

Daniel

1. Purpose in one's heart

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A. AN UNIQUENESS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Book of Daniel is one of the most intriguing books, not easy to understand due to prophecies. With Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation, you can completely submerge yourself into the end times prophecies – Eschatology.

It is doubtful that any Old Testament prophet played a more significant role in the history of Israel than Daniel. He was taken out of his home country Judah at his young age – probably not much older than 15 years of age, was made to be an eunuch by his captors. The Babylonians not only tried to erase his past, but also they wanted him to be one of them as pagans. But Daniel shined himself as God's chosen with uncompromising heart toward his God. That is why God used him to enlighten us about the future with this great Book.

B. THE AUTHORSHIP & TIMELINE

Who wrote the book of Daniel? Daniel himself. He mostly speaks in the third person except for chapter 8:1, 9:2, 9:20 and 10:2, where he speaks in the "I, Daniel" form. It was customary for ancient writers to speak in the third person even when writing about themselves.

Even though the Book of Daniel was written around 536 B.C., the authorship and dating of the Book of Daniel has been challenged by many liberal Bible critics. They doubt its date because the Book contains many detailed prophecies that they can't believe it could have possibly been written that long ago, hundreds of years before some of its most precise prophecies.

Some liberals have suggested that it was written at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, around 170 B.C. The problem with that idea is that the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was written around 300 B.C. – before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and it contains the Book of Daniel in Greek.

I don't see anywhere in the Book of Daniel that shows the physical strength of Daniel. Even though he was not a battle-scarred hero, he doesn't need to take the second place for less courage. Throughout the entire Bible, I see no other character who cannot be found with any fault other than Daniel – of course exception of Jesus. From start to the end, Daniel kept his integrity and his heart for God.

C. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

We can divide the Book of Daniel in two parts:

The first six chapters are containing Daniel's biography and putting a main emphasis on Daniel the prophet who interprets the king's dreams. The second six chapters contain prophetic section an angel interprets Daniel's dreams for future.

Daniel is to the OT what the Book of Revelation is to the NT. In fact, we cannot fully understand one without the other. Prophetically, Daniel deals with "the times of the Gentiles," that period of time that began in 606 B.C. with the captivity of Jerusalem

and will end when Christ returns to earth to judge the Gentile nations and establish His kingdom.

As the Book of Daniel was written for Gentile with the end times prophecy, the Book of Revelation was written for the Jews.

D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Daniel 1:1-7 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god. 3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, 4 young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. 6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Beltshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

When the Pharaoh of Egypt invaded Babylon, the young prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Charchemish. Then he pursued the fleeing Egyptian army all the way down to the Sinai. Along the way (or on the way back), he subdued Jerusalem, who had been loyal to the Pharaoh of Egypt in 605 B.C.

The invaders did whatever pleased them. They took between 8,000 to 15,000 people out of Judah to their country for various reasons. The main reason for deportation is for slavery.

But there was a small number of very gifted and who could be of value to king Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. The king selected those and started to brain-wash them with their own pagan culture, custom and even changing their names. This would be like after raising our kids according to God's Word and sending them to the ultimate liberal university "Berkeley" where they have co-ed dormitories and shower rooms. But because Daniel was well grounded in the Word of God since he was a young child, he could sustain himself in this highly hostile and contagious environment.

We might say what is a big deal about eating the food from the king's table. You can bet that they were great foods: thick slices of prime T-bone steaks, buttered lobster, juicy porkchops, well seasoned games and the list goes on.

All meals served at the king's table were feasts, and among the heathen feasts were feasts in honor of their gods. To share in such a feast was the equivalent of honoring such an idol, admitting his claims and existence, and practically denying the one true God.

It was bad enough for the Babylonians to take these boys away from their parents, now they are trying to erase all of their identities. Those are not the only things they took away from them. According to Jewish historian Josephus, the Babylonians even make them eunuchs, which explains why Daniel never married. They took away families, homeland, religious background and manhood. They put them in a whole new lifestyle that was sensual to the core.

To top all of them, they were trying to remove their spiritual heritage from their names:

Daniel: God is my judge → Belteshazzar: Bel (their main god's name)'s prince.

Hananiah: Beloved by the Lord → Shadrach: Illuminated by sun-god.

Mishael: Who is as God → Meshach: Who is like Venus.

Azariah: The Lord is my help → Abed-nego: Servant of nego.

E. DARE TO BE A DANIEL

Daniel 1:8-16 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. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. 10 And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king." 11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants." 14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. 16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

I think that it is so important for everyone of us to establish in our hearts this kind of commitment and purpose that we will not defile our bodies and hearts for anything that the world offers.

Undoubtedly, Nebuchadnezzar wanted to communicate to these young men, "look to me for everything." But Daniel and his friends refused, insisting to look to God. In the same way, satan wants to indoctrinate us into the world system. He wants us to feed on what the world offers, to identify ourselves according to the world, and to educate ourselves in the ways of the world.

Integrity, it is the word we don't hear very often nowadays. In light of the upcoming election for the Senate and Congress, we know that somehow the word, "integrity" and the Washington politicians are standing opposite sides. The lies flow from the Capital Hill to the Supreme Court and the Federal Courts, all the way down to local governments. They are the ones who are supposed to uphold the word, "Integrity" and practice in their given professions, but they don't.

In the private chamber of his heart, young man Daniel set up a wall-like decision that he would not compromise. How could these young teenagers take such a

strong stand? Because their hearts were firmly grounded in the Word of God and chose to please God more than men including the king who could kill them with a flick of his thumb.

Let's put this into our lives: So we are learning the Word of God here in the church. But true tests come, when we step outside of the church. The people in the world will entice us with good packaged baits, they will only ask for our very small compromises, they will tell us that we are living in a lonely, boring and rigid world, and they will tell us that we can have so much fun and fulfilling life if you just loosen up a little. Please remember, temptation without an opportunity is like a bee without a sting. The choice to sin does not come from others except our own decision.

Having made his decision, Daniel made a wise approach with tactfulness to his superior. Do you think that God would have kill Daniel if he ate the king's food? I don't think so. But God honored Daniel's and his friends' decision to keep themselves pure and brought Daniel's enemy to come in peace.

Prov. 16:7 When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

God will never abandon us when we stand for Him. Daniel entrusted himself to God, and God came through – though it was no doubt a stretching experience for Daniel and his friends.

F. HEAD AND SHOULDER ABOVE

Daniel 1:17-21 As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. 21 Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

Yes, it was a happy ending for now. Not every time we stand for God, God would make everything cherry the way we want. Sometimes the situation can go from bad to worse, or simply to worst.

We who are parents and grandparents need to prepare our children for the occasions that the world and our enemy satan bring by both teaching them God's truth and modeling integrity.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Inner conviction for God can overcome any outer pressure to compromise.

The power of God is on our side when we obey Him.

2) God honoring convictions yield God-given rewards.

The situation may not change the way we want after we refuse to defile our faith in God, but we know that God is pleased with us.