

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS.

(S) **Daniel chapter 1-6.**

First. The book of Daniel teaches that Christians may participate in the government of a country. Joseph served in Egypt. Daniel and his three friends served in the Babylonian Empire and Nehemiah in the Persian Empire.

Second. The book of Daniel teaches that the uncompromising stand on principles can cause suffering. In chapter 2 and 3 it was the religious astrologers and in chapter 6 it was the jealous politicians that caused trouble for Daniel and his friends. *It was their devotion to principles that kept them apart from their contemporaries*, but also caused the hatred and jealousy of their enemies.

Third. The book of Daniel teaches that God is sovereign in all the affairs of man. According to the understanding of the time, the Babylonians and even the Jews may have thought that the Babylonian gods were superior to the gods of the conquered nations. But in chapter 1-6, Daniel emphasises *the absolute superiority of the God of the Bible*. For example, in chapter 1 says that Nebuchadnezzar did not have the decisive word in international affairs, for it was God who had delivered the exiles from Judah into his hand (2). It was God who gave his loyal followers a favourable reception in Babylon (9). And it was God who equipped them with knowledge and understanding (17).

(T) **Daniel chapter 7** teaches that the kingdom of God will come in the place of the kingdoms of the world. According to the interpretation (7:15-28), "the four beasts" *represent* four kings (17) or kingdoms (23) that will arise on earth. They will be terrifying and destructive. Especially the fourth kingdom will be absolutely frightening, because it will crush the whole earth (23). However, there will be internal dissension in that kingdom (24) and especially the last king will be a terrible tyrant. His rule will be characterised by the following four things: There will be blasphemy against the Most High God. There will be a long-drawn out persecution against God's people. He will try to change religious festivals and morality in order to subjugate the people of God. Although he will try to change the times, the sovereign God already decreed "a time, times and half a time" for him. The tyrant may expect his plan to work as "one, two three", but the sovereign God will cut it off before it is completed. God will cut off the tyrant's "four" arbitrary and decisively somewhere in the middle! The tyrant will not be allowed to accomplish his evil plan (25)! The last king, whose rule will be totally destructive, will see his dominion completely destroyed forever (26). The people of God, who pass through this trial and persecution, will finally triumph! While the vision says that the kingdom of God will be given to "one like the son of man" (7:14), the interpretation says that it will be given to "the saints of the Most High" (7:18,27). The astonishing thing is that "the saints of the Most High" are identified with "the one like the son of man"! "The explanation is that one like a son of man" is the representative of "the people of God". In the light of the New Testament revelation, "one like a son of man" is Jesus Christ. He is not called "the son of Israel", but "the son of man", and thus shows that he is the King of all the nations on earth, that he represents Christians from every nation and embraces all people who acknowledge his authority.

(S) **Daniel chapter 8** identifies the second and third kingdoms. According to the interpretation (8:15-27), the "ram" *represents* the Medo-Persian Empire, with the "two horns" *representing* the king of Media and the more dominant king Cyrus of Persia (20). The "shaggy goat" *represents* the Greek empire and the "large horn" between his eyes *represents* its first king, Alexander the Great (21). The fact that the horns of both animals break, *typifies the brittle nature of political power*, especially as the goat had his great horn broken at the height of his power (8). The continuing vision shows "four prominent horns", which *represent* four kingdoms within the Greek Empire. In the latter part of their reign, "a little horn" grows out of one of these horns, and it *represents* a tyrant king. *The description of this tyrant king can apply to more than one political leader known in the history books of the world.* He is the *symbol* of the many antichrists in history (1 Jn 2:18). He will be so proud and arrogant that he will defy God. His defiance takes the form of a sacrilegious attack on the temple, as had taken place once before under Nebuchadnezzar and was tantamount to an attack on God himself. He achieves his ends at the price of many human lives including the people of God (24). Yet he will be decisively broken and his downfall will not be the result of human scheming (25). According to the vision, the temple will remain desecrated for "2300 evenings and mornings", that is, for less than three and a half years (7:25), thus a relatively short time, after which it will be restored (13-14). However, in the interpretation, this number is not interpreted. The point of interest is not the future and dates, but the vindication of God's sovereignty by the restoration of his sanctuary. When this vision was given in the third year of Belshazzar (550/549 B.C.), the sanctuary in Jerusalem was still in ruins and hopes of return and rebuilding it could not yet be implemented. Because this vision referred to a later desecration and restoration of the sanctuary, Daniel had "to seal up this vision, for it concerned the distant future"; it had no immediate application.

(T) **Third, Daniel 9 explains God's purpose for all history.** In the first year of Darius the Mede (king Cyrus), that is, 539 B.C., Daniel understood from the Scriptures from Jeremiah 25:8-11, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last *seventy years*.

One. The explanation of the number "seven". The number *seven* has *symbolical or theological* meaning. *Seven is the number of divine perfection in creation, salvation, judgement and history.* There are seven creation days, seven lampstands around Christ, seven bowls of God's wrath and the cycle of seven days in human history.

Long before the period of the kings, Leviticus 26 (18,21,27-35,43) warned that God would punish his people seven times over for their continued disobedience and stubborn pride.

Two. The explanation of the number "seventy". The number *seventy years* primarily has *symbolical or theological* importance. Seven is the number of divine perfection and ten is the number of completeness. Seventy represents *the fixed period of God's indignation against Israel's sins.* 2 Chronicles 36:21 explained that God punished the unfaithfulness and detestable idolatrous practices of his people by carrying them into exile to Babylon until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The number was *not literally chronological*, because the period of exile was shorter than 70 years (605/587-538 B.C.). During seventy years the land of Israel enjoyed its sabbath rests, which Israel had neglected during the period of their kings (about 1050-587 B.C.). The end of this period represented *God's forgiveness and acceptance* (Isa 40:1-2).

Three. The explanation of the number "seventy sevens". The number *seventy sevens* also has *symbolical or theological* importance. In Daniel 9:24 the angel Gabriel explained that *seventy sevens* represents *the fixed period decreed by God to accomplish his purpose in divine and secular history.* The part of history that lies ahead of Daniel begins in 539 B.C. with the decree of the Persian king Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (Ezra 1:1-4) and would end when God's purpose for that part of history was accomplished. It would end when Jerusalem and the temple would again be destroyed and rebuilt. Daniel 9:24 defines this end by three negatives and three positives. The three negatives: "to end the rebellion, to do away with failures, to wipe away waywardness" are practically synonyms and refer to the ending of the sacrilege of the temple. The three positives: "to bring in lasting vindication, to seal a prophet's vision, to anoint a most sacred place" are also synonyms and refer to the reconsecration and rededication of the temple after its defilement (164 B.C.). Daniel 9:24 is a restatement of God's promises in Daniel chapter 8 (8:11-14) and Daniel chapter 10-12 (11:36).

Four. The explanation of the number "seven sevens" and "sixty two sevens". Leviticus 25:8-24 teaches that the fiftieth year after seven times seven years is the Year of Jubilee. Then the people of God *must return to their inherited land* and freedom must be proclaimed to prisoners. This "seven sevens" of years answered Daniel's prayer concerning the return to Israel from exile and the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. Although the command to rebuilt Jerusalem is given in 539 B.C., it was not until the time of Nehemiah (445 B.C.) that Jerusalem as a city was completed with a wall and "squares and a moat" amidst much opposition.

The period of 7 sevens and 62 sevens refers to *the period between the two desolations* of Jerusalem, the period during which Jerusalem was rebuilt (9:25). It is the long postexilic period from the decree of Cyrus in 539 B.C. to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple to the murder of "an anointed one" (171 B.C.).

Five. The explanation of the last "seven" (9:26-27). The period of the last seven refers to the period of unholy alliance between the opponents of God's people and *the completion of God's purpose in divine and secular history.* Daniel 9:24-27 refers in allusive terms to this unholy alliance directed against God's people and God's cause. One high priest would be put to death. Another ruler, also a high priest, would enforce an agreement on many people by means of his superior strength and finally destroy the city and the sanctuary. He would terminate the temple worship and set up an abomination in the temple. Armies like floods of water would fight wars until the end decreed by God.

The tyrant king had intended to enforce his unholy alliance on many people for a period of "one full seven". "For one half of the seven" he would carry out his defiant activities against God and God's people. But "in the middle of the seven" a crisis would erupt that would finally lead to the termination of this unholy alliance and its unholy allies. God would suddenly, unexpectedly and sovereignly cut his plan and activities short. The tyrant king would not be allowed to complete the full seven. Daniel ends with the statement that God's decreed judgement would be poured out on him. Because Daniel does not give an account of "the second half of the seven" he is saying that "the end is not yet" (cf. Mt 24:6, "the end is still to come"), that is, that *the final end of divine and secular history* has not yet arrived! Therefore Daniel 9:24-27 does not describe the very end of world-history as for example Daniel 12:1-3 does.

The fulfilment of the last seven is the following: As in Daniel chapter 8:11-14 and Daniel 11:21-36, Daniel is first of all referring to the Antiochene crisis in which king Antiochus IV of Syria made an unholy alliance with the reformist Jews in Jerusalem. Antiochus IV highhandedly replaced the high priest Onias in 174 B.C. by his brother, Jason, who enforced the godless culture and religion of the Greeks on God's people in Jerusalem. In 171 B.C. Antiochus IV replaced Jason with Menelaus, who bribed Antiochus to get into power. Menelaus bribed an assassin to "cut off" or murder Onias in

171 B.C. In the following years the treasures of the temple were looted, the temple ritual was suspended, the sacred scriptures destroyed, the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals forbidden, the food-laws abolished and circumcision discontinued. Finally in December 167 B.C. an altar was erected on the altar of the temple, dedicated to Zeus and unclean animals were sacrificed on it. This was “the setting up of the abomination that caused desolation”, that is, caused the *depopulation of the temple and its service*. Pagan altars were erected in every town and severe penalties were imposed on inhabitants who refused to bring sacrifices there. The circumcision of children, the possession of the sacred law and the refusal to eat unclean meat were capital offences. This devastation would continue to overwhelm desolate Jerusalem until “the appointed time decreed by God” to end wickedness and to restore his people, that is, until God’s divine purpose had been accomplished.

Six. The application of Daniel 9:24-27. The traditional understanding of Daniel 9:24-27 by many Jews and Christians is mistaken. They applied Daniel 9:24-27 to rather later events like the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the fall of Jerusalem, various subsequent historical events and even the still future manifesting of the Messiah.

But Daniel himself understood the events of Daniel 9:24-27 as referring to the Antiochene crisis in the second century B.C. The details of Daniel 9:24-27 fit this second century B.C. crisis and agrees with allusions to this crisis in the other chapters of the book of Daniel. The verses in Daniel 9:24-27 do not indicate that they are looking centuries or millennia beyond the period to which the context, Daniel chapters 8, 10-12, refer. They do not suggest that the cleansing and renewal of which Daniel 9:24 speaks is the cleansing and renewal of the world. It is rather the cleansing and renewal of Jerusalem and its temple. Daniel 9:24-27 refers to the Antiochene crisis.

Seven. The reapplication of Daniel 9:24-27. Yet *the allusive terminology of Daniel 9:24-27 justifies reapplication of the passage*, as is the case with previous chapters in Daniel, but only in the following sense: *Daniel 9:24-27 does not refer specifically to concrete persons and events in the way of historical narrative such as 1 Maccabees (4:42-61), but refers in terms of symbols to what those persons and events embodied, symbols such as sin, justice, an anointed prince, a flood, an abomination.* Concrete events and persons in history are understood in the light of such symbols, but the symbols transcend them! *The symbols are not limited in their reference to these particular concrete realities! The symbols have other embodiments that happen in other periods of divine and secular history as Matthew 24:15-20 and Revelation 13:11-18 prove!* What these other embodiments are is a matter of theological, not exegetical, judgement. It is a matter of faith, not of science.

If Christians on the basis of the teachings in the rest of the Bible are justified in believing that Jesus Christ is God’s anointed, and that his birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and appearing are God’s ultimate means of revealing himself and achieving his purpose in this world history, then Jesus Christ, his life and his work are also God’s *ultimate application* of what the symbols in Daniel 9:24-27 speak of! It is this point that is made in the traditional explanation of Daniel 9:24-27. Christians maintain that there is a *typological relationship* between the events and people of the Antiochene crisis and deliverance on the one hand and the events during the first coming of Jesus Christ and even the events at the final end at the second coming of Christ on the other hand!

(S) **Fourth. Daniel 10 to 12 is a vision of continued conflict right up to the end.** The book of Daniel prepares God’s people ahead of time so that their faith will not falter them when the test comes.

One. Daniel 10. This chapter reveals that behind the visible conflict on earth between the kingdoms and rulers of the world on the one hand, and God’s people in the world on the other hand, there is a vital conflict taking place on a world-wide scale in the heavenly realm. Daniel 10 reveals that the angelic beings have a part in that conflict. While during the Old Testament period, the demon “prince of the Persian kingdom” or the demon “prince of the Greek kingdom” may have had power to hinder the proclamation of the good news in their respective countries, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have been conquered and bound in the sense that they can no longer keep the nations from hearing the gospel!

Two. Daniel 11. The political rulers of the world cannot agree and so they fight among themselves. Their successes are followed by their defeats. In Daniel 11, this principle is *illustrated* by the wars between the southern kingdom of Egypt and the northern kingdom of Syria during the third and second centuries B.C. Between them, they had a monopoly of political and military power. But the main message of this chapter is that the people of God will suffer as a result of the political and military setbacks of ambitious world rulers. The people of God will experience suffering and will be threatened with extinction.

The primary reference in this chapter is to the confrontation between a ruthless tyrant, who is identified as Antiochus IV, who tried to impose the Greek worship and lifestyle throughout his empire, and the struggling people of God. This tyrant was going to have his way and was going to impose his will. He was trying to wipe out the people of God. It was what the apostle Paul later described in Ephesians 6:12, a struggle against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The final message of Daniel 11 is that, however powerful the rulers of the earth may be, “they will stumble and fall, to be seen no more” (11:19)!

Three. Daniel 12. In Daniel 12:9-10, the book of Daniel ends with the mysterious words that right up to the end of history, the wicked people will continue to do wicked things, but nevertheless there will be many who will be purified and refined. Because by the end of Daniel's book, the kingdom of God had "not yet" been ushered in, the words of Daniel are closed up and sealed until "the time of the end". Like all the prophets of the Old Testament, Daniel only saw the future as mountains in the far distance, without being able to see the distance that separated one range from another. Therefore, the words "the time of the end" in the book of Daniel refers to both the first coming of Jesus Christ when he *inaugurated the kingdom* and the second coming of Jesus Christ when he *completed the kingdom*.

The book of Daniel closes with the very encouraging message that everyone's name that is written in God's book, will be delivered (Rev 20:15)! After the one resurrection from the dead and one final judgement, God's people will forever shine like stars (12:1-3).

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Every day have a quiet time from one chapter of the following Minor Prophets: Joel 2:28-32, Amos 5, Jonah 1, Micah 5, Haggai 2, Zechariah 14 and Malachi 3.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".