The Sovereign God Who Delivers His People

The Book of Daniel: A Look Back

**Introduction**

 For the past several months we have been studying the book of Daniel which has given us many lessons that we can apply to our lives today. With the time we have today we are going to spend some time looking back at what we have learned so that we can take these lessons to heart as we continue to live with anticipation for the return of Jesus Christ. We began this study on August 18, 2024, which means that we have been in this book for a year. Over the past year the Lord has provided for us very important applications from the life of Daniel that will continue to guide us as we live our daily lives in the hope He has given to us. Today we will review the four main lessons we have learned about God in this book. 1. God is sovereign over all of history. 2. God is faithful to His people. 3.God will ultimately defeat evil. 4. We are called to live faithfully until Christ’s return. As we discuss these points today, I ask you to use the fill in the blank sheet provided in your bulletin to take some notes that you can keep with you for future reference. I’m sorry that there is no extra credit awarded, but if you have this for reference later you will always have a study aid as you come back to Daniel.

***1. God is Sovereign Over History***

In chapter 2 verse 21 when Daniel was interpreting the dream for King Nebuchadnezzar, he made this bold statement of truth regarding God. **“He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings.”** As we look back at that dream, we saw that the king had envisioned the stone coming to destroy the mighty statue that was made up of the gold, iron and clay. The stone was the kingdom of God showing that even though all those kingdoms would be coming to power, none of them would ever be as powerful as the kingdom of God. God establishes all the kingdoms that exist and uses them to carry out His purposes.

 Not only did God make this known through the dream of the king, but He also showed this truth in the way that He guided the nations after the life of Daniel. When we were looking at the history being outlined in chapter 11, we learned that **Babylon, Persia, and Rome all rise and fall under God’s hand.** The nations of this world as well as their leaders come to power as well as rise and fall when God determines. He has the final say in all human affairs.

 In what way did the book of Daniel show us the sovereignty of God over kings? There were a couple of examples. The first came when God executed the judgment that He made on King Nebuchadnezzar when He made the king lose his sanity and roam around the kingdom like a wild animal for seven years. In addition to this example, King Belshazzar read the writing on the wall after he had desecrated the holy vessels from the temple. The writing told of his kingdom coming to an end, which did on that very night. Therefore, **even the most powerful kings (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius) learn that heaven rules.**

 Our first application this morning is that **nations rise and fall, but God’s kingdom endures forever (Daniel 7:14).** If we can keep this fact in mind, it will help us not to become so stressed and anxious over the affairs of these temporary times. We have been blessed to be a nation of people for over 300 years, but even if something were to happen to the United States of American God is still sovereign and we can always rely on Him to guide us in our lives.

***2. God is Faithful to His People***

 The second fact that we have learned about God in this book is that He is faithful to His people. There were several occasions in this book where God showed up to protect those who were being faithful to Him. He rescued the three men from the fiery furnace and saved Daniel from the lions. The reason that He did this was to serve as an encouragement to the people that even though they were in exile He was still with them and did not forsake them. **Daniel and his friends remained faithful in exile. God delivered them from the fire, from the lions and from despair.** In doing this God has shown us that He is always with us no matter what trials we may be going through. The scripture that speaks volumes in the account of the three men being thrown into the furnace is when they are threatened by the king with punishment if they would not submit. In ***Daniel 3:17-18*** the men respond by saying ***“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods nor worship the golden statue that you have set up.”*** The men believed that God had the power to save them, but they did not allow the decision of God’s action to control their thinking. Even if God may allow us to suffer for His name, we need to stay faithful because the reward for faithfulness is greater than we can imagine!

 **Daniel modeled courage, humility, and steadfast prayer (Daniel 9).** These three disciplines should guide us in our lives as well. God calls us to be strong and courageous during trials because it is through those challenges that He is refining us to be made into His image. He also calls us to be humble because we cannot do anything without His power. Finally, prayer is the way that we stay in communication with God. When we commune with Him every day, He gives us the ability to withstand the temptations of Satan and equips us to do the work of ministry. **Application #2: Faithfulness in both small and great trials reveals trust in God’s eternal promises.**

***3. God will Ultimately Defeat Evil***

 Throughout the book Daniel experienced several changes in leadership over the nation. Every time these kingdoms changed there seemed to be new evils to deal with. These kings were very prideful and arrogant, expecting and demanding allegiance from their subjects. This is the same today because many leaders think that they have the final say in what happens in their nations. However, as we have already learned they are not really in charge, God is. Daniel is given visions regarding the future that show the arrogance of these leaders will culminate at the end of the age. **The visions reveal the rise of earthly empires and the final rebellion.**

 Despite the rebellion that takes place in those nations, the sovereignty of God is not changed nor is His will. **The “Ancient of Days” sits enthroned, and the “Son of Man” receives an everlasting dominion (Daniel 7:9-14).** Jesus Christ the Messiah through His sacrifice and resurrection has received the kingdom and rules for eternity. His kingdom has no end and when it comes will defeat the curse of evil.

 Not only will the curse of evil be defeated, but those who have remained faithful despite the challenges will be rewarded for their devotion. **Daniel 12:2 promises the resurrection of the dead- life for the righteous, shame for the wicked.** This is the hope that all who trust in Christ have to keep them encouraged as they remain faithful to Him. The resurrection will happen because Christ has overcome the grave. This life is not all there is and therefore we have hope for the future.

**Application #3: Our hope is not in the present circumstances but in the coming kingdom of Christ.**

***4. We are Called to Live Faithfully Until Christ’s Return***

 Near the conclusion of Daniel, we were given a description of the end of the age when there will be a resurrection, and the kingdom of God will come to earth. When God had finished giving to Daniel the vision he was told **“Go your way till the end; and you shall rest and stand in your allotted place at the end of the days” (Daniel 12:13).** Daniel had been told and shown everything that he needed to know at that time. The rest he was promised is what all who place their trust in Christ are offered as well as after the work of this life has been completed. **Jesus echoes Daniel in Matthew 24, urging watchfulness, endurance, and readiness.** These words of comfort and hope tell us that as we live these lives we have been blessed with, we need to continue doing the work of ministry so that when the Lord returns, He will find us at work building His kingdom. This is like the parable of the talents. When the master returns will he find that His servants have been faithful or have they just buried what they were entrusted with? When Christ returns may He find us doing the work He has called us to.

**Application #4: Walk in holiness, courage, and hope, awaiting the resurrection and the eternal kingdom.** We should not only just wait for the events foretold in Scripture to happen, but we must live these lives in honor to God.

**Conclusion**

 Now that we have reviewed the main applications from the book of Daniel let us quickly discuss where this will take us as we move forward. **Daniel reminds us: 1. God rules history- Trust Him above earthly powers.** Leaders in this world who are fellow image bearers of God are not where our hope needs to lie. We must depend on God and trust Him above all others. **2. God is faithful- He will keep His people through trials.** As we walk through the trials of this life we do not do so alone. Our God knows what we are going through and walks through them with us. Not only will He keep us, but He will use us to accomplish His perfect will. **3. God will triumph- Resurrection and everlasting life await the faithful.** This allows those who trust in Christ not to have to fear what man on this earth may do. We are in the hands of our loving Father who has a future awaiting us that will make these challenges seem like nothing.

 Let us charge ourselves to live with courage and confidence in the God who rules the nations and rescues His people until Christ’s kingdom is fully revealed. We have reasons to be joyful despite the trials. As we continue this ministry in the Nankin community may this hope, and joy keep us focused on the work the Lord has ordained for us.

 Next week we will begin our study of the First Epistle of Peter. The reason that we are going to transition to this book is because we are living in times of trial and challenge. The faith that we hold dear is continually under attack just like the persecution the early church experienced during Peter’s lifetime. As we study, we will be encouraged to endure the trials and remain faithful until the return of Christ. I look forward to studying this book with you!