

# When all the lights go out - Daniel 1 (2)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 December 2010

Preacher: Ian Hamilton

[ 0 : 00 ] with you here this morning as it was last evening. I trust as we sit together under the ministry of the Word of God that the Lord will bless us and instruct us and that he will do us much good that we might in all our ways acknowledge him so that he will then direct our paths.

Well, please turn with me in your Bibles to these verses in the book of Daniel. Which I read a little time ago in our service this morning. As I mentioned last evening, the book of Daniel has two intersecting or intertwining themes running throughout the book.

The first of these is the magisterial sovereignty of God over nations, over kings and over individuals. The book of Daniel has God the Lord as the great subject of the book.

It's not Daniel who is the great subject of the book of Daniel. It is Daniel's God. And in particular it is the remarkable, unabridged sovereignty of God as he pursues his purposes and as he seeks to bring to pass his wise and holy counsel for his church and for his world.

This is the great message of the book of Daniel. But intersecting that knowledge and intertwining with it there is the secondary theme of the faithfulness of God's servant Daniel.

[ 1 : 44 ] Daniel comes to Babylon at the tender age of 14 years. This is the age at which the Babylonians would train up young men. And Daniel as a young lad comes to Babylon uprooted from his own land, from family and friends.

And we see in the book of Daniel what it means to be faithful to God. What it means to be faithful to God in a godless world.

It was costly for Daniel to stand for truth and for righteousness. But he was a young man who had resolved in his heart to put truth before consequences.

And so in the book of Daniel we are given a glorious picture of a young man and then an old man who stands unbowed before a godless world continuing faithfully to serve his God in the face of potential great costs even when his life is on the line.

Daniel resolves to go where the truth of God will lead him. And of course in that respect Daniel is a human type of the faithful man Jesus Christ.

[ 3 : 09 ] We are not told in scripture that Daniel is a type of Christ but very manifestly he is a type of Christ. Actually nowhere in the book of Daniel is there any reference or any hint of Daniel sinning.

Not that he didn't sin but there is no evidence in the book that he did sin. And that simply I think is a further indication to us that we are intended to see Daniel as an earthly type of the faithful man of God our saviour Jesus Christ.

So let me remind you of the context of the book of Daniel. It's the year 605 BC. Babylon has just vanquished Egypt at the great battle of Carchemish near the Nile.

Egypt has been vanquished and a new superpower now rules throughout that part of the ancient world. The superpower of Babylon under the headship of Nebuchadnezzar.

And Nebuchadnezzar comes and in the first of three deportations he uproots the cream of Israelite nobility and carries them off into exile in Babylon.

[ 4 : 33 ] There will be two further waves of exile in 595 and again in 587 BC. And so at the tender age of 14 years or thereabouts it seems Daniel finds himself uprooted from everything he's ever known.

Taken away from family and friends and situation and contacts. Away from the land where God had met with his people and blessed his people.

And he's taken off and planted replanted in a land full of idolatry and paganism.

And the book of Daniel answers in part this question. What are believers to do when the bottom drops out of their world?

What are believers to do when all the lights go out? I don't know personally what it's like for all my lights to go out. But the 50th chapter of Isaiah tells us that there are times in the experience of the people of God corporately and individually when all the lights go out.

[ 5 : 56 ] What are we to do when we are to walk in the darkness and have no light? I remember a friend of mine a very fine godly Christian man and preacher of the gospel telling me that at one time in his life he envied the lampposts of Glasgow because they had light.

There was a time in his life when darkness just seemed to envelop him. It must have been something like that in the time of Daniel. All the lights have gone out.

Where is God in all that is going on? The people of God vanquished carried off into exile and the book of Daniel in part answers the question what are believers to do when all their lights go out? Well I want to look at these eight verses with you this morning and to do so under three headings. Let me tell you what they are. First of all the chapter begins with a solemn introduction. Secondly the chapter continues with a sinister experiment. And then thirdly the chapter concentrates on a resolute believer.

[ 7 : 17 ] A solemn introduction a sinister experiment and a resolute believer. First of all look at the second verse the chapter begins with a solemn introduction and the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

It's not the might of Babylon that has overwhelmed and vanquished Israel. It is the Lord who gave Babylon the authority and the power to do this.

It is the Lord himself who is behind the vanquishing of his people. It is the Lord who has initiated this tragedy this crisis.

It is the Lord who has brought down upon his people this darkness that has caused all the lights to go out. The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Now the question that naturally arises is this why did the Lord do this? Why did the Lord go to such an extremity and bring such tragedy and devastation upon his ancient people?

[ 8 : 42 ] Why would he do this? Well actually what the Lord is doing here is simply fulfilling a promise that he had made over 800 years before in the days of Moses.

You may remember how in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 28 you have this great scene where on Mount Ebal God promises curses if his people disobey him and on Mount horizon God promises blessings if his people obey him and as God sets before his people blessings and cursings as they're about to enter the land of promise he makes this promise he says if you persist in your disobedience if you continue in your wickedness if you resolve to be wayward and to turn your back upon me and my goodness and my love and my covenant mercies if you persist the day will come when I will cast you into exile when sin will visit you when judgment will come upon you for 800 years

Israel had lived lightly and loosely to the word of God the people thought God would never go to such lengths he would never go that far would he but he did the day came it took a long time in the coming but the day came when judgment was visited on the people of God God is here fulfilling his promise he is slow to anger but do not think that he will not execute his righteous anger God would rather show mercy we are not told anywhere in scripture I think that God loves to execute judgment we are told he loves to display mercy I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that they turn from their evil ways and live why will you die

O house of Israel all the day long we are told God holds out his arms all the day long beckoning us calling us pleading with us to come to him he is slow to anger but the day came when God visited his promised judgment on his people do you remember these words in the first letter of Peter it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God and if it begins with us what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God God loves his church too much to allow it to simply drift heedlessly throughout the ages

God loves his church and so he comes periodically to his church to humble it to refine it to bring it low that he might then lift it high there are people who say today where is the promise of this judgment you Christians speak about and that your Bible talks about where is this judgment that is to come remember how it is put in the second letter of Peter where is the promise of his coming you Christians are always on about the coming of the Lord the coming of the Lord where is this coming and you remember how Peter responds the day of the Lord will come a thousand years is as a day and a day is as a thousand years but bank on this the day of the Lord will come is there anyone here this morning who is living in the vain hope that God will not ultimately execute righteous

judgment these visitations of God and his word not least here in the days of Daniel are testimonies to us to take

[13:28] God seriously for God takes himself seriously God takes sin seriously that's what he's saying to his people here don't trifle with me don't trample on my commandments don't treat me as if I were a nothing and a nobody I take sin seriously and of course where we see God taking sin most seriously is not here in the exile to Babylon nor even in the deluge in the days of Noah nor even in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah where we see God taking sin most seriously is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ there God visited on his son the holy righteous wrath that was ours there God poured out in his son the hell that our sin deserved

God executed in his beloved son as our substitute the judgment that we righteously before God deserved and that's why as we look forward to that day of the Lord when he will come to execute final irreversible judgment we need to be sure that we have hidden ourselves in Jesus Christ that we have taken shelter in the Christ who loved us and who gave himself for us that we might not be among those who on that day will call on the rocks to fall upon us hide us from the wrath of God and of the Lamb they will vainly cry my friends there is only one refuge there is only one refuge from the wrath that is to come and that refuge is in the broken body and in the poured out blood of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the sins of his people he is the cleft rock that we must run to and find refuge and shelter in and so the chapter begins with a solemn introduction God is not slow to bring visitations upon his people and those visitations should humble us we live in days that are sad and confusing we live in days when once strong churches are decimated do we stop and think is this perhaps the finger of God expressing his displeasure ought we not to humble ourselves and cry to the Lord in the 20 years

I served in the church of Scotland thankful to God for his kindness to me in those years it always struck me that as we saw decline after decline after decline year after year after year in the church of Scotland the answer would be let's have a new plan let's devise a new strategy we never said let's humble ourselves before almighty God and call upon the Lord in wrath to remember mercy but then secondly as we hurry on notice we see here a sinister experiment verses 3 through 7 the cream of the Israelite nobility and of the royal family are taken off youths without blemish of good appearance skillful in wisdom knowledge understanding etc and the king assigns for them the food that he himself eats and the wine that he himself drinks and for three years they were to be educated according to the ways of the

Babylonians the Chaldeans and then their names were to be changed Daniel Hananiah Mishael and Azariah all had names that included either the generic name God the Lord the sovereign Lord Elohim El meaning God or Yah Yahweh the covenant Lord but those names were to be obliterated and they were to be given new names Belteshazzar Meshach Abednego and Shadrach names that included the names of foreign deities pagan idols now do you see what's going on here there is a not so subtle indoctrination going on it's a sinister experiment they're seeking to expunge all that was past and remove from their minds and their emotions and their very lies every remnant and vestige of the life that they had once lived and I think we can see three facets here we see the world the flesh and the devil we see it in terms of the world and that they were to be schooled in the arts and the sciences of the

[19:12] Chaldeans in the pagan learning of the world that then was their learning their education was to be an education where God was excluded and they were to be imbibing the knowledge of a godless fallen pagan world but there was the flesh as well the king surreptitiously I would think gives them the very same food that he is to eat it's a great privilege to be eating at the king's table and eating the same food and drinking the same wine as the king and how your head can be turned and your flesh can drink in the privileges my I must be somebody look how well I'm being treated and our flesh becomes pampered heart and then there is the devil the world of flesh and the devil and I think we can see that in the change of the names you see behind it all

Satan is seeking to destroy the church of Jesus Christ in this world this is not simply a little local difficulty this is a cosmic battle that is going on and Satan is seeking to destroy the very knowledge of the living God in the world that's how it always is remember how when our Lord Jesus Christ embarked in his public ministry what was the first great reality he encountered after his baptism Satan comes to him in the wilderness and Satan tempts him what effrontery to tempt the Son of God in our flesh and Satan comes and he appeals to the humanity of Christ takes him up and shows him all the kingdoms of the world all these I will give you he will bow down and worship me if

the

Son of God was not immune from the temptation to abandon God then don't think for one moment that you or I are immune from such a temptation I'll give you all of this Satan loves to allure our senses he does it with Adam and Eve in the garden the tree looked good and pleasant and desirable for food but God has said thou shalt not but Satan comes and he appeals to our senses how are we to resist this pressure from the world to conform to its ways remember what Paul says in Romans 12 do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind but how does that work out well think of our Lord Jesus Christ how did he repulse the evil one when he was tempted remember he does it in three related ways

Satan comes and tempts him and Jesus says it is written and Satan comes again and again the Lord Jesus Christ says it is written and Satan comes a third time to Christ and a third time the Lord takes the rock of Holy Scripture and hurls it at Satan and says it is written now what is interesting in those three it is written that our Lord quotes from significant chapters in the book of Deuteronomy he wasn't carrying a Bible with him but he had hidden God's word in his heart that he might not sin against him God armors our hearts as we drink in his word your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you I've often said to my own children you know read the scriptures meditate on the scriptures feed upon the scriptures because you never know when you will need them and at the right time the

Lord was able to pluck appropriate verses from the book of Deuteronomy that were just right to repulse the temptations of Satan we live in a world you young people here this morning you know better than I but I've got four children we live in a world that is seeking moment by moment to seduce you away from the worship of the living God in Jesus Christ you're bombarded by the media by the advertising world and it's all saying eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you die people are judged by the labels they wear and the places they go to and the whole the whole experiment seeks to capture your mind and sin can appear so attractive and it is but for a season for a season do you know the words I don't often quote Robert

[ 24 : 59 ] Burns in Tam O'Shanter pleasures are like poppies spread you seize the flower the bloom is shed or like the snow falls in the river a moment white then melts forever or like the borealis race that flits there you can point its place sin has a great allure but I tell you my young friend sin will damn you sin will kill you sin will cast you into hell and all the while it will be saying come and taste my wares I've got much to give you just as the fruit and the tree in the garden looks so good and it did look good sin can look very good but the question you need to ask is this not does it look good but is it good it's the same when you're looking for a wife or a husband a good thing to do but you need to be asking ah she looks good but is she good or yes he looks very fine but is he fine you know that great incident in the life of Joseph he's been carried off into captivity himself his brothers have abandoned him given him up for dead finds himself in Egypt you would think people would be saying Joseph make the best of it

Potiphar's wife comes and seeks to seduce Joseph and you think the temptation would be Joseph what have you got to lose what have you got to lose your family has abandoned you your God has abandoned you isn't it remarkable that Joseph says how could I do such a thing and sin against God when the world the flesh and the devil come to conspire to draw you away from Christ or to turn you away from seeking Christ and to say you know this salvation thing it's a waste of time the great thing is to stop and to think I would be turning away from the living God from the God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son who would be so foolish but sin twists the mind who in their right mind would refuse

Jesus Christ as he's offered in the gospel who in their right mind but sin distempers the mind corrupts the mind and so the Lord Jesus armoured himself with the word of God time's really gone but notice just thirdly we see not only a solemn introduction a sinister experiment we see a resolute believer but Daniel purposed in his heart Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's foot now the issue here is not that he would be transgressing the Levitical food laws but probably this food of the king had been offered up to idols and Daniel is saying I'd rather be a vegetarian than eat all this rich food that has been consecrated to non entities that defy my God I would rather live on a diet of pulse than eat the rich fare of the king Daniel's 14 he's 14 many of you 14 he's 14 and he says as it were to the dictator of a world superpower I'm resolved I've purposed in my heart to defy your idols not to simply embrace this food that has been offered to them how do you get to be like that how do you get to be the kind of young man young woman old

man old woman that resolves or purposes in their heart to choose the hard way rather than the easy way to choose the narrow way rather than the broad way to choose the way that will be sore to the flesh rather than the way that would pamphlet flesh how do you get to be like that well we're told at the end of the book of

Daniel almost it is the people who know their God who shall be strong and do exploits there's no secret you see it wasn't that Daniel was some kind of superhuman young man he knew his God you see in this Daniel was exemplifying the savior Jesus Christ in John 17 25 Jesus says I know you father how did the Lord Jesus Christ become so resolved in the face of such suffering to give himself a sacrifice for sin he knew his father he loved his father and when you know God you know that he is good and wise and right and just and holy and loving and you can entrust yourself to him knowing that it's better to have

[ 30 : 55 ] God in the wilderness than be embraced by the world at the table of a king in the council of eternity the Lord Jesus resolved purposed in his heart that he would choose the way of his father at his incarnation in the womb of the virgin Mary he was embracing the holy will of his father to suffer and to die in his baptism he was pledging himself resolving purposing in his heart to pursue the way that the father had committed to him and even on the cross even on the cross even as he cried my God my God why have you forsaken me he was still saying my God my God that's why the writer to the Philippians Paul said he was obedient unto death

Daniel resolved in his heart young lads young girls here this morning older ones too are you resolved in your heart are you purposing in your heart come what may to be faithful to Christ he was faithful to us even unto the death of a cross he endured the cross despising its shame that we might enter into life that we might know the forgiveness and the pardon of God when Satan comes and seeks to allure you away and says have you got better things to do on a Sunday you got better things to do prayer meeting night goodness me and you say no I've got nothing better to do for what could be better what could be better than blessing the God of my salvation what do believers do when all the lights go out well they do

Isaiah 50 verse 10 says let him who walks in the darkness and who has no light yet trust in his God for he is good he spared not his only son but gave him up for us all what a God is this majestic and holiness awesome and glory doing wonders what kind of a God is this he's the God who so loved the world that he was willing to give up even unto the cross his only begotten son may God bless to us his word to his glory and to our good let us pray thank you Om embar