

Lesson 10

GOD'S VIEW OF HISTORY

Reading Daniel 2

God does not look at history in the same way as we do. What men think of as a mighty empire may be as nothing in His sight. On the other hand, a quiet humble man ignored by his fellows may be very important in God's eyes.

The Bible is God's history book, and the Jews are His people. God's plan of salvation is centred on the Jews, though it extends to all nations. It is not surprising, then that history in the Bible is chiefly concerned with the Jews.

Here is a brief look at some of the men in the Bible narrative.

ADAM was the first man. God made him very good; but he disobeyed God. From that time to this, all men have disobeyed God in one way or another (Genesis 1 and 3). And all men have died.

NOAH was born over one thousand years after Adam. In his days, men had grown so wicked that God sent a flood and destroyed them all, except for Noah and his family. Noah believed God and obeyed Him (Genesis 6).

ABRAHAM is called in the Bible 'the friend of God'. God told him to leave his home at Ur, and go to live in Canaan, and Abraham obeyed Him. God made him special promises (Genesis 12).

ISAAC was Abraham's son, born by a miracle when Abraham and his wife were too old to have children (Genesis 21).

JACOB was Isaac's son. God changed his name to Israel, meaning 'prince with God'. Jacob had twelve sons.

JOSEPH was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. His brothers were jealous of him, and sold him into Egypt as a slave. He had many trials, but God blessed him, and he became second ruler in Egypt.

Later, all Jacob's family joined Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 46). Many years later, when they had become a nation of people they became slaves to the Egyptians.

MOSES was born to Jewish parents, but brought up by Pharaoh's daughter. God used him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and bring them to the land of Canaan, which He had promised them. God gave the people wise laws, but they disobeyed, and even turned to idol-worship.

IDOLS

An idol is anything which is worshipped instead of the true God. Men have worshipped many things - the sun, trees, carvings, stones, statues and many others. They are all **false** gods and they cannot help, think or act.

After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness where most of the older people died for their lack of trust, they came to the land God had promised them.

JOSHUA led the people into the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

Judges rule the people

For about 400 years, the Jews in their land were ruled by Judges, but God was their King. Time and again they disobeyed His laws, and He punished them by sending surrounding

nations to fight them. When they were in trouble, the people turned back to God, and he delivered them by one of the Judges.

The people want a King

Instead of living happily in obedience to God, the Jews asked for a king. They did not want God. They wanted a king they could see, like the other nations.

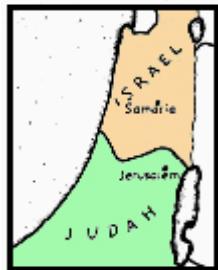
SAUL was the first king. He did not please God, but was disobedient.

The second king, DAVID, is called in the Bible, a 'man after God's own heart'. He was given special promises, to be fulfilled by the Lord Jesus (2 Samuel 7).

David was followed on the throne by his son, SOLOMON, but Israel was still the Kingdom of God, as you will read in 1 Chronicles 29:23:

"Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king..."

A divided kingdom



After Solomon, the Kingdom was divided. The northern part was called Israel, and the southern part, Judah.

The people of Israel, in the north, grew so wicked that God brought the Assyrians against them. They were taken into captivity, and never came back to their own land.

The southern kingdom, Judah, was not much better. They were taken captive into Babylon. From that time, they had no king. They returned to their own land, Israel, after 70 years.

The New Testament

At last, about 400 years after the close of the Old Testament, God sent His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus, and the beginning of the Christian church.

Most of his countrymen, the Jews, rejected Jesus. Then God sent His offer of life through Jesus to people of all nations; we read how the first Christians travelled far and wide preaching about this new way of life. That preaching is still being carried on today.

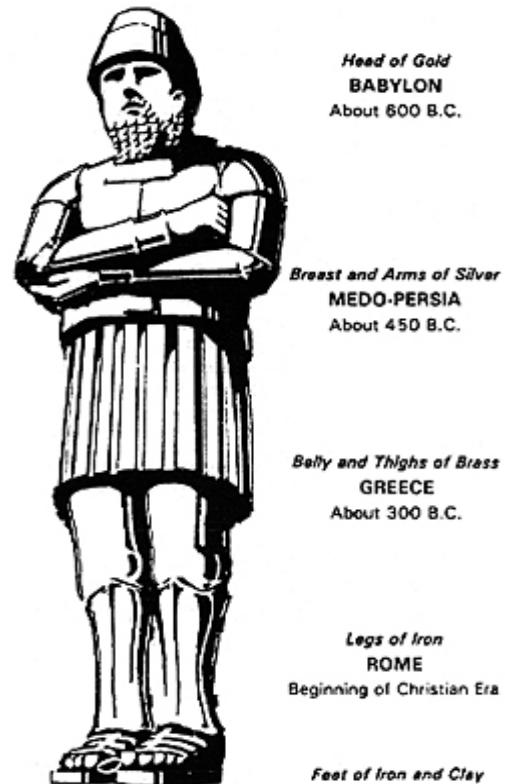
A Vision of World Empires

Before you study this section study the picture which follows carefully. This vision spans the history of the world from the time of Babylon, right down to our own day and into the future. It shows how God both knows and controls the states, countries and nations and gives an indication of when the Kingdom of God will come.

Do you remember how the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon? Among those taken was a young prince called DANIEL.

One night NEBUCHADNEZZAR, the king of Babylon, had a very strange dream. This dream had been sent by God, and God showed Daniel its meaning.

The king saw a great image, something like the one in the picture. The image represented four great empires, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires, all of which would flourish for a time, one after the other, and then pass away. This all happened and we can read of the world empires



in history books.

The gold head of the image represented the kingdom of Babylon, which was very rich. The chest of the image was made of silver and represented the Medo-Persian empire. Then came the stomach and thighs of brass, which represented the Greek empire.

Finally the Roman empire came to dominate the world. It was represented by the legs of iron - iron because it was a very hard and cruel empire, and also very strong. The Roman empire spread further than any other and gave the world laws that are the basis for many laws today. It was during the Roman empire that the Lord Jesus was born and it was Roman soldiers who crucified him. A few hundred years later the Roman empire broke up and there has never since been a world empire to dominate the known world.

For 1 500 years it has been the time of the feet of the image - a mixture of iron and clay, strong nations and weak nations. That is how it is today.

Then, in the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a small stone, "cut out of the mountain without hands". The stone hit the image on its feet, and smashed it to powder. Then it grew into a large mountain, which filled the earth.

The stone "cut out without hands" stood for Jesus, who had no human father. When he comes back to the earth, he will completely destroy the kingdoms of men, and set up God's Kingdom, which will cover the whole earth.

Today we are living in the time of the iron and clay - a time of divisions. Some nations are strong and many are weak, and they can agree on very little. They are divided and separate - just as bits of iron will not fuse or mix with clay. Soon Jesus will come back. He will destroy the kingdoms of men, and set up God's Kingdom, which will fill the whole earth.

So much of what was told in Nebuchadnezzar's dream has come to pass; we can be quite sure that the last part will also be fulfilled. Notice that this Kingdom to come will be here on earth.

Summary

1. The Old Testament tells us about the history of God's chosen people - the Jews.
2. The New Testament is about Jesus, and it tells how the Gospel was preached to people of all nations after the resurrection of Jesus.
3. In both the Old and New Testaments we read about Christ coming back to earth to set up the Kingdom of God.
4. The Prophecy of Daniel 2 shows how four great empires were to follow each other in world history. We live in the time of the 'toes', and we are waiting for the Lord Jesus (represented by the stone) to come again.

Chapters to read

There are a lot of chapters mentioned in this lesson. Try to read them all: they will help your understanding. Then read Acts 7.

A verse to learn

Daniel 2:44

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."