Daniel: Perspectives And Patterns For The Future

Daniel 1:1-6

Introduction

Someone once told me, “God has no point of view. God only has points to view.”
The God of the Bible is a God who sees all, completely, sovereignly, in minute detail.
The opening verses of Daniel focus on the conquest of Jerusalem; a King’s command; and the
selection of some choice candidates for the King’s service.

There will be lessons here for each of us. Just so you know: I will not predict when the rapture
will take place; simply that it will take place. I believe the coming of Jesus is imminent; that
means the coming of Jesus is the next event on the prophetic calendar. There is a great
imbalance among the students of prophecy; some seem committed to exploiting people’s
emotions; resources, setting dates; or buying guns, gold and groceries instead of living godly
lives in dedicated service to Jesus Christ.

The book of Daniel is deeply rooted in history and prophecy. The book can be broadly broken
down into two categories; the personal history of Daniel (chapters 1-6); and the prophecies of
Daniel (chapters 7-12). Someone once wisely said; “He who learns nothing from the past will be
punished by the future”. A contemporary historian of the first rank Paul Johnson wrote; “The
study of history is a powerful antidote to contemporary arrogance. It is humbling to discover
how many of our glib assumptions, which seem to us novel and plausible, have been tested
before, not once but many times and in innumerable guises; and discovered to be, at great human
cost, wholly false.”

The book of Daniel also presents two outstanding perspectives; concerning faithfulness and the
future; the perspective of man and the perspective of God. From God’s perspective, all of
human history, from beginning to end, can be broadly broken down into the events leading up to
the Messiah; the life and ministry of the Messiah; and the return of the Messiah. If I were to
further break up human history; it would be God’s dealings with the Jewish people, and God’s
dealings with the Gentile nations.

It might come as a shock to you, but God’s primary concern in human history is not the rise and
fall of nations and kingdoms; but rather the rise and fall of nations as it pertains to the coming of
King, Jesus. All nations are judged by their willings to submit and obey God; or their
unwillingness to submit and obey God.

Nothing is more important than Jesus, and our response to Jesus. Because so much of Daniel
deals with Biblical history and prophecy we will devote much time to both subjects. However it
is history and prophecy rooted and grounded in the glorious fact of Jesus Christ. In the end Jesus
is the “The Golden Key” which unlocks the book; the first coming of Jesus and the second
coming of Jesus Christ (See Prophetic Diamonds from Daniel; by W.G. Heslop; p.7).
If you love Jesus, you will love the book of Daniel. Jesus is the great stone that comes from heaven and smashes the kingdoms of this world; and establishes His own Kingdom. Jesus is the Ancient of Days and the fourth man in the fiery furnace. Jesus is the one who shuts the mouths of lions (Chapter 6) and it is His finger that directs the writing of the wall (Chapter 5). Much of Daniel was written for the future; but Daniel’s future has become our past; and yet there is still much prophecy left unfulfilled.

Jesus told his own disciples in John 14:29; “And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that, when it comes to pass, you might believe”.

Prophecy has long been one of the outstanding proofs that the Bible is true. Daniel is to the Old Testament what Revelation is to the New Testament. Prophetically Daniel deals with what the Bible calls the “the times of the Gentiles”. “The Times of the Gentiles” is that period of time when Jerusalem is politically subject to the rule of Gentiles; it began with Nebuchadnezzar; and some scholars suggest it will continue until the coming of the Messiah. Other expressions are also used in the Scriptures; the fulness of the Gentiles; and the fulness of the times.

*Luke 21:24; And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

This might come as a shock to you; but Daniel probably knew less about the future than you do right at this moment. Daniel certainly knew about the rise of the Gentile kingdoms to power; the rebuilding of Jerusalem; the coming and death of the Messiah; the great tribulation and the millennial kingdom. The first three have already occurred; the final two are yet to come.

The book of Daniel for the non-christian has a very special message; God knows all of human history down to the last details. For the non-Christian, God knows all of human history down to the last details; and Jesus will rule and reign in power and glory, and majesty soon!

What about the critics who say the book of Daniel is a late forgery; designed to get people to believe in a God of their own imagination? Jesus settles the issue once and for all;

*Matthew 24:15; Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand).*

**A Subjugated City (vv.1-2)**

*Daniel 1:1; In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.*

Daniel was taken into captivity about 605 B.C.; about the same time Habakkuk wrote his prophecy. Although Daniel was a prophet; his primary job was as a government official, an
Daniel: Perspectives And Patterns For The Future
Daniel 1:1-6

administrator. The third year of Jehoiakim extended to the month of Tishri 605 B.C. There is some reason to believe that Daniel’s captivity even predates the fall of Jerusalem; since Jeremiah 46:2 dates the event to the 4th year of Jehoiakim’s reign.

Scholars place the sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar shortly after his victory of Carchemish (Egypt) in the early summer of 605. Daniel’s service extended into the third year of Cyrus (fall of 539); at least 69 years after Daniel is taken captive; he remains a committed and true minister. Jehoiakem began his rule in the fall of 609 B.C. following the three month rule of Jehoahaz; who immediately succeeded Josiah when he was killed by Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo (July of 609 B.C.).

Many Gentile rulers had attempted to capture Jerusalem; but none had succeeded until Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar means “Nebo protects” or “Prince of Nebo”. Nebo was a major deity in the Babylonian pantheon of gods. Nebo was seen as the prince of the gods and the god of fire. The name Nebuchadnezzar means prince and Lord of Nebo. No placing the children in fiery furnace takes on a whole new meaning.

“Babylon and Jerusalem represent the two cities to which men and women belong. They symbolize the two loyalties of which Scripture speaks in many different word pictures: two gates, two ways, two masters. As such, Babylon and Jerusalem are permanently opposed to one another” (see Sinclair B.Ferguson; The Communicator’s Commentary; Daniel; p.30).

Daniel 1:2; 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.

Jehoiakim means “The Lord will set up” that is establish. The Lord will certainly establish both a cross and a crown for God’s Messiah. The land of Shinar is Babel (Gen.10:10).

The treasure house was the place where the treasure was stored. The articles in the Temple, owned by God; would have been seen as an affront; the gods of Babylon had overthrown the God of Judea.

The destruction of the city did not catch God unaware. Had God forgotten his people? Had he forgotten His promises to them in their greatest hour of need? In the reign of Hezekiah the Lord had already prophesied “Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,” says the Lord. “And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (Isa.39:6-7).
The Scripture certainly contains prophecy, and that prophecy is understood in the ultimate plans of God. God’s ultimate end in allowing the destruction of Jerusalem wasn’t limited to God’s judgment, but also included His mercy. Babylon was the place that God would reveal to a selfish King a dream about humanity’s future; but it would also be the place where Daniel would receive visions, and exercise faithfulness in the most wicked, and godless society. Daniel would do what escapes so much of us; he would live faithful in a faithless society. Paul would repeat the principle in the New Testament when he said from prison; “I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel” (Phil. 1:12).

A Sovereigns’ Command (vv.3-5)

Daniel 1:3; Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the kings descendants and some of the nobles,

Daniel was apparently of royal descent. The son of a king or a prince; he has now reduced to slavery. Sin enslaves. Sin by its very definition and application is enslavement.

Daniel 1:4; 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 kings palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.

The king wanted only the cream of the crop. You would think they were auditioning for some reality TV show; they had to be young (almost certainly teen-agers), no physical defects; good looking; outstanding intelligence, superior learning abilities; including the ability to learn new languages.

Make no mistake, the King is looking to take the creme of Judah’s leadership, and transform them into men who will think, talk, act, walk, look like a Babylonian. The goal--total--complete socialization, transformation; dare I say it? Complete indoctrination. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream wasn’t to simply subjugate all peoples; but to use them in his own plans.

The point was to transform and create a whole new generation with a Babylonian world view. Sin certainly is not restrained by wealth, intelligence, or education. Some of my best wealthy, intelligent and educated friends are among the vilest of sinners. Every Bureau Agent knows that intelligence coupled with evil is a formidable enemy.

Daniel 1:5; And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the kings 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.

The young were given a full scholarships to BIT (Babylon Institute of Technology); where they would learn all the advanced technologies, including Akkadian agriculture; architecture,
astrology, astronomy, law, mathematics, and of course language. The vast ancient libraries were stored in Babylon; every legend, every omen, that had come out of man’s ancient past. It was here that people learned how to calculate eclipses and watch the stages of the moon; here careful watch was made on heavenly constellations.

These young men didn’t simply eat in the school cafeteria; they ate from the King’s table.

We are not talking about “Hot Pockets and Top Ramen”.

Leupold: “All meals served at the king’s table were feasts, and among the heathen feasts were feasts in honor of the gods. ...To share in such a feast was the equivalent of honoring such an idol, admitting his claims and existence, and so practically denying the one true God” (see Exposition of Daniel; p.66).

The food and drink were meant to undermine their convictions, and get them to deny the God of the Bible. **There is a certain demonic wisdom; the leaders of Babylon were committed to replacing the boys deeply held Jewish values for Babylonian values.**

The boys were taken from everything they once knew; they were separated from their families and their families’ influence; they were separated from the Temple, and perhaps had limited access to the Sacred Writings or the Torah. Perhaps all they had was what they memorized as children. The historian Josephus suggests that the Babylonians made them eunuchs, which may or may not be true; but if it is true; it might be a reasonable explanation why Daniel never married.

The king of Babylon used several different tactics in order to break the will and transform the children of Judea. Isolation; cut them off from the spiritual influences that remain in their life; cut them off from friends who share their views about God and the Bible. Cut them off from the teaching of the Word of God and isolate them from public worship. Cut them off from whatever memory that had of Jerusalem. Indoctrinate; brainwash; certainly there is value in learning a foreign language, foreign customs, foreign thoughts and foreign traditions; and compromise--eat food offered to idols. Again we struggle with the concept; repeated in the New Testament.

Easy living verses hard living; discipline verses undiscipline; the good life or the hard life--focus on the Lord or enjoyment; I mean what’s wrong with a few guilty pleasures? The change was meant to get Daniel to think of himself; as a modern sophisticated Babylonian; not some country Judean bumpkin.

It is interesting, Daniel does not relate any apologetic being offered for the polytheistic world view; or Babylonian cosmology, or the intellectual arguments against faith and trust in the Old Testament documents. The attack was far more subtle; isolate, indoctrinate--compromise.
Our antidote to isolation, indoctrination and compromise --fellowship; teaching the word of God; commitment to godliness and trust in Christ. The final step in this unholy--systematic shift in world-view; change their names. Anything that reminds them of their origin and destiny; that will somehow link them back to their sacred past; and their commitment to the God of the Bible.

As they heard their new names day after day; it would be easy for them to think of themselves as Babylonians first and Jews second. What could be a better illustration of a tried and true principle; the way you think about God; the way you think about the Bible; the way you think about yourself; the way you think about the world in which you live; will determine how you live with God; with others and with this world.

It is still true. The secret of living for God faithfully today; lies in the way we think! Do not be conformed to this world; be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom.12:1-2). True worship of God begins here--in the mind; we do not live in a Marxist or totalitarian state.

But there is enormous pressure--to look like this world, to think like this world, to believe like this world. Perhaps there has never been a generation of Christians so likely to reject a Biblical Worldview and accept unbiblical worldview.

A Servant’s Captivity (v.6)

Daniel 1:6; Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Who will be Chaldea’s next “Babylonian Idol”? 
One of the children chosen for deportation was Daniel.

In the next verse; verse seven; the Babylonian process of indoctrination was to be completed.
The young men are stripped of their Hebrew names and given new names, new identities that are consistent with Babylon’s gods and cultures. Imagine middle schoolers, fourteen or fifteen years old; removed from their families, forced to take graduate level courses in a strange university in a foreign language; inundated with pagan world views and philosophies; they don’t get to go home, they aren’t allowed spring break or summer vacation.

Daniel, along with his friends; once royalty now slaves. Sin makes paupers out princes but grace and mercy, and God’s forgiveness will transform the have-nots into the “haves”. Daniel will be challenged on every turn, to reject Jewish roots and embrace the Babylonian world view. How will he keep his conscience clean? How will he avoid compromise?

In the polluted courts of a corrupt society, how will he maintain integrity?
Daniel: Perspectives And Patterns For The Future
Daniel 1:1-6

Daniel and the others will purpose in their hearts to remain pure; even in a world filled with impurity. In the end Daniel will be honored by the God of Heaven and the kings of the earth.

There are lessons even names. The name Daniel means “the Lord is my Judge” or “the judge of God”. Daniel knew that his very name meant “representative on earth”. Daniel was going to be God’s voice; once of God’s choice representatives. His name reminds us that we are judged by God; the final word, the final authority, cannot be the whims and wants of people. His name is changed to “Belteshazzar” (Prince of Bel); but the change in name never changed his heart or his life.

Nebuchadnezzar was making a vain attempt to wipe out the name of God; and the remembrance of Jehovah. Not once does God, or the Holy Spirit, or the Angels or prophet himself use that name. The name was supposed to be an honorable title; but instead was one more attempt by Satan to distance the children of Judea from their Lord and God. Hananiah means “Beloved of Jehovah; Mishael means who is like God; and Azariah means “Jehovah is my help”.

ZION, Ill. - A school bus driver and amateur artist from the Chicago suburb of Zion has legally changed his name to "In God We Trust."
A Lake County circuit court judge approved Steve Kreuscher's (CROY'-shirz) name change petition on Friday. The 57-year-old's first name was changed to "In God," while his last name was changed to "We Trust."

There is a sermon in every name; God is my judge (not man); the grace of God is more than sufficient for every need and any or every emergency; holiness is Godlikeness or godliness. Help is near, ever near, when God is at hand. In times of testing, in times of trial, in days of darkness and distress, in sorrow or sickness, God is a very present help.

Daniel cannot help the fact he is a captive. Daniel cannot help the fact that the Babylonians will attempt to change his name. Daniel could not change the circumstances of himself or his companions; but he could control his thoughts, his words, his dreams, and in the very simple issue of diet; he could refuse what he would and would not eat.

Daniel was determined to be true to God; no matter the cost, no matter the consequence. Where Adam and Eve failed in eating the forbidden fruit; Daniel’s war to retain his identity with the God of the Bible; was what would and wouldn’t enter his own temple.

But that’s for next week.