**Dreams & Visions of the Book of Daniel**

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**Preface**

 The book of Daniel reveals the power of God and His universal sovereignty. Through visions and dreams, the book reveals God’s power in contrast with world power “***The Most High God Rules in the Kingdoms of Men” Daniel 4:25.***The book shows how God was in control even when it seemed as if the kings of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome were in control.

 The book was written to encourage God’s people in their exile to keep their faith and stay faithful to the Sovereign God. He rules in the kingdom of men, in spite of their temptation to compromise with the world and water down their beliefs.

 The book has two main parts: (1) Stories about four people, Daniel and three of his fellow-exiles who through their faith and loyalty to God succeed and triumph over their enemies. (2) Dreams and visions which in the form of symbols present the successive rise and fall of the kingdoms of men, and point to the kingdom of God that stands forever.

 The book of Daniel is relevant to us today as we are faced with conflicts on the job and in our personal lives. Following our God today without compromise, as the four men of the book of Daniel did is difficult but possible. Through trusting and relying on God who is in control of all circumstances we can be victorious too. Let us then begin our journey through this great book.

**Botros Botrosdief**

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 May God be praised and His Name highly exalted for all good things that comes from Him and to Him and for Him!

**Soli Deo Gloria- To God Be the Glory**

**A Suggested Outline of the Book of Daniel**

**God the Keeper - Daniel chapter 1**

**God the Revealer of Secrets - Daniel 2**

**God the Deliver - Daniel 3**

**God the Potentate - Daniel 4**

**God the Judge - Daniel 5**

**God the All Powerful - Daniel 6**

**God the King of All Kings - Daniel 7-12**

 **Five different kingdoms are presented in this book: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome and the kingdom of God in Christ, the smiting stone that fills the earth. God’s Kingdom stands forever.**

**Chapter One**

**The Sovereign God Even In Babylon**

 Daniel chapter One speaks of three great truths of the sovereign hand of God in the affairs of both nations and individuals:

1. He is Sovereign in history.
2. He gives faith in the midst of a personal and national crisis - Babylonian captivity.
3. He honours those who honour Him.

 **God is Sovereign in History**. He is in control of everything and in all circumstances even in a world that seems out of control. The book begins with God *delivering* His own people into the hands of the Babylonians “*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.* ”

 This beginning of the Book of Daniel is very significant. It sets the tone for the entire book. The book has more to do with what the Sovereign God is going to do *in* Babylon than with God getting His people *out* of it. One thing is for sure, God is not just sending his people into Babylon for punishment or for cleansing although these things are certainly part of the reason and cause (Jeremiah 25:1-11).

 God is sending his people into captivity because He has work to do there. God is both leading the charge and going with his people. This is God at his most ironic, using such a strange way to uproot an entire nation and deliver them into the hand of the Babylonians in order to accomplish His own purposes.

 It’s like when God sent Joseph as a slave to Egypt ‘*to save many lives*.’ It is like when Peter preached on Pentecost that with the help of wicked and evil men Christ was put to death to redeem us and for the salvation of multitudes of peoples coming into the glory of eternal life.

 So we begin Daniel’s book by reading the announcement, “*The Lord delivered His people to the Babylonians.*” God had a plan for Babylon and he had four young people in mind to bring it about. They were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

 The last verse of the chapter says, *“And Daniel remained there (in Babylon) until the first year of King Cyrus”* (1:21). This verse points to the sovereignty of God in history. Cyrus was the king of Persia who overthrew the Babylonian empire. So the empire which had destroyed Israel in the first verse of this chapter has itself disappeared from history in the last verse, but Daniel and his people survived and God’s glory was revealed through them as we will see through this book.

 Yes, God is sovereign and still in control of all things and rules over all things. He has power and authority over nature, earthly kings, history, angels, and demons. Even Satan himself has to ask God’s permission before he can act. The Bible says, “*The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all”* (Psalm 103:19). But unlike some corrupt earthly kings who abuse their authority to terrorize their subjects, God rules in love. He loves us and wants the best for us.

 **God gives faith in the midst of a personal and national crisis - Babylonian captivity**.

 About 605 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and destroyed it. He took captive many Israelites and deported them to Babylon. Among those taken captive were four young men about 15 to 16 years old: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In captivity, the youths were given a training course lasting for three years that had four elements: education in Babylonian culture; state maintenance; a career in the political administration of the state; and new Babylonian names instead of Jewish ones.

 These young men were tempted to compromise their faith and go with the crowd and live like the Babylonians. Did they integrate in the society of the Babylonians?

Well, yes and no.

 Those young men said ‘**Yes**’ three times, before they said ‘**No**’. They said ‘Yes’ to school education. They said ‘Yes’ to a political career. They said ‘Yes’ to a change of name. But they said ‘No’ to the king’s food.

 Those young men could learn all that the education system had to teach them, but they didn’t have to believe all it assumed. They could master its content without swallowing its falsehood.

 They said ‘**Yes**’ to a political career and served a pagan king. Perhaps they drew encouragement from the stories of Joseph who likewise had served the Egyptian pagan king. Or perhaps they reflected on how Obadiah had held high office under the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in spite of their obvious idolatry and evil.

 They said ‘**Yes**’ to a change of name. Names don’t mean as much to us as they did to the ancient world. Those young men were forced to change their names that reminded them of their true God, for Babylonian names that pointed to the pagan false gods. Daniel means “*God is my judge*,” but it changed to Belteshazzar which means “*Bel protect his life*”. Hananiah means “*The Lord shows mercy*”, but it changed to Shadrach which means “*Aku the moon god*”. Mishael means “*Who like our God*” but it changed to Meshach which means “*Who like Auk*”. And Azariah means “*The Lord is my help*” but it changed to Abednego which means “*Servant of god Nego*”.

 This would have been difficult for these youth. Surely to replace the name of the living God with the name of a pagan god was impossible for them! Yet once again we find they accepted it. Why? Because they knew that these gods were nothing and their names were nothing, knowing well that their living God was not only still their God, but the only true God; as the Bible says,

*“Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands.They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see.They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell.They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats.Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them”* (Psalm 115).

 But those young men said **‘No’ to the king’s food!** “*Daniel resolved in his heart not to defile himself with the royal food and wine*.” Why did they say ‘**No**’ to the best food; food from the king’s own table!?

 This food would have been unclean because it was offered to idols before being delivered to them. For these young Jews to accept eating from this food would mean their declaration to worship idols and accept them as their gods. That’s why they said ‘**No**’.

 The Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor 10:20-30, “*Eat anything sold in the meat market... If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you… But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice* *to idols” then* ***do not eat it****… The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons”.* To eat this food means your declaration that you worship idols too.

 Daniel said to the man in charge of their food, “*Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.”*

*So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days*” (1:8-14). The Bible says that “*God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel*.” God caused. He is in control.

 Despite the Babylonians' attempts to control them by giving them new names and train them in their ways, those young men continued to worship and live true to God.

**God honours those who honour Him.**

 “*At the end of ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.*” These four young men excelled in wisdom and knowledge and found favour in King Nebuchadnezzar's eyes. The king put them into service among his most trusted wise men and counsellors. And it is because they had made this commitment to worship God only that God honours them according to His promise in 1 Sam 2:30, **“***Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained.*”

These are the three great truths which shine through Daniel chapter one and will go on echoing through the rest of the book.Fear not if it seemed that things were out of control. Our God is the Sovereign God. He is in control of all circumstances. Fear not if your faith is shaken or troubled. God is able to keep us from falling and encourage our faith to stay faithful to Him in spite of temptation and oppression.

 As God encouraged the discouraged prophet Elijah and said to him, “*I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal,*” so He will keep our faith to the end (1 Kings 19:18). And because we made our commitment to worship Him only and honour His name He will honour us as His promise **“***Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour*” (1 Sam 2:30) “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.
In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight”* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

**Chapter Two**

**Nebuchadnezzar’ Dream**

 Chapter Two speaks of another truth which reflects God’s sovereignty over Nebuchadnezzar’s mind. God disturbed his sleep with a nightmare that greatly troubled him and he struggles to understand it (2:1-15).

 God put the dream in the mind of the king because He loves the king and does not want him to perish in ignorance. God wants the king to have the right knowledge of the One True God and to tell his people of this saving truth and turn away from the false gods that people made for themselves.

 The king was sincerely a believer, *but in false gods* and he sought their guidance. He asked his wise men to tell him the dream and interpret it!!! The king was looking to God in the wrong place through the deceived wise men!

 The king said to his wise men, “*I had a dream that troubles me, tell me the dream and I want to know what it means*.” The king firmly commands that if his wise men couldn’t reveal his dream and interpret it, they would be publicly humiliated and mercilessly slain. Why **did** the king use that terrible approach? The king was seeking to know the truth, and he was testing his wise men. He didn’t want to hear misleading and wicked things as he said to them. God was working in his mind to direct him in the right way.

The wise men tried flattery and logic, but failed to reveal the dream. They were in shame with their gods, like the wise men of Pharaoh and their Egyptian gods who were defeated before the only True God of Israel.

 They said to the king, “*Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it*.” The king said, ‘No’, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.” The astrologers answered the king, “*There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer.* *What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans*.”

The king became very angry and issued an edict that all the “wise men” in the city of Babylon be slain. As we see, the situation has become desperate, not only for the wise men who were there, but also for the four Jewish young people. Daniel, in a desperate situation with his life at risk, relying upon the Lord, went to the king and asked for more time.

 By faith in the living God, Daniel promised the king to tell him the dream and the interpretation, for he trusted that the Lord would answer his prayer as God promised, “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me*” (Ps 50:15)

 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of Heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

 Here comes God to disgrace the wise men and their false gods and disclose the dream and its interpretation through his servant Daniel.

 Daniel’s first response was to bless and praise the Lord for He had answered his petitions and revealed the dream and its interpretation to him. He sang to the Lord, “*Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are His.He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.I thank and praise You, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, You have made known to me what we asked of You, You have made known to us the dream of the king.”*

 Daniel revealed the dream and interpretation to the king. He said to the king that the dream was not revealed to him because he was wiser than other men, but the God of Heaven is the one who revealed it.

 Daniel said to the king, “*You saw a great statue… with head of gold, the chest and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, and the legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. The great statue was destroyed by a small rock which was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet and smashed it. Then the statue broke in to pieces and became like chaff and the wind swept it away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth*”.

 Daniel goes on to tell the king its meaning, “*You are that head of gold. The God of heaven has given you dominion and glory. He has made you king of kings.* After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, for iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. The feet and toes were partly of clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom… and will not remain united. In the time of the fourth kingdom, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, but will endure forever. That was the rock that struck the statue and became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

 The image represents the rise and fall of four kingdoms of men. The Babylonian kingdom was the starting point represented by the head of gold, followed by the Persian, represented by the arms and chest of sliver, followed by the Greek, represented by the belly and thighs of bronze and then followed by the fourth and last kingdom represented by iron and clay which was the Roman Empire.

 The rock was representing Christ our Lord and His spiritual kingdom that would never be destroyed. It was started in the time of the Roman Empire as a small rock but will grow spiritually and will stand forever.

 So, the emphasis is not on the kingdoms of men, but on the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, was revealed to the king by the God of Daniel, later proclaimed by John the Baptist (Mark 3), and established by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, who Himself is its king and those who believed in Him are its citizens. It is an indestructible spiritual kingdom that continues on, ever growing, as our Lord said, “*I build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”*

 King Nebuchadnezzar praises God, but still remains a believer in many gods and accommodates another god, and admits that the God of Daniel is the powerful one “*God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries for He was able to reveal this mystery*.”

 This was the starting point in which God continued to deal with the king as we will see in the next three chapters that the king fully became a believer in the only one true God and he told his people to worship only the God of Israel.

 The King then exalted Daniel to be the head of his wise men. Daniel didn’t forget his friends who prayed with him that the dream would be revealed and the king also highly exalted them to new positions of authority.

 The message of the dream is still holds for us today, and tells us “Do not put your heart on earthly things, they will not last. Put your heart on the heavenly things, they will last forever”.

Our Lord said *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also… Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matt 6:19-21; 31-33).* The Bible also says in Colossian 3:1-2 “*Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things*”.

 God in His mercy did not give up on the king of Babylon, as we will see in chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar became a full believer in the Almighty God as the one true God, and wrote to all people of his empire;

“*King Nebuchadnezzar, to the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth: May you prosper greatly! It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation*” (Daniel 4:1-3)

 Let us now focus on the stone that struck the statue and became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. The stone is the symbol of Christ and His kingdom, and speaks of three important truths;

1. ***The stone speaks of Christ’s Spiritual Kingdom that grows and becomes a great mountain of the Redeemed that fills the earth with His Glory (The New Earth).***

 On the surface, the early Christians appeared powerless and weak; they had no great financial resources, no buildings, no social status, and no government approval. And after they became separated from their first-century association with the Jewish synagogues, they became an easy target of severe persecution.

 But what mattered for them was what they did have. They had no sword, but faith. They had a fellowship. They had a new way of life. They had a confidence that their Lord was alive in heaven and guiding their daily lives. They preached the Gospel of Christ to all people. These were the important things. And it made all the difference in laying a Christian foundation for all of Western civilization.

 From an insignificant number, they grew to 3000 and 5000, and then from Jerusalem to the ends of the Roman Empire. It is still growing until the full numbers of all redeemed are completed, then our Lord will come to dwell with us in the New Heaven and in the New Earth.

 John the apostle saw the great mountain of the redeemed from all nations that fills the heaven with God’s glory, and he said, *“I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb… They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.They are before the throne of God… Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; ‘he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”* (Rev 7).

 Kingdoms of men appear to be great with power, riches and authority in their symbols of gold, silver, bronze and iron, but those kingdoms of men come and go, they will not last forever as the Bible says “*For this world in its present form is passing away*” (1 Cor 7:31) “*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal*” ( 2 Cor 4:18). “*For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever*” (1 John 2:16-17).

1. ***As a Stone Christ’s Church was built on Him. Through His Death and His Resurrection the Kingdom of God in Christ shall stand forever.***

 When Peter confessed Jesus as “The Christ, the Son of the Living God”, our Lord said, “*Upon this rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it*” (Matt 16:16-18).

 The kingdom of God in Christ continues to grow, and nothing will stop it. It will never cease in spite of all the odds against it- it will stand forever. Christ’s kingdom never fails as the beautiful song says;

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane, but the church of Jesus constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never gainst that church prevail;
We have Christ’s own promise, and that cannot fail.

1. ***As a Stone Jews and Gentiles who do not receive Him Stumble over it and are broken by Him.***

 Those who believe in Him are blessed forever and those who stumble over that rock are condemned and perish.

 In His parable of the Wicked Tenants in Matthew 21, our Lord Jesus told the Jewish leaders; “*Have you never read in the Scriptures:* *The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.*”.

 After Pentecost when Peter declared that the lame man had been healed through faith in the Name of Jesus, he then said to the Jews “*This is the stone which you* *builders rejected, which is become the head of the corner”* (Acts 4:10-11)

 In the parable of the wise and foolish builders Our Lord painted a clear picture in Matthew 7:24-27 of two different groups of people who hear the Word of God. He said, “*Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.*”

###  We still come to our Lord as the author of eternal life, the cornerstone, the very foundation of His kingdom and the sure foundation for our life now and forever. Let us take Him at His word, and build our life on Him and His promises. He will keep his promises for He said, “*Whoever comes to me I will never cast out*" (John 6:37).

 Yes, we can trust Christ, the Stone, the rock of our salvation, relying on His promises, and marching on in our spiritual battle against the wiles of the devil. We have our shield of Faith with which we will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one, through doubt, fear, and all the storms of life.

 The humility that Daniel showed is a good example to us of how he took his problem to the Lord. He leaned hard upon him and asked his friends to ask the God of Heaven for grace and mercy. He trusted in God and God didn’t fail him. God will not fail you and me either.

 We worship God, the King of Heaven and earth without fear because we belong to His Kingdom that will not fail, that will not be defeated and that will stand forever. We are waiting for the hope of its glorious future when our Lord Jesus comes again. Let us trust Him in all things, even in the midst of troubles, and claim His promise: “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”* (Ps 50:15).

 We are looking forward to His coming kingdom in its final and lasting glory, as the Bible says, “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God, and His Christ” This is the New Heaven and the New Earth which He is going to make for all the redeemed since the beginning of creation, and we will be like a great mountain that fills the New Earth with God’s glory. Amen Come Lord Jesus. Glory be to His name forever and ever. Amen!

**Chapter Three**

**In The Fiery Furnace**

 The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace experience is a story of uncompromising, courageous faith in the face of death.  It is a story of choosing civil disobedience over the earthly law in order to obey completely the higher Law of Heaven. It is story of standing without fear of a king, to honour God the King of all kings at all cost!

 Around 602 B.C., God distressed King Nebuchadnezzar with a dream and told him, through Daniel, that his kingdom would not last but fall to other kingdoms coming after him. Only the kingdom of God will grow and stand forever.

 **Fifteen years** later, around 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar made a huge golden statue and commanded all the people to bow down and worship it when they heard the sound of the music. Anyone who failed to bow and worship it would be thrown into the fiery furnace. The fiery furnace was a huge chamber used to melt minerals or bake bricks for construction.

 At this time, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were men aged 35 to 38 years old, with their faith being severely tested again. Yet, they chose to obey God at all cost! They refused to bow down and worship the king’s statue. The king was furious and gave orders that the three men be brought before him immediately.

 The king offered them another chance to worship his idol or burn. These men were in a big dilemma: to obey God’s command that says “*You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not bow down to them nor serve them*” (Ex 20:3-5), or to compromise with the king to save themselves and their job. They could compromise and say, “*Our office demands that we bow and obey the king, we will bow our knees but we won’t bow our hearts, so we can do our people more good by being officers in the king’s service than by ashes in the king’s furnace.*”

 But they didn’t compromise. They refused to bow down and worship the idol, even in the face of death in the fiery furnace.  They didn’t give the king an apology but they boldly said,  “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from your hand.  But even if he does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (3:16-18).

 They remind us of Moses who rejected the four compromises offered to Israel by Pharaoh the king of Egypt. God said to Moses to tell Pharaoh “*Let my people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness*” (Exodus 7:16). Pharaoh offered his first compromise and said to Moses “*Sacrifice in the Land*” (8:25). Pharaoh’s compromise was but a partial fulfilment of God’s commands. Moses said “NO” we have to go the wilderness and obey our Lord God completely.

 Pharaoh offered his second compromise and said to Moses, “*Go not very far*” (Exodus 8:28). Moses rejected it for the line of separation was too near Egypt which tempted Israel to go back to Egypt if they faced trouble in the wilderness. God does not want us to be “borderline people”. He said to the leader of the Church of Laodicea “*Because* y*ou are neither cold nor hot but lukewarm I am going to spew you out of my mouth*” (Rev 3:15-16).

 Then Pharaoh offered his third compromise and said to Moses “*Let only the men go*” (Ex 10:8-11). Pharaoh knew that if the men went into the wilderness to sacrifice that they would soon return to their families and slavery. Satan wants us to have a bit of religion, a little bit of the world and sin, he wants us to water-down our faith. Moses said, “NO” everyone must go, male and female, old and young.

 Then Pharaoh offered his last compromise and said to Moses “*Let the people go but not the cattle*” (Ex 10:24-27). Moses again said “NO” Everything and everyone must go, “*not even one hoof is to remain behind*”. Moses refused to accept Pharaoh’s four compromises and held out for 100% obedience to God’s command.

 So here in the story of the fiery furnace, these three men refused to compromise with king Nebuchadnezzar. They believed that God is able to deliver them, and they also affirmed that even if He didn’t they still wouldn’t worship the king’s golden statue.

 Furious with pride and rage, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than normal. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound and cast into the flames. The fiery blast was so hot it killed the soldiers who had escorted them.

 As the King was watching, he was astonished at what he saw and asked those around him: “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?  They answered, ‘True O King’. The king said: "*I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.*" (Daniel 3:25)

 The king apparently recognised the fourth person as being a divine being. He understood that his idol was nothing in comparison to the God of these three men. The king called them to come out of the furnace. When they came out of the furnace, their clothes were not harmed, not a hair on their heads was singed and they didn’t even have the smell of smoke on them (3:27).

 King Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed that he gave glory to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and sang praises for him, “How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!  His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation” (4:3). He commanded everyone in the entire Babylonian Empire not to speak any word against God of Israel or they would be put to death.

 Through God's miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that day, the rest of the Israelites in captivity were given freedom to worship and protection from harm by the king's decree. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego received a royal promotion. These three men sent a strong message to their people in their captivity - which at the time had lasted 20 years, with 50 more years still to come - that God hasn’t forsaken us, He is still on the throne, even in Babylon.

 **The conclusion is that** in the fiery ordeal that they went through, God was with them and He went through it with them.  The lesson for us today is that through life’s fiery trials and ordeals, God will never leave us nor forsake us.  God not only knows about our suffering in trials, He goes with us in them and He goes with us through them.  He is ever present in times of trouble as Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”  What this Scripture is saying is that God is “ever-present” or always with us in our troubles.

 We must never compromise what is taught in the Bible and we must stand firm in our faith at all times.  We must obey God over men as Peter said to the Jewish leaders “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

 When we are cast into figurative fiery furnaces, even if we are bound, we can rest assured that God is with us before, during, and after.   He will be faithful and present with us in our going through them.  We can believe God.  He will be with us, even in the fiery trials of life.

 When we are in trouble, let us claim His wonderful promise to us, “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you… When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you*” (Isa. 43:1-2).

#

**Chapter Four**

**Nebuchadnezzar’s Testimony**

 Daniel chapter four is unique, because it is written by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian empire himself, after his conversion. It speaks of his testimony and how he became a believer in the God of heaven and earth. Let us see how God dealt with that king and favoured him with special opportunities to bring him to the knowledge of salvation.

 It all started in 605 B.C., when God delivered Jehoiakim, the king of Judaea, and the people of Jerusalem into the hand of the king of Babylon who took most of its people captive to Babylon, including the four young boys Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who later after three years training became some of his wise men.

 In 602 B.C., God put in the mind of the king a dream, a huge statue of four metals that was destroyed by a small stone and the stone became a big mountain that filled the earth. The king’s wise men failed to tell him its meaning. God of Heaven had revealed to the king the meaning of the dream through Daniel, the Jewish exile who was at that time 19 years old.

 Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged that the God of Daniel is “*the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries”* andhad learned that no earthly kingdom is secure. Earthly kingdoms come and go, only the kingdom of God stands forever, even if it looks in the eyes of men like a small stone. Nebuchadnezzar had learned that his Babylonian kingdom of the head of gold would end one day, and God would raise other kingdoms to take its place.

 Fifteen years later, in 587 B.C. , Nebuchadnezzar built for himself a huge golden statue and ordered all people of all nations under his rule to bow down to this golden image or burn in the fiery furnace. Everyone bowed down, except for three Jewish men who refused to worship the king and his golden image and they were thrown into the fiery furnace.

 Nebuchadnezzar had seen the mighty power of God in saving His three faithful servants, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and publicly confessed that there was no other god like the God of the Hebrews who could do such a thing. The king had decreed that nobody speak against their great God.

 But the king still did not understand that the God of Daniel, who revealed the mystery of his dream, the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who saved them in the fiery furnace was the only one true God. The king continued to accommodate the God of Heaven as one of his many gods, and he just believed that God of Israel to be more powerful than his gods.

 In 575 B.C., twelve years after the fiery furnace experience, once again God in his mercy had given Nebuchadnezzar another terrible dream to warn him of his sins and called him to repentance.

 Nebuchadnezzar saw in that second dream a huge tree that fed and sheltered the animals of the earth and the birds of heaven. Then he saw an angel from heaven command that the tree be chopped down, its branches and leaves cut off, its fruit scattered, and its stump banded with iron and bronze. Thenthe angel said “*Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal till seven times pass by for him*”.

 The king was terrified and called his wise men who failed again to tell him the meaning of his dream. At last he called Daniel and described his dream. Daniel was troubled when he heard the dream, because God showed him what lay ahead, the terrible judgement upon the king.

 Think as if you are Daniel in that situation. There you are, standing listening to the king’s dream of that great tree. It gets chopped down, somebody gets driven out to eat grass with animals for seven years, and suddenly you realise that it all applies to the king who is telling you his dream. That is bad news, you cannot tell that to your king. That is why Daniel was troubled greatly. But the God of Daniel granted wisdom to his servant and Daniel prepared the king for bad news by saying that he wished the dream applied to the king’s enemies and not to the king.

 Thirty years before, Daniel had said to the king, “*You are this head of gold*”. Now he says to the king, “*You are this tree*” and God is going to remove you from your throne and make you like an animal eating grass for seven years until you acknowledge that the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men. Daniel concluded his explanation of the dream with calling the king to repentance and urged him to turn from his sins and humble himself before God. “*O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that your prosperity will continue*” (Dan 4:27).

 Daniel put his finger on the sore spot of Babylon’s imperial glory; its social costs in terms of oppression and injustice. Eastern kings and presidents lived in splendid isolation and heard only the good news. Being an official for nearly fifty years under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel knew that the king had not been concerned about the poor nor shown mercy to those in need. Daniel also knew, from God’s Word, that the Lord is the protector and defender of the poor and aliens, and the oppressed.

 God communicated that dream to the king to warn him of his sins and call him to repent. For thirty years, God was dealing with the king and favoured him with these opportunities. The king knew enough about the God of Daniel, but did nothing after hearing the meaning of his dream nor did he change his ways and repent of his sins after the advice and the warning he had been given. The king was passing up a gracious opportunity to repent and make a new beginning and acknowledge the Most High God who rules in the kingdoms of men.

 God, in his mercy again, gave the king one more year to heed his warning and repent of his sins. These twelve months were days of grace, but as “all things” seemed to “continue as they were”, the warning of God was neglected and forgotten. Then God moved in to his final act to humble this king and bring him to his senses. In 574 B.C., the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon and he said: *“Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.”*

 At that moment, Nebuchadnezzar received a mental illness and acted like an animal, being driven away from his palace to live on his farm eating grass with animals. He was under the watch of his wife, his son and his doctors, but ultimately under the protection of God Himself.

 That was the interpretation of thecutting down and trimming of the tree which symbolized Nebuchadnezzar’s disgrace and removal from the throne, but leaving of the stump and banding it with iron and bronze was a promise that he would one day reign again when he repented of his sins and God’s purposes for him were fulfilled.

 Finally, *Nebuchadnezzar* saw the truth that God had been trying to teach him for thirty one years. At the end of the seven years punishment he said, “*I raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”*

The king said, *“M*y *sanity was* *restored*, *my honour and splendour were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble*”.

 This is a story of salvation. It teaches us that if there is hope for Nebuchadnezzar there is hope for everyone in the world today. In pride and arrogance and sin, Nebuchadnezzar lost all his glory. He was an unjust wicked king, and ignored God’s voice for 51 years, but God in His mercy changed him and made him a new creature. God waited patiently to see people turn to him; He waited 120 years in the days of Noah, 430 years for the Canaanites, and 40 years for Jerusalem. The Bible says, “*Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of men is fully set in them to do evil*” (Ecc 8:11) and the merciful God still today is waiting to bring all people to the knowledge of his salvation.

 In response to God’s grace, the king looked to heaven, and praised God! Then he wrote to all nations under his dominion telling them what God had done for him “*To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth: May you prosper greatly! It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation”*.

 It was the responsibility of Israel before their captivity to be a light to the nations of the world (Is 42:6; 49:6), but they failed to be so. God brought them to exile and declared his glory through Nebuchadnezzar who became God’s voice and wrote a letter to the Jews and all nations of the world inviting them to glorify the God of heaven who rules in the kingdom of men. May the light of Christ shine in and through us as we continue to pray “*Lord Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it in heaven. For Yours is the kingdom, power and glory forever and ever”* Amen.

**Chapter Five**

**The Writing On The Wall**

 In Daniel chapter Five, we read about Belshazzar; the young and final king of Babylon. The king made a big party that ended in tragedy. While the king was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather had taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles might drink from them. So they brought them to him.

 Belshazzar and his nobles took the goblets (the sacred Jewish vessels) filled them with wine. The king led them in praising the gods of Babylon, gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. He mocked the Most High God of heaven by drinking wine out of the sacred Jewish vessels. These had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem 65 years before by his grandfather king Nebuchadnezzar.

 Suddenly there is a startling interruption of the party. Fingers of a human hand appear and write a mysterious message that no one can understand on the palace wall, near the lampstand. “*The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together*.” Belshazzar was so overcome by what he saw that he went totally limp.

 Let us now consider the meaning of this message. Looking at the historical setting, Nebuchadnezzar, the first king of the Babylon Empire, responded in faith to the God of Heaven, rejecting his former pagan religion. In the last ten years of his life he honorued and worshiped the true God and died in faith on 562 B.C.

 In 539 B.C., Belshazzar, his grandson, and the last king of Babylon made a big party to restore the pagan religion and he mocked the God of Heaven. God did not allow this blasphemy to go unchallenged. That very day, God wrote Belshazzar’s doom on his palace wall. The Babylon Empire came to an end that very day and the Persian Empire took over the world stage.

 So here is the young king looking at the mysterious message on his palace wall and he cried out and said to hiswise men, “*Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom”* (Daniel 5:7).

 The reason he said third highest ruler is because he and his father were first and second. The man who read and interpreted these words would be just beneath the authority of the co-regents. But none of the wise men in Babylon could interpret these words. The king became even more alarmed than before. Then the queen mother, the daughter of King Nebuchadnezzar, came on the scene. She entered the banquet hall and told Belshazzar her son, that Daniel would be able to interpret these words. Daniel was brought before the king; he was about 80 years old.

 The king said to him, “*Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. The wise men were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom*” (Daniel 5:13-16).

 Daniel answered the king, “*You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means*” Daniel began his interpretation by reminding Belshazzar of the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule. And then he said, “*when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived and ate grass like cattle; until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes*.” (Daniel 5:20-21)

 Daniel then said, “*But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.  Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honour the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription*” (Daniel 5:22-24)

 Then Daniel said, “*This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN*.” And this is what it means, Mene; *God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end*”. Tekel; *you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting*”. Peres; *your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians*” (5:25-28).

 Historians tell us that on the eve of the fall of Babylon, King Belshazzar made a great party while his kingdom was under attack and the city of Babylon was surrounded by the Medo-Persian armies. Belshazzar thought the city was indestructible, because it was surrounded by a massive wall, 350 feet high and 87 feet across. The Euphrates River ran through the middle of the city. There was a 30 foot moat outside the wall that surrounded the city.

 During that banquet, the Medo-Persian army devised a way to divert the Euphrates River that ran into the city so that the water levels around the moats sank just enough to allow his armies to push their way across under the cover of darkness and they conquered the city.

 Belshazzar thought that Babylon was safe and secure behind massive walls, but his city was conquered at the very moment Daniel was talking to him. The party was over. He was killed that very night. The fall of the Babylonian Empire is recorded in the last two verses of Daniel 5:30-31 “*That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two*”.

 **Why did Daniel not call Belshazzar to repent? What sin did Belshazzar commit?**

 Belshazzar knew all about his grandfather’s pride and downfall; how he was humbled by God, and how he looked up to God and repented and acknowledged Him as the Most High God who rules in the kingdom of men. Belshazzar knew all about this, but he deliberately ignored and rejected God and sinned against the light and made fun of God by drinking wine in the sacred Jewish vessels that had been consecrated to the worship of God. His sin was intentional mockery of what those vessels represented; the God of the Jews, the God who, in Belshazzar’s eyes, was defeated more than 69 years ago.

 Today, we see a new form of blasphemy. The name of Jesus Christ, the cross itself, and other symbols of the Christians faith, are so easily used in the media as a source of comedy. So such constant media misuse reflects the intentional mockery of what those symbols represent, the Most High God whom they deny.

**What is God saying to us here?**

 It’s an age-old message. It is summarised in this way, “*God cannot be mocked... He will bring every deed into judgment”.* There is no escape from God’s judgment upon those who know the revealed truth of His Word, and ignore, reject, suppress it, mock and make fun of it. The Bible states, “*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse*” (Romans 1;18-31).

 Through Belshazzar’s experience, God is warning us strongly not to forget that one day as the Apostle Paul says, “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him*” (2 Corinthians 5:10). But the good news is that Paul goes on to tell us that the reason why God warns us so strongly is because he loves us so dearly. Romans 5:8 states, “*But God demonstrates His own love in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*.”

 There is no warning like the cross of Jesus Christ.  The message of the cross reinforces all the Old Testament warnings about judgment. The cross warns all men of the type of destruction and great wrath that a Just and Holy God must pour out on sin because of who He is. The penalty of sin against the light is death.

  But the Scriptures tell us the real glory of the cross is that it does more than warn us of sin’s penalty. It also saves us from it! ***The blood of Jesus blots out the handwriting of condemnation*** that has been written across all of our lives if we will come to Christ in sincere repentance and faith. God has promised us, “*Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow*.” (Isaiah 1:18). God himself promises that on that final judgment day, when we stand before his throne, when He looks at us, He will see Jesus. Instead of our sin, He will see Jesus’ sinlessness.

  Imagine when you get home and in the evening, you sit down to eat your dinner when suddenly a hand appears writing on your living room wall. What words would that hand be writing for you? What exactly is the writing on your wall saying to you?

 The Bible tells us about three writings by the fingers of God:

 **First, the Ten** **Commandants** **on the tablet stone - the Moral Law-** that speaks to us of the need to honour God our Creator and the Redeemer (Exodus. 20:1-17).

 **Then, the writing on the wall (Daniel 5)**, that speaks of the doom of those who know the revealed truth of God, but they ignore and reject it, blaspheme God and make fun of the symbols of the biblical faith.

Here are two lessons from Belshazzar’s doom;

* Belshazzar’s doom is a warning to those who are sinning against the light. The knowledge of the truth of God should lead us to repentance “*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation that God has revealed?”*
* Unbelief, indifference and rejection of the revealed truth are the reasons for God’s judgment “*The light has come to the world*...”

 **Thirdly, Jesus’ writing on the ground** in John 8:1-11, in which the Lord reminds us not to judge others and speaks also to those who are in need of forgiveness and take away from their hearts the fear of condemnation as He said the woman, “*Fear not. I will not condemn you”.*

 Let us rest in God’s solemn promise: “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” (Romans 8:1). Yes, Jesus paid it all.

**Chapter Six**

**Facing The Lions**

 In 539 B.C., the Babylon Empire ended and the Persian Empire took the world stage. Daniel, at that time, was over 80 years old. Having gone to Babylon as a 15-17 year old, Daniel had spent his adult life serving in the courts of various Babylonian kings. Now he is serving the Medo-Persian Empire, under a king named Darius. The names of kings had changed but the spiritual challenge was the same.

 King Darius appointed 120 administrators over his entire kingdom and above them he appointed three top minsters, one of them Daniel. Soon Darius recognized Daniel as a man of integrity and wanted to make him second in command over the entire kingdom. At this, the two other minsters hated Daniel. They tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel and get rid of him, butthey could find no fault in him. They said, “*We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God* ” (6:4-5).

 His enemies realised that his daily prayers could be that one “flaw” where they could catch him. They tricked King Darius into signing a 30-day law that forbade anyone to pray except to the king himself. The king had no idea that Daniel was the intended target. Daniel was a victim of his own integrity. His troubles came not from his weakness, but from his strength. When Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home where the window opened toward Jerusalem, and he knelt, praying three times a day, morning, noon and evening, as every godly Jew did (Psalm 55:17). He gave thanks to God, just as he always had, but knowing now that his enemies would catch him.

 Daniel did not try to escape the consequences of his decision to pray to God. He was willing to die rather than give up his faith in his God. He could have simply closed the window and no one would have seen him pray. Or he could have said, “*I’ll pray in my heart. No one will know*.” It was for only 30 days and he knew that if he didn’t go along with the law, the lions would eat him alive. But none of those excuses were needed because long ago Daniel had made up his mind to serve and glorify God no matter what. He just kept on doing what he had been doing all along.

 They arrested him, and brought him to the king asking for his death according to the law. Darius now realises he has been tricked, and the king begins seeking loopholes in the law to prevent Daniel being thrown to the lions. But he cannot, and the law must stand. He cannot repeal his own law because that would make him look weak and ineffective. Daniel must go to the lion’s den.

 King Darius wishes Daniel well with these words, “*May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!*” (6:16). So Daniel is thrown into the lion’s den, which was basically a form of capital punishment.

 Daniel may have thought that God would rescue him, but undoubtly he had some anxiety when they took him to the den. I’m sure he was praying that God would help him to endure the pain. When he hit the ground at the bottom of the den, he could hear the sound of the lions’ roars, but as the seconds ticked away, minutes passed and then hours, the lions did not touch him. Daniel later said that an angel of the Lord came to rescue him and shut the mouths of the lions so they could not harm His servant.

 That night the king didn’t sleep well, but I don’t doubt that God gave Daniel a very deep sleep. The king refused all offers of entertainment, and even refused to eat. Early in the morning he rushed to the lion’s den, hoping against hope that Daniel had somehow survived. The king cried out, “*Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?*” (6:26). He jumped with joy when he heard Daniel’s voice saying, *"My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king"* (Daniel 6:22).

 The end of the story comes quickly. When they pulled Daniel out, he had no wounds. No one had to apply any first aid, and Daniel didn’t have to go the hospital for observation. Though he was an old man, he came out at least as healthy as when he went in. The king ordered that the two other top men who plotted against Daniel be thrown to the lions, along with their wives and children. Then Darius offers public praise to “the God of Daniel” who is the living God who endures forever. He rescues and he saves, and he is the One who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (6:24-27).

 What amazing words coming from the lips of a pagan king! Or perhaps he is no more a pagan. Like Nebuchadnezzar he became a believer in the one true God. Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius and King Cyrus the Persian after him.

 Let’s consider some lessons for us as modern-day Daniels as we find ourselves facing the lions every day.

1. It is possible to live a godly life in the midst of spiritual hostility, where the temptation to compromise our faith is with us every day. This is our spiritual battle.

 Yes, Daniel story and the lion’s den remind us that there is a spiritual battle raging all around us. The devil himself is like a roaring lion who would devour us if he could. This is Satan’s deal; if you stop acknowledging Christ as Saviour and Lord, he will stop bothering you. The lions won’t come near you. It should not surprise us if the devil has an army of supporters whose major call in life is to harass us, trick us, and rip us up if they can (1 Peter 5:8).

 Daniel’s story demonstrates this and encourages us to live a godly life acknowledging the fact that not everyone shares our faith. Yes, we can live for Christ on the job, in our office, in our classroom, or in our neighbourhood. There is always a way to compromise for those who want to compromise. And there is always a way to be God’s light for those who want to obey God.

1. Christians who live for God should expect opposition.

 Daniel had his share of opposition and this is part of what our Lord Jesus meant when he said “*take up your cross daily and follow me”*. The jealous colleagues are never far away; the more honest we are, the sooner they will attack.

1. God can use us to touch unlikely people when we are faithful to him.

 The story emphasises the powerful effect that Daniel’s personal integrity had on Darius. While it is true that some of his colleagues envied him and plotted to kill him, it’s also true that he made a huge impact for good on the king himself. Some ‘Darius’ has his eyes on us right now. Let us be careful about what we say and do. Our example may be leading someone to heaven, or through carelessness we may be leading someone to hell.

1. God is able to deliver us from any danger we face.

 Generations of God’s people have taken strength from this story because He is the same God, He is sovereign over those who plot against us, over the lions who surround us. Take heart and trust in Him. He can deliver you from whatever is troubling you this very moment.

1. Does God always deliver his people? Yes, indeed, but not always our prayers are answered in the way we expect.

 It’s true that God didn’t prevent Daniel from being thrown in to the den. But the Lord went in with him. The Bible tells us why the miracle happened; because Daniel “*trusted in his God.*” For over 80 years, Daniel’s faith had rested in the Living God, and as a result, the lions couldn’t touch him. Faith believes God, even when belief is unbelievable.

 The fear of death keeps many paralysed in the time of crisis. Our life is in God’s hands and we cannot die one second before our appointed time, and we won’t live a second longer either. So what do we do when they call for the lions? We don’t change a thing. We keep on serving the Lord, keep on doing right, and keep on living for Christ whatever the cost. God will be with us.

 Let us trust our God who can stop the mouths of any lions we may face. And even He does not, let us continue to worship Him and rest secure that He makes no mistakes as King Nebuchadnezzar confessed that “*everything God does is right*” (Daniel 4:37).

1. Daniel is a picture of our Lord Jesus who, though he was innocent, was envied and hated and condemned to die.

 He too was let down into a pit of death and a stone was rolled across the entrance and an official seal placed across the stone. Just as God sent an angel to Daniel, he also sent angels to Jesus’ tomb to testify, “*He is not here. He is risen just as he said*”. From that pit of death came forth the Prince of Life. He is the One who has conquered death forever and ever. Because of him, we know that to be absent from the body is not to be dead, but to be present with the Lord.

 In the days to come if we face hostility in one form or another because of our Christian faith, be of good cheer. Daniel’s God is our Lord too. He is the same God, the One who rescued Daniel can rescue us too. This is God’s promise to those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

 O Sovereign Lord, give us courage to walk the path You set before us. We thank You knowing that our life is in Your hands and that we have nothing to fear because all our days are appointed by You. Give us the faith of Daniel and help us to make our colours clear so that everyone will know that we belong to You our Living God our Saviour. We do not pray for a den of lions but we ask for courage if that is Your will for us. Help us to glorify You in our life so that others will see Your love for them in us. In Jesus’ name our Lord and Saviour, we pray. Amen.

**Chapter Seven**

**The Vision of The Four Beasts**

 Daniel 7 tells us of Daniel’s first dream of the four beasts. He said, *“I saw in my vision by night … four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another*” (7:1-3)

  We are told in the interpretation that these four beasts represent four kings and their four kingdoms. The angel said to Daniel, “*The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth… The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it”* (7:17; 23).

 This dream of the four beasts and its interpretation correspond perfectly with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2. Both speak of kingdoms of men that come and go and point to God’s kingdom in Christ that stands for ever.

 The head of gold in the big statue is the first king, corresponding with the first beast which looks like a lion, but it has eagle’s wings, and points to the kingdom of Babylon.

 In the vision, Daniel saw the lion lost its wings and that was what happened to Nebuchadnezzar when he lost his sanity.  The beast was lifted up from the ground and given the mind of a man, showing how God gave Nebuchadnezzar his sanity back when he acknowledged God and believed in Him.

 The chest of silver is the second kingdom and corresponds with the second beast which looks like a bear, representing the Medo-Persian Empire that took over the world stage after the Babylonian kingdom.

 Daniel saw that one of the bear’s sides was lifted up in a reference to one part of the empire being more powerful than the other.  Even though there was an alliance between the Medes and Persians, the Persians were the dominant force of the empire.  The three ribs represent the three greatest conquests of the Persian Empire over Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia which is today the western part of Turkey.

 The belly of bronze is the third kingdom corresponding with the third beast which looks like a leopard, with four wings and four heads (7:6). It represents the Greek Empire that we know came directly after the Medo-Persians.

  Alexander the Great king of the Greek Empire, by the age of 32 had conquered within ten short years, the entire Medo-Persian Empire, and the west border of India.

 The leopard in Daniel’s dream has four heads.  After the death of Alexander, his empire was divided among his four generals, as in the dream that the beast has four heads.

 The legs and feet of the statue made of Iron and clay is the fourth kingdom corresponding with the fourth beast which represents the Roman Empire that took the world stage after the Greek empire.

 Both dreams describe the same four kingdoms, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Both visions say that kingdoms of men come and go, but the kingdom of God stands for ever. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the kingdom of God in Christ is represented by the Rock that crushed the statue and became a big mountain and filled the earth, referring to God’s redeemed people of all time. In Daniel’s dream,God’s kingdom will be revealed at the coming of Christ, with the cloud of heaven, and God’s people will enjoy its glory for ever.

 However, there is one large difference.  Daniel’s vision tells us more details than what was revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Daniel’s vision describes a little horn which symbolises the rise of persecution and opposition against God’s people. The focus however, of Daniel’s vision, is on the blessed end for God’s people at the coming of the Son of Man; Christ our Lord who will bring His Church safe for her glorious eternity.

 The time of persecution is only for three and a half years. The angel explained this to Daniel and said: *“The little horn speaks against the Most High and oppresses his holy people and tries to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time”.*

 Daniel saw that this little horn *“had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. He was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom”.*

 The emphasis of the angel’s explanation is not on the kingdom of men, their power, their brutality, nor their persecution of God’s people, but on the kingdom of God, which is given to God’s redeemed people of all ages forever. The emphasis is positive. If Daniel had been shaken by the dark side of his vision, as we are, he is reminded in the interpretation of the outcome of these events, the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom.

 The boasting of the little horn of persecution turns to blasphemy. He not only speaks against the Most High God, he oppresses His people too. He intends to make changes in time and in law, changing the order God has established. This little horn of persecution may hope to change the time, but in God’s plan, is given only “*a time, times, and half a time*” —three and a half years to oppose and oppress God’s people. Persecution of God’s people may succeed and the Church of God suffer, but only for a limited time.

From the earliest days of the New Testament Church, until now, God won’t allow Satan to destroy His people. The time is limited by the symbolic number of “*Forty-two months is equivalent to 1260 days or 3 ½ years, or time and times and half a time*” (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 11:2-3; 12:14; 13:5-9).

This signifies a short time of persecution, and reminds us of Jezebel the Queen, who persecuted God’s people for three and a half years. She forced them to worship idols and she killed those who dared to worship God. In Daniel’s vision and in the book of Revelation, this symbolic time refers to the suffering of the Church who continues to preach the gospel in the midst of suffering. This is a short time, not forever.

 Elijah went through a period of 3½ years, being fed and maintained in the wilderness by a raven and then by the woman of Zarephath. Likewise, the Church was and will be maintained and protected by God Himself. Like Elijah, who boldly witnessed to the Word of God before King Ahab, so the Church will continue to be the light of Christ our Saviour in the world.

 Just as 7,000 were kept safe through the three and a half years of Queen Jezebel’s persecution, likewise, the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. If God is with us, who can be against us?

 The blessed end is coming, when the court of the Most High God sits for judgment, and then the time of troubles is over. At this time the kingdom of God is revealed with the glorious coming of Christ. God’s people of all time will be given an everlasting kingdom. They will enjoy His glorious presence forever.

 Daniel’s vision ends here, but its impact on him does not end. His thoughts alarm him, and his face pales. Nevertheless, Daniel tells no one, keeping the matter to himself and suffering a quiet agony over the future events God has revealed to him. The message of this prophecy is really quite simple and may be summed up in the following.

 Before the coming of the eternal glorious kingdom of God, at the second coming of our Lord, the blasphemous little horn of persecution, will continue opposing God and oppressing His Church. God’s people of all times were and are facing that little horn of persecution. During times of oppression, it may appear the Church of God is being defeated and that God’s kingdom is but wishful thinking.

 But looking to the blessed end as God’s Word reveals, gives us comfort and patience, encouraging us to pray always “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matt 6:9-10). God will end our time of troubles, pain and suffering, and we will receive the glorious kingdom which will never end. Yes, we are looking forward to the coming of Christ, praying with the Apostle John **“*Amen, come Lord Jesus*”.**

**Chapter Eight**

**The Vision of The Ram And The Goat**

 Daniel chapter 8 speaks of a vision of a fight between a Ram and a Goat. The Ram came from the east and charged to the west, and to the north and to the south. No animal could stand against it, and none could be rescued from its power. Daniel was told that the ram “*represents the kings of Media and Persia*”.

 Then he saw a goat come from the west. It had a great Horn between its eyes and knocked the ram to the ground, shattering its two horns. The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the big horn was broken off, and in its place four horns grew up to the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came a little horn which “*set itself up to be great, throw the truth to the ground and outlawed the daily sacrifice and the Temple was brought low”*. Daniel was told that the large horn between the eyes of the goat represented its first king, and the little horn, its last king” (8:3-4; 9-12; 20-25).

 **Q: What does this vision mean? What is the main message of this vision?**

 The message of this vision is this: “Satanic war against God’s people by the little horn and his failure to destroy them”. The Bible says in the Old Testament “*No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me*,” says the Lord (Isaiah 54:17). And in the New Testament our Lord Jesus confirmed this and said. “*I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18).*

 But before we see who the little horn was and what he did to God’s people, let us recap the story of the book of Daniel from the beginning to this vision. Daniel is a book of encouragement to God’s people who suffer for their faith, calling them to keep their trust in God, despite temptation to compromise with the world and water down their faith. The book emphasises that God’s spiritual kingdom in Christ stands for ever; He is sovereign over all things and rules in the kingdom of men.

 The Book of Daniel has two main parts: chapters 1-6 *are* the stories of four young people in exile who through their faith in God suffered but succeeded and brought blessing to others- including two kings who believed in the only true God. Chapters 7-12 speak of 4 visions that are full of symbols and represent the successive rise and fall of the kingdoms of men. They point to God’s spiritual kingdom in Christ that stands forever, in spite of the opposition and persecution against it**.**

So far we have seen two important visions and now we will study the third. All three visions are related to each other and have three important symbols that speak of one truth- God’s kingdom in Christ stands forever in spite of all the war of the gates of hell against it. The first vision we saw, King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image, represents the rise and fall of the kingdoms of men. The first was the Babylonian kingdom represented by the head of Gold, followed by Persia represented by the arms and chest of silver, followed by the Greek, represented by the belly and thighs of bronze and then followed by the fourth kingdom represented by iron and clay which was the Roman Empire. The second vision we saw was of the four beasts which represent the same kingdoms as the great image, but also point to a little horn which comes from the fourth beast of Rome.

 Now we have the third vision of a fight between a Ram and a Goat, which gives more details on the third and fourth kingdoms of the four beasts and points to a little horn coming from the goat- the last king of Greece. The little horn of Greece symbolises the persecution of its last king on God’s people before the birth of Christ. But the little horn of the fourth beast symbolizes the persecution of Rome on the Christian Church.

 But the most important symbol of all is the small Rock in Nebuchadnezzar’s great image. The small Rock crushed the great image and became a great mountain that filled the earth. This symbolises God’s spiritual kingdom in Christ that was established at His first coming. It will be revealed in its glorious state when He comes again. This kingdom will last forever.

 Now let us see more details on the little horn in Daniel’s vision of Four Beasts and the vision of the Ram/ Goat. The little horn symbolises the rise of persecution and opposition against God’s people. The little horn of Greece was against Israel before the birth of Christ and the one of Rome was against the Church in the first three centuries. The focus of the visions however, is on the blessed end for God’s people at the second coming of Christ our Lord when He brings His Church safety to enjoy with Him the glorious eternity.

 With this background, let us see what persecution of the little horn on God’s people looks like, past, present and future.

 The evil works of the little horn according to the vision of a Ram and a Goat says, **“***He set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host* (God of heaven) *… the place of the sanctuary was brought low* (for 3½ years and the 2300 sacrifices of evening and morning were outlawed). *The host of the saints were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground* ” (Daniel 8:11-12).

 Let us see briefly the history of the Greek empire and what evil works were done by its little horn, its last king.

 In the year 336 BC, the goat started with a big horn between his eyes in the vision. That was Alexander the Great, the first king of the Greek empire. Alexander conquered the Persian empire of the Ram and as we saw in the vision he knocked the ram to the ground, shattering its two horns. At his sudden death in 323 BC, according to the vision, the big horn was broken, and in its place came out four horns. After Alexander’s death, wars between his four generals resulted (in 275 BC) in the division of his empire into four; Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, and Egypt. Each general took one of these kingdoms.

 Out of the four horns of the goat, came out a little horn, its last king, was Antiochus Epiphanies. He came to power in 175 B.C and wanted to set himself up to be as great as God. That little horn persecuted God’s people over three and half years from 169-164 BC. He died in 164 BC.

 During that time, from 169-164 BC, the vision tells us three evil things were done by the little horn: Sacrifices were Outlawed (No more worship); persecution and killing of some of God’s people; and blasphemy of the Name of God.

 It all started in 169 BC, when the little horn first defiled the Temple of God in Jerusalem and carried off some of the gold and silver vessels. A severe persecution of Jewish people commenced. Some were killed. Sacrifices some 2300- were also outlawed. In one day, two sacrifices were supposed to be offered, one in the morning and one in the evening. If we divide the 2300 sacrifices by two for each day, that means there were 1150 days or **three years** in sacrifices were banned.

 After those three years, the Little Horn blasphemed God by destroying the altar of the Lord and replacing it with a pagan altar. Unclean animals were offered. This was an abomination of desolation and blasphemy of the Most High God. It **lasted three months.** That evil act caused the death of the Little Horn in 164 BC.

 Our Lord referred to this evil act in Matt 24:15, and told us that evil act will be repeated again by another little horn of Rome, and that is exactly what Daniel’s vision revealed before it happened. This also was spoken of by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thess 2, **“***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day of the Lord will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”*

 This evil work was done by the little horn of the fourth beast of Rome. According to Daniel’s vision, “*He speaks against the Most High God and oppresses his people and tries to change the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. The little horn had a mouth that spoke boastfully ... and was waging war against the holy people and defeating them”* (7:21; 25).

 But the great encouragement of those visions is this; persecution of God’s people is a limited time. As it was in past, so it is today and also will be a limited time in the future. Persecution and troubles will not last forever. The symbolic number for Persecution and troubles in the Bible “time and times and half a time = 3 ½ years = 42 months = 1260 days. This time would not and will not last forever, it just 10 days, a short time according to Rev 2.

 It happened in the past: Jezebel the Queen of Israel persecuted God’s people 3 and a half years. She forced them to worship idols and she killed those who dared to worship God, but she failed to destroy them all. Elijah the prophet, went through 3½ years in hiding, was fed in the wilderness by a raven and then by the woman of Zarephath. Like Elijah, who boldly witnessed to the Word of God before King Ahab, so the Church of Christ her Redeemer will be enabled to continue to be the light of Christ our Saviour in the world.

 Just as 7,000 were kept safe *through the three and half years of Queen Jezebel’s persecution*, likewise, the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. *If God is with us, who can be against us?*

 Let us say with Apostle Paul: “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us…For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (Romans 8:18 ; 2 Cor 4:17-18).

 The blessed end is coming, when the court of the Most High God sits for judgment and then the time of troubles will be over. At this time the kingdom of God will be revealed with the glorious coming of Christ. God’s people of all time will be given an everlasting kingdom. They will enjoy His glorious presence forever.

 Trust God and His Word. We know that the Bible is true because of the fulfilled prophecy. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century AD, wrote in his book, “***Antiquities of the Jews***”, about Daniel’s prophecies and visions, “*No prophecy was ever more accurately fulfilled than this*”.

 The purpose of the vision was and is to prepare God’s people for any persecution by the gates of Hell. “*No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me*,” says the Lord (Isaiah 54:17). And in the New Testament our Lord Jesus confirmed this and said, “*I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18).*

 The identity of the ram and goat are clearly given. History confirms what is described in this vision. The conflict is between Medo-Persia and Greece. The division of the Grecian empire follows Alexander's death and then there is the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes and his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem.

 The remarkable accuracy of this vision has led some to date the book of Daniel after the events of Antiochus Epiphanes. However, its accuracy poses no problem for those who accept the inspiration of the Scriptures, and should remind us of God's power to fulfil His Word

 The people of God in the second century BC were made the target of this severe suffering under the powers of evil that hate God’s work and are out to destroy for ever whoever confesses his name. Antiochus Epiphanes was a symbol of every persecution past, present, and what is to come at the end, before the blessed second coming of Christ.

**Chapter Nine**

**The Vision of The Seventy Weeks**

 Daniel’s vision of the seventy weeks is an apocalyptic vision that uses figurative and symbolic language to predict the nature, timing and consequences of Christ’s work on the Cross at His first coming.

 Daniel was written for the Jews who had been living as captives in Babylon for almost seventy years. It was about 540 BC and God in His wisdom inspired Daniel the eighty-two-year-old to see the greatest event in the history of mankind, the coming of the Messiah to take away the sins of the world.

 One day, Daniel was reading the prophecy of Jeremiah about a seventy-year exile for Israel that was about to come to an end “*When seventy years are completed … I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back from captivity.I will gather you from all the nations where I have banished you,” declares the Lord’* (Jer 25:8-11; 29:10-14). Daniel prayed that God in His mercy would fulfil His promise and free Israel. Then God sent the angel Gabriel to Daniel with a message about another seventy. In seventy times of seven (490 years), Jerusalem will witness even greater things, the coming of the Messiah and His death would take away sins and make an end of the animal sacrifices.

 This is what God reveals to Daniel, *“Seventy weeks (490 Years) are determined for your people and for your holy city. (Why?) To finish the transgression, to make an end ofsins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy” (Daniel 9:24).*

***Q: What is the main message of the Vision of the 70 Weeks?***

The vision speaks of three important things: to predict the nature, timing and consequences of Christ’s work on the Cross at His first coming.

1. **The vision predicts and speaks of the nature of Christ’s work at His first coming.**

 The vision portrays this greatest work of God, Christ’s redemption, on the Cross (Daniel 9:24).

The message of the vision says, ***“To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for*** *(lit. to cover)* ***iniquity:*** When sin is covered it is atoned for. ***To bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up*** *(lit. to authenticate)* ***the vision and prophecy:*** God’s Word will be accredited and attested by these events. ***To anoint the Most Holy:*** God will qualify and enable His Son, the “Holy of Holies” for his central role and huge responsibilities in this great work of redemption.

When Jesus came and entered the synagogue, He was given the book of Isaiah to read this prophecy, “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour*.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.He began by saying to them, “*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*” (Isaiah 61:1-3 & Luke 4:16-20)

1. **The vision predicts the timing of Christ’s work at His first coming**

 The vision divides the “seventy weeks” into three divisions (vv. 25-27): the first division ***7 weeks, 7 times 7 = 49 years:***which began when Artarxerxes gave the command to rebuild Jerusalem from 457 to 408 BC. Daniel describes this as “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” This restoration and rebuilding occurred under Ezra and Nehemiah.

The second division ***is 62 weeks, 62 times 7*** **= 434 years** from 408 BC to 27 AD. It began with Jerusalem being rebuilt and restored, and finished with Christ’s first coming and, more specifically, with the beginning of His public ministry, when he was baptised and anointed with the Holy Spirit. Remember what God said to John the Baptist “*The one on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the Messiah" (John 1:33)*

The last division is***One week, the last week of the vision, 1 times 7 = 7 years:*** which began with Christ’s public ministry in 27 AD and after three and a half years which is 31 AD in **the middle of** that week, Christ was cut off, but not for Himself, The Messiah being *cut off* is foretelling of Christ's Crucifixion for us to make an end for our sins and to bring an end to sacrifice and animals offering. The vision says, **“*In the middle of the week, the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself and He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering*”.**

That last week of the vision ends after three and a half years in 34 AD, when Stephen was stoned to death, which declared another official rejection of Jesus as the Messiah from the Jewish leaders. At that point, the kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to the Church of the New Testament to proclaim it to all nations of the world. Remember that our Lord, after His resurrection, instructed his disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations beginning from Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and to the end of the earth.

1. **The vision predicts two consequences of Christ’s work on the Cross.**

**First**: The New Covenant was established by the shedding of the blood of Christ, the perfect sacrifice that made an end of the sacrificial system which in God’s eyes, after the cross, was unnecessary and over. It says, “*Then He (the Messiah) shall confirm a covenant with many … in the middle of the week He (the Messiah) shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering”.*  This is what our Lord Jesus did with His disciples in the upper room “*He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’* ” (Matthew 26).

**Second**: Rejecting Christ’s sacrifice would punish the Jews, who did not believe in Him as the Messiah, with desolation and destruction of the Temple/City and exile again by “*The people of the prince* (the Romans) *that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. And till the end of the war desolations are determined*.” (v. 27)

 This is what our Lord said to the Jewish leaders “*See! Your house is left to you desolate … Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it*” (Matt 23:38; 21: 43; 24:15 & Acts 13:46).

Our Lord advised his disciples and those who believed in Him to flee Jerusalem and said, “*Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation’, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains*” (Matt 24:15-16 & Luke 21:20-24).

 **The same two consequences of Christ’s work on the Cross still apply today**. Apostle Paul says, “*We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God...* *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1: 18, 24)*

**Therefore we can say with confidence** *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1: 16-17****)* Praise the Lord. Amen**.

**Chapter Ten**

**The Mystery of Delayed Prayer**

 Daniel chapter Ten tells us about Daniel’s prayer with tears and fasting, and the mystery of the prayer delayed for 21 days in the vision of the heavenly being by the Banks of the Tigris River.

Three Questions here;

Q1. Why was Daniel praying to God with tears and fasting?

Q2. How did God answer Daniel’s prayer and why it was delayed for 21 days?

Q3. What lessons can we learn from that vision?

 Daniel wrote "*In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.*"

 It was in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, that is, in 536 BC. That date is important because that’s the year the exile of the Jews finally ended and the first group of Jews, about 50,000, returned to Jerusalem that year, but Daniel was not among them, because of his advanced age of 82 years.

 Daniel, then aged 82 years old, was fasting and praying for 21 days asking God to give him more understanding about the visions and prophecies he had already received, and because he was concerned about the future of 50,000 of God’s people who had already returned to Jerusalem.

 From the previous visions, Daniel learned that God’s people would experience great suffering in the years ahead, from the two little horns of the vision of the Ram and the Goat, and the vision of the four beasts, but Daniel was assured that the LORD would watch over His people and ultimately will bring them to the eternal Blessing.

 Q2: How did God answer Daniel’s prayer and why was it delayed for 21 days?

 After three weeks Daniel went out to the banks of the Tigris River, and in response to Daniel’s prayer, God sent an angel to explain the things in visions he did not understand. However, this angel was delayed for those same three weeks, as he explains to Daniel, “*But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia*” (10:13)

 The appearance of this angel was so terrifying and so powerful that Daniel lost his colour, had no strength in him, and fell on his face. The angel was dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the shining bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

 The angel touched Daniel and said "*O Daniel, man greatly beloved… stand up, for I have now been sent to you… Do not be afraid… since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days*”.

      We learn three important truths from this vision. **First**, we learn that God immediately answered Daniel's prayer. This is encouraging. **Second**, the mystery of why sometimes our prayers are not answered but delayed for a time, because God in His wisdom allows the Devil and his demons to hinder our prayers.

**Third,** the forces of evil are at work against God and His people, but in the end they fail to destroy God’s perfect plan for us. Praise the Lord, *“No weapon formed against you shall prosper. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,”* says the Lord (Isaiah 54:17).Our Lord said, “*I build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against us*” Matt 16).

 The vision allows us to see a glimpse into the spiritual world. It is a view from the seen to the unseen, from the visible to the invisible, from the natural to the supernatural. The vision is telling us that Satan wanted to discourage Daniel from knowing the truth of God’s Word, and hindered the answer of his prayer for 21 days. We should expect the same, and not be discouraged when we pray and don't see immediate answers. God hears your prayers, because He cares about you.

 Let us see what the angel said to Daniel in that vision; "*The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me… Now I will go to fight with the prince of Greece!*

 This is the clearest example in all the Bible of what is called a "***territorial evil spirit***." This is like Star Wars only this isn’t science fiction. It’s real. What is the main job of this territorial evil spirit? His job in general is to darken the people of Persia, to keep them from having the truth and the light of God's Word, and in particular to discourage Daniel from understanding God Word to His people.

 The vision is telling us that evil spirits have special appointments from Satan over kingdoms of the world like Persia and Greece and today’s world, but God in His sovereignty rules over all. He has given His angels to foil Satan’s plan against God’s people. As we see here in the vision, the angel Michael has very special assignment for Israel and helped the angel who came to Daniel with the answer. Nothing can stop God in accomplishing his purposes.

 The Bible says that Satan is "*the god of this world*". He is the "*prince of demons*" (2 Cor 4:4, Mark 3:22.) His mission as the Bible says is "*to darken the minds of unbelievers*" and that he "*deceives the world*" (Rev 12:9); and plants his weeds (unbelievers) throughout the world (Matt 13:39); and that he takes people captive to do his will (2 Tim 2:25); and that he plucks up the seed of the Word when it is preached (Matt 13:4); and falsely accuses the believers and throws ministers in prison (Rev 2:10). Since we know the prince of demons does all that, this is what his sub-princes do as well.

 Wherever there is a flock of Christ’s sheep there are wolves that want to eat them. Whenever God’s people reveal the light of Christ, dark principalities of evil are at work. Whenever the Lord frees people from the realm of darkness, Satan always strikes back.

 Satan wanted to keep the Jews captive in a foreign land; behind the scene, he wanted to prevent the coming of the Messiah. Satan got angry when the Persian king freed the Jews and allowed them to return home. So Satan tried to hinder them from knowing the truth of God’s Word. But thanks be to God, he failed.

 The Bible teaches that our spiritual battle is not against flesh and blood, but rather, *“against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephs 6:12).*

In Daniel 10: 21, the angel says to Daniel, "*But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth.*" That is why the evil spirit over the kingdom of Persia in the vision tried to hinder God’s angel from reaching Daniel from heaven. The angel was bringing a message of truth. But Satan is a liar and a deceiver from the beginning. The main aim of all his demons is to keep the book of truth from being known and believed. The truth frees people (John 8:32). So the territorial evil spirits do their main work of corruption and destruction by blinding the people of their area from the truth.

 Let us be like Daniel who was praying to God for the truth to be revealed and for the good of God's people. Yes, we can fast and pray for the things that we know are God's will in our lives and our families and our church and our city and our world. But don't let a secondary biblical truth such as the territorial evil spirits, become a primary preoccupation. Let us Trust in God, He is in control. May the Lord make us a people who pray like Daniel.

 Let us now wrap up the message of Daniel Ten. Remember **first** that our prayers are immediately heard by God. This ought to encourage all of us who wonder if our prayers ever reach beyond the ceiling.

 **Second**, the unseen spiritual warfare may at times delay answers to our prayers. What happened to Daniel may also happen to us. It’s easy to say, “Lord, bless me and my family. And thank you Lord for the food”. That’s good but it’s hardly the kind of prayer that will cause Satan to tremble. But, when we pray for our loved ones or others people to be saved and return to the Lord, we should not be surprised that those prayers are not immediately answered. Satan hates that kind of praying because it is a direct attack on his kingdom. He will not give up his captives without a fight.

**Third:** Nothing can stop God in accomplishing his purposes for you.

 God’s Word to all of us today, as it was to Daniel is “*Do not be afraid, O Daniel, man greatly beloved… Peace! Be strong now; be strong*.” Twice he says “**Be strong**” as if he knows how tired Daniel is and how easy it would be to give up altogether. This is God’s word to all of us today.

 Are you under attack from the enemy? Never give up! Do you feel like quitting? Never give up! Are you trying to be strong in the face of temptation? Never give up! Are you tired of the struggle? God’s word is clear. Never give up. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Run to Him when you feel faint. Lean heavily on the Lord.

 When the day is done, you will be standing on the victory side. Let nothing turn you aside. Fear not, and fight on. Never give up. Never, never, never give up. Stand on the promises of God.

Praise Him. Glory to His name. Amen.

**Chapter Eleven**

**The Mystery of Troubled Times**

 In chapter ten, we saw that an angel was sent to Daniel to bring him an important prophetic message, yet it took 21 days for him to reach Daniel because of conflict in the angelic realm. The demonic spirit over Persia resisted this angel from reaching Daniel until Michael, one of the angels, came to his aid.

 The angel then told Daniel here in chapter 11 about the mystery of troubled times of wars that would affect God’s people. The angel revealed to Daniel prophesies concerning man’s political ambition, greed, diplomacy, military conquest, marriage alliances, and flattery to gain power. At the end of chapter 11:31, one king dared to challenge God and defile His Temple, “*His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice”.*

 Prophecies of wars in Daniel 11 have been fulfilled between the Old and New Testament. The Persian kingdom was taken over by the Greek Empire led by Alexander the Great, and after his death, his kingdom was divided between his four generals (Daniel 11:3-4) In the East is Trachea- Turkey. In the West is Macedonia. In the North is Syria and in the South is Egypt. And then there is the continuation of wars between two of the generals and those who rule after them, specifically between the king of the North and the king of the south.

 Q: Why were the prophecies of these battles foretold to Daniel before it happened and what we can learn from it?

 The end of the 70 years Exile must have seemed to God’s people the end of their troubles, “*When the LORD brought back the captive to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.* *Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy*” (Ps 126:1), and no doubt there were high hopes of great days. Yet God told them through Daniel the prophet, there were still more troubles to come, 70 X 7 = 490 years until the coming of Christ, the Messiah to take away sins and bring everlasting righteousness.

 These prophecies were given to encourage and strengthen their faith against the evil deeds of the little horn of the Goat in vision Ch 8, the king of the North in vision Ch 11.

 The emphasis of Daniel 11 is expressed by our Lord Jesus in John 16:33 and Matthew 28, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”, “I AM with you always to the end of the world.”.* These words were spoken not simply for the disciples but also for every generation of the faithful who meet troubling times until the end, when our Lord Jesus comes.

 These wars between the kings of Syria and the kings of Egypt and their dynasty affect God’s people and their worship. The prophecy described details of what the last king of the North, the little horn, would do to God’s people, and their responses to him.

 The prophecy said, “*His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Those who understand shall instruct many; yet some they shall fall by sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help. Some of those of who understand will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless …* *The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.*

 **Let us glean three practical spiritual lessons from these troubled times that God’s people have been through, to help us in our Christian walk today.**

**1.** “*With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the Holy covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him”* (Daniel 11: 32).

 **Troubled Times reveal our true faith.** Afflictions reveal what metal men are made of.  All that glitters is not gold. The true believer remains gold when under fiery trials.  Persecution shows that the true Christian is the one who built his house on the rock; when storms and winds come, she/he stands firm.

 In Malachi 3:16-18 the Bible says, *“Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.“On the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not”.*

2. “*Those who understand shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help”* (Daniel 11:33-34).

 **Troubled Times motivate us to reveal the light of God’s Word to others, as God will aid us through it all to stand.** In Acts 8:4, 11:19, the Bible says, *“Those who had been scattered by the persecution preached the word wherever they went”.* And in 1 Cor 10:13*,* the Bible says *“No temptationhas overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it”.*

3. “*Some of those of who understand will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end. For it will still come at the appointed time”* (11:35).

 **All the trouble that we meet on earth will purify us and this will advance our glory in heaven.** “*Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake…rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heave*n” (Matt 5:10-12).

 The Apostle James said, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything …Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him”* (James 1:2-4; 12).

 Those troubled times were part of the sovereign plan of God. During the time of the Greek Empire, until the Roman Empire took over the world, the Greek language was the spoken and written international language of the world from 332 B.C to 250 AD. That assisted in the translation of the Old Testament into Greek in 132 BC, which in turn was translated into many languages. That helped the spread of the Gospel of salvation in Christ and also the writing the New Testament in Greek centuries later from 45 Ad to 90 AD. The final Christian writing in Greek by the Church fathers was done in 250 AD.

 Now let us wrap this message together: Troubling Times reveal our true faith. Troubling Times motivate us to reveal the light of God’s Word to others. Troubled Times purify us and advance our glory in heaven.

 Let us join the Apostle Paul and say with confidence, “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us… And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified”* (Romans 8:18; 28-31).

 Let us hold on this wonderful promise*: “The Lord knows those who are His… The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the Day of Judgment” (*2 Tim 2:19 & 2 Peter 2:9)

**Chapter Twelve**

**The Mystery of the End**

 Daniel chapter Twelve brings us to the greatest revelation of the Old Testament concerning the Judgment Day and the Resurrection of the dead. But before we get to that great and blessed end, let us see from Daniel’s eyes his response to these visions that God has given him.

 In the vision of the four beasts, Daniel understood that the kingdoms of men come and go, but God’s kingdom stands forever. But Daniel was troubled with a little horn, one king who comes out from the last beast and tried to destroy God’s people for almost three and a half years. Daniel said, “*As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart*” (Daniel 7:28)

 Then, in the next vision of chapter 8 of the Ram and the Goat, he was troubled when he saw another little horn coming out of the Goat, the third kingdom of the four beasts. And that little horn caused great troubles to God’s people. Daniel tried to understand, when, why and what that little horn could be. He said, “*And I was praying and fasting for 21 days, and I fainted and was sick for days. I was astonished by the vision, it was beyond understanding (*8:27).

 And then Daniel went for walk and said, “*I was by the side of the Tigris River, I lifted my eyes and looked, an angel clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold... And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you…Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these visions?” And he said, “Go your way, till the end; for you shall rest* (die), *and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days*” (12:12).

 Before we see this blessed end for Daniel, let us remember that the visions that Daniel saw speak of three ends:

1. The End of Troubled Times for God people in the Old Testament. That happened with the death of the king of the north, the little horn (Daniel 12:7, 11; 11:45).
2. The End of Old Testament Sacrifices. That happened with the death of Christ on the Cross (Daniel 9:27).
3. The End of the World. That will happen on the Resurrection Day, at the Second Coming of Son of Man in Glory as the lion not as He came first as a lamb (Daniel 12:2-3; 7:13).

 The end of the Old Testament sacrifices was foretold in the vision of the seventy weeks in chapter 9:24-27, where the angel said to Daniel “*Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy*… *The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself… in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering”.*

Thanks be to God, on the Cross our Lord Jesus was there for us as the Lamb of God who took away our sins. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:1-8, *“For by one offering Christ has perfected forever those who are being sanctified… Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin”.*

 Regarding the mystery and the end of troubled times, the vision of the Ram and the goat revealed that the little horn, the king of the north- Antiochus Epiphanies, persecuted God’s people very severely, defiled the temple and abolished the 2300 daily sacrifices for almost 3 Years (8:11-14; 11:31; 12:11)

 The angel told Daniel three reasons why God allowed his people to suffer those troubled times; firstly, t**roubled times reveal our true faith.** *“But the people who know their God will firmly resist him”* (11:32).

Secondly, t**roubled times motivate us to reveal the light of God’s Word to others** *“Those who understand shall instruct many”* (11:33).

Thirdly, t**roubled times purify us and advance our glory in heaven**.  *“Some of those who understand shall fall by sword or be burned or captured or plundered… so that they may be refine, purified and made spotless”* (11:35). Daniel asks God how long and when that troubled time would end? The angel said “*It will be for a time, times and half a time*- ***3 ½******Years = 1290 days-*** *When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed…**From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days”* (Daniel 12:5-11).

 That means, the end of that great trouble by the *death of the little horn, the king of the north* as the angel said to Daniel ***“****He shall destroy many … he shall even rise against God* ***but*** *he shall be broken without human means….****Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him*”** (Dan 8: 25; 11: 45). **After the three and a half years ended,** it happened that the little horn was determined again to destroy God’s people but 45 days later he died; **that’s why the angel said “***Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days”.*If we take away **1335 – 1290 = 45 days** *(*Daniel 12: 11-12).

The literal troubled times of 3½ Yearsin the Book of Daniel that happened to God’s People of the Old Testament became symbolic of times of persecution that was and is ongoing against the Church, God’s people of the New Testament in the Book of Revelation suffered persecution from the Scarlet women who sits on the Beast. But the Faithful God is the Same, Yesterday and Today and For Ever, who helped His people in the Past and is still helping His people today until He comes. The Bible says, *“The Lord knows those who are His… The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials” (*2 Tim 2:19 & 2 Peter 2:9).

 That brings us to the third and Blessed end in the Book of Daniel, the end of the World, the Judgment Day, and the Resurrection of the dead at the coming of the Christ the Son of man not as he came as the Lamb of God but as the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

 Daniel was a man like us, wondering and asking God about those who suffered and were killed by *sword or burned or captured or plundered* for being God’s people. What is going to happen to their souls, what is their reward?

 Some people after Daniel said, ‘*It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance? …Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name.“They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels”* (Malachi 3).

 Peter, the disciple of Jesus, said to him, “*Lord, see, we have left all and followed You. What shall we have?” The Lord answered “There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time…with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life*” (Matt 19:29 & Mark 10:28-30).

 Daniel was told, “*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days*” (12:2-3, 13).

 Our Lord confirmed this in John 5:28-29 when He said “*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”.*

 In 1Thess 4:13-18, Paul told us about the destiny of those who died in the Lord, “*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope… For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words”.*

 The Apostle Paul gives us an assignment to do here on earth until the coming of the Lord as he says, “*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain*” (1 Cor 15:42-58). This is how the book of Daniel ends, “*Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever... 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*” (Daniel 12:3-4, 10). Yes, Lord Jesus come Amen.

**Conclusion**

 Studying the book of Daniel ought to increase our confidence in the sovereignty of a God who makes no mistakes. Daniel’s God is our God too—and he is still on the throne. This may be the most important lesson of the book. God is in charge!

 He is in charge of nations, families, and individuals. He is in charge of the past, the present, and the future. He is in charge of good times and bad days, of happiness and sorrow, of joy and heartache, of great victories and shocking defeats.

 Though the Lord had taught Daniel many things and revealed to him many mysteries, it was not for Daniel to know everything before he died. As the end of his life drew near, it was enough to know that he had been faithful to the Lord and would one day rest from his labours. He will one day be raised from the dead and receive the reward the Lord has allotted for him.

 In the same way, we do not have to fully understand the things of the signs and wonders of the book, but what we must do is live faithfully to the Lord and one day we too will receive our reward at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To Him be glory forever and ever Amen!

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Chapter 9: Vision of the seventy weeks

Chapter 6: Daniel in the lions’ den

Chapters 10-12: Vision of the end.

**A Suggested Time Line**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 605 B.C. | Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar |
| 602 B.C. | Nebuchadnezzar has his dream of a great image |
| 586 B.C. | Jerusalem and the temple destroyed |
| 539 B.C. | End of Babylon and the reign of the Persians  |
| 538 B.C. | Cyrus decrees of the return of the Jews |
| 537 B.C. | 50,000 Jews return, led by Zerubbabel |
| 530-22 B.C. | The rebuilding of the temple is stopped |
| 522-486 B.C. | The rebuilding of the temple is renewed in 520 B.C. The temple is completed and dedicated in 515 B.C. |

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