

Journey Into God's Word



II Chronicles 1-11

Daniel 1-12

II Thessalonians 1-3

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

So many people get discouraged when things don't go their way. For example, if their favorite candidate or political party loses out, they think it's the end of the world. We get quite a different message when we study the lives of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the book of Daniel. Here we have four young men who are rooted up by a ruthless tyrant and forced to go to the country of Babylon. In spite of the circumstances these four men display such a trust in God that their faith had a dynamic impact on Nechuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon. As we read the book Daniel, II Chronicles 1-11, and II Thessalonians we are once again reminded that no matter what the situation may be, God is in control.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. He doesn't want just an explanation of what the dream means, but also to be told what the dream is. If he doesn't get what he wants, all the wise men of Babylon are to be killed. Everyone else panics while Daniel prays. Daniel tells this political leader that "there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (Daniel 2:28) and then goes on to tell Nebuchadnezzar what his dream is about and what it means. What is the King's response in Daniel 2:46-49? But after a period of time, Nebuchadnezzar forgets what God has shown him and he creates an idol of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide and commands everyone to worship it. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego respond by not bowing down to the idol and instead they declare, "O Nebuchadnezzar, 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 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." (Daniel 3:16-18) Now this really upset the King. He made the furnace seven times hotter until it even killed the soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it. Then the most amazing thing happens. It caused King Nebuchadnezzar to leap

to his feet in amazement. What does Daniel 3:23-27 say happened? When these three men came out of the fire the King declares, “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. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no god can save in this way.”(Daniel 3:28, 29) Wow, what a miracle and what a proclamation!

As time passes, Nebuchadnezzar forgets that God is in control and he lets pride take over, declaring in Daniel 4:28-30, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty? “What took place after that according to Daniel 4:31-33? Finally after seven years of losing everything, what does Nebuchadnezzar declare in Daniel 4:34-37? How many times does the bottom have to drop out before you recognize that God is in control?

Read II Chronicles 1-9 and look at the great things that God did through Solomon. In II Chronicles 7:14 we see God declaring to Solomon, “ If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” What do you feel that this verse is saying to you and to our country at this time? God blessed Solomon with wisdom and riches almost beyond measure. Yet with blessings comes the responsibility of walking humbling with God daily. As you read the rest of Solomon’s story in I Kings 10:26-11:43, you see that it has a tragic ending. “As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord His God, as the heart of David his father had been.” (II Chron. 11:4) The scripture tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had repented and returned to the living God but there is no record that Solomon did the same thing. What a tragedy. What steps are you taking to remain close to God the rest of your life?

The handwriting was on the wall. Daniel tells a later King, “Belshazzar, (you) have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this about Nebuchadnezzar. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven... you did not honor the God who holds in His hands your life and all your ways.”(Daniel 5:22,23) As a result, what does Daniel 5:25-28 declare was written on the walls?

We try to do what is right and things still don't always work out. Take Daniel, for example. We have seen how he tried to live right and do right and in Daniel 6 we see he is thrown in the lions' den because he continues to pray. Have you ever felt you were alone in lions' den? What did you do? Please read this chapter carefully and note what Daniel did. Look at King Darius' response in Daniel 6:26, 27. What is your response to what God is doing in your life?

Even skeptics have to admit that something supernatural has happened to Daniel as he talks about events hundreds of years before they happen in Daniel 7-11. Daniel was a humble man who knew how to pray. Please study Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:3-19 and note how as he fasted and prayed he humbled himself, confessed his sins, and asked God to reveal His will. Such prayer involves complete surrender and complete openness to what God is saying.

In Daniel 12 we see a great revelation of the last days and a clear reference to the resurrection of the dead. "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 forever and ever." (Daniel 12:2,3) What encouragement do you find in these words? Some would say all our work for Jesus is a waste of time. How do these two verses prove that such declarations are wrong? Some may have difficulty with Daniel 12:7 where it says, "When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." God's purpose is to bring His people, whether it is the people of Israel, or you or me into a living relationship with Him. This means being broken of our pride and self-sufficiency until He is Lord of every area of our life. As we trust in the Living God who reveals Himself to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, the same promise made to Daniel also can apply to us. "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." (Daniel 12:13) What joy and peace do you find in this promise?

It is exciting to study events concerning the last days, but we must not let such study cause us to become confused or indifferent to the needs of this present age. Paul wrote the book of II Thessalonians to clear up confusion about the last days and the second coming of Christ. His key verse in this book is found in II Thess. 3:5, "May the Lord Christ direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." "With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His calling and that by His power He may fill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the

name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (II Thess. 1:11,12) Why is this so critical in light of the events described in II Thess? 2:1-11 prior to the return of Jesus? What does II Thess. 3:6-14 say we should do about those who are lazy? Our Lord could return at any time.

Now, “may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.” (II Thess. 2:16) Please join me this week in studying II Chron.10-13, Hosea 1-14 and I Timothy 1-6. “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” (II Thess.16)

Your brother in Christ,

Larry Rice