

BETTER DAYS AHEAD / Sunday School- March 3, 2013

Unifying Topic: DANIEL'S VISION OF CHANGE

Lesson Text

I. The Ancient Of Days (Daniel 7:9-11)

II. One Like The Son Of Man (Daniel 7:12-14)

The Main Thought: And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:14), KJV).

Unifying Principle: We live in the hope that the future will be better than the past. How can we learn from the past and apply it to the future? Daniel's experiences taught him to trust in God always despite the danger he faces; and his vision tells of the Ancient of Days seated on a throne, ruling forever, and giving dominion and power to a Messiah.

Lesson Aim: To help students connect Daniel's dream with the historical incidents to which it is related.

Life Aim: To reaffirm the reality that God has prevailed in shattering the powers and principalities and will one day absorb them into the kingdom of God

7:9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

7:10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

7:11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

7:12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

HISTORY:

DANIEL SERVES UNDER NEBUCHADNEZZAR/ DANIEL INTERPRETS THE KING'S IMAGE DREAM

Daniel is the author of this book under the kingship reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Belteshazzar was the Babylonian or Aramaic name given to Daniel while exiled in Babylon. He still honored God by not defiling himself; by not eating the king's food. The king had a dream so he called for the magicians and astrologers to tell him what he had seen, and also to interpret the dream unto him. And when they could not, the king became angry. Daniel was then brought before the king by Arioch (captain of the king's guard) with the stipulation that the men wouldn't be destroyed because they couldn't interpret the dream. Well, Daniel interpreted the dream as God had showed it to him. The king rewards Daniel with gifts and to be ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief of the governors over all of the wise men of Babylon. Daniel then requests Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to help him over the affairs of the provinces of Babylon; and Daniel set in the gate of the king (Chapter 1-2).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FIERY FURNACE/ THREE HEBREWS CAST IN THE FIERY FURNACE

Nebuchadnezzar erects a golden image (90ft high and 90ft wide) to be set up in the Plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. All was called to the dedication of the statue; and at the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, they were to fall down and worship the golden image that king Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And whoever didn't worship the image would be cast into the fiery furnace. Well, certain Chaldeans were jealous and reported that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not obey the decree. Therefore, they were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace which was turned up seven times hotter than usual. Well the king asks the question: *"And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"* They boldly reply: *"Our God whom we server is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."* Those that threw them in were instantly killed by the fire. The king was astonished as he looked into the mouth of the furnace and spoke, *"Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"* They answered, *"True, O king."* He answers, *"Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."* The king was not the only one to see this miracle. *The princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors saw that the fire had no power upon the bodies of these men, nor was a hair on their heads singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.* Nebuchadnezzar then

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declares, *"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God."* The king tells his people to acknowledge the power of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; not to speak against their God or they would be cut in pieces and their houses would be made a dunghill. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were promoted again (Chapter 3).

DANIEL INTERPRETS NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S TREE DREAM AND WARNS THE KING

Nebuchadnezzar sees another dream that needs interpreting. Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar (a name given by Nebuchadnezzar to honor a false god); troubled by the dream he informs the king that the dream was against him and not his enemies. Judgment was coming to Nebuchadnezzar; but not total destruction. Daniel had forgiven and forgotten the past of what Nebuchadnezzar had done in the destruction of his home and nation, and therefore, God was able to use Daniel mightily. Forgiving people means putting the past behind us. After Nebuchadnezzar hears the interpretation, Daniel pleads for him to change his ways, to stop sinning; do what's right, and show mercy to the poor, maybe God will spare him. God allowed a year to pass and after thinking this over for 12 mos. (one year later), the king speaks, *"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."* This voice comes directly from heaven and Nebuchadnezzar has an encounter with the Almighty God, which cannot be denied. The king endured painful humiliation of insanity before he finally acknowledged the sovereignty of the God of Israel over the affairs of humanity. *"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase"* (Chapter 4).

DANIEL SERVES UNDER BELSHAZZAR / DANIEL INTERPRETS THE WRITING ON THE WALL AT BELSHAZZAR'S BANQUET

This chapter opens with Belshazzar as the king. The Aramaic word for father was also frequently used for grandfather, ancestor or predecessor. Belshazzar was the oldest son of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, and therefore the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Because Nabonidus was away on campaigns for more than half of the reign, his son Belshazzar served as co-regent (co-reigned) in his father's absence. Belshazzar is having a feast and calls for the golden and silver vessels that had been taken from the Jerusalem temple by Nebuchadnezzar. *"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: ..."* The queen, who is probably Nabonidus' wife or the wife of one of his predecessors, comes in to let him know to call forth Daniel to interpret this writing on the wall. Daniel began to remind Belshazzar of the family history; the sin of pride that had occurred in Nebuchadnezzar, and now even in his heart, as he and his wives and concubines drank wine from the sacred vessels, praising other gods. *"...this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."* The interpretation: *"Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."* The handwriting on the wall was for Belshazzar. Although he had power and wealth, his kingdom was totally corrupt and he could not withstand the judgment of God. The Medes and Persians joined forces to overthrow Babylon. This event began the second phase of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 (the silver chest and arms) (Chapter 5).

DANIEL SERVES UNDER DARIUS / DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

Darius divided the kingdom into 120 provinces, each under a governor. The governors were accountable to three presidents (Daniel was the first president) to bring efficiency. Daniel proved himself to be more capable than all others. At this time Daniel was in his eighties. The other members of the king's cabinet tried to find ways to trick Daniel up, but couldn't. So they devised a law regarding prayer— *"whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions."* They presented it to king Darius which was really a plot to kill Daniel. *"...king Darius signed the writing and the decree"*, which could not be altered. Although Daniel knew about the law against praying, he still prayed three times a day as he always had. Daniel knew he had to obey God. Of course, the men went back to king Darius and told what had occurred. The king was really displeased with himself for signing such a decree and wanted to save Daniel. Daniel was then brought, and cast into the den of lions. *"Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."* They then placed a stone over the den and sealed it with the king's own signet, and with the signet of his lords, so that no one could rescue or change the purpose. The king was very disturbed and fasted that night, unable to sleep. Early the next morning with haste, he ran to the den, *"the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"* Daniel replied, *"O king, live for*

ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Daniel was brought out, and the men that accused Daniel, their children, and their wives were cast into the den of lions, and the lions had had their fill. Then king Darius wrote a proclamation that all people of his nation must fear and reverence Daniel's God. Because of God's faithfulness, Daniel was exalted to a place of honor and prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian (**Chapter 6**). These first six chapters present history and the last six chapters are prophecies about the future.

THE PROPHETIC PORTION OF DANIEL / DANIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS

Chapter 7¹ begins a series of dreams given to Daniel. These visions contain prophecies covering the period of the times of the Gentiles and the great tribulation. This first dream came to Daniel during "the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon (v. 1)," so actually it happened before the events of chapter 5 and 6. Daniel first saw the great sea (the Mediterranean Sea) churned by the action of four winds (v.2). Then four ferocious beasts came out of the sea (v. 3). These seem to represent the four empires that in succession rule the land bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. These would correspond to the four kingdoms of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The first beast was like a lion, except that it also had eagle's wings which symbolize Babylon (v. 4). The second beast is like a bear which ravaged the lion and represents Mede-Persia, the empire that conquered Babylon (v. 5). The third beast was like a leopard which had four wings and four heads and this symbolizes the Grecian Empire lead by Alexander the Great (v. 6). The fourth beast that Daniel describes apparently was a mongrel composed of parts of a lion, bear and leopard and this beast had large iron teeth (v. 7). This beast points to both Rome and the end times. On its head were ten horns. Suddenly another "little horn" overcame three of the other horns. Finally Daniel saw the "little horn" come to his doom, and the beast itself (the Roman Empire) was destroyed (v. 8). The prophecy now shifts to the end times (v. 9).

LESSON:

Daniel 7:9-11 The Ancient Of Days

7:9 *"I beheld till the thrones were cast down,* — Now Daniel saw something happening in the court of heaven. The phrase, *"I beheld till the thrones were cast down"*, speaks of all the Empires, even from Babylon straight through to the Antichrist; all that are against the kingdom of God.

7:9b *...and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.* "Ancient of days" refers to God the Father and His Dominion, His kingdom will remain. He has always existed. There was never a time when He was not. He is God from everlasting to everlasting. The things that describe the Ancient of Days are:

- He was *"seated"* in His place of authority for the purpose of judgment, of the sentence in which he would pronounce.
- His *"garment was white as snow"* representing uncompromising and radiant purity in all the administrations of His justice.
- The *"hair of His head is like pure wool"* symbolizing the wisdom that comes with great age.
- His *"throne was like the fiery flame."* The fire represents the power to destroy and also His majesty and splendor.
- And His *"wheels as burning fire"*—²In Ezekiel 1:16; Ezekiel 10:9, the wheels of the throne appeared to be of the color of beryl; that is, they were like precious stones. Here, perhaps, they had only the appearance of a flame— as such wheels would seem to flash flames to devour the adversaries; for our God is a consuming fire, and with Him are everlasting burnings.

7:10 *"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, — "A stream of fire flowed out from before Him"* can illustrate the majesty and glory of God or the judgments of God. He was also surrounded by myriads upon myriads of angelic attendants who ministered unto Him; attended upon Him, waiting His orders, and ready to execute them. *...and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set,* — The scene depicts in powerful imagery a judge who has the wisdom to sort out right from wrong; the purity to persistently choose the right; and the power to enforce His judgments. The court was set *...and the books were opened"* represent God's records of the deeds of those on the earth. The books reveal that God records the detailed actions of His enemies; nothing escapes the eye of God. And they're all standing before God.

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/daniels-vision-of-the-four-beasts/>

² <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/21943/eVerseID/21943/RTD/barnes>

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7:11 *"I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."* Daniel continues to see the vision in heaven. The strange horn of the fourth beast spoke—that had the ten horns, and on which the little horn had sprung up. He continued looking and the beast with the boastful horn continued to mouth defiance at the heavenly court and it was swiftly slain and its body thrown into the fire. ³This was the result of the judgment. It is evidently implied here that the beast was slain on account of the words uttered by the horn that sprang up, or that the pride and arrogance denoted by that symbol were the cause of the fact that the beast was put to death. If the *"beast"* represents a mighty monarchy that would exist on the earth and the *"little horn"* a new power that would spring out of that, then the fulfillment is to be found in such a fact as this—that this power, so mighty and terrible formerly, and that crushed down the nations, would, under the Divine judgment, be ultimately destroyed, on account of the nature of the authority claimed. Dominion was taken away, (some say the Roman monarchy) from this beast and his body was totally destroyed.

Daniel 7:12-14 One Like The Son Of Man

7:12 *"As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time."* The other three which represent the Babylonian, Persian and Grecian monarchies had their dominion was taken away, but they were not destroyed like this last beast. Their kingdom remained for a time set by God, ⁴but successively, the dominion was taken away from the Babylonians, and given to the Persians; and then their dominion was taken away, and given to the Grecians; and after that the dominion of the Grecians was taken away from them, and given to the Romans. These monarchies did not at once become extinct, as the fourth beast. Their lives were prolonged for a season and time; a definite period; a set time.

7:13 *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him."* "Night visions" may refer to the same day as the above vision and going into the night hours but what continues is astounding! He now *"beholds one like the Son of man."* this can only be Jesus. In the Old Testament of Ezekiel, he is referred to Son of man 90 times but Jesus in His earthly ministry took this title to Himself (Matt.8:20; 24:30; 26:64). Daniel reports *"one like the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven"* coming to the Ancient of days, the Father. Mind you Jesus had not yet taken on man's nature, but he appeared then in a figure. No one has seen the Father but the Son. Daniel sees the vision of both the Father and the Son. And his vision is for things to come. He was brought near before the Father.

7:14 *"And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."* As Jesus came near He was given dominion (*power and authority*), glory (*exaltation and awesome splendor*), and a kingdom (*realm and empire*) that all; all means all, people, nations, and languages would serve (worship) Him. There will be no end to His dominion. It will not pass away and it will not be destroyed. It is eternal and everlasting!

SUMMARY:

Daniel's vision entails the thrones being cast down and He describes the Ancient of days sitting on His throne in a garment as white as snow; hair like pure wool; His throne like a fiery flame and wheels as burning fire. He describes a river of fire poured out of the throne with thousands upon thousands serving Him and tens of thousands attending Him. The courtroom was called to order and the books were opened. He kept watching and behold there was the little horn beast speaking arrogantly but not for long for the beast was killed and its body destroyed by the burning flame (**vv.9-11**).

As concerning the other beasts, their dominion was taken from them, but their lives were not destroyed as the little horn beast, but they were prolonged for a set time. In the night vision, Daniel began to see one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven, being presented to the Ancient of days. He was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His rule would be forever, never ending, and would never be replaced (**vv.12-14**).

APPLICATION:

Our future will be better than the past; our latter will be better than our former because God's dominion is forever. Trouble don't last always, there are better days ahead. Can you see the vision?

³ <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/21945/eVerseID/21945/RTD/barnes>

⁴ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/daniel-7-12.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>