

THE STORY OF DANIEL

by

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“Aunt Hattie’s Bible Stories” for Boys and Girls

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CHAPTER TEN

DANIEL’S VISION OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS

I ONCE knew a man who had been for a number of years a department head in a large store. He was popular with employees and customers and most efficient. The store was sold to another firm who wanted to retain the experienced man, but because he was forty-eight years old he was rejected and a younger man put in his place.

In Daniel’s time the positions of responsibility were given to men who were best fitted for them, no matter how old they were. And so it was, as we have seen in the preceding chapter that Daniel was chosen late in life to a place of honor, second only to the king.

At the age of eighty-eight he was president of the Supreme Council of Three, which administered affairs, through princes or governors, over the one hundred and twenty provinces which comprised the empire.

His life in such a place of trust must have been exceedingly eventful, requiring much time and effort, yet, we find him ever a man of prayer. Three times a day, as we have seen, he went to his room, opened his windows towards his beloved city of Jerusalem and communed with Jehovah, his God.

I think that he prayed for strength and wisdom to do his work well, but the great burden of his prayer was for his people, Israel.

Many years had passed since he came to Babylon and now in the first year of the reign of Darius, the Mede, he searched the Word of God, anxious to know God’s plan for Israel in the future.

Daniel had the books of Moses, that is, the first five books of the Bible, and the Psalms, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and many of the other prophets. I wonder if, after Jeremiah wrote his book, he sent him a complimentary copy, autographed. Anyhow we know he had it, for he said,

“In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans,

“In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

That is to say, Daniel read in the book of Jeremiah that the captivity would end in seventy years at which time Jerusalem would be restored and be no more desolate.

Daniel realized that the end of this period was very near and he wanted to know what God was going to do about his people.

Let us think about Jerusalem, the Temple, and the scattered nation of Israel.

Suppose all of the people of your town would move away. There would be no mayor nor city council, no city engineer nor street commissioner, no one to take care of any individual house, no one to mow the lawns nor to pick up the limbs of trees blown down by the storms, no one to repair the bridges washed out by high water and no one to replace the fallen electric and telephone wires. What would your beautiful city look like in two or three years?

I think Daniel was thinking of these things with regard to his city of Jerusalem which had been without people, without a king, without princes, and without priests for seventy years.

Perhaps he mused, “Seventy years since I left Jerusalem! I’d like to go back and see my beloved city once more but I am too old for the journey. Moreover, I cannot leave my position here in the court. But I am sure a visit would bring only sorrow to my heart for the city must be in ruins. I know the walls need repairs and the once beautiful Temple—I cannot bear to think of its condition, so many years without a priest or a worshipper. It must be desolate and forsaken.

“The altar upon which the priests offered sacrifices is broken down, and the veil into the Holiest of all is in bad condition; all of these things must be true, but my greatest burden is for my people.”

Of all of the men in the Bible, Daniel is the only one about whom no sin is recorded. Of course, he was born in sin as all of us were, but he lived a particularly holy life and that, too, in the midst of heathen surroundings. Now, as he thought of his city and his nation he realized more than ever that sin had brought on all of the trouble and that the captivity was a just punishment. They had been idolatrous and wicked. They had broken the law and turned away from God.

And so it was that one evening at the time that the priests in the Temple in Jerusalem had formerly offered the evening sacrifice, Daniel began to pray even more earnestly than before:

“I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.”

Daniel was in dead earnest and knew that God was the only hope of Israel. What a prayer! It is one of the greatest in all the Bible.

Let us look at it a little.

“And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts and your judgments;

“Neither have we hearkened unto your servants the prophets, which spake in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

Did you notice that Daniel said, “We have sinned,” as though he himself had done all of these wicked things? This makes me think of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who knew no sin, but took our sins upon Himself when He died for us upon the cross.

Daniel told the Lord that he was ashamed for Judah and Israel. They had been warned again and again by the prophets but they would not listen.

Many, I fear, are doing the same thing today. God’s prophets are still speaking through the Bible and yet men will not listen to them. Let us feel ashamed as Daniel did and pray to God to open our eyes to see the truths in His Word and to believe them.

The people of Israel were so sinful that Daniel found nothing worthy in them at all, but he loved them and pled with God to turn His anger and fury away from His loved city Jerusalem and His people for His own name’s sake.

“O my God, incline your ear, and hear; open your eyes and see how the city that is called by your name is desolate, for we are not calling on you because we are righteous but because you are merciful.

“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; do not delay for your own sake, O my God; for your city and your people are called by your name.”

Did God hear the prayer of this righteous man?

While Daniel was praying, even before he finished his prayer, a hand was laid upon him and who should stand beside him but his old friend, the angel, Gabriel, whom God had sent to him upon other occasions.

How Daniel’s heart must have been warmed as he listened to Gabriel’s greetings,

“Daniel, God heard your prayer in heaven and I have made a swift journey to come to you for you are greatly loved up there. I have been sent to give you skill and understanding. As soon as you began to pray this evening I received orders to leave at once for earth to show you the things that will come to pass in Israel.”

Think of that journey from heaven to earth. “Astronomers may speak of the immeasurable spaces between earth and the mighty planets that wend their solitary ways through the vast expanse around us; we may be told that the heaven of heavens where is located the throne of God, is a long way off, far beyond the most distant constellations of stellar worlds, but there is neither space, distance, nor time with eternal God.

“Quicker than thought may communications between heaven and earth be established. It took heaven’s messenger to Daniel not more than a few minutes to come from God’s throne to the prophet’s place of prayer. As long as it takes to utter the words Daniel prayed, just so long did it take Gabriel to reach the side of the praying one.” (Lamb).

“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear,” God has promised.

Why was God so ready to send a messenger to tell Daniel all about the future of His earthly people, Israel, the Temple, and the sanctuary? Was it only that His loved servant might know these things?

I believe He had a larger purpose. God foretold all of these things to Daniel that he might write them down and preserve them for the ages to come. The same was true of the other prophets to whom God gave wonderful messages, especially of John to whom He gave the great revelation of Jesus Christ that we might be warned against the evil of this world and be ready to meet the Lord when He comes in glory.

I realize what a difficult task is mine to help you to see the meaning of the messages which God gave to Daniel at this time for it is closely linked with the prophecies given to John and many other writers of the Word and as Peter said, **“No prophecy is of any private interpretation,”** that is, to understand the full meaning we must read the whole story.

We spoke in another chapter of the **“times of the Gentiles.”** We all know that all of the peoples of the earth who are not Jews are called Gentiles. Almost all of our Bible is a record of God’s promises and dealings with His chosen race, the children of Israel, or the Jews, as we call them today.

The Gentiles are mentioned only in connection with the Jews. God ruled over the Jews through men like Moses and Joshua, whom He raised up to be their earthly leaders and when they asked for a king God appointed Saul, David, Solomon, and many others who followed in kingly line. But when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and carried the Israelites away captives, they ceased to have a national life and from that day to this they have been scattered among all nations.

Hence the “**times of the Gentiles**” began when Nebuchadnezzar carried Daniel and his people away captive.

Daniel longed for a restored national life and that his nation might worship God in the holy Temple once more. At this time he wanted to know when the “**times of the Gentiles**” would cease. Gabriel had come to answer that question. He said there were seventy weeks for Daniel’s people before certain things would be accomplished.

What did he mean?

Seventy weeks! Were they to be weeks of seven days like ours? The word translated “**weeks**” really means “*sevens*” and should read seventy sevens or seven times seven.

One commentator says this word “**sevens**” is like our word dozen and might mean days, weeks, months or years. To know what is meant it must be associated with the circumstances. For example, if we visited a poultry farm and went into a room filled with crates of eggs and we asked for a dozen, they would give us eggs, but if we went into a bakery where pans of cookies were piled up and asked for a dozen, they would give us cookies.

Now, we have just heard Daniel talking about the years of Israel’s captivity and when Gabriel said, “Daniel, it will be ‘seventy sevens,’ he understood him to mean seventy sevens of years or four hundred and ninety years.

Someone has said that “It was just as though Gabriel had said to Daniel, ‘You have been reading that the first period of judgment or the captivity foretold regarding your people was to be seventy years. Now I tell you that a further period is determined. This time it will not be for actually seventy years but seventy times seven years.’”

Gabriel said the four hundred and ninety years would be divided into periods or sections of time. The first would be seven times seven years or forty-nine years; the second sixty-two times seven or four hundred and thirty-four years, and the last one seven or seven years.

Before we find out what is to be done in these four hundred and ninety years let us understand definitely whom it concerns. Gabriel said it was about Daniel’s own people, the Jews, and about the holy city, Jerusalem. Then he continued by stating six things that would be done for the Jews in these four hundred and ninety years, namely,

1. “**To finish the transgression**”,
2. “**To make an end of sin**”,
3. “**To make reconciliation for iniquity**”,
4. “**To bring in everlasting righteousness**”,
5. “**To seal up the vision and the prophecy**”,
6. “**To anoint the Most Holy.**”

What does it all mean?

I believe all of these wonderful promises are to be fulfilled in the future when the Lord shall come to reign upon the earth.

What was the great transgression of Israel? Was it not the rejection of their Messiah when He came to earth in the flesh?

Then, making “**an end of sin**” must be when the nation is restored again to favor with God and surely this has not yet been done but will be when He comes again and Israel hails Him as its Messiah.

Everlasting righteousness will come again when the nation receives Him. “**They shall look upon Him whom they pierced.**” Jerusalem will ring with the shout of Israel’s redeemed.

It will be at that time that the vision and the prophecy will be sealed up because they have been fulfilled and are no more needed.

In the new Temple in Jerusalem the Holy of Holies will be anointed, for the Son of David, the promised Messiah, will sit upon the throne. What joy in Israel!

Some would have us to think that all of these things were fulfilled when the Lord Jesus came the first time. How could they have been? Israel is still scattered and away from God in apostasy and sin.

I once visited the old city of Jerusalem, but we could not look upon its filth, its superstitions, its Christless temples, synagogues, and cathedrals and say it was the city of the living God. No, it must first be renovated and purified for the One whose right it is to reign.

“Some will ask, ‘Has not an end been made already for our sins on the cross? Has not everlasting righteousness been brought in for us?’ Certainly, these things, for us who have believed in Christ unto salvation, have been already realized. We know that our sins have been put away from us by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, and we are now before God made righteous in Him.

“All that is perfectly true now for every believer whether Jew or Gentile. But it is not these about whom the prophecy before us speaks, but Daniel’s people, the Jews, and none other. These still await the national fulfillment of the things declared for them in Gabriel’s message.” (Lamb).

Let us go on to the next thing told to Daniel.

It was as though Gabriel said, “Daniel, I want you to understand what I am telling you. In a few years from now the king will send out a decree from the palace here in Babylon that your people shall return and build again the wall of Jerusalem and restore the city. That will be the beginning of the four hundred and ninety years. *It will take forty-nine years to do this.* This is the first division of years. From the end of that period to the coming of Messiah, the Prince, will be four hundred and thirty-four years.

“Then at the end of the four hundred and thirty-four years Messiah shall be cut off but not for himself.”

How wonderful is God’s Word, *for from the restoration of the city it was exactly four hundred and thirty-four years to the very day when Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem and offered Himself to His nation as their King and long-expected Messiah.*

On that very day the crowds that followed Jesus sang, **“Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”**

But did Israel, as a nation, receive their Messiah and King? Oh, no. It was but a few days until they nailed Him to the cross, “despised and rejected of men.”

“Cut off, but not for himself.” Crucified for my sins and for yours, and for the sins of His own people, as well. How true are the words, **“but not for himself.”**

And then Gabriel uttered strange words for he said that after Messiah was crucified on the cross **“the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”**

Notice that it is the people of the prince that shall come, who destroy the city. About forty years after the Lord was crucified, the Roman General, Titus, took Jerusalem, killed a hundred thousand Jews and destroyed the city.

I think Daniel may have said, “Is that the prince with the fierce countenance that I saw through the long-range telescope?”

“Yes,” I fancy Gabriel said, “he is the one, but he does not come at the destruction of Jerusalem but it is his people, the Romans, for, you remember, this prince comes out of the fourth kingdom which was Rome.”

Just before He was crucified, when Jesus was speaking to the Jews as a nation, He said, **“Your throne is left unto you desolate.”**

As I stood one time by the Mosque of Omar, which stands upon the old site of the Temple in Jerusalem, I thought of Solomon’s Temple and the glory of the Lord which filled it upon the day of dedication. Then, as I beheld this Christless mosque with its superstition and unbelief, I said to myself, “Truly, this is desolation.”

When the Jews crucified the Lord Jesus they cut themselves off and became a rejected nation, and they remain so to this day.

A long time passes between the second and third periods or the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, for it has now been nearly two thousand years. You and I are living in the latter years of this period.

Gabriel did not explain about the Church Age to Daniel for it did not concern his people as a nation.

In this long section of time God has been calling out a people for His name. He has sent out the gracious invitation that whosoever will may come and have eternal life by believing on His Son, Jesus Christ.

This invitation is to any Jew or Gentile. All may be saved by receiving Jesus Christ as Saviour. Have you received Him?

When the Church which is called the body of Christ is complete, then,

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

As we read the great prophecies of the Bible and then look about us today we cannot help but believe that the glorious coming of Jesus Christ is very near.

After this long unnamed period of time Gabriel next said that this prince, whose people had destroyed the city of Jerusalem, **“shall make a covenant with many for one week.”**

Who are the many with whom he makes the covenant? They must be Jews for they are the ones about whom Gabriel and Daniel are talking. I think Daniel must have been stirred when he heard these words. Perhaps he said,

“Gabriel, is this prince the horrible, little horn that came up on the fourth beast, the one that had eyes and a mouth and spoke great things?”

I think Gabriel answered, “Yes, Daniel, you are right. He is the very same. He is the one also pictured to Nebuchadnezzar as the beast so terrible there were no words to describe him.”

“And do you mean to say,” Daniel may have replied, “that my people, the nation of Israel, will enter into an agreement with him?”

“Yes, for in that day the Jews will be gathered back to their own land of Palestine; and this dictator, who will have organized into a league the nations that formed the old Roman Empire, will be in power. The great desire of the Jews will be the same as in your day, to establish their worship in Jerusalem and to rehabilitate the land. But they are after all a dependent people and need protection against enemies around them, and the dictator, for his own good, needs their confidence so he proposes to them that if they will be loyal to him they may build a temple in Jerusalem and for seven years worship God as they choose.”

For the first half of this time the covenant is fulfilled but the God-hating, Satan-possessed dictator cannot have Jehovah worshipped and so he breaks the covenant with them and makes them worship him as God.

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

“Will all of my people covenant with this monster and follow him?”

“No, there will be in that day, as in every age, some who will hold faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But for these the days will be full of suffering and untold persecutions. It will be called the time of ‘**Jacob’s trouble.**’”

When Jesus was talking to His disciples on Olivet shortly before His crucifixion He told them more of the details of these days which He said would be so terrible that if they weren’t shortened there would be no one left upon the earth.

During these awful days which the Bible also calls the tribulation, many Jews and many Gentiles, especially those who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, will turn to Him and be saved. Then one glorious day at the close of this last week of seven years the heavens will open and the Lord of glory will ride forth conquering and to conquer.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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