

01. The Book of Daniel—1:1-21

(3/15/17)

The Book of Daniel is one of the most remarkable books, written by one of the most remarkable men in the Bible.

The author, Daniel, is remarkable because of his commitment to God and the character of his life.

He is only one of two main characters in the Bible of which no evil is spoken of—the other one being Joseph in the Book of Genesis (excluding of course the Lord Jesus Christ).

Daniel was such a man of integrity, and walked so closely with God that when his enemies tried to find some wrongdoing they could use against him, we read in chapter 6 verse 4:

“So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.”

He was such a godly man who walked with God with such unwavering loyalty that God Himself puts him in the same company with Noah and Job (Ezekiel 14:12–14).

Daniel grew up during the revival that took place in Judah under the leadership of King Josiah.

He and his three friends Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were all taken to Babylon in the first deportation which took place in 606 B.C.

Daniel and his friends were around 16 when they were taken to Babylon—where Daniel spent the next 70 to 80 years (which means he lived to see the entire captivity).

He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Ezekiel—in fact he was something of a legend in his own time (Ezekiel mentions him three times in his book).

There are four words that characterize Daniel’s life—purpose, prayer, purity and prophecy.

1. Purpose—*he purposed in his heart to walk with God and be faithful to Him no matter what.*
2. Prayer—*he was a man of prayer, who continued to pray even when it threatened his life.*
3. Purity—*he stayed pure to his God even in a polluted environment like Babylon.*
4. Prophecy—*God revealed to Daniel some of the most incredible and specific prophecies in the Bible.*

In fact, with regard to prophecy, the prophecies in the Book of Daniel are so incredibly precise and detailed that critics have long tried to say that the book is a forgery written by someone claiming to be Daniel after the fact (around 170 B.C.—400 years after Daniel lived!).

The main reason that critics deny that Daniel wrote this book is because—they don’t believe in prophecy!

Many critics of the Bible adhere to the philosophy of materialism and as such—they don’t believe in the spiritual or supernatural.

And so based on their belief system, the Book of Daniel can't be prophetic (because that's supernatural and the supernatural doesn't exist)—therefore it must have been written by an imposter *after* these events took place!

But that is ridiculous for a number of reasons—

1. The Septuagint, (the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek around 280 B.C.)—contains the Book of Daniel.

2. Jesus quoted from the Book of Daniel as recorded in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 and said that Daniel wrote it and called him a prophet—

“Therefore, when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet...”
(Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14).

3. Ezekiel mentions Daniel three times in his book (Ezekiel 14:4, 20 and 28:3)—and as we said Ezekiel and Daniel lived at the same time (the sixth century B.C.).

The Book of Daniel divides itself right down the middle—the first 6 chapters are historical, and the last 6 chapters contain visions and prophecy.

The key verse in the Book of Daniel is chapter 2:44—

Daniel 2:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

The theme of the Book of Daniel is how the (righteous) Kingdom of God will someday replace the (corrupt) kingdoms of this world—even as we see in Revelation 11:

Revelation 11:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

As we study this book you're going to see that Daniel's life personifies the adage, "*Blossom wherever God plants you.*"

This concept that, "*I just can't grow and flourish in my walk with God when my circumstances and surroundings are so negative and worldly*"—isn't something Daniel ascribed to.

Daniel was a man who purposed in his heart (1:8) that he would not defile himself with the pleasures of Babylon (the world) but would remain faithful to his God no matter what.

As we read and study this book may we accept the challenge the Holy Spirit has placed in it for all of us who are the people of God—"*Dare to be a Daniel!*"

Chapter 1

Daniel 1:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ 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.

This should not have come as a surprise to anyone living in the southern kingdom of Judah at that time.

God had sent prophets to them for decades warning them that if they didn't repent of their idolatry, immorality and injustice toward the poor—He was going send the Babylonians against them as an instrument of His judgment.

In fact, as far back as a century before the fall of Jerusalem, the Prophet Isaiah had proclaimed this message (Isa. 13; 21; and 39), and Micah, his contemporary, also shouted this warning—

Micah 4:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, Like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, You shall dwell in the field, And to Babylon you shall go...

The Prophet Habakkuk couldn't understand why the LORD would use the godless Babylonians to judge His own people—as God said to him:

Habakkuk 1:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ "Look among the nations and watch-- Be utterly astounded! For *I will* work a work in your days *Which* you would not believe, though it were told *you*. ⁶ For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans (Babylonians), A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places *that are* not theirs.

Jeremiah spent most of his ministry weeping over this coming judgment, as he tried to reason with the people of Judah to repent and turn back to the Lord quickly while there was still time.

One example of God's warning to the people thru Jeremiah is found in Jer.20:4-5—

Jeremiah 20:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ For thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall see *it*. I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon and slay them with the sword. ⁵ Moreover I will deliver all the wealth of this city, all its produce, and all its precious things; all the treasures of the kings of Judah I will give into the hand of their enemies, who will plunder them, seize them, and carry them to Babylon.

As one author said,

“God would rather have His people living in shameful captivity in a pagan land than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing His name.”

Now, before we go on in Daniel—let’s fill in some of the history that leads up to the opening verses of chapter one.

As I said earlier, Daniel grew up during the reign of one of Judah’s best kings—godly King Josiah.

And even though Josiah tried to lead the nation back to God by refurbishing the Temple and restoring public worship—his efforts were too little, too late—the people were too far gone.

During the time of Josiah’s reign, the Assyrian Empire was declining in strength while the Babylonian Empire was gaining in strength.

This led the Assyrians to make an alliance with the Egyptians whose king at that time was Pharaoh Neco.

We read in 2Kings 23:29 that the Egyptian army was on its way to fight alongside the Assyrians against the Babylonians which brought them thru the land of Israel—and for some strange reason Josiah decides to go against the Egyptians.

We pick up the story in 2Chron. 35—

2 Chronicles 35:20-24 (NKJV)

²⁰ After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him. ²¹ But he sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? *I have not come* against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make

haste. Refrain *from meddling with* God, who *is* with me, lest He destroy you." ²² Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo. ²³ And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am severely wounded." ²⁴ His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in *one of* the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

After the death of Josiah his son Jehoahaz reigned in his place—

2 Chronicles 36:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. ² Jehoahaz *was* twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. ³ Now the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ⁴ Then the king of Egypt made *Jehoahaz's* brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him off to Egypt.

And now here's where the history of Israel, as recorded in 2Chronicles 36, intersects with the history of Israel as recorded in Daniel chapter one—

2 Chronicles 36:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ Jehoiakim *was* twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God. ⁶ Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze *fetters* to carry him off to Babylon. ⁷ Nebuchadnezzar also carried off *some* of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

The year was 606 B.C. and this was the first deportation as Nebuchadnezzar not only took articles of gold from the Temple back to Babylon—but also King Jehoiakim, Daniel, his three friends and thousands of others as well.

Jehoiakim was then replaced by his son Jehoiachin—but he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

And so in 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar once again besieged Jerusalem.

He didn't destroy the city at that time—but the king, his mother, and all the vessels of the house of the Lord were taken away to Babylon, along with an even larger group of captives.

This was the second deportation which included the prophet Ezekiel (see 2 Kings 24:6–16).

At that time Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah, the uncle of Jehoiachin, as king—but he also wound up rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar.

By this time Nebuchadnezzar had had enough and he came against Jerusalem with great fury—

2 Chronicles 36:15-20 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And the LORD God of their fathers sent *warnings* to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending *them*, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till *there was* no remedy. ¹⁷ Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave *them* all into his hand. ¹⁸ And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all *these* he took to Babylon. ¹⁹ Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. ²⁰ And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia...

Nebuchadnezzar left only a small remnant of the poorest of the land as vinedressers and farmers—this was the third and final deportation that took place in 586 B.C.

But going back to the first time Nebuchadnezzar came against the land in 606—

Daniel 1:2 (NKJV)

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.

History shows that this was a common practice of Nebuchadnezzar—to take articles from the temples of the nations that he had conquered to put into the temple of his god.

This was his way of saying that his gods were more powerful than the gods of the nations he had conquered—that they were now subservient to his gods (and to him).

Daniel 1:3 (NKJV)

³ Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs...

For years critics of the Book of Daniel claimed the book was a forgery and historically untrustworthy because history never records anyone by the name of Ashpenaz in the history of Babylon.

And therefore they wrote him off as, “*Just another fictional character in this fantasy book called the book of Daniel.*”

However, during the latter part of the twentieth century, the name *Ashpenaz* was found on the monuments of ancient Babylon, which are now in the Berlin Museum—it says, “*Ashpenaz, master of eunuchs in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.*”

Daniel 1:3-4 (NKJV)

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.*

The Babylonians made it their practice to take the best looking, the brightest and most gifted young men from the nations they conquered to put into a training program where they would serve the king as wise men and advisors.

By taking the cream of the crop, Babylon was always guaranteed to have the best of the best in leadership.

Of course for these young men to be loyal to the king—they needed to be thoroughly assimilated into Babylonian culture.

To accomplish this the Babylonians focused their indoctrination on three key areas of conditioning—

1. Mental conditioning—v.3-4

They wanted them to think differently so they taught them the language and literature of the Chaldeans—in other words, the ways of the world.

Colossians 2:6-8 (NLT)

⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. ⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

This, by the way, is what secular schools (especially colleges) endeavor to do with our young people.

The Bible admonishes us not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (thru the Word of God).

2. Social conditioning—v.5

Daniel 1:5 (NKJV)

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.

As Christians, the only One we are to be dependent on and completely loyal to is God Almighty.

By giving these young trainees everything in life they needed to live—it was conditioning them to be dependent upon and therefore loyal to the state.

This is what many in our own country want—to replace God with government.

Cultural indoctrination was key to assimilating these young men into Babylonian culture by changing the way they dressed, the food they ate, the language they spoke and the customs they were taught to embrace.

3. Religious conditioning—v.6-7

Religious conditioning is probably the most powerful way to assimilate a foreigner into a culture.

If you can condition someone from a foreign land to embrace the gods of the culture you're trying to assimilate them into—they will be loyal to that new culture for life.

The Romans did this with the people they conquered—they didn't care what gods you worshipped as long as you acknowledged Caesar as lord first. (Explain)

The Babylonians understood this and so right off the bat they gave all of these young men new names—names that contained the name of one of their Babylonian deities.

In this way, every time someone spoke their name they would be forced to identify themselves with that god and in time it would become part of them.

Daniel 1:6-7 (NKJV)

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* Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

1. The name **Daniel** (*God is my judge*) was changed to **Belteshazzar**—“*Bel’s prince*” or “*Bel protect his life*”.
2. The name **Hananiah** (*the LORD is gracious*) was changed to **Shadrach**—“*May Rach (the sun god) illuminate or brighten*”.
3. The name **Mishael** (*Who is like God*) was changed to **Meshach**—“*Who is like Aku?*” (*the moon god*).
4. The name **Azariah** (*The LORD is my help*) was changed to **Abed-Nego**—“*Servant of Nebo (Nego—the fire god)*”.

Daniel 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ 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.

Once again, this is the first of four things that characterized Daniel’s life—he *purposed in his heart* that he would not defile himself...

The heart is the seat of conviction—so living a life of purity and commitment has to start in the heart.

All Christians *believe* that purity is good—but very few today have made it a *conviction* of their heart.

A belief is something rooted in your mind (thinking)—a conviction is something that's rooted in your heart—which is stronger than a simple belief you *think* is good.

Daniel understood that living for God is not something that's going to happen by accident—you have to live for God on purpose.

One of the keys to Daniel's success was that he didn't look at his walk with God as a matter of locality (like some do when they go to church).

It didn't matter to Daniel if he was in Jerusalem or 700 miles away in Babylon—he purposed he would honor God with his life—no matter what, no matter where.

Daniel 1:9-16 (NKJV)

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.

The meat had been sacrificed to the gods of the Babylonians—therefore it would have defiled them to eat it.

In the law God didn't forbid drinking wine—unless Daniel and his friends had entered into a Nazarite vow for a time. (Explain)

It could be that all of this food had been dedicated to the gods—which was why Daniel and his buddy's refused to eat it.

Daniel 1:17-21 (NKJV)

¹⁷ 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.