|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topic | Daniel’s Final Vision of the Future |
| Reference | Daniel 11-12 |
| Date | 31 October 2016 |
| Speaker | Brother Lee Yee Dian |

The lessons from the final vision of Daniel will compel us to think again about the things in life that really matter the most.

Early in chapter 10 when Daniel began to see his final vision he was standing on the banks of the river Tigris and he first saw a man dressed in linen wearing golden belt from verses 4 and 5. Verse 6 gives further description of this man.

Daniel 10:4-6 His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

But Daniel did not identify this person. In all likelihood Daniel himself does not know, the answer was given several hundred years later when the apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation. In Revelation Chapter 1 John saw this vision in which he saw Jesus standing amongst seven lampstands, representing seven churches in verses 13 to 16 of Revelation Chapter 1 John describes Jesus using almost the same language as Daniel’s

Revelation 1:13~16 ….and with a golden sash around his chest…. and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. … His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Hence what Daniel saw at the beginning of vision in chapter 10 was the figure of the pre-incarnate Jesus. I use this word because at that point in time the second person of the Holy Trinity had not yet taken human form and this final vision that began in chapter 10 with the vision of Jesus soon unfolded in chapter 11 into a complex prophecy of kings and wars. This finally ends in chapter 12 with the reappearance of this man dressed in linen.

**Visions in the Book of Daniel**

There are altogether five visions in the entire book.

1. Vision of the Statue (Daniel 2)
2. Vision of the Tree (Daniel 4)
3. Vision of the Four Beasts (Daniel 7)
4. Vision of the Ram and Goat (Daniel 8)
5. Final Vision (Daniel 10~12)

It is worthy of note that a large part of these four visions is prophecies about future events but future to the people in Daniel’s time. To us at this point in time what we read in these four visions is a lot of history, past events that have already happened from our point of view and Bible scholars and historians have been able to connect the various aspects of these prophecies to specific events of persons in history especially during the Babylonian, the Persian and the Greek empire. In other words these prophecies have been largely fulfilled to a high degree of accuracy and here I would like to digress to say that if this Book does contain many prophecies like in Daniel that have already been fulfilled accurately than this is no ordinary book. It is nothing less than the very word of God and that being the case it would do us a lot of good to take the Bible very seriously and to see what else it says especially about prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled and consider your response to them. **It will be utter foolishness to treat what is really important as unimportant**

1) Vision of the Statue was related to King Nebuchadnezzar:

It was first given to Nebuchadnezzar as a dream but God also granted Daniel the same vision plus also its interpretation. Now in this vision we see a huge statue made of different material from head to toes, each part of the statue down to the leg represents a specific empire, first the Babylonian then the Persian then the Greek and finally the Roman Empire. Now the feet and ten toes are made of slightly different material, a mixture of iron and clay and this seem to symbolize the current geopolitical system in the world in which we live. But what is of interest to us is the rock at the end of the vision, the rock that flew in and smashed the statue to pieces and this is the part of the vision in Daniel 2 that has not been fulfilled yet and it will surely be fulfilled. The rock represents Jesus will establish his eternal kingdom here on earth when he shall return soon. This is the link to the final vision of Daniel which is our topic for today. We have to remember the man dressed in linen from Chapter 10.

2) Vision of Four Beasts:

Here we see four terrifying beasts coming out of the sea and once again these creatures represent the four empires from the Babylonian to the Roman, one after another and so this vision in Daniel 7 is an almost parallel to the vision of the statue in Daniel 2. The last beast was the most frightening and powerful of the four has 10 horns. What is of interest to us here is that out of the 10 horns comes a little horn coming out of beast #4. At the end of this vision Daniel see someone he used the term like the Son of Man and we see him receiving authority and sovereign power of God and this is recorded in Daniel 7 verses 13-14. In all likelihood Daniel doesn’t know who this person is in Daniel 7 but when we link this to Daniel 2 (the rock) and also link it to Daniel 10 (the man dressed in linen), this term Son of Man refers to Jesus.

3) Vision of the Ram and Goat:

In this vision goat overcomes the Ram and they symbolize the Persian and Greek Empires which means that this vision in Daniel 8 is a partial parallel to the first two visions. The goat has a large horn but that is soon broken off to be replaced by four horns. The large horn is Alexander the Great and the four horns are his four generals who succeeded him. Interesting thing here is that out of one of the four horns that replace the large horn comes a little horn.

What could have been on Daniel’s mind as he was about to receive the final vision early in chapter 10 because there is something we can learn from this.

At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; **Daniel 10:2~3a**

The first few verses of Daniel 10 tell us that he was in mourning. He was so troubled in spirit that he refrain from eating what he normally eats and for three weeks he confined himself to a simple vegetarian diet and this backs the question.

**Why was he in distress? What was bothering him?**

By this time Daniel was already 90 years old. Daniel was taken in exile in his late teens and the 70 years of exile was already up and as God promised the Israelite had started to return to the homeland but Daniel was not part of the first group of returnees which must have saddened him but it is not this that caused him much distress, rather it was the fact that the future of his people back home would not be one of peace and prosperity. There future would be marked by hardship and wars and this was told to Daniel by the Angel Gabriel at the end of Chapter 9 before the vision in Chapter 10.

Now if we recall the little horn in Daniel 7 and 8 and this is what the two visions says about what this little horn or the person represented by the little horn would do to God’s people soon.

**Daniel 7:25** He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people…

And that is from the vision of the four beasts.

**Daniel 8:24b**  He will destroy … the holy people.

That is from the vision of the ram and goat.

Daniel must have remembered these two visions well and hence he was greatly troubled because he knew that his people would be in great trouble soon. The person represented by this little horn would persecute and torment his people and there will be pain and suffering on the part of God’s people and this was Daniel state of mind in Chapter 10 as he was about to receive the final vision. This is why it is highly significant that as he received the final vision from Chapter 10 onwards the first thing he saw was the man dressed in linen. It is as if the pre-incarnate Jesus was telling Daniel, “*Daniel I know what you are going through but look at me, focus on me not on your fears and worries about the future but look at me. I know exactly what is going on and I am in full control.*” Soon after this an angel came to touch Daniel and said to him

**Daniel 10:11** He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed,…

This is repeated in chapter 10 verse 19.

Now the King James Version renders this verse a little differently

**Daniel 10:11** (KJV) And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved,…

Somehow I get this sense that God was trying to tell Daniel, Daniel regardless of what is troubling you, regardless of what you fear about the future, I love you so much. You are my beloved.

**SIDE LESSON FOR US FROM DANIEL’S FINAL VISION**

As parents we always have our concerns about our kids. Sometimes we have fears, sometimes things seem so daunting, trials and suffering that weigh us down. In all these situations God is telling us that he loves us. God is also telling us to look at him and focus on him.

**2 Corinthians 12:9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

If you are feeling weak and down hearted Jesus is also saying to you, my grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.

**SUMMARY OF DANIEL 11**

This final vision unfolds into a complex scenario of kings and wars in chapter 11 which stretches 45 verses, almost more than three times the length of chapter 12. Now in chapter 11 in the second verse it talks about four kings of the Persian Empire and the next verse talks about Alexander the Great. That is the easy part but after that it gets very complicated. The problem is that when Alexander the Great died he did not name a successor and there was a fierce power struggle following his death. Eventually his huge empire was divided into four parts among four of his generals or leaders. They are the four horns in the vision of the ram and goat in Daniel 8.

* General Cassander took control of the Western region in Macedonia.
* General Lysimachus ruled in parts of Asia Minor, now modern day Turkey and also parts of Northern Macedonia.
* General Ptolemy became king in the south in Egypt.
* General Seleucus became king in the east in what used to be the Persian Empire

Now out of the four the Seleucid Kingdom and the Ptolemic Kingdom were clearly the strongest, one in the east and one in the south. Cleopatra was actually a descendant of the Ptolemic kings.

Now in chapter 11 we read of the king of the north which actually refers to the Seleucid Kingdom to the east since they are north of Jerusalem, so they are called king of the north. There is also the king of the south mentioned in chapter 11 referring to the Ptolemic Kingdom in Egypt in the south, but these two kingdoms they never lived in peaceful coexistence and there was intense rivalry between them and that explains the complexity in Chapter 11. Chapter 11 describes confusing back and forth battle between then and sometimes they forged alliances between themselves and other times they fought each other bitterly. Now the complexity aside chapter 11 is actually a detailed prophesy of events during this period of rivalry between these two kingdoms. There was also an occasion when the king of the north, the Seleucid Kingdom tried to make war with the two other smaller western kingdoms. So we may say that Chapter 11 is detailed expansion of the verses in Chapter 8 on the four horns on the goat.

Each verse in Chapter 11 is tied to a specific historical event. Chapter 11 is so historically accurate that they have dug up coins of many of the kings mentioned in these verses, but of course we will not find the names of these kings in Chapter 11 because Chapter 11 is just a prophecy of what would happen, it just says that king of north or king of the south but it is very-very accurate historically.

Antiochus IV or Antiochus Epiphanes (reign: 175BC~164BC):

He was one of the long lines of kings who ruled the Seleucid kingdom in the east. He is the little horn in the vision in Daniel 8 and also Daniel 7. He was an evil cruel ruler who tormented the people of God.

**How is Antiochus IV, ruler in the second century BC connected to our future?**

By the time we get to verse 35 in Chapter 11 this king of the north will be firmly empowered, this king whom we now know is Antiochus IV. He is that little horn in Daniel 7 and 8 but from verses 36 to 45 in Chapter 11 the description of this king of the north goes beyond what we know about Antiochus. He is certainly Antiochus no doubt about it but the picture of this person depicted in the closing verses of Chapter 11 is much bigger than Antiochus. It sounds like Antiochus but seems bigger.

On the surface the last king of the north in Chapter 11 is Antiochus. On the surface the little horn in Chapter 7 and 8 is Antiochus but he is actually merely a false shadow of another person to come in our future. On one layer we see a Seleucid king in the second century BC, on the deeper level he is really another more frightening future to us. Who is this person of whom the evil Antiochus is merely a false shadow? Now when we study Daniel side by side with Revelation, the parallel book, the identity of this person becomes clear. Daniel Chapter 13, 17 and 19 depict him as the beast. In the letters of 1 and 2 John he is called the antichrist, in 2-Thessalonian Chapter 2 he is referred to as the man of lawlessness and he will be the right hand man of Satan when he appears. Now since it is often said that we are now living in the end times. Is there a way of knowing who this person is? Now this has been the subject of intense speculation and much debate. Some say in America especially that Barrack Obama is the antichrist and the others were so sure that Pope Francis is the antichrist. You can get tons of articles on internet that gives you proof why the pope is the antichrist. All I can say is that he has not yet appeared and it is possible that he is alive today living somewhere in this world. What we can be more certain from the pages of scripture is that he would likely be a world leader with unmatched levels of intellect and knowledge of charisma and appeal.

Let see how the Bible describes him so that perhaps we can recognize him when he appears. What he is going to be like? What kind of character will he have? There are many bible references that I picked mostly from the Book of Daniel.

* Daniel 7:9, 20 …and a mouth that spoke boastfully.
* Daniel 8:23~24 …a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong,...
* Daniel 8:25 …He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior.
* Daniel 11:36…He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.
* Revelation 13:9…The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies…

The main feature about him will be his **mouth**. He will use his words, eloquence to mislead and to deceit many. He will also use his mouth to speak against God. What is most important to us is what will happen to God’s people under his rule. The things that little horn has done to Israelites, the same thing the antichrist will do to God’s people from these verses in Daniel 7 and 8.

Chapter 12, the middle of verse 1 says

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.

This confirms that the future will not be a pretty site. Time of distress is for us if we are still around at that time. During his reign the antichrist will persecute and torment the church and all followers of Jesus and the two verses from Daniel 7 and 8 are just a glimpse into this time of distress for the saints. We can get more details from Revelation Chapter 13, frightening details. Every now and then we here get alarmed by growing opposition to the practice of our faith. Our Bibles are seized, we are not allowed to use a certain word from the Malay Bible, applications or permits to build new churches are mostly rejected, even a cross was forced to be taken down from a church building but what we now face is nothing compared to the persecution and hardship that we will have to endure under the antichrist.

Next a question is asked in the middle of the text as to how long this period of distress for the saints will last. Daniel sees two angels standing on both sides of the river. In verse 6 one of them ask the man clothed in linen this question “How long will it be”. The man clothed in linen answered “It will be for a time, times and half a time.

Time is one year, times is two years, half a time is half a year for a total of three and half years which is 42 months or 1260 days. This period will be terrifying times for believers under the antichrist. Jesus call it the great tribulation in Matthew 24:21

**Matthew 24:21** (KJV) For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time,…

Jesus was in fact quoting from Daniel 12 verse 1

Why will it last only three and half years, Jesus explained it in the next verse

**Matthew 24:22** If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Jesus gave more details in Matthew 24 about this period of distress for the saints.

**QUESTION**

Why do you think that God allow believers to go through so much pain and suffering?

The answer is in verse 10.

10 Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

It is for the purification and refinement of his people to be made spotless. The Bible teaches that God often uses trials and tribulations to transform his people. *There is purpose in the pressure and yet some people try to find purpose in pleasure.* The truth of the matter is thatwhen things are smooth sailing and when everything is wonderful people often forget about God. I have often seen how material success can puff up an individual and draw him away from God. The challenges in life draw us closer to God and made us more dependent on Him. As someone once put it *don’t scuffle over your sufferings*.

Nobody wants suffering, nobody is looking for that but they are often necessary tools of spiritual refinement, God does not promise us a bed of roses. If becoming a Christian means your problems are over then all churches will be packed. God never promises us a life free from trouble, but He promises us his strength and his comfort during our troubles. He is watching over you in your time of distress which is what is happening here. In the first line of verse 1

1 “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.

God is sending his archangel Michael to watch over his people during the great tribulation.

Now the Good news

There will be deliverance for God’s people at the end from the end of verse 1.

1 But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.

Verses 2 and 3 then describes kind of mass resurrection of all humanity but there are two kinds of destiny for everyone who has ever lived; one is redemption and the other condemnation, it says

2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

What a glorious day will it be for us. Book of Revelation gives a a better picture of this glory

* **Revelation 21:4** *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,…*
* **Revelation 21:5** *He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”*
* **Revelation 21:6** *To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.*
* **Revelation 22:14** *Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life…*

All of this that we have seen appears to be too much for Daniel to take in. He laments in verse 8

8 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?”

He could not take in all of this and the man dressed in linen replies him in verses 9 and 13

9 He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.

13 “As for you, go your way till the end.

What the pre-incarnate Jesus is telling him is this, “*Daniel you don’t have to understand everything now, you will get to understand fully later. The scroll which is sealed up now will be unsealed by me at the end of time then everything will become clear. In the meantime just go your way and do your stuff.”*

**CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION**

I think it is very significant that Daniel was told to seal up the scroll. It is not a physical scroll to be sure. The scroll is just a metaphor for God’s eternal plan from eternal past to eternal future with every detail because no physical scroll can fully contain God’s plan and when the time comes Jesus unseal the scroll as outlined in Revelation 5 and the great tribulation will start. At the end of the great tribulation He will return as the rock as foretold in Daniel 2 and he will start his eternal kingdom here on earth as foretold in Daniel 7. In the meantime when we read a prophetic book like Daniel we get snippets of God’s eternal plan. God reveals his plans to us in part. He does not tell us everything. It would have been nice to know about the future in all its entirety with all the details but God does not grant us there because of this principle I want to propose to you today.

*Knowing about the future is not as important as preparing for the future.*

If you have truly preparing for future that what was important to you before will become less important and what was unimportant to you before will become more important. If we have been preparing for this glorious future you will focus on your eternal inheritance from the last verse of chapter 12.

Daniel is told to go his way meaning to continue his work as a prophet. God is also telling us go your way, continue with your life but if you have the right perspective of the final vision your priorities will be reordered because your goals and aspirations will be very different and when that happens your love for God will transition from decorative mode to a more demonstrative mode meaning that you will not only declare your love for God but you will also demonstrate your love for him.

The other important take away from the final vision is the living hope that all believers should breath and this is the last part, the living hope of a glorious future of a blessed future. If you are still around when the antichrist appears on the world stage you will suffer as follower of Jesus but this living hope is that is what that will keep you going faithful and loyal to the cross. It is the same living hope that has kept the Christians in Syria and Iraq under ISIS but some of you may think I am already so old, I may not be around when the great tribulation starts. Well to make this final vision and Daniel 12 more relevant to you let me conclude by saying this.

*If you are carrying a heavy load, if you are burdened by a great difficulty, if you are weighed down by pain and sorrow may this living hope sustain you*

At the same time Jesus is saying to you, I love you. He is saying to you, look at me, and focus on me.