

“THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO DANIEL.”

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July 2, 2017, 6:00PM

Scripture Texts: Daniel 1:1-2; 12:1, 8-9, 13

Summary of the book of Daniel.

The Bible is a story. Not a collection of stories, not an anthology of religious experiences, not a random assortment of things people did for God in the past. The Bible is one story, the story of God's redemptive purposes for humanity from Genesis to Revelation.

God is the central character. God created man in His image. Man sinned and fell and broke that image in his rebellion against God. The rest of the Bible is about how God set out to rescue and redeem fallen mankind and defeat sin and Satan and restore His image and His creation. The Bible is God's tool to transform us and conform us to the image and likeness of Jesus.

The part of God's story told by Daniel began with a story of a great defeat, the defeat of the people of God and by implication, the defeat of their God. Nebuchadnezzar was able to carry off the holy items from the temple of God without interference, showing the gods of Babylon were superior to the God of Israel. Is this true?

The rest of the book of Daniel is the answer. At every step and turn God demonstrates His superior power and wisdom. Nebuchadnezzar is impotent before the God of Israel and would soon be destroyed, and every kingdom after that until the kingdom of one like a Son of Man comes to establish His eternal kingdom.

Revelation 11:15 The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

Daniel is an amazing and remarkable and unique book. It reveals in ways unlike any other God's plans for the world and for His people.

The first six chapters are written about Daniel in the third person. They are historical events that happen in the lives of Daniel and his friends. They give numerous accounts of how God's sovereignty and providence are personal, they reach down to individuals. In these stories we see their fierce loyalty to God and God's faithfulness to them.

The last six chapters are written in the first persons as Daniel describes a series of visions he receives concerning Israel and the surrounding nations. The details of the prophecies are so accurate that liberal scholars cannot bring themselves to believe Daniel wrote the book in 500 BC, that it was written by someone else around 150 BC, after all the events prophesied. In this last half of the book we see God's sovereignty and providence extends not just to individuals, but to rulers and nations and armies.

Who is the hero in Daniel? Who answers prayers and delivers from evil? Who saves from fire and rescues from lions? Who interprets dreams and handwriting on the wall? God is the hero, the savior and deliverer.

Message of the book of Daniel.

I call this *the gospel according to Daniel* because it really is good news, a proclamation of the triumph of Christ and the deliverance of His people.

Daniel 12:1 At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time ***your people shall be delivered***, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

How many times did it look like evil was winning? Israel was defeated and carried off into exile, the friends were thrown into the fire, Daniel was thrown into the lion's den for praying, Antiochus IV desecrated the temple, the anti-Christ shatters the power of the holy people of God.

When will they be delivered? When Jesus comes and dies and is raised from the dead and raises from the dead all who have faith in Him. All who looked forward to and longed for that day, and all who look back on that day and love it.

Daniel 12:9 He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.

Daniel 12:13 But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.

As for you. You, Daniel, here is what you are to do. Go your way in the assurance that the promises of God are true and everlasting, nothing can be changed.

They can take your job, your money, your food, your house, your family, your church, your freedom, even your life, but they can't take your soul and your truth.

God never leaves us or forsakes us and God never ceases or fails to have a plan and purpose for us. Here is your mission, here is what you are to do.

Your future is settled. Until then, go back to work, go back to what I have given you to do. Work and serve and give until you can't anymore and you die, then know you will be raised up to stand in your allotted place in glory.

What more do you need? Is this not enough that God says, go your own way, do what I have given you to do, be faithful until you hear those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Go your way. Don't be worried or afraid. The things to come are not for you to know, it is enough that you have today. Don't worry about the times and seasons, about the trials to come. Go about your business. Be faithful to what God has called you to do as a servant of Jesus Christ.

Stay on the paths of righteousness, stay on the narrow and hard way, walk by faith in the way of the Spirit. Fight the good fight of faith.

Our way leads over many twists and turns, ups and downs, up steep mountains, through dark valleys. The days are evil, full of wickedness. Our days on earth are short. Let us make the most of our days as we live for and serve the Ancient of Days.

Eventually rest will come. "You will rise to receive your allotted inheritance"

God's final word to Daniel is a command and an assurance. Stay faithful and true as you have all these years and God will be faithful and true to you. And then the final place of rest prepared for you will be yours. Our duty is clear and our destiny is clear. Be faithful to the end.

The message of Daniel is redemptive. There is a God, He is in control, He will deliver His people, evil will be destroyed, Jesus will reign and the righteous will enter His rest and reign with Him.

This is the gospel according to Daniel. It's meant to give us a future and a hope, to give us courage in the face of our enemies and all evil, to give us hope in our troubles and perseverance in our trials.

This is all grace, for apart from Christ we can do nothing.

Let His grace and goodness be the compelling reason for your goodness. Grace leads to godliness, grace is the power for godliness. Our sins and failures are not greater than God's grace.

The evidence of God's grace in our past gives us confidence and courage to live the future in the confidence of His continued and future grace.

The evidence of God's love and grace at the cross is more than enough, yet He continues to show it in countless little ways.

Lessons of Daniel

How then shall we live? How are we to live as broken people, exiled in a hostile land, pressed from all sides with temptations to compromise and go along.

We must recognize we are like Daniel, we live in between, before the great and final end. We are called to go on our way, working, serving, being faithful, being salt and light, being a witness.

Daniel is a survival manual for saints, for God's people living in an alien land, in a foreign culture, in a godless climate. It is a survival guide for when there are no immediate solutions, no approaching rescues.

Is there a more relevant message for our secular and materialistic culture that ignores God? How do you remain faithful to a holy and true God while living in a pagan land with pagan gods? Can it be done in a way that maintains inner peace and joy?

How do you maintain courage, wisdom and grace in these kinds of times, when the days are evil and darkness has spread across the land?

How do the people of God remain the people of God? How do we live godly lives in ungodly times? When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?

How do we keep from being defeatist when the world seems to be winning? Notice in the harshest of circumstances and in the hardest of times in Scripture there is no giving in to pessimism or fatalism.

Good and evil are never equal and opposite forces with the ultimate victory in the balance and always in question. It never is expressed that way in Scripture. Never.

This is a book about a man who didn't just live through a time like ours, he didn't just survive through it, he thrived and triumphed. He excelled without compromising, without bowing to pagan gods.

We live in a time where it will become increasingly dangerous to serve God. We need models of those who trust God at whatever cost.

We have a God who knows and rules the future and all nations and kings. We have a God who is mighty to save and can and does deliver His people out of furnaces and lions dens.

We don't live in a closed universe as liberals and secular humanists and atheistic evolutionists would have us to believe. God is here and He is not silent.

Pray for perseverance.

Pray and persevere, pray and be faithful in good works, not growing weary in doing what is good and right and best. We are to be lights shining in dark places, testimonies to God's love and grace before a watching world.

Pray for the perseverance of the saints, pray for the church of Jesus Christ, pray she will be found faithful to the end, that Jesus will return and find faith still alive.

Pray thy kingdom come, thy will be done. We are to pray for this every day, because His is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Live by faith.

Live by faith guided by God's Word. The Word of God is completed, sealed, validated. The truth has been completely revealed. It is faithful, trustworthy and true.

One of the things you should take from this book is that God is faithful and His Word abides forever.

You are never too old to be useful to God and used by God. God is never finished with you.

Walk in purity.

Live by faith and ***walk in righteousness***, purity, pursuing holiness.

Know God and reflect the character of God. Time spent with God should show. Like when the people saw the disciples and said, “They have been with Jesus.”

Because we have the Holy Spirit of God we should reflect something of God’s glory having been with God. We are to be a light shining in the darkness of our culture. God says He will use us to lead others to righteousness.

Enter into rest.

After we have walked by faith and lived in righteousness there is a long awaited and much anticipated rest. If we persevere by God’s grace and we receive His glory.

Our work will be done, our sin will cease. This life is not all there is, the best is yet to come.

There is a resurrection that God has prepared for His people. There is a promised Sabbath rest for God’s people. God has prepared a place for those who love God and long for His coming.

Mark 13:7, 13 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ... 13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

We have finished together another story in God’s grand story. May our faith and courage be strengthened. In three weeks, Lord willing, I will take up a study of another story in the grand story, the book of Esther. Pray for wisdom and discernment.

Calvin’s prayer at the end of Daniel:

Almighty God, since you purpose for us no other end than that of constant warfare during our whole life, and subject us to many cares until we arrive at the goal of this temporary life: Grant, we may never grow fatigued. May we ever be armed and equipped for battle, and whatever the trials by which you test us, may we never be found deficient. May we always aspire towards heaven with upright souls, and strive with all our endeavors to attain that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, in Jesus Christ our Lord. -- Amen.