GO YOUR WAY TILL THE END

(The Overview of Daniel)

Daniel 1-12

Key Verse: 12:13

“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

Thank God for guiding us to complete our study of the book of Daniel. In this overview, we will think of three things, Daniel’s life of faith, God’s sovereign rule and God’s hope.

**First, Daniel’s life of faith.** The book of Daniel begins a boy Daniel being a captive in Babylon in his youth. At an opportune time of great human success in Babylon he resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine (1:8). Such a resolution showed that he loved God more than his life and future. This was keeping his identity pure as one belonging to God. And such a decision of faith in his youth was the seed of his amazing spiritual growth and his powerful and victorious life in God. Accepting his decision of faith, God made him ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the whole kingdom of Babylon (1:20).

When King Nebuchadnezzar had a very disturbing and troubling dream, he demanded all the wise men of Babylon to tell the dream and interpret it. They finally responded with human limitation, “What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men” (2:11). This made the king so furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon, which included Daniel and his friends. At this national crisis, Daniel had courage to go to the king and ask for time. After gaining time, he urged his friends to plead for mercy from the God of heaven, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon (2:18). Daniel knew the importance of prayer and having prayer partners. That night the mystery regarding the king’s dream was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Daniel could tell the dream and interpret it to the king. The dream was that there was before the king an enormous dazzling statue with the head of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. Then the statue was struck and smashed by a rock out of a mountain. The meaning was concerning the present and future of the kingdoms of the world, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome and its final form. The rock that crushed the statue is the kingdom God will set up as a kingdom that will never be destroyed, enduring forever. On hearing of his exact dream and its interpretation from Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and said to him, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries” (2:46-47). That was Daniel’s victory of faith over the Babylonian kingdom.

Another time King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, that is, 27 X 2.7meters. He summoned all the officials in his province and commanded through an herald that all the people, nations and men of every language were to worship the image of gold. Anyone who does not worship would immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. At this command all fell down and worshiped the image without a second thought. But there were those who did not worship: Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They said to the king, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (3:17-18). What courage before the king! What faith! They knew the importance of their worship, worship of the only true God, which was more important than their life. Right away they were thrown into the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. Yet, they were completely safe in the blazing furnace in God’s protection having a fourth man with them. The fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God” (3:28). This victory of faith of Daniel’s friends over the king and his kingdom certainly reflect Daniel’s victory over the gentile kingdom in his faith.

There was an event that made King Nebuchadnezzar experience the Most High God and let him give a personal testimony. He had a dream of a tree that grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air. Then a messenger from heaven called in a loud voice, “Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump…Let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.” Again, no wise man in Babylon could interpret it but Daniel. The meaning was that the king was the tree and at the time to the establishment of the great Babylon the king would be degraded to an animal level because of egocentric pride and live among wild animals with his human mind taken way and given the mind of an animal for seven years. This exactly happened to him. This was God’s training for the proud king. There was good fruit that came out of this training. Subsequently the king made this confession, “At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Mist 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” (4:34-35). His position as a king was secured and restored him. He made his own confession continually, “…I 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” (4:37). The Most High God was not just the God of Daniel and the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but also the God of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had been a good shepherd for the king Nebuchadnezzar until he made such a confession of his own, telling the truth at the right time, “renounce your sins by doing what is right” (4:27).

King Belshazzar, a son of Nebuchadnezzar, gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and a party. But he committed a terrible sin that he and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem. Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. His nobles were baffled. No one could read the writing and know its meaning. Finally Daniel was brought and could read and interpret it, refusing the gifts and rewards the king offered. The writing was “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN” and the interpretation is “*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.” Daniel delivered the message of judgment truthfully. That very night the last king and kingdom of Babylon were gone but Daniel and his life of faith continued.

At the beginning of the Medo-Persian kingdom, King Darius, that is, Cyrus, an edict was issued that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except the king shall be thrown into the lion’s den. King Darius was manipulated by the political enemies of Daniel and put the decree in writing, meaning not to be altered in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which could not be repealed. Learning that the decree had been published, Daniel went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (6:10). In that life-threatening situation, Daniel could have stopped praying for thirty days or prayed in secret. Yet, Daniel kept his prayer just as he had done, for he knew that God was in control even in such a situation and prayer was his potent weapon in a spiritual battle like this. When he prayed as usual, he was thrown into the lions’ den. But the lions did not hurt Daniel at all. When Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. King Darius issued a decree that overrides the previous decree, saying, “I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions” (6:26-27). The king acknowledged that the living and everlasting God had rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.

We see Daniel’s continuous victory of faith. And we see that Daniel’s life of prayer was shown, praying three times a day in the thought of Jerusalem and his people, even in such dangerous circumstances. Amid so many things to do, prayer was his first priority to listen to God and talk to him. The content of prayer was well displayed in chapter 9, confessing his sins and the sins of his people, particularly the sin of disobeying the words of God’s command, and asking for God’s mercy of forgiveness over their sins for the sake of God’s honour: “For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city bears your Name…O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name” (9:17-19). This prayer was his fasting prayer in sackcloth and ashes (9:3). His prayer was based on God’s word given to Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. God heard his prayer and let Cyrus proclaim for the Israelite to return to their own land in that very year Daniel prayed.

On one occasion in his old age he prayed, fasting for three weeks (10:2) probably because of his people’s poor and unwilling response in going back to their land at such a time of opportunity to rebuild the nation and probably because of the upcoming horrible suffering of his people. Indeed, Daniel was a man of prayer, and we believe that his prayer was the lifeline in his fellowship with God and was the power source of his victorious life, even amidst the pagan world.

**Second, God’s sovereign rule.** God’s sovereign rule was well manifested through King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s interpretation of the dream and through the mouths of the gentile kings of the powerful empire: a rock smashing the gigantic dazzling statue (2:44-45), Nebuchadnezzar’s confession, “His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation” (4:3) and Darius’ proclamation, “He is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end” (6:26). God’s rule of sovereignty would be displayed further through Daniel’s four visions recorded in chapters 7-12.

Daniel’s first vision was four great beasts coming out of the sea, churned up by the four winds of heaven; a lion representing Babylonian empire, a bear representing Medo-Persia, a leopard representing Greece, and a terrifying and frightening beast with large iron teeth and bronze claws which represents Rome and its related final kingdom of the world.

The meaning of this vision was almost the same as that of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about an enormous dazzling statue crushed by a rock. However, the statue was made of gold, silver, bronze and iron, valuable things of the world, which show a certain value of each kingdom of the world. However, in God’s sight, the beasts were nothing but cruel, destructive powers. Amid the similarity between Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s first vision, the clear discrepancy is that in Daniel’s vision, a little horn, representing the final Antichrist, comes out of the fourth beast of the Roman Empire, and the horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully against the Most High, and was completely destroyed forever. In Daniel’s vison also there was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient Days/the Most High God and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power/ a kingdom; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped (7:13-14). This is the picture of Christ’s coronation and his everlasting kingdom. And it is further written that the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom after the great tribulation of a time, times and half a time, and they will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever (7:18).

In his 2nd vision, Daniel saw a ram being attacked and struck down and knocked to the ground by a goat. This was the picture of the Medo-Persian kingdom being defeated by the kingdom of Greece, particularly by its first king, Alexander. These kingdoms appeared again in this vision after in the first vision, yet it was in the connection with the Beautiful Land of Israel, God’s chosen people (8:9). Antiochus Epiphanes from Seleucid kingdom related to the kingdom of Greece would trample on the saints and desecrate the sanctuary, the daily sacrifice being given over to him and the truth thrown down to the ground. The desecration would last 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:14), which was fulfilled in history. Alexander and Antiochus Epiphanes were the prefigures of the final Antichrist, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue (8:23). It is clearly written that this vision concerns the time of the end, the appointed time of the end (8:17; 19).

Daniel’s third vision was God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer regarding the finish of the seventy years of their Babylonian captivity. God revealed to Daniel the accurate timetable for the destiny of the future Israel, that is certainly related to the fate of the whole world. It is through the expression of seventy ‘sevens’, seven ‘sevens’, sixty-two ‘sevens’, and one ‘seven’ (9:24-25). Gabriel said to Daniel, “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.” How important these words are in the history of God! In seven ‘sevens’, namely, forty seven years, the city of Jerusalem would be restored certainly including the restoration of the temple. And then after the seven ‘sevens’ and the sixty-two ‘sevens’, that is, 483 years, the Anointed One, Christ Jesus would enter Jerusalem as the triumphant king and would be cut off by crucifixion to death. Afterwards there would be times of desolations to the people throughout history (9:26). Then the final figure of the prince of the world will confirm a covenant with may for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (9:27). What a time table for the history of the world till the end!

When Daniel mourned and prayed in fasting for three weeks at the thought of his people that even through their Babylonian captivity could not refine them, the preincarnate Christ appeared to him in glory and majesty, dressed in linen with a golden belt around his waist, his body like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude (10:5-6) He is the commander in chief of the Army of God. Consequently, God showed Daniel the reality of the angelic warfare that an angel was in coming to Daniel resisted by the prince of the Persian kingdom and so detained with the king of Persia for 21 days. By the help of Michael, one of the chief angels, the angel could come to Daniel to deliver God’s message to him and then he would return to fight against the prince of Persia and then against the prince of Greece (10:20).

In chapter 11, the angel who had been speaking to Daniel unfolded what was written in the Book of Truth. In it, is such a detailed description of the wars between the king of the South and the king of the North, that is, between Ptolemaic dynasty and Seleucid dynasty, for more than two hundred years. For they were the ones that are right around Israel. The wars between the two waged on the borders and throughout the land of Israel. Finally, the north won the battle. Antiochus the great devasted the Beautiful Land (11:16), and his son Antiochus Epimenes/Epiphanes did even more with his armed force rising up to desecrate the temple fortress and abolishing daily sacrifice and setting up the abomination that causes desolation (11:31). Behind all these sufferings of his people there is a divine purpose to refine and purify them and make them spotless, fit to the coming kingdom of Christ (11:35).

Lastly there will be the final Antichrist, a willful king who will do as he please and exalt and magnify himself above every god. He will say unheard-of things against the God of gods (1:36) He will show no regard the traditional religions of his fathers and for the one desired for women. He will be a perversion of normal human responses, with no family love, no affection for women and no love for god of any form. He is perverted. He will honour only a god of fortresses and attack the mightiest fortresses and be victorious defeating the king of the South, the African army and the king of the North including Russian and Arab alliance and even kings from the east. He will also invade the Beautiful Land and pitch his royal tents at the beautiful holy mountain Zion between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him (11:45). He will be finally destroyed by the splendour of the coming of Christ. All these are also written in the Book of Truth. Human history has been going on according to the words of the prophecy of God.

In his part of God’s sovereign we are to notice that God is described as the God of Daniel and the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (3:28, 29) and the God of Daniel (6:26) along with the expression, ‘my God’ (6:22), ‘your God’ (6:16, 20) and ‘his God’ (6:10, 23).

He is also depicted as the God of gods (2:47; 11:36) and the Lord of kings (2:47). He is the King of heaven (4:37). He is the God of heaven (2:18, 19, 37, 44). He is the living God and he endures forever (6:20, 26). And he is described as the Most High or the Most High God 13 times (3:26; 4:2, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34; 5:18, 21; 7:18, 22, 25, 27). He is the Sovereign Ruler of history over all nations. We are also to know that he is the God who holds in his hand each one’ life and all his or her ways (5:23). May we truly live with our faith in this Sovereign God.

**Third, God’s hope.** The angel who had been speaking long to Daniel concluded his speech with these words, “…At that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (12:1-3). What a message of hope! The hope of the resurrection from the dead and shining like the stars of the sky forever is the hope of Israel and true hope for all people of the world.

When an angel asked, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?”, the man clothed in linen, the preincarnate Christ answered, lifting his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed” (12:7). This is the confirmation of the message that God’s desire and hope is in the refinement and purification of his people with all human dependency being broken to the point of finally looking into Christ Jesus the Messiah whom God sent for their salvation. For this the duration of the great tribulation, a time, times and half a time, is assured.

From Christ himself, a personal message is given to Daniel, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. 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” (12:9-10). We are reminded of Jesus’ words in Revelation 22:10-11, “Don’t seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” We see how the world is going, continually doing wrong and being vile. May we keep doing right and being holy before God.

Christ continually speaks to Daniel, “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days” (12:11-12). What a specific plan of God with the days of 1,260, 1,290 days that is 30 more days, probably the time of Christ judging nations written in Matthew 25, and 1,335 days with extra 45 days probably for the full establishment of the millennial kingdom of Christ. Although we are not completely sure of what these numbers refer to, these specific numbers shows us more and more the reality of the blessed and glorious kingdom of Christ coming.

Lastly Christ says to Daniel, “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive to your allotted inheritance.” (12:13). We believe that this way is the way of the life of faith , faith in the Most High sovereign God and the way of keeping our identity as the saints of the Most High with the priority to listening to the words of God and faithfully praying to him.

Thank God for Daniel’s life of faith, which is an example of all those who live in the pagan world. Thank God for the God of Daniel. He wants to be the God of each of us. Thank God that he is sovereign over all things, good and bad. The time of the great tribulation is coming for the purpose of refining his people with their human power being broken fit to the kingdom of Christ. May we go the way of the life of faith treasuring our Christ and following his way of life, with the hope of resurrection or meeting him at his coming here on earth and with the hope of sharing in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.