

*The Unsearchable Riches of Christ
in the Prophets
The Book of Daniel*

Cupertino, June 2010

The Lord is ready to come with His kingdom and we must prepare ourselves for this. May the Lord open our hearts. I would like to mention three aspects from the book of Daniel that are of great importance as far as our preparation for the Lord's Second Coming is concerned. The book of Daniel was written when the people of God were captured in Babylon. Although many Jews were taken captive to Babylon at that time, the Bible speaks only of four young men, one of whom was Daniel. At the beginning of the captivity, they were probably not older than 15 years. They must have been very special, for they were the only ones mentioned by name.

Purify oneself for God

Daniel 1:8 says: *“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”* Daniel and his three friends wanted to keep themselves pure according to God’s word. To understand that, we must know the ordinances in Leviticus concerning the dietary regulations for God’s people. They determined which food defiles and which does not. At this young age, Daniel purposed to keep himself undefiled and pure for God. Do we have such a purpose in our heart? Let’s read James 1:21: *“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*

We read further: *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this:*

to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:26-27). Religion here does not mean Buddhism, Islam, etc; according to the Greek translation religion means, very generally, that someone is working for God because he is God-fearing. People do all kinds of things for God. The extremists even think they have to kill someone for God. It is frightening that someone can think God would accept such a work. Furthermore, James says that your religious works are done in vain and are useless, if you cannot even rule over your tongue and keep your heart pure.

If I do much for God, but my walk is not pure but rather defiled, God will not accept my work. God proves our heart above all. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). If I am an unclean person, then everything that I do will be unclean. If my hands have touched dirty things and I prepare food for you with them, would you eat it? The important thing is not whether we do much for God, but whether God can accept it. The question is: Do you do something so that people see it, or do you live wholly in the Lord’s presence?

James also says you should remove all uncleanness in you before you read the Scripture. And then you should receive with meekness the implanted word of life. If not, how then can the word achieve something in you? If our heart is not pure, yet we do many works for God, then we will quarrel with one another and eventually go separate ways. Although we can still speak about the teachings of the Scripture, where is its fruit? If we live in our self, then James is right when he says that such a religion will not be accepted by God, and that such religious works are useless.

Therefore in the book of Daniel, first of all, you should see that you must purify yourself. If Daniel could purify himself at such a young age, how much more we today who have the blood, the Spirit and the Word! If we are not pure and still do something for God, this will end in corruption. Outwardly it appears as if we are doing something for God, but in truth we do it for ourselves. May the Lord open our eyes and help us.

Faithful and absolute for God and His kingdom

We should be not only pure for God, but also absolute. The three friends of Daniel in chapter 3 were absolute for God. When King Nebuchadnezzar made a great image of gold, he thought only of himself. Everyone had to fall down before this image and worship it. And everyone obeyed, even the Jews who were in captivity in Babylon. Only Daniel and his

three friends did not bow down. So the king was angry and said they would be cast into the burning fiery furnace. He warned them once again and gave them the chance to save their lives. If they would worship the image, they could stay alive. But they answered him: "*O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up*" (Dan. 3:16-18). What boldness! They were absolute for God and stood firm for Him.

In chapter 6, Daniel was already over 80 years old. At this time, King Darius issued a decree that whoever petitions any god or man except the king for thirty days shall be cast into the den of lions (see v. 8). Daniel was very faithful when he was 15 years old, and how was he at the age of 85 years? Had he changed? People can change quickly. But Daniel was absolute when he was 15, and was still absolute when he was 85. How many Christians have I seen in my life who, with time, have changed concerning God's purpose. Maybe not when they were 20 or 30 years old, but when they became 40 and older, they went another way. I have even seen believers who were faithful till old age, and then changed concerning the Lord's way. Some brothers and sisters were burning for Christ and the church in the beginning yet turned away later. Some difficulties aroused and they went away. Where are they today? Peter says that we should not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us (1 Pet. 4:12). For some brothers and sisters, a little of it was already enough to change their stand. Daniel, on the contrary, only became firmer at the age of 85. Although he knew that he would be thrown into the lions' den, he still knelt down before his God and prayed in the direction of Jerusalem, as he had also done before.

How do we prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming? First: purify yourself! Do not think we are already totally pure because we are regenerated. The Bible tells us that our heart is wicked. Daniel 12:10 says: "*Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.*" The wicked here are not the Gentiles, but the wicked among God's people. Many understand only the teaching of the Scripture, but they do not know God. To know God, we must purify ourselves. To be pure and without blemish, we must be refined by fire.

A clear seeing of the church

We must be like Daniel. In verse 10 of chapter 6, we learn that he had his windows opened toward Jerusalem when he prayed. They were opened not only to God, but also toward Jerusalem – for where does God dwell? In Jerusalem! In the Old Testament, He dwelt in the earthly Jerusalem; but in the New Testament, His dwelling place is the heavenly Jerusalem. That is the church of the firstborn, as written in Hebrews 12:22-23.

Today are you someone who is absolute for God and for what He wants to have, namely, the church? This is not only the time of the Lord's Second Coming, but also the time in which the Lord restores the true testimony of His church. What then does the Lord come back for, if not for His church, for His bride, for His kingdom? Our heart must burn wholly for the Lord's testimony today. The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, from God. What does not come from God is also not the church. What is not heavenly is not the church, but only an organisation in which men are the head. God's word is very clear. He has given Christ as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). But the headship of Christ was replaced by men and so the church became a worldly organisation. There men are the head and thus a religion comes forth. Our hearts must be set on the heavenly Jerusalem today. May the Lord restore His glorious church.

For this glorious church, we must be a clear testimony for the Lord like Daniel and his friends. They were pure and absolute for God and not for themselves. Let's read Daniel 12:3: *“Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.”* And James 1:5 says: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”* What kind of wisdom is that? Not human wisdom! Men are intelligent, but their wisdom is human. We are able to do many things, can manage our house well, are successful in our profession and in school, and yet, when it concerns the things of God, we understand nothing. It is so too when we read the Bible. No one is born with heavenly wisdom. If you want to understand the heavenly things, you must ask God for wisdom. If not, you have no insight and also no clarity concerning spiritual things and cannot differentiate.

For example, some say: “All Christian groups are churches.” Let's suppose I had a quarrel with you and then I form another Christian group. Are they all churches? Maybe you argue in this way: “You read

the Bible, we also read the Bible. We even use the same hymnal. The only difference is that we meet at another place and have a different name from you.” Brothers and sisters, is that the church? Certainly not. There are so many Christian groups today – are they all churches? Are they not rather an expression of the division of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:13) and sheer human organisation?

I want you to understand something. I cannot just form a Christian group and claim it is the church. We need wisdom from above in order to know what the Lord acknowledges as His church. We also do not need to say that other groups are not the church. But for yourself, you must know what the church is. For that, you must ask God. He will give you wisdom.

Turn others to righteousness

Only through God’s wisdom can we be the wise who are a true testimony for the Lord, in order to show people the right way. We should be those who turn many to the Lord. Do you have friends, acquaintances and colleagues? Do you have schoolmates and neighbours? We must turn them all to the way of righteousness.

Do not take care of yourself only. We have the life of God, we know the truth, we know how a man can be saved, we know how one overcomes, and we know the way of righteousness and of the church. This knowledge is not only for us alone. It is for our friends and our family, for the people around us.

We still have empty seats in the meeting hall. Don’t you want to see that all the seats are occupied? Shouldn’t our friends and acquaintances come to enjoy the blessings here? We should pray for them. Not only that they will be saved, but that they will also come to the full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) and be brought into God’s house. Be one who prays for that. When we do that, then we are stars that shine forever.

So first we saw: We need the constant purification so that we are absolute for God and His kingdom. Second: Let us be perfectly clear about the way of the church and of the kingdom. Third: We should be people who can turn others to the way of righteousness. Tell the Lord: “Lord, I want to be a star who helps other people to go this way.” Only in this way will we be prepared for the Lord’s Second Coming. May the Lord help us and guide us!