. 11; Prov. 20:1). He wasn't going to put into his body those things that would not promote health,

strength, and intellectual vigor, something he would need each day living far from home and in a foreign land.

When thinking about being faithful to God in the last days, did you ever think about what it would be like; what big thing you would do for God during that time? Have you pictured yourself standing before leaders and judges and juries, testifying eloquently about your faith, or standing bravely in the face of death, not flinching, remaining steadfast? You know, what God simply wants from us is to be faithful in the small things.

“Don’t waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.”
- F.B. Meyer.

Luke 16:10: “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.”

Daniel 1:20: “And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.”

Matthew 25:21: “His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ”

Just be faithful in the small things that are right before you. In the face of pressure to conform from your unbelieving family, how are you doing? In the face of pressure to follow convention at school, are you being faithful to Jesus? Don’t worry about tomorrow and what’s coming, and fret about not being ready. Be faithful in the small things now, and tomorrow will take care of itself.

Monday – The Humility Of Daniel

Daniel 2;17-23, 28; Jeremiah 9:23, 24; Galatians 6:14

One of the most important prophecies of the Bible, the foundational prophecy upon which all Bible prophecies are based, is found in Daniel 2. You remember the story. The king had a dream, forgot what it was, and didn’t know what it meant. It made a profound impression on Nebuchadnezzar. The king called in his counselors to solve the problem but they don’t know. The king threatened their life and so they asked for more time. But the king knew they were really stalling and so they appeal that no one can answer the king’s request. But this time the king has had it, and a death decree is issued on all the wise men of Babylon.

Enter Daniel. He inquires about the decree, asks for time, prays (we’ll come back to this), God reveals the king’s dream to Daniel in a night vision, including the

interpretation. He's ushered in before the king and proceeds to tell the king the dream and the interpretation.

Daniel 2:31-45. In these verses God reveals what will take place over the next 2,500 years of human history and beyond. The head of gold symbolized Babylon, which ruled from 605 B.C. to 539 B.C. Next came Medo-Persia, which ruled from 539 B.C. to 331 B.C. Then a third kingdom of brass. What was the next world-ruling power? Greece ruled from 331 B.C. to 168 B.C. What then? The Greeks were vanquished by the armies of Rome. Rome ruled from 168 B.C. to 476 A.D.

God predicted the rise of four world kingdoms. Then He said Rome would be divided, not conquered. Rather than being conquered by another nation Rome was overthrown by repeated attacks of barbarian tribes. Rome was divided into about ten nations, many of which became the nations of Europe we recognize today.

Keep in mind all of this was predicted 600 years before the birth Christ, and it unfolded exactly as God said it would. Then God said that although people would try to reunite the European kingdom, it would never happen. They would not cleave one to another. Over the years many have tried but have been unsuccessful.

So where are we now in the flow of Bible prophecy? Divided Europe! But is that all that happens in Daniel's prophecy? Then Jesus returns. God is letting us know we're right on track for Jesus' soon return. These are like mile markers on the highway of life indicating that we're nearing home.

How should someone living in the toes of Daniel's image be conducting their lives?

Daniel 2:17-23, 28. Daniel recognized his dependence on God. He didn't trust to his own smarts or spirituality. He trusted God. He "pray[ed] and let God worry." (Martin Luther) He walked humbly before his God.

Jeremiah 9:23, 24: "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord."

Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

Few words are so poorly understood as "humility," and few of us know how to practice it. We might well heed the words of Golda Meir: "Don't be so humble; you are not that great."

In our attempts to be humble we have ended up telling lies about ourselves, saying we can't do things that we certainly can do well. Why would a corporate executive feel that he is unable to pray in public? Why would a well-educated nurse feel that

she could not learn about Scripture and contribute meaningfully to the adults in her church? This is false humility.

“But true humility is widely different. To be clothed with humility does not mean that we are to be dwarfs in intellect, deficient in aspiration, and cowardly in our lives, shunning burdens lest we fail to carry them successfully. Real humility fulfills God’s purposes by depending upon His strength.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 363)

Tuesday – The Golden Image

Daniel 3:16-18, 22-25; Jeremiah 12:5

In Daniel, there’s the story of the fiery furnace. Daniel 3 is more than just a story to tell to your children and grandchildren. Daniel 3 and Revelation 13 both tell of powerful kings who set up images and command the world to worship or be killed. The story in Daniel 3 helps us to understand Revelation 13, and sheds light on the mark of the beast issue. More than that, it also helps us know how to live during that intense time.

Nebuchadnezzar made an image out of gold. The image was based on the dream that he had nine years before. Only the head was made out of gold. So what Nebuchadnezzar was saying was that his kingdom would never pass away. Everyone was invited to the dedication of the statue, and if they did not bow before it, then a fiery furnace was waiting for them. But three boys decided to put God first.

Daniel 3:16-18, 22-25. Why did they decide not to bow down? They understood that God’s word forbade bowing down to images (Ex. 20: 4). So knowing they could die, they still wouldn’t compromise their faith in God.

What was the great crime these boys had committed, that in the king’s eyes made them worthy of death? We could say that the crime was not bowing down, but lets be a bit clearer. The crime was obeying God. And for obeying God at this time of false worship they were marginalized, pressured and threatened. And things will be like that down here at the close of time.

The Son of God came to them with deliverance. Many people will compromise because they are fearful. Many people will compromise because they don’t have enough faith to believe that Jesus will help them, but these three men had a special relationship with God. There will be those in the last days who remain true and faithful because they have a saving connection with God.

And what God did for those who were faithful to Him? God made them to prosper (Dan. 3:30). That’s what God is going to do for those who are faithful to Him in these last days. Not only will you be blessed in this life, but you’ll live forever with the redeemed. You’ll receive a crown of gold and life that measures with the life of God.

So how were these boys faithful under incredible pressure? Because they were faithful in the small things, and God could trust them with greater responsibilities. God asked Jeremiah an important question that highlights this principle:

Jeremiah 12:5: ““If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”

Wednesday – Conversion Of The Gentiles

Daniel 4:34-37; Zechariah 8:23; John 3:3, 5

Daniel 3 ends with Nebuchadnezzar acknowledging the existence and power of the true God. But knowledge of God and of His power isn't the same as being converted. Doesn't the devil also believe and tremble?

Daniel 4:30. Nebuchadnezzar was anything but converted. He had a bit of an “I” problem didn't he? By the time that the chapter is done, though, Nebuchadnezzar learns, even if it is the hard way, that all true power exists in God, and without God, he is nothing at all.

Daniel 4:34-37. Daniel 4 ends with a powerful pagan king acknowledging the authority, dominion, and power of the “Hebrew” God. We saw this happen in the early church, when, through the witness of Jews, Gentiles learned the truth about the Lord and began to proclaim that truth to the world. Hasn't that always been God's plan for His people?

Zechariah 8:23: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” (cp. Deut. 4:6-8)

Although we think of last-day events in terms of the death decree, worship, and persecution, **what does Jesus say that, above and beyond everything else, prepares people for the end of time?**

John 3:3, 5: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”

Thursday – The Faithfulness Of Daniel

Daniel 6

1. **What does Daniel 6:4, 5 reveal about the character of Daniel? What lessons can we take from these verses about how we should be seen?**

Daniel wasn't a man who cut corners, did shoddy work, gave things a “lick and a promise.” He didn't do it in his relationship with God and he brought that same

attitude into his work. Daniel was a politician, but not in the normal sense we think of them today. They couldn't find anything they could use from his past or present to trap him with. He's the type of candidate either of the parties in American politics would want to have—found to be clean after being vetted. Can the same be said about us?

2. What parallels can we find in this chapter that link it to final events as depicted in the book of Revelation? (see Rev. 13:4, 8, 11–17)

The issue in Daniel 6 is one of worship and faithfulness to God in the face of the threat of death when a law removing religious freedom is defied. The closing issues in the last days will be the same. Will we remain faithful in our allegiance to the Creator God who deserves our loyalty and affection, even in the face of death decree placed on the head of those who defy a new law removing our religious freedom?

3. What rationale or argument could Daniel have used in order not to pray? Why do you think Daniel continued to pray as he always did, even though he necessarily didn't have to do so?

Daniel could have said, "Why invite trouble? I don't need to let others know what I'm doing. I can close my window. I don't need it open to pray. God sees me in secret anyway. Isn't this being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove?" Why didn't he?

I suspect because in his heart he knew that if he did so he would be hiding His faith. Also, wouldn't those who knew of Daniel's habit, upon seeing Daniel's change of behavior, find a reason to justify themselves in their disdain for His faith? Daniel's witness would have been compromised.

5. What did King Darius say (Dan. 6:16) even before Daniel was thrown into the lions' den that showed he knew something about the power of Daniel's God?

Could it have been that Darius saw in the life of Daniel the goodness of his God? Daniel's patience, his care for people, his fidelity to God, all spoke to the faithfulness of God. When children trust their parents, what does that say about the parents? You recall Jesus asked if a parent would give their child a scorpion if they asked for an egg. The way some Christians live their lives (doubtful, fearful, glum, etc.) you would think that their God mustn't be much of a God. Would you want to get to know someone that's going to make you miserable and judgmental all the time? May God help us each to live in such a way that reveals God's goodness to others.

Friday – Further Thoughts

"As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living. With them

should be linked the teachings of the last book of the New Testament Scriptures. Satan has led many to believe that the prophetic portions of the writings of Daniel and of John the revelator cannot be understood. But the promise is plain that special blessing will accompany the study of these prophecies. 'The wise shall understand' (verse 10), was spoken of the visions of Daniel that were to be unsealed in the latter days; and of the revelation that Christ gave to His servant John for the guidance of God's people all through the centuries, the promise is, 'Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.' Rev. 1:3." (Prophets & Kings, p. 547)