

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Introduction

The focal point of the book of Daniel is the climax of earth's history, when time blends into eternity and the transient kingdoms of this world become the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Looking forward to that grand event, however, the angel of prophecy cautions Daniel that those who live for God and look with longing hearts for the establishment of His righteous reign on earth must pass through a period of gross apostasy and bitter persecution. Through the nations of earth Satan will oppose God's purpose and oppress His faithful people.

A careful study of the books of Daniel and the Revelation is most important in our time. Note the following:

"As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are *living*."—*Prophets and Kings*, page 547.

"The light that Daniel received from God was given especially for these last days. The visions he saw, . . . are now in process of fulfillment, and all the events foretold will soon come to pass. . . . "When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great *revival*."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 113.

"We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Many of the prophecies are about to be fulfilled in quick *succession*."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 116.

"We need to study the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, that we may estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen; that we may learn what is the true aim of life; that, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may put them to their truest and noblest use. Thus, learning here the principles of His kingdom and becoming its subjects and citizens, we may be prepared at His coming to enter with Him into its possession."—*Education*, page 184.

It would be impossible to compress within the limited space of twelve brief lessons all that might be said about the book of Daniel. Those who wish a more complete understanding of its message for the church today will find a variety of references listed for enrichment. In a number of instances additional Scripture references are given following the notation, "See also."

Because the book of Daniel was written long ago when the Jews were still God's chosen people, its words, expressions, and concepts may often seem unfamiliar. Furthermore, much of it reflects a historical situation that is more or less strange to us, and many of its predictions have already met their fulfillment in the great empires of antiquity and down through the centuries since the fall of Rome. Historical perspective is helpful in seeing the various predictions in relation to each other. To provide such a perspective, the introductions to some lessons are somewhat longer than usual. These introductions are intended to provide a helpful background for the study of the respective lessons.

The first six chapters of Daniel are largely a narrative of Daniel's experiences during the Babylonian exile. This narrative presents God at work behind the scenes of history to accomplish His beneficent purpose for His people and for this world. The last six chapters

report a series of visions concerning future events from Daniel's day down to the close of time. The first four of this quarter's lessons focus on the historical section of Daniel, with a backward glance at God's purpose for His people Israel and a forward glance at His purpose for them upon their return from exile.

Lessons 5 and 6 present a composite summary of all of the information Gabriel imparted to Daniel, without attempting (in these two lessons) to interpret it. Lessons 7 through 12 turn to the New Testament for the interpretation and application of the prophecies of Daniel given by Christ and the various New Testament writers.

Especially for Last Days

Read the book of Daniel. Call up, point by point, the history of the kingdoms there represented. Behold statesmen, councils, powerful armies, and see how God wrought to abase the pride of men, and lay human glory in the dust. God alone is represented as great. In the vision of the prophet He is seen casting down one mighty ruler, and setting up another. He is revealed as the monarch of the universe, about to set up His everlasting kingdom—the Ancient of days, the living God, the Source of all wisdom, the Ruler of the present, the Revealer of the future. Read, and understand how poor, how frail, how short-lived, how erring, how guilty is man in lifting up his soul unto vanity.... 4BC 1166.4

The light that Daniel received direct from God was given especially for these last days. The visions he saw by the banks of the Ulai and the Hiddekel, the great rivers of Shinar, are now in process of fulfilment, and all the events foretold will soon have come to pass (Letter 57, 1896). 4BC 1166.5