

Chapter 4: Atonement Through Humility

Atonement with God comes only through humility (see Hebrews 12:7-10). Even after being forewarned of God through Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar was hard pressed to accept this important principle. In Daniel 4 we see how a proud king finally becomes one with his Maker through the process of humiliation. This chapter communicates the tremendous yet sometimes frightening fact that God will do whatever it takes to save us and, for that, we will praise Him in the end (Daniel 4:2-3).

Chapter 5: Rejecting Atonement

Daniel 5 gives us a glimpse into the bounds of God's mercy (see Genesis 6:3, Matthew 24:37). In relation to the atonement, there is a limit to God's forbearance, a line we are cautioned not to cross (see Mark 3:28-29). While God is longsuffering to us, not willing that any would perish, this chapter reminds us that there are many who will not be vindicated by a professed faith in God. Chapter 4 shows us the very worst of rebels saved. This chapter uncovers the very worst of rebels lost and shows that our persistence in sin and rejection of God does have an ultimate negative consequence.

Chapter 6: Atonement Through Intercession

The very essence of atonement is the intercession of Christ on behalf of sinners (see Hebrews 7:25). Here, in Daniel 6, a whole chapter is devoted to underscoring the significance of prayer as a vital part of vindication. This chapter reveals the height of God-likeness that mankind can attain when their entire reliance is upon God. Because of his immovable trust, Daniel is vindicated not only in God's sight, but also in the eyes of earthly rulers and leaders, who can find no fault in him. The judgment of finite man is powerless to accomplish what God's judgment has not decreed.

Chapter 6 discloses a picture of the peace and trust a firm reliance upon God can bring, even when we are thrown into the pit of adversity.

Chapter 7: Complete Atonement of God's Kingdom

In this chapter, as in chapter 2, we find an account of the history of nations with some added insight. The process of dominion, one kingdom to the next, is expounded to include the judgment that will inevitably fall upon evil. Because atonement assures the complete restoration of God's kingdom, it promises the complete annihilation of every aspect of evil (see Malachi 4:1, 3).

This truth must have its part in the at-one-ment process of all who would be saved. Mankind, and even unfallen angels, find it necessary to understand God's fairness in dealing with the sin problem. And we, too, must know there is Someone who will make all things right, that a day of accounts is awaiting this earth (see Matthew 12:36-37). When we understand God's intent and His right to judge, we can leave room for Him to adjust all wrongs and vindicate life's present injustices, even those that threaten to undo us (see Romans 12:19-21).

In Daniel 7 we see that God will be the final court of justice before whom all will someday be called to give an account (see Romans 14:10).

Chapters 8 and 9: Atonement and Cleansing Through the Cross

Daniel 8 and 9 focus on the very foundation of the plan of salvation. In these two chapters we find the climax of God's atonement process for humanity. The cleansing of the sanctuary and the cross of Christ, so clearly spoken of in these

chapters, are the central themes of our final vindication and at-one-ment. That the sanctuary can be cleansed and made right is the miracle of God's grace. The essence of this grace is that this cleansing is done through the gift of His only begotten Son (see Hebrews 9:11-15; 22-28).

Whether or not you and I are saved, it is awesome just to realize that through God alone, the whole sin problem that we chose to plunge ourselves into is totally reconciled. That the Sovereign God of the universe would take the initiative to save us while we were His enemies is enough to cause even the lost to bow before Him and confess the glory of His character (see Philippians 2:5-11).

These two chapters disclose the measureless love of God, despite a world bent on opposing His purposes and rejecting His tender pleas.

Chapters 10 through 12: Final Atonement

The last three chapters of Daniel are linked together. Chapter 10 is a clear and sobering revelation of the fact that there is nothing in us that can recommend us to God. Righteous as Daniel's character was, all becomes corruption before the spotless purity of Christ (see Daniel 10:8).

Chapter 11 is the beginning of Daniel's final vision. A brief summary of human history is given—past, present and future. In this way, God offers proof positive of His omnipotence and thus reveals His right to judge mankind. Here, also, as in chapters 7 and 8, is shown the work of those who fight against the new covenant, God's vehicle of at-one-ment (see Daniel 11:30-31; 7:21, 25; 8:9-13).

In chapter 12 redemption is complete. Michael stands for His people (see Daniel 12:1). This is the ultimate purpose of God, the finished product of His grace (see Ephesians 5:25-27). Being chosen, cleansed and sealed, the redeemed of God have nothing to fear for the future, for God has healed their past (see Hosea 14:4).

These chapters show God alone to be holy, fully omnipotent and able to save all who come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ.

In Conclusion

With these insights as an overview, we can look forward to a faith-fortifying study through the book of Daniel. Of course, we will be touching on many other books of the Bible as we sort through Daniel's prophetic thoughts. In fact, the Bible itself will be our tour guide. Christ's words, especially as recorded in His last-day-events discourses (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), were directly linked to Daniel's prophecies, making these words of the Savior key to our study. Also the "Revelation of Christ" to John on the isle of Patmos must hold an important part in any investigation we attempt, for at least three reasons:

- 1) The books of Daniel and Revelation are both symbolic, prophetic writings.
- 2) Daniel and John were shown some of the very same symbols (see Daniel 7:1-8; Revelation 13:1-2).
- 3) Both books speak of events which are to transpire just before the second coming of Jesus.

With all these thoughts in mind, prepare yourself for a journey through the Bible that promises to be interesting, challenging and rewarding.

Let's go!

The Unsealing of Daniel

Study Number 1



Do you ever wonder what the future holds? Theories abound and vary. Some say we're headed for atomic disaster. Others assure us that an era of worldwide peace is soon to be ushered in. Most of us have heard opinions from various sources, perhaps unsolicited, offering some prophetic analysis of mankind's destiny. There are groups that point to the need for a more careful use of earth's resources in order to ensure future survival. At the same time various religious movements around the world believe survival depends on enforcing their code of ethics on the masses.

Let's face it. When it comes to predicting the future, confusion and misunderstanding surround us like fog surrounds London. Even religious leaders come up with so many diverse interpretations of the Bible that the average person might as well give up. But wait! There is Someone who holds promise for unraveling the confusion—and in such a way as to establish our belief in Him as the true Source of prophetic utterance. Note His challenging words: "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (Jesus Christ, John 14:29).

Just before His death, Christ drew His disciples close about Him on the Mount of Olives. His discerning eye pierced the fog of false prophecy and looked down through time to its very close (see Matthew 24:1-3). His prophetic message, recorded in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13, was broad and comprehensive. It set aside false teachings, revealing a reasonable, consistent, and hopeful understanding of future events.

Yet what Christ began to unfold was so unlike the religious teachings of the time that His disciples could hardly bear to hear it all (see John 16:12). But understand, dear friend, it is His undying love for humanity that compels Christ to tell us all we can bear about the future. He knows the subtle deceptions of the enemy. His first prophetic communication in Matthew 24 includes a warning against many false prophets, sent in His name, seeking to deceive if possible the very elect (see Matthew 24:4, 11, 24).

How true these words have proved to be, for we are presently saturated with false teachings claiming to be heaven-sent. In contrast to this warning, Christ points us to a true prophet whose words were to be read and trusted. This

A Book of Atonement and Reconciliation

prophet was Daniel. Jesus placed His divine approval upon the prophetic book of Daniel, encouraging us to read and understand (see Matthew 24:15). In doing this Christ throws out a life preserver to keep us afloat in an ocean of error. He directs us to truth that will bring us comfort and safety for the future.

The book of Daniel holds in its twelve brief, yet comprehensive, chapters the most wonderful theme found in Scripture—God’s reconciling, atoning love. The apostle Paul says this love provides the only motivation strong enough to save us (see 2 Corinthians 5:14). Daniel was shown this love in the symbolic language of Bible prophecy.

He saw a mysterious stone that would finally crush the cruel tyranny and corruption of all earthly kingdoms (see Daniel 2:34-35). He witnessed the Son of Man coming into the presence of the Father to make intercession for sinners (see Daniel 7:13). The cleansing of the sanctuary, through the sacrifice of the Lamb for the sins of the world, was opened to Daniel’s view (see Daniel 8:14; 9:26). And he saw the final deliverance of all those who put their trust in Christ (see Daniel 12:1). The entire plan of redemption was revealed in symbolic language to this much beloved prophet and admired statesman.

As we study Daniel’s writings, looking for the ever-recurring, inexhaustible truth of redemption, the message of the book promises to become one of the most rewarding spiritual experiences we can ever have.

Daniel: Prophecy for the End of Time

When speaking of the events concerning His second coming and the end of time, why did Jesus point His followers to the prophetic book of Daniel? (see Matthew 24:3, 15.) Because Christ Himself had uncovered truths in this book of the most sublime import. His own ministry had been affected and directed by the longest prophetic time prophecy recorded in Scripture. In Daniel 9, the 2300-day prophecy so clearly confirms the Messiahship of Christ, that some Jews to this day prohibit its study. This prophecy, along with other visions in the writings of Daniel, flows in a grand succession down the stream of time to disclose events yet to transpire in our day. This is why, on numerous occasions, Daniel is directly told that His visions apply not only to his time, but also to ours. Consider the following verses:

“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days” (Daniel 10:14).

“He said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision” (Daniel 8:17).

“And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be” (Daniel 8:19).

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to *the time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4).

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till *the time of the end*. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:9-10).

“But go thou thy way till *the end* be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at *the end* of the days” (Daniel 12:13).

Christ knew this little book held truth essential to the destiny of individuals in the latter days. And, in light of this fact, Christ’s words in Matthew 24:15 are particularly

significant. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:).” In the context of this discourse, Christ was speaking not only of Jerusalem’s destruction, but of the condition of the world just before His second coming (see Matthew 24:3). In a special sense, those living on the very borders of eternity have, in Christ’s words, a divine admonition to study and understand the prophecies of Daniel. This is significant because Daniel is the only book of the Bible that was actually declared to be sealed by God (see Daniel 12:4, 9). And now, by the divine declaration of Christ, its prophetic utterances have been officially opened to “whoever reads” (see Matthew 24:15, NKJV). Yet the awesome truths of the book of Daniel remain closed to the comprehension of multitudes.

Daniel: A Book of Hope

The name *Daniel* means “God is my Judge” or “God is my Vindicator.” Therefore the very title of this prophetic book speaks a message of hope for sinners. Vindication and judgment through the advocacy of Jesus Christ is a pillar of the gospel, the very purpose of atonement (see 1 John 2:1-2). Through His intercession as High Priest in our behalf, Jesus purposes to apply His atoning sacrifice for the eternal good of every believing sinner (see Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).



In fact, the words “atonement” and “judgment” were synonymous terms to the Hebrews. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, was also known as the Day of Judgment. It was a time when God vindicated those who put their trust in Him, cleansing them by faith from all their sins (see Leviticus 16:29-30).

As we consider this little book of prophecy, we will find that its underlying message is reconciliation or at-one-

ment with God. Through Christ’s merit alone, God offers us the gifts of “righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (see 1 Corinthians 1:30). He purposes to draw us back to complete at-one-ment with Himself (see John 12:32). From different angles and in various forms, this grand and vital theme is carried through every chapter of the book, from the beginning of Daniel’s message to its close.

A Brief Overview

Before delving into a chapter-by-chapter study of the book of Daniel, let’s consider a brief outline of Daniel’s basic content and message. As we do this, we can expect to encounter the gospel or “good news” of Christ Jesus as Redeemer of sinners, a central theme of the Old Testament as well as of the New (see Hebrews 4:2).

Chapter 1: Reaching the World Through Captivity

In chapter 1 we find the professed worshipers of the only true God taken captive by a nation of devout pagan idolaters. Why? It seems God is interested in revealing Himself to those who do not know Him, but His people are not cooperating. From the beginning, God’s people were called and blessed so they could be a blessing to the world (see Genesis 12:2). In the symbolic language of a parable, Isaiah spoke of this divine purpose and the failure of God’s people to fulfill it (see Isaiah 5:1-7).

It is in this context, after years of pleading with Israel to be a holy nation that would make His character known to the world, that God tries a different method of evangelism. And it is here we find Daniel and his three friends. Through the devotion and steadfast commitment of four faithful youth, God will bring His atonement plan beyond Israel, to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6). Nebuchadnezzar, the highest human authority in the world, is impressed. With hearts of purpose, unyielding conviction and the wisdom of God, these four Hebrews occupy the highest positions of power and influence in the world. They stand in the presence of the king (see Daniel 1:19).

Daniel 1 reveals God’s overruling providence in positioning His faithful followers to do evangelism among the nations.

Chapter 2: God’s Initiative for Atonement Recorded Through History

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). That’s how the account of human history opens. Yet the pages of our ancestral annals record anything but God’s original intent on that blessed creation morn. Disobedience brought alienation, fear, distrust, jealousy, hatred, murder, pain, suffering, and death—just to name a few of its atrocities. Domination, subjection, tyranny and enslavement are the earmarks of nearly six thousand years of human history. Against the principles of evil empires, God has ever been at work to draw mankind back to His original design.

The second chapter of Daniel lays out a framework of our history and of the final triumph of God’s atoning work for the human race. Taking us down through the channels of time, Daniel’s first prophecy brings us to the joyous climax, the full establishment of the kingdom of God (see Daniel 2:44). In a brief, yet comprehensive, narrative, we see the effects of sin come to an end. The stone, representing Jesus Christ, shatters the image of all earthly kingdoms to fragments and becomes a great immovable mountain (see Daniel 2:34-35, 44; 1 Peter 2:4-8).

Daniel 2 unfolds an outline of God’s overruling redemptive power down through history from Daniel’s day to the end of time.

Chapter 3: Atonement Through Truth

When Jesus prayed for the unity of all who would believe on Him in John 17, He was praying an at-one-ment prayer. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:20-21). The context of this atonement prayer is the truth of the Word of God (see John 17:17). Here Christ reveals that atonement with God comes through His Word of truth.

In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar chooses to turn from God’s atoning truth to exalt himself. Though he knows better, this proud king refuses to give glory to God for His saving truth and makes an image completely of gold (see Daniel 3:1). Nebuchadnezzar then commands all people to worship this image made in honor of himself (see Daniel 3:2-7). Where is God in all of this? He is with Daniel’s three friends, who in refusing to worship the image, reveal to all that atoning truth cannot be compromised (see Daniel 3:16-18).

This chapter offers a powerful lesson in the necessity of keeping the truth of God’s Word pure.