

I Connect Sunday School Class Notes for 1/31/2021

Praises and Concerns

Daniel

Commentary: Chapters 10-12 are a vision of the end of time. Chapter 10 serves as an introduction to the vision, which is found in Chapter 11. Following the vision, there is an interpretation of the vision, which takes up most of Chapter 12.

The vision may apply to the restoration of Israel following the overthrow of Antiochus IV. The vision may also foreshadow even more distant future events. Jesus applied some of Daniel's prophecy in this way. (Mat 24:15-28, Mark 13).

Chapter 10

Vision of a man

1 In the third year of Persia's King Cyrus, a message was revealed to Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar. The message was true: there would be a great conflict. Daniel understood the message, having discerned the meaning of the vision.

Commentary: Cyrus' third year is when the first exiles returned to Judea; Daniel is still in Babylon, and nearly 70 years have passed since his deportation.

Verses 1-20: The big buildup signals the importance of the divine message. The message itself (verses 10:20-12:4) is a long sequence of events still future to Daniel, showing awareness of the hostility of nations towards the covenant. Many commentators believe this review was written after the events took place. But it comes to us in the form of a prophecy, and it is best to approach it that way. The messenger's words are fulfilled in Near East history during the next 400 years and like the interpretation of the statue in chapter 2, cover the sequence of

empires from Daniel's time to "the future" (10:14). The message is highly selective, skipping more than 200 years of Persian history in one verse and Alexander the Great in two, spending most of its time on two of the four kingdoms that follow the breakup of Alexander's empire. Syria (the north), within which the Holy Land lies, and Egypt (the south). Kings in these two long lines actually fought each other for 150 years.

2 During that time, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks.

3 I didn't eat any rich foods. Neither meat nor wine passed my lips, and I didn't clean up at all until the three weeks were up.

4 Then, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was on the bank of the great Tigris River,

5 I looked up and suddenly saw a man clothed in linen in front of me. He had a brilliant gold belt around his waist,

6 and his body was like topaz. His face was like a flash of lightning, and his eyes were like burning torches. His arms and feet looked like polished bronze. When he spoke, it sounded like the roar of a crowd.

Commentary: *The appearance of the man that Daniel sees is similar to that of the celestial being seen by Daniel (Ezekiel, Chapters 1 and 9).*

7 Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The other people who were with me didn't see it. Despite that, they were terrified and ran away to hide.

8 So I was left alone to see this great vision all by myself. All my strength left me. My energy was sapped, and I couldn't stay strong.

9 Then I heard the sound of the man's words. When I heard it, I fell into a trance with my face on the ground.

10 But then a hand touched me, lifting me up to my hands and knees.

11 The man said to me, "Daniel, you are greatly treasured. Now grasp the meaning of what I'm saying to you. And stand up, because I've been sent to you." As he said this to me, I stood up, shaking.

12 Then the man said to me, "Don't be afraid, Daniel, because from the day you first set your mind to understand things and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I've come because of your words!

13 For twenty-one days the leader of the Persian kingdom blocked my way. But then Michael, one of the highest leaders, came to help me. I left Michael there with the leader of the Persian kingdom.

14 But I've come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the future, because there is another vision concerning that time."

15 While he said this to me, I turned my face to the ground and kept quiet.

16 But then someone who looked like a human being touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to the person standing in front of me: "My lord, the vision bothered me deeply, and I couldn't stay strong during it.

17 So how can I, my lord's servant, speak with you, my lord? Even now there's no strength in me, and I can barely breathe."

18 The one who looked like a human being touched me again and gave me strength.

19 He said, "Don't be afraid. You are greatly treasured. All will be well with you. Be strong!" As he spoke to me, I suddenly felt strong. Then I said: "My lord can go on, because you've made me strong."

20 Then he said: "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must go back to fight the leader of Persia. As I leave, the leader of Greece will come!

21 But I will tell you what is written in the Scroll of Truth. No one stands strong with me against these leaders except your leader Michael.

Chapter 11

A vast empire divided

1 "In the first year of Darius the Mede's rule, I took my stand to strengthen and protect him."

2 I will now tell you the truth. Persia will have three more kings, but the fourth will be richer than all of them. Once he has become strong through his great riches, he will disturb everyone, including the Greek kingdom.

3 Then a warrior-king will come forward, ruling over a vast empire and doing whatever he wants.

4 But even as he takes control, his kingdom will be broken, divided to the four winds of heaven. It won't pass to his descendants. No one will rule like he did because his kingdom will be uprooted. It will belong to others, not to these.

Commentary: *Alexander the Great is the mighty king. His kingdom stretched from the Adriatic through the Near East to India. He died at the height of his power in 323 BCE. His kingdom was divided among four of his generals, who did not have his power.*

South and north

5 “Then the southern king will gain power, but one of his princes will overpower him, ruling in his place. His empire will be vast.

6 After some years, they will make an agreement together. The southern king's daughter will go to the northern king to finalize the agreement, but she won't retain her great power. Neither will his power remain in place. In those times she will be handed over, along with her escort, the one who fathered her, and the one who strengthened her.

Commentary: *The “South” is Egypt, the kingdom of Ptolemy I (306-285 BCE). Ptolemy began his reign stronger than Seleucus I, another of Alexander's generals who was satrap (provincial governor) over Babylonia and controlled the Northern Kingdom. With Egyptian military help, Seleucus fled to Egypt for political reasons and was made a general in Ptolemy's army. With Egyptian military help, he regained control of the North. He eventually extended his rule from Asia minor to the Indies.*

7 “A branch from her roots will rise up in his place. Attacking the army, he will enter the walled fortress of the northern king. He will fight with them, and he will conquer.

8 He will even carry off their gods to Egypt, along with their statues and their silver and gold equipment. For years he will avoid the northern king.

9 Then the northern king will attack the kingdom of the southern king, but will return to his own land.

10 His sons will get ready for war, gathering massive forces. Their attack will be like an overwhelming flood. And they will attack again, taking the battle as far as his walled fortress.

Commentary: *For example, the northern king will be Antiochus II, and the southern king Ptolemy III of Egypt. The princess of verse 6 will be Bernice, Ptolemy's sister.*

11 “The southern king, in a bitter rage, will come out to battle the northern king. He will muster a huge army, but the army will be handed over to his enemy.

12 When the army is carried off, he will become confident. He will kill tens of thousands, but he will not stand strong.

Commentary: *Antiochus III attacked Ptolemy IV and was defeated. Ptolemy did not follow up his advantage. He signed a peace agreement with Antiochus.*

13 The northern king will then muster another army—this one bigger than the first. After some years have passed, he will attack with a large and well-equipped army.

Commentary: *Fresh from conquests in Persia, Antiochus III moved against Ptolemy V (4-year-old son of Ptolemy IV overseen by a regent) in Phoenicia, Syria and Gaza.*

14 In those times, many will oppose the southern king. Violent persons from among your people also will rise up to support the vision, but they will fail.

15 “When the northern king attacks, he will throw up a siege ramp and occupy a walled city. The southern forces will not be able to resist—not even its elite forces. No one will be strong enough to resist.

16 The one who comes to attack will do whatever he wants; no one will be able to oppose him. He will take his place in the beautiful country, and he will hand out destruction.

17 He will decide to occupy his entire kingdom by force. He will make an agreement with him and will give him a wife, intending to destroy him, but it won't succeed and it won't happen.

18 He will turn his face to the coastlands, capturing many people. A commander will put an end to his disgrace, even though he won't repay that disgrace.

19 Then he will turn his attention to the walled fortresses of his own country but will stumble, fall, and disappear.

Commentary: *The southern king will be Ptolemy IV, and the northern king Antiochus III, who will actually occupy the holy land and give his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V in another dynastic marriage.*

20 “In his place one will arise who will send his agent to exact a kingdom's glory, but in a few days he will be broken, though not by anger and not by war.

21 A worthless person will arise in his place. Royal majesty will not have been given to him, but he will come in a time of security and seize the kingdom by deceitful means.

22 Forces will be completely swept away and broken before him. The same is true for the leader of the covenant.

23 From the moment they make an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully. He will gain power at the expense of a small nation.

24 He will come into a province's richest places untroubled and will do what his fathers and grandfathers never could. He will hand out plunder, spoil, and wealth to them. He will make plans against fortresses, but only for a time.

Commentary: *The “prince of the covenant” may be the high priest Onias III. Antiochus IV made an alliance with Jason, a Jewish leader, who paid Antiochus a large sum in order to be appointed high priest. Antiochus was a deceitful schemer, however. He deposed Jason in favor of Menelaus, who paid him an even larger sum. Menelaus was supported by part of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, though he allowed his troops to plunder Judah.*

25 “Then with a large army he will gather his strength and courage against the southern king. The southern king, with a large and super powerful army, will prepare for war, but he won't endure because they will make plans against him.

Commentary: *Most of the message concerns Antiochus IV, the arrogant oppressor of the previous visions, who will seize power after his brother's murder, remove and assassinate the Jewish high priest Onias, consolidate his power, and fight two wars with Egypt (Ptolemy VI). Striking out against the biblical faith, he will profane the temple and set up an altar to Zeus and cause many martyrdoms. Worst of all, he will elevate himself above all deities, claiming himself to be god made manifest – Epiphanes. Wesley calls him an eminent type of antichrist.*

26 Those who eat the king's provisions will destroy him. His army will be overrun. Many will die.

27 “These two kings, with their minds set on evil, will sit at one table, telling lies, but with no success because the end will come at the set time.

28 He will return to his country with great wealth and set his mind against a holy covenant. He will do what he wants and then return to his country.

Commentary: *Antiochus IV returned to his homeland with spoils from Egypt. On the way, he sacked Jerusalem and carried away some of the Temple treasury.*

29 At the set time he will again battle against the south, but the second time will be different from the first.

30 Kittim ships will fight against him, and he will retreat in fear. He will rage against a holy covenant and will do what he wants. Then he will pay special attention to those who violate a holy covenant.

31 His forces will come and make the sanctuary fortress impure. They will stop the daily sacrifice and set up a desolating monstrosity.

32 By deceitful means he will corrupt those who violate a covenant, but the people who acknowledge their God will stand strong and will act.

33 “The people's teachers will help many understand, but for a time they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder.

34 When they fall, they will receive a little help, but many will join them with deceitful plans.

35 Some of the teachers too will fall in order that they might be refined, purified, and cleansed—until an end time, because it is still not yet the set time.

An end to the arrogant king

36 “The king will do whatever he wants. He will exalt himself, making himself greater than any god. He will say unbelievable things against the God of gods. He will succeed until the doom is completed, because what is decreed must take place.

37 He will give no thought to the gods of his fathers, nor to the god cherished by women. He will give no thought to any god, because he will make himself greater than all of them.

38 In their place, he will worship a god of walled fortresses. With gold and silver, rare stones and precious things, he will worship a god his fathers did not acknowledge.

39 He will deal with walled fortresses with the help of a foreign god. He will heap rewards on those who support him, making them rule over many and dividing up the land for a price.

Commentary: *The oppressor will meet his downfall after further battles, and the end time will be at hand. The events of the end include great persecution and the deliverance of God's people, followed by the resurrection of the dead.*

40 At the end time, the southern king will attack him. The northern king will storm against him with chariots and horses and many ships. He will invade countries, sweeping over them like a flood.

41 He will invade the beautiful country (Israel), and tens of thousands will die. But Edom, Moab, and the best of the Ammonites will escape from his hand.

42 He will extend his power into other countries. Even Egypt won't escape.

43 He will take control of Egypt's hidden treasures of gold, silver, and all its precious things. Libyans and Cushites will follow at his feet.

44 But reports from the east and north will alarm him, and in a great rage he will set off to devastate and destroy many.

45 He will pitch his royal tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. But he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Chapter 12

Commentary: *Verses 1-13: The message clearly links the end of the arrogant oppressor with the end time, yet Antiochus fell and the end did not come. The end of the persecution was not the end time. This linkage must be ruled by Jesus assertion, "But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. Only the Father knows" (Math 24:36, Mark 13:32).*

The church preserved these visions as Scripture for their vividness in depicting great evil falling upon God's people, and especially for the character and actions of those who desire and direct that evil. This first-ever arrogant oppressor, this first expression of the hostility of nations to the covenant, stands as a type of anti-Messiah in any time and place, especially that is still to occur in the days of the coming of the Human One.

The antichrist is a recurring figure in the Bible and in the history of God's people.

Eternal life or eternal disgrace

1 "At that time, Michael the great leader who guards your people will take his stand. It will be a difficult time—nothing like it has ever happened since nations first appeared. But at that time every one of your people who is found written in the scroll will be rescued.

2 Many of those who sleep in the dusty land will wake up—some to eternal life, others to shame and eternal disgrace.

3 Those skilled in wisdom will shine like the sky. Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and always.

4 But you, Daniel, must keep these words secret! Seal the scroll until the end time! Many will stray far, but knowledge will increase."

Commentary: *Daniel's book may have been hidden away until the end of the reign of Antiochus IV. Obviously, it has not been hidden away until the end of all things.*

Waiting for the end time

5 I, Daniel, looked and suddenly saw two other figures—one standing on each side of the stream.

6 One said to the man clothed in white linen, who was farther upstream: "When will these astonishing things be over?"

7 I heard the man clothed in white linen, who was farther upstream, swear by the one who lives forever as he raised both hands to heaven: "For one set time, two set times, and half a set time. When the breaking of the holy people's power is over, all these things will be over."

8 I heard it, but I didn't understand it. "My lord," I said, "what will happen after all this?"

9 He said, "Get going now, Daniel, because these words must remain secret and sealed up until the end time.

10 Many will purify, cleanse, and refine themselves, but the wicked will act wickedly. None of the wicked will understand, but those skilled in wisdom will understand.

11 There will be one thousand two hundred ninety days from the time the daily sacrifice is stopped to the setting up of the desolating monstrosity.

12 Happy is the one who waits and reaches one thousand three hundred thirty-five days.

13 Now as for you, go on to the end. You will rest and will stand to receive your reward at the end of days."

Commentary: Daniel is told to go on with his life. By implication, he is told not to question what is beyond him.

Those who are purified and refined may be the martyrs in the fight for righteousness. (Dan 11:35, Rev 6:11).

The wicked, whether Jew or non-Jew, will continue in their ways because they do not understand that God is in control. The wise understand this, even though they may not understand all the details of God's plan.

Questions:

1. Have you reflected on "the end of time"?
2. How has your concept of the end of time changed as a result of this study of Daniel?
3. Does the knowledge of the end of time affect the way we live now?
4. Does it affect your commitment to service to God?

The Lord bless us and keep us;

the Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us;

the Lord turn his face toward us and give us peace."