


For Adults Ages 18 and Up

Adult Bible Class



Thy
word is
a lamp unto
my feet,
and a light
unto my
path.

Psalm 119:105

Fall Quarter

September | October

November 2024

Large-Print Edition

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FALL QUARTER

September, October, November 2024

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**UNION
GOSPEL
PRESS**
SINCE 1902

Editor in Chief: James M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Managing Editor: Michelle Birtasevic

Edited and published quarterly by

LIFESTONE MINISTRIES

UNION GOSPEL PRESS DIVISION

Rev. W. B. Musselman, Founder

Price: \$6.09 per quarter*

*shipping and handling extra

ISBN 978-1-64495-590-1

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Two Prophets—God’s Great Faithfulness

BY TOM GREENE

This quarter, we will be looking at two prophets, Daniel and Jonah, as well as how Jesus spoke about them and applied the truths about them to Himself. Daniel provides us with a good model of how to live in the midst of an unbelieving society, faithfully serving and honoring God for decades in exile in the Babylonian and Persian Empires.

Jonah is less exemplary—he initially ran from God’s calling to preach to Israel’s enemies. As we live in a society that seems increasingly opposed to God, the lessons these two men teach are increasingly relevant for our lives.

Throughout the lives of Daniel and Jonah, we see God display His love in a variety of ways. He miraculously preserved both of them—reassuring Daniel when he was discouraged and pursuing Jonah when he was disobedient. He also displayed abundant mercy to His enemies.

In lesson 1, we see Daniel and his friends resisting pressure to conform to the Babylonian diet and customs that compromise God’s law. Dietary matters might seem inconsequential, but the men’s faithfulness in a smaller case prepared them for when faithfulness would be more difficult later in life.

In lessons 2 and 3, we see Daniel’s friends refusing to bow to the king’s golden image, even under the threat

of death. Nebuchadnezzar challenged Daniel’s friends, asking them what god could deliver them out of his hands. After he cast them into the furnace, however, he saw a fourth figure “like the Son of God” walking with them in the flames (Dan. 3:25). God miraculously preserved them in the fiery furnace, revealing both His power and presence.

Daniel was given a vision of the heavenly Son of Man (lesson 4). This Son of Man would come riding on the clouds in judgment. Further, the Ancient of Days would present Him with dominion and an everlasting, heavenly kingdom that will surpass all earthly kingdoms and shall never fade.

Later (lesson 5), Daniel saw visions of earthly kingdoms that proved stunningly accurate hundreds of years later. Daniel prophesied about the Persian Empire, its subsequent defeat by Alexander the Great, the division of Alexander’s kingdom after his death, and the later rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, who persecuted the Jews and committed abominations. The startling accuracy of these prophecies gives us confidence in Daniel’s prophecies that have not yet come to pass, such as those regarding the end times and the antichrist.

Daniel’s prayer in lesson 6 is an excellent model for us. He confessed both his personal sins and those of Israel, pleading for deliverance on the basis

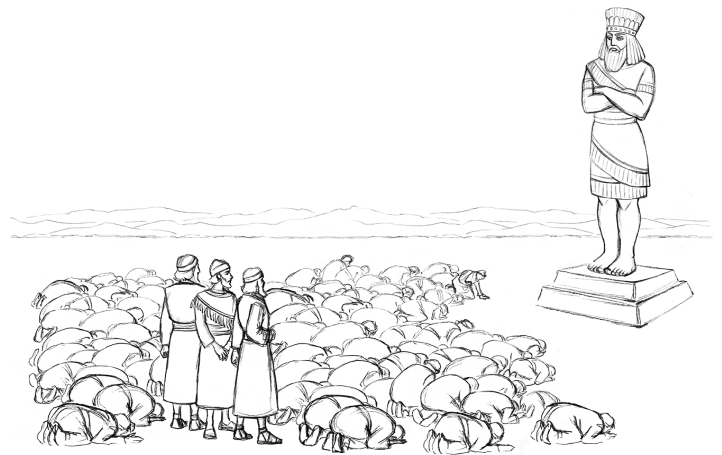
of God's mercy, not Israel's righteousness. We, too, should pray boldly, not because of our righteousness but because of God's great mercy. God answered Daniel's prayer, sending an angelic messenger who assured him that his prayers were heard and that he was greatly loved. The angel then gave Daniel a vision of things that were yet to come.

We see another angel coming to Daniel in lesson 7, the sight of which overwhelmed him. However, the angel strengthened him and once again delivered a message about future events. He gave Daniel insight into the spiritual warfare that was already taking place and yet again assured Daniel that he was greatly loved.

Jesus pointed to Daniel's vision of the Son of Man coming on the clouds and applied it to Himself (lesson 8). Clearly, Jesus understood Himself to be the Messiah and not merely a good teacher, as some today falsely claim. Jesus taught that He was divine, that He would judge the nations, and that He would rule over an everlasting kingdom.

As we turn to Jonah in lesson 9, we find God's resistant prophet fleeing in the opposite direction from God's call, refusing to preach to Israel's enemies. Later, we learn of Jonah's surprising reason. Jonah was not afraid because he thought the Ninevites would reject and persecute him. Rather, he feared they would believe and repent; he wanted them to suffer God's wrath.

After God sent a violent storm at sea and a giant fish to swallow him, Jonah finally repented from inside the belly of the fish (lesson 10). Like Jonah, we can be confident that God hears our prayers, regardless of how bleak our circumstances may be—and even if those circumstances are self-inflicted. No matter how greatly we have sinned and disobeyed God's com-



mands, we can turn to Him in repentance. He promises He will welcome us with open arms.

Jonah finally obeyed God's call to preach to Nineveh (lesson 11), but to his dismay, the Assyrians repented. As a result, God spared them from judgment. No one, no matter how wicked, is too lost for God's mercy and love to save. Jonah grew angry because he did not want Israel's enemies to receive God's mercy. God gently rebuked him, using a plant that gave shade as an object lesson for him (lesson 12).

The book of Jonah ends by challenging our attitudes toward our enemies. Will we help fulfill the Great Commission by going to all nations? Would we rather leave some people alone to face God's wrath than declare His forgiveness and love to them?

Finally, in lesson 13, we find the Pharisees blasphemously claiming that Jesus was casting out demons through the power of Satan. Jesus' response revealed the absurdity of their assertion by asking whether Satan would fight against himself. Undaunted, they brazenly asked Him for a sign. In response, Jesus enigmatically declared that He would give them no sign except for the sign of Jonah. Jesus referred to Jonah's time in the belly of the fish, comparing it to the time He would spend in the grave before His resurrection.

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

DAN. 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm.

21 And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.

NOTES

Daniel Honors God's Law

Lesson Text: Daniel 1:8-21

Related Scriptures: II Chronicles 36:5-8; Psalm 119:105-112; Daniel 1:1-7

TIME: 605 B.C.

PLACE: Babylon

GOLDEN TEXT—"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat" (Daniel 1:8).

Lesson Exposition

CONVICTIONS TESTED—

Dan. 1:8-10

Personal resolve (Dan. 1:8). One of the emphases in this book is the sovereignty of God over individuals and nations. Kenneth Gangel summarizes, "Daniel wastes no time getting to his theme—the sovereignty of God. . . . The captivity of 605 B.C. was not a victory for Nebuchadnezzar any more than the crucifixion was a victory for Satan. The God of creation decided that year that a new chapter would open in His personal 'world book,' so He sent Jehoiakim to defeat and Daniel to Babylon" (*Holman Old Testament Commentary: Daniel*, B&H).

Daniel showed no concern over the secular education or his Babylonian name, for he knew who he was and how God saw him. The prescribed diet, however, posed a problem: it violated God's law.

It is probable that Daniel's objection to the Babylonian food and drink was that it had been dedicated to false gods. He requested, therefore, to be excused from that prescribed diet.

Personal integrity (Dan. 1:9-10). In these verses, we see not only Daniel's integrity but also that of the chief of

the eunuchs, or officers, over Daniel and his friends (cf. vs. 3). Ashpenaz had observed that Daniel was not naturally a troublemaker, so he had developed kind feelings toward him. Even this was the sovereign working of God in his heart: "God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs" (vs. 9). His rejection of Daniel's request, therefore, was not based on personal negative feelings.

Ashpenaz revealed in his response to Daniel a loyalty to the king. There was certainly some fear involved, but he did not express any bad feelings toward Nebuchadnezzar. As a servant of the king, he could not make such decisions on his own, especially if they would be contrary to what the king had ordered! Ashpenaz had a responsibility to carry out. Although he felt kindly toward Daniel, he did not dare change the king's rules.

Ashpenaz argued that if Daniel and his friends did not eat the king's food and, as a result, did not look healthy, he would be held responsible. This could result in his death. Therefore, Daniel's request was bad for all of them.