



DARE TO BE A DANIEL:
TIMELY STUDIES FROM THE LIFE OF GOD'S SERVANT

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DARE TO BE A DANIEL

(1) Daniel's Integrity

Sermon text: Daniel 1:1-23.

Background readings: Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (cf., Rom. 9:4); Deuteronomy. 29; 2 Kings 17:7-13.

INTRODUCTION:

You likely know the children's chorus, "Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone, Dare to have a purpose firm, Dare to make it known". It sums up well the man at the heart of the book and the author of much of it (7:2; 8:1; 9:2; 10:2). Daniel embodies the courage of God's faithful in the C6BC.

[Apply:](#) How we need more Daniels today! Too many of us walk out our lives looking for the path of least resistance. To true Daniels God's honor takes priority over our comfort. .

CONTEXT:

We find God's people at rock bottom. Consider them ~

A. Historically:

The people of Israel were the most blessed people on earth. They were God's people, but only because they had been chosen and loved (Deut. 7:6b-8). He had given them an unique privileges (cf. Rom. 9:1-4).

[Apply:](#) As the new Israel we, too, are loved and lavished (cf., *ordo salutis*: unconditional election, effectual calling, regeneration, union with Christ, justification, sanctification, adoption, faith, repentance, assurance, perseverance, and, to come, glorification).

B. Spiritually:

For all Israel's blessings, the golden age of the reigns of David and Solomon is long past. The rot set in early ~ the demand for a king (Samuel); the conduct of David and Solomon (wives, horses); the division of the Kingdom (under Rehoboam); the exile of the northern kingdom in C8 (2 Kgs 17:7-13). God's people had received the curses of the broken covenant (Deut 28-29).

[Apply:](#) Although the new Israel lives under the new covenant, with our curses for unfaithfulness having fallen on our Lord, we err if we think that God no longer chastens his people. Our faithful God calls us to be faithful.

C. Politically:

Now the southern kingdom of Judah, failing to learn from Israel's exile, is also exiled. Jehoiakim, enthroned in 609BC, did not halt the idolatry and immorality. God has now raised up Nebuchadnezzar II (reigned 605-562BC) as his instrument to chasten his people, and thus the people of Judah in 586 are exiled by Babylon (1:1-2). We may ask why God allowed the vessels of the temple to be captured. Likely two reasons: (i) The capture symbolized the dishonour the people had brought on God; (ii) The people had worshiped the vessels rather than God.

[Apply:](#) When God's people backslide, they don't necessarily become pagans, but they replace true worship with the mere trappings of Christianity. We call this pseudo-Christianity *Churchianity*.

Yet, no matter how corrupt the professing church becomes, God always sustains a remnant of faithful believers. Doubtless, some remained in Judah, but we are now introduced to four in exile ~ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The book focuses on Daniel.

Notice:

1. WHAT DANIEL REALIZED (1: 3-4):

Daniel (and his friends), estimated to be about 14 years old, having been uprooted to a pagan world 1000+km away from Jerusalem, now has to figure out how he is to remain faithful to God. Perhaps it would have been easier, spiritually, had Nebuchadnezzar taken the stance of Pharaoh and enslaved the Jews. Instead, he seeks to so integrate them into Babylonian culture that they lose their sense of identity as God's people. To this end, the king focuses on the *creme de la creme*, but Daniel remains alert.

A. Daniel realized his privilege (v. 3-4a):

Daniel likely took for granted in Judah his upbringing in the higher echelons of Jewish society, but now he receives special treatment and is to be brought into the king's civil service. His Jewish privilege becomes his lifesaver. Yet, whereas his peers, facing hardship, would be on their guard, Daniel faces the spiritual danger of being lulled to sleep by Nebuchadnezzar's perks.

[Apply:](#) Satan still uses such tactics to make us drowsy. The danger is greatest not when we are oppressed by the world, but when we are favored (cf., the impact of the fall of the iron curtain on the believers in Eastern Europe). We

stay awake by recalling our standing not with earthly powers but with God. We are his kingdom. That's our greatest privilege!

B. Daniel realized his responsibility (vv. 4b):

Although of impressionable age, Daniel and his friends must not allow their privileges to dull them to their responsibilities of faithfulness to God amid their training in Chaldean language and literature. They must learn and read with discernment. How? By applying what they had learned from the Scriptures in Judah.

[Apply:](#) What importance this places on the solid biblical education of our youth at home and in church. We cannot shelter our covenant children forever from what the world offers, but we can train them to discern truth from error.

2. WHAT DANIEL RESOLVED (1:5-8a):

Daniel has his head on! He resolved not to be swayed by the new culture (v. 8a). This would not have been easy, for the King sought to change:

A. Their diet (v. 5a, 8):

Nebuchadnezzar appeals to their appetites. The food was likely not so much of an improvement on the noble food to which they were accustomed, but they would eat the same as the king, and so much better than the other Jewish exiles. By thinking their to their noble food, the young lads would think there was not much difference between Judah and Babylon. Daniel could have agreed to the food, for there was no law against it, but he saw that it would "defile" him: (i) It had been offered to idols; (ii) The eating of it would lead him to drop his guard.

[Apply:](#) We are reminded that true Daniels avoid not only what is sinful but what implies guilt by association. Cf., Hebrews 12:1.

B. Their learning (v. 5b):

The cost of their feasting would be indoctrination into a Babylonian way of thinking. The reprogramming would take three years. Certainly, they needed the Chaldean language to get by, but they would need to resist not so much the Chaldean literature as the influence of it.

[Apply:](#) It is important that we not only biblically educate our youth, but that we stretch them in that knowledge. Says Paul Washer in effect, "We are busy teaching our children how to colour Noah's Ark while schhols are teaching

then the theory of evolution." Invest in the youth, then, but do so in a robust kingdom way.

C. Their identities (vv. 6-7):

True to their roots in God's covenant with Israel, these four lads had names bespeaking God and his attributes. Daniel means "The Judge" (a reference to the justice of God); Hananiah means "one who has obtained the mercy of God"; Mishael means "What is required or demanded by God"; and Azariah means "The help of God". Yet, Ashpenaz starts the re-education by renaming them: (i) To remove the lads' consciousness of the one true God; (ii) To evade the Babylonians being stirred by their birth names.

[Apply:](#) We are reminded to be on the alert to the world's attempt to eradicate our identities in Christ!

3. WHAT DANIEL RECEIVED (1:8b-21):

Since God had repeatedly revealed his will for his people to be separate from the world, he comes through for these young lads. Specifically, he grants Daniel and his friends four supports:

First support: Favour (vv. 8b-9):

In his wisdom, Daniel does not push through his will, but courageously seeks the eunuch's permission to abstain from the king's food. God plants in the chief eunuch sympathy for Daniel and courage to answer. The Psalmist celebrates this, Ps. 106:40-46.

[Apply:](#) Too often we compromise with the world out of fear that God will not provide for the stand we take; that he will leave us hanging out to dry. Yet, the more we trust in God's covenant with us the more we shall overcome such fear.

Second support: Wisdom (vv. 10-13):

The chief eunuch, although favourable, sees a problem: the king will find out (vv. 10-11)! So what is Daniel to do? Feeding off his God-given wisdom 91:4), he comes up with a solution. It is rooted in the belief that God will not let his servants down (vv. 12-13).

[Apply:](#) We cannot wage spiritual battle without stepping forth in faith. Faith is our shield (Eph. 6). It is needed not to retreat but to proceed. Could it be, then, a lack of faith which causes us to play things safe? Compromising to get by.

Third support: Vindication (vv. 14-16):

Ashpenaz goes along with David's solution, but only God could enable the test to work. The test works:

(i) Physically: Ten days later, the young men were fatter and healthier looking.

(ii) Spiritually: They lost out on the kings' feast, but they resisted being sucked into Nebuchadnezzar's world. They know to whom they belong.

Apply: The lesson here is that in evading the battles of our day we also miss out on the victories.

Fourth support: Honour (vv. 17-21):

Now that they have withstood the test, these young men are usable in God's hands. Notice what God does:

(i) He piles wisdom on wisdom for what is to come (v. 17): Thus, after three years, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah outstripped the magicians and enchanters in "every matter of wisdom and understanding" (v. 20).

(ii) He places Daniel in the King's palace (v. 21): Daniel will remain there despite regime change for the next 70 years. God will use him to witness to the rulers and to safeguard his people.

Apply: When we are faithful in the smaller battles we become usable in the bigger and more protracted battles.

CONCLUSION:

We are living in uncertain times. If we are to see kingdom advances in Malacca, we'll need to be people of integrity, too. How so?

A. By realizing we are nobility: Be self-conscious! We're children of the king!

B. By instruction in God's word: Be prepared to wield the sword of truth.

C. By trust in God's faithfulness: Be assured, God will never let us down.

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## DARE TO BE A DANIEL

### (2) Daniel's Rarity

**Sermon text:** Daniel 2:1-49.

**Background reading:** Matthew 2:1-11; Number 12:6; Hebrews 11:6.

#### INTRODUCTION:

Clearly, not all who profess God to be their God are the same. Some believers are true, some are false; some are young, some are old; and some are backslidden and some are on fire for the Lord. This suggests that among God's people the likes of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are a rarity. Later, this becomes apparent where, repeatedly, Daniel is described as a man "greatly loved" by God (10:11, 19).

[Apply:](#) Daniel's life calls us to inquire about our own. Have we settled for being converts or are maturing into disciples; and, if so, are we ready to stand firm and to stand out for God?

#### CONTEXT:

Having introduced us to himself and his friends, Daniel now turns our attention to King Nebuchadnezzar. Notice four details:

##### ***A. The Spirit of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1):***

The second year of the king's reign likely refers to the second year after the three years of Daniel's training (in other words, the fourth year since the exiles arrived in Babylon). Now, their spiritual learning and skills are to be tested, for Nebuchadnezzar has been left sleepless by troubling dreams. We are not told the dreams, but we know, generally, that man without God is very insecure, and, specifically, that brutal kings forever look over their shoulders. Thus, for all Nebuchadnezzar's power he cannot do this simple thing of falling asleep.

[Apply:](#) It is worth remembering the insecurity of tyrants. Cf. The insecurity of Herod the Great in (Matt. 2:1f.).

##### ***B. The summons of Nebuchadnezzar (2:2-6):***

At a loss as to his dream, Nebuchadnezzar calls for all his aids (v. 2). Telling them his trouble, they respond with great self-confidence (v. 4). Clearly irked, the king, distrusting his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, Chaldeans, does two things (vv. 5-6):

(i) *He ups the challenge:* He doesn't tell them the dream. Either because, in his troubled spirit he cannot recall it, or to test the trustworthiness of his aids.  
(ii) *He ups the stakes:* If these aids cannot produce the dream and interpretation then they are dead men. But if they can, there will be rewards galore!

[Apply:](#) Tyrants are insecure precisely because they operate above the law, facilitating injustice in limitless amounts. Yet, they know there is a reckoning to come.

##### ***B. The servants of Nebuchadnezzar (2:7-11):***

Nebuchadnezzar's advisors have no access to his dream. Accordingly, he accuses them of:

(i) *Playing for time* (vv. 7-8).

(ii) *Preparing to tell him "lying and corrupt words"* (v. 9b). Desperate, the king's aids plead that no one on earth or in the heavens can meet his demands (vv. 10-11).

[Apply:](#) The dialogue is a tribute to the limitations of man. Left to himself, there are things he cannot explain (why the world began, the universality of sin and death, etc.). Yet, man's desperation becomes God's opportunity.

##### ***C. The sentence of Nebuchadnezzar (2:12-13):***

The king takes his advisors at their word, and follows through on his threat. He commands the destruction of all the wise men of Babylon, including the newest Jewish recruits. Yet, no killing will resolve the King's trouble.

[Apply:](#) We are reminded that tyrannical power is not only lustful but irrational. Recall this amid the irrationalities of our own day.

Against such odds, what can Daniel do? His rarity is seen in his combination of three actions in the face of danger.

##### **1. DANIEL SOUGHT GOD (2:14-23):**

Everyone seeks God when their lives are threatened. Even ardent atheists do. When, however, Daniel sought God it was the natural response to the spiritual flow of his life (1:4). We see this also in the Psalmists' cries for help against their enemies. The maturity of their cries did not come overnight. In Daniel's case, we can discern how he sought God:

##### ***A. Daniel sought God implicitly (vv. 14-16):***

Daniel stands before Arioch, Captain of the Guard, expecting to be killed at any

moment. What prayers he must have shot up to God! From God he receives:

*(i) Wisdom to win Arioch over to a conversation (vv. 14-15):* It is a sign of Daniel's wisdom and favour that Arioch hears Daniel out rather than killing him on the spot. Says John Calvin, "God bent and tamed the prefect."

*(ii) Courage to go and see the king (v. 16):* How brave, given the king's decree that he and all the other wise men be torn limb from limb. Yet, he lives! We don't know why the king granted Daniel the time he withheld from his aids. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar recalled Daniel's examination (1:20), or observed Daniel's confidence in God.

[Apply:](#) If we have never, on account of being Christian, had to shoot prayers up to God, then we have likely been hidden away too much. We have merged in with the world.

### ***B. Daniel sought God explicitly (vv. 17-23):***

Having got a reprieve from the king, Daniel now sets about seeking God openly. He did so ~

*(i) Communally (v. 17):* Joint prayer is the best communion of saints!

*(ii) Earnestly (vv. 18-19):* Their lives and those of all the wise men hung on receiving God's revelation. Back in the days of Moses, God had promised to make himself known in visions (Num. 12:6). They went to bed without an answer, but God, who is never late, revealed the interpretation in the night.

*(iii) Gratefully (vv. 20-23):* Daniel's gratitude is twofold. He blesses God, for his name (v. 20), his power (v. 21), and his grace (v. 22); and thanks God for answered prayer (v. 23).

[Apply:](#) How God rewards those who put their trust in him! Cf. Heb. 11:6.

## **2. DANIEL SPOKE FOR GOD (2:24-45):**

Daniel emulates God's mercy. He heads first to Arioch to prevent the killing, asking for an audience with Nebuchadnezzar. Arioch obliges in haste, for his life is also on the line. Despite Daniel's appearance before the king the day before, Arioch stresses to the king that it was he who had found Daniel (v. 25). Regardless, Daniel can now witness to the king:

### ***A. Daniel witnesses to God's wisdom:***

Daniel keenly points away from himself to the king's only hope, the God of heaven (vv. 26-28). Daniel was but the conduit through whom the revelation came, not its source (vv. 29-30). As such, Daniel not only passes along the revelation, but urges the king to exchange his life of folly for the life of the wise.

[Apply:](#) In their desperation, people will look to us, but we glorify God when we point them beyond the immediacy of their troubles to new life in God.

### ***B. Daniel witnesses to God's perspective (vv. 31-45):***

Daniel now reveals ~

*(i) The dream (vv. 31-35):* An image of God, silver, bronze, and iron reduced to chaff by "a stone cut out by no human hand" and blown away. The stone became a great mountain and filled the earth.

*(ii) The interpretation (vv. 36-45):* The gold head is Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 6-8); the silver chest and arms are the Medo-Persian empire; the bronze middle and thighs is the Greek empire; and the iron feet the Roman empire. But from God will come a fourth kingdom (vv. 40-45). This is the great mountain which shall fill the whole earth.

[Apply:](#) How many have trusted in their own kingdoms since Nebuchadnezzar! Man's folly is seen in that, apart from God's grace, he never learns (recall, for example, Hitler's repetition of Napoleon's folly in invading Russia).

## **3. DANIEL SERVED GOD (2:46-49):**

Note how the chapter ends, v. 49. How did his fortunes so turnabout? Consider:

### ***A. Nebuchadnezzar's response (v. 46):***

We witness here the beginnings of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion. He remains an idolater, but two things happen:

*(i) His heart begins to soften.* Despite the bad news, he does not kill Daniel.

*(ii) He realizes that Daniel has wisdom from God of which he knows nothing.* Unready to bow to Daniel's God, Nebuchadnezzar pays homage to Daniel instead, offering up incense to him.

[Apply:](#) Let's be reasonable in our expectations. People may show respect for God's Word and his servants before they finally bow before God. Let's not crush moves toward God, however modest they be initially.

### ***B. Nebuchadnezzar's remark (v. 47):***

Nebuchadnezzar will go on to show that he is not yet repentant, but he has begun at least to admire Daniel's God. God will get greater glory from the king, but Nebuchadnezzar's admiring of Daniel is enough to quell the killing and to save the Jews.

[Apply:](#) Nebuchadnezzar warns us that we may extol the true God and yet remain idolaters at heart. God seeks more from us than mere membership of a



Christian sub-culture. He wants our hearts.

***C. Nebuchadnezzar's reward (vv. 48-49):***

For now, the king felt it better to know the future than to be in the dark. He was yet to come to know the God of gods, yet he was already of use to God. By elevating Daniel to be ruler over all Babylon and to be chief of the wise men, God spread his influence through Daniel. Daniel, though, did not forget the friends who sought God with him and for him. Through them Jewish influence spread through Babylon.

[Apply:](#) When we think God is doing a thing or two, he's doing many things to fulfill his plan. It is for us to praise God and to remember those who stand with us in our trials.

**CONCLUSION:**

We are not called to be prophets as was Daniel, but we are called to live prophetically, speaking forth God's Word to our day. To do so takes faith ~ faith that God answers prayer, faith that God's kingdom alone will stand, and faith that God honours those who honour God.

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DARE TO BE A DANIEL

(3) Daniel's Opportunity

Sermon text: Daniel 3:1-6:28.

Background readings: Romans 9-11; Psalm 110:3; Proverb 24:10.

INTRODUCTION:

For the believer, the book of Daniel is thrilling. It warms our hearts with vistas of God's greatness and glory. Thus far ~

A. Vistas of God's faithfulness:

As wayward as his people become, he never leaves himself without a witness. He retained a faithful remnant in Judah but also in exile, raising up a few young lads to bring the faith into the king's palace (Daniel) and into the provinces (Hananiah [Shadrach]), Mishael [Meshach], and Azariah [Abednego]).

[Apply:](#) God's covenant faithfulness remains a reality for Israel (Rom. 9-11) and the new Israel (Matt. 28:20). Israel will be restored, the church remain.

B. Vistas of God's grace:

God spares Daniel and his friends not only because he is faithful, but because he intends to use them for his glory. Already, God is beginning to work in Nebuchadnezzar's life. Thus far, he's shown him that he cannot trust in earthly advisors, that there is a "God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries", and that his kingdom is temporal. Nebuchadnezzar has fallen on his face before Daniel, but is not yet ready to fall on his face before God. This will come.

[Apply:](#) Do we believe in such grace? Do we believe that if God can work in Nebuchadnezzar, he can work in the worst in Malacca? I recall the question posed by the young Ian Paisley to his elders: "Who is the worst sinner on Ravenhill Road, Belfast?" He began with him, with gospel success.

CONTEXT:

Now "ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon" (2:48), Daniel has opportunity to nurture the work God has begun in Nebuchadnezzar. Notice ~

A. The opportunity is immense (3:1-7):

Despite the first dream, its interpretation, and the king's response, Nebuchadnezzar remains a fool, wedded to his idolatry. Although the secret of the temporary nature of his kingdom is out, he appears to rebel against God's call to repentance. He calls all his officials together from the provinces to the dedication of, note, the *golden* image (v. 4). Anyone not doing so will be thrown into the fiery furnace. Since all did as they were commanded, v. 7, what a task is Daniel's!

[Apply:](#) Similarly today, we ponder how we can see a turnaround in Malaysian society. We have temples galore. Where do we begin? One option is to pray for God to raise up Daniels to in high places.

B. The opportunity is intense (3:8-30):

The Jews had been exiled for idolatry, but the exile cured them of idolatry as the faithful remnant now demonstrate (vv. 8-12). The king lays down the law to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, defiantly asking, "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" They answer, vv. 16-18. The rest is well known, the king heats the furnace seven times hotter than usual, but God is with the friends in the flames (vv. 24-25). For the second time, the king acknowledges "the Most High God". He calls them out of the furnace unscathed. He is brought closer to God (vv. 28-29). Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego are promoted (v. 30).

[Apply:](#) Let's not be discouraged in outreach. As God presses in on a person he or she will often get more rebellious or hostile before bowing the knee.

In the meantime, Daniel's opportunities continue. Notice in chapters 4-6 three which come Daniel's way ~

1. DANIEL'S OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS (4:1-27):

Observe at this juncture a change in the narrative. It is not Daniel now narrating but Nebuchadnezzar. He reflects on how God led him to himself (vv. 1-3). Notice:

A. Nebuchadnezzar's condition (vv. 4-9):

Clearly, some things are unchanged: Nebuchadnezzar thinks he's prospering, God is still pursuing him, and his aids are still failing him (vv. 4-7). How stubborn is pride! He returns, then, to Daniel but only as a last resort (vv. 8-9).

[Apply:](#) We speak of God's irresistible grace, but how grace can be resisted! It is

better to speak of God's invincible grace. Recall from the KJV, Psalm 110:3: God's people are made willing, but only in the day of God's power!

B. Nebuchadnezzar's counsel (vv. 10-27):

This time, the king recalls his dream (vv. 10-18) ~ a tall, strong, beautiful tree, visible to the whole earth. Heaven decreed it should be chopped down, stripped of its leaves and its fruit scattered. Yet, the root would be bound. The purpose of this is found in v. 17, "that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men."

Very diplomatically, Daniel explains that while he would that the dream were for someone else, the king is the tree (v. 22). He is the one who will be deeply humbled. Thus, Daniel now extends his boldness directly calling on Nebuchadnezzar to repent (v. 27).

Apply: Down is the way up! Recall Luther's words, "He whom God must justify he must first condemn; he whom God will make alive he must first kill." It is the Spirit's condemning of us in our own eyes, which leads to genuine repentance, but the authenticity of repentance is discerned only by its fruits.

C. Nebuchadnezzar's conversion (vv. 28-37):

The king ignored Daniel's call to repent (vv. 28-30), yet in God's severe mercy he is made to repent. To this end, the king's second dream comes true. Note the two "immediatelies" (vv. 31 and 33). They are God-sightings as is the king's eventual acceptance of his humbling over "seven periods of time" (cf. v. 25 and v. 34). After seven years (interprets Matthew Henry), two things happened:

(i) *The king's reason returned to him (vv. 34-35):* Once a fool, now he's wise.

(ii) *The king's kingdom is returned to him (vv. 36-37):* He didn't repent because he wanted his kingdom back, yet in repenting God graciously restored that to Nebuchadnezzar. The king now holds his kingdom lightly, holding now tightly to his God.

Apply: Note that in true conversion we vindicate God and his ways. There is no rationalizing of sin (no "ifs" or "buts" about what we have done)!

2. DANIEL'S OPPORTUNITY TO WARN (5:1-30):

The narrative now jumps forward in history. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562BC and was followed by weak kings. Then Nabonidus became king in 556BC, reigning 17 years until 539BC when Babylon fell to the Persians. From Daniel

5, we discern that Nabonidus is away on military campaign leaving the kingdom in the hands of his son Belshazzar (v. 29).

Clearly, the kings have changed but not the culture of the empire. Note:

A. The follies of Babylon (vv. 1-12):

The follies are all the more remarkable given God's prior intervention in the history of Babylon. Notice here:

(i) *The culture of the court:* Worldliness prevails (v. 1) and the violation of the sacred (compare 1:2 and vv. 2-4).

(ii) *The conviction of the king (vv. 5-9):* Another "immediately"! All Belshazzar's confidence in self goes. His conduct and his call to his aids reveal that the lessons from Nebuchadnezzar's life have been forgotten. Even though his aids are promised reward rather than ruin they are unable to help Belshazzar.

(iii) *The calmness of the queen (vv. 10-12):* How important is institutional memory. In recalling both Daniel and what was said of him (v. 11), she bears witness to the overtures of God's grace to the nations.

Apply: When God intervenes in our family histories, how important it is to record his dealings for future generations. Have you recorded how God first brought the Christian faith to your family? Do leave a testimony to what God has done.

B. The fall of Babylon (vv. 13-30):

For free, v. 17, Daniel forthrightly tells Belshazzar that Babylon's fall has been coming. The conversion of Nebuchadnezzar was not only pivotal for him but for the empire (vv. 18-23). Yet, now, the day of grace is over. The kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians (v. 28). In raising Daniel to the third ruler in the kingdom, Belshazzar underlines that he is oblivious to God's judgment. Politically speaking, with the enemy at the gates Daniel's advancement is futile.

Apply: What a warning this is to our peers to run to God. This day of grace is also concluding. Not only is it but a short while before we each appear before God, but among the nations the feeling of God's impending judgments are in the air.

3. DANIEL'S OPPORTUNITY TO WILT (6:1-28):

Again, the narrative leaps forward. We are not sure of this Darius. There is no extra-biblical record of him, maybe because he came to the throne at the age

of 62. What *is* known, is that:

A. Daniel retained favour with the king (vv. 1-15):

Despite the regime change, Daniel rises to the top once more (v. 3). No sooner does he than he is opposed by high officials and satraps. Since “they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful” (v. 4) they set out to trap Daniel, proposing to King Darius that no one petition any god for thirty days except the king. King Darius naively signs their injunction (vv. 6-9). Yet, the trial of costly obedience affords Daniel the opportunity to prove his faithfulness to God (v. 10). The rest, as we say, is history (vv. 11-15). Daniel is divinely saved from being killed in the lions’ den.

[Apply:](#) Daniel’s longevity in the service of kings and the envious plotting of the worldly inevitably stirred temptations to wilt in his faith. This is very relevant to us in a day wherein many are doing so. There is a loss of both first love and high standards. The use of the Lord’s Day and the slackness of the Lord’s people amid the COVID pandemic point to this. If, then, we too are facing temptations to wilt, how are we to address such temptations?

B. Daniel retained favour with God (vv. 16-24):

Darius understood that it was not favour with him but only with God that could save Daniel now (v. 16). So, Darius fasts and prays to God all night. Yet, what favour Daniel had with Darius, and what impression Daniel’s faith made on Darius that the king should become so desperate about Daniel’s prospects in the den of lions (vv. 19-22). Note:

(i) The evidence of the favour (v. 23a). Darius was “exceedingly glad” that Daniel was spared.

(ii) The cause of the favour: Daniel’s trust in God (v. 23b). Compare the plight of Daniel’s malicious accusers!

[Apply:](#) Proverbs 24:10 reminds us, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small”. Daniel teaches us that we need not faint, for God’s grace is sufficient for those drawing from God what they need to stand firm.

CONCLUSION:

Because Daniel kept on witnessing, warning, and refusing to wilt, God was exalted (v. 25). While Darius could not make people “tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,” they would have no need to slavishly or hopelessly fear, so long as they grasped two truths, that:

(i) God is sovereign (v. 26):

(ii) God is merciful (v. 27):

Let us trust God, too. This alone is the way to true prosperity (v. 28).

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## DARE TO BE A DANIEL

### (4) Daniel's Humility

**Sermon text:** 7:1-12:12.

**Background readings:** 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Ezra 1:1-4; Daniel 7:1-12:12; Jeremiah 25 and 29.

#### INTRODUCTION:

We have now traced Daniel's service to God through his service to successive kings and kingdoms. He was the Queen Elizabeth of his day, serving for about 70 years, from his youth to old age (cf. 1:21 and 6:28).

[Apply:](#) Daniel's life reminds us that God saves those whom he keeps. The divine grace sufficient to save us is sufficient to keep us faithful throughout our days. Recall Peter's words in 2 Peter 1:3-4: God's "divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence."

#### CONTEXT:

In entering these last chapters, note two clear differences ~

##### ***A. A stylistic difference:***

With the historical narrative now closed, Daniel is silent about his interactions with Cyrus. There are two likely reasons for this:

(i) *God's judgment had already fallen on Babylon:* God had no need, then, to send Cyrus ominous dreams of impending judgment.

(ii) *God's spirit stirred up Cyrus to end the exile of his people:* Cf. Ezra 1:1-4.

[Apply:](#) What a sovereign Lord of history is our God! He is able to rescue a people for himself from his enemy, to use his enemies to chasten his people when they disobey, and to dispose of his enemies once they prove to be unrepentant.

##### ***B. A thematic difference:***

Following all the emphasis on the destruction of earthly kingdoms, the focus now shifts to the sovereign and eternal reign of God. We have already been prepared for this by Daniel (2:21); by Nebuchadnezzar (4:3; 34-35); and by Darius the Mede (6:26-27). So now, the dreams of judgment given the earthly kings are replaced by visions of hope given to Daniel the prophet of God.

These God used to reveal how he would funnel the power of his universal reign through a coming kingdom on earth that would capture in grace the minds and hearts of men and women (see most clearly, 7:13-14).

[Apply:](#) How marvelous it is that this sovereign Lord has had a singular plan to bring under his reign those who repent of their sins and trust in the King. Obviously, the King in view is Christ. Two benefits accrue from his reign over us: (i) His protection; (ii) His subduing of our temptations from the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

From these closing chapters, we highlight how Daniel, in contrast to some who serve earthly monarchs, was humbled by a life spent ultimately in the worship and service of God. In, then, flying over of these last chapters of the book, we note three ways in which Daniel was humbled:

#### **1. DANIEL WAS HUMBLLED BY WHAT HE RECEIVED (7:1–8:27):**

Daniel's blamelessness and usefulness is seen in his readiness to attribute all praise to God. There is always the temptation to crave adulation, yet Daniel continually deflected to God. After all, he was entirely dependent on God.

##### ***A. Daniel was dependent on God for revelation (vv. 1-14):***

Daniel thinks back to the reign of Belshazzar. He had not conjured up such dreams and visions but was given them. We know they were from God, because they:

(i) *Saw into the future (vv. 1-8):* The four beasts emerging out of the great sea (of humanity) reflect the four parts of the great image in Daniel 2 (gold, silver, bronze, iron) ~ the empires of Babylon (note, v. 4b), Media-Persia, Greeks, and Rome. The ten horns are a multiplicity of kingdoms that were to arise from the context of Rome (vv. 7-8). Writes Stuart Olyott in his *Dare to Stand Alone*, "None of these could have arisen without Rome, and yet none is Rome."

(ii) *Saw into heaven (vv. 9-12):* Now Daniel receives a vision of God. How he contrasts with human rulers. God is sovereign (enthroned), eternal (ancient with white hair), and just (note the court, and the destruction of the beasts and their power).

[Apply:](#) God's revelation is our comfort. No power arrayed against him will last or win. God's own king shall alone reign forever (vv. 1-14).

##### ***B. Daniel was dependent on God for the interpretation (vv. 15-28):***

As if to prove that the revelation was not of Daniel's own concocting, we are

told that Daniel was anxious, alarmed and perplexed, v. 15-16a. So, assuage his emotions Daniel approaches one of the thousands in the vision. From him Daniel hears that the saints will be opposed but privileged:

*(i) Opposed:* By each kingdom in turn, but especially by the fourth beast (Rome) (vv. 19-21). So bad would the opposition become that the figure in the vision repeats the warning (vv. 23-25). Nevertheless, there is hope.

*(ii) Privileged:* The saints shall possess *the* kingdom. The kingdom to come shall be a gift (v. 18a); eternal (v. 18b); and a haven (v. 22, 26-27).

*Apply:* How thankful we can be amid the promise of the defeat of earthly kingdoms and the duration of the kingdom of heaven that we need not become prey for every other end time scheme (climate change, nuclear catastrophe). Only God interprets and prophesies the times accurately.

### ***C. Daniel was dependent on God for vocation (8:1-27):***

Two years passed. Nabonidus was yet away on his 10-year military campaign. Daniel received another vision, revealing the turmoil of history in three phases: (i) The fall of Babylon (cf. Ch. 5; 8:1-2); (ii) the fall of Media and Persia (vv. 3-8, 15-22); (iii) The rise of the little horn (Antiochus Epiphanes vv. 9-14, 23-26). Amid the threat of this brutal antichrist, Daniel must look to Christ (v. 15); understand the end-times (v. 17; Cf. Rom. 1:10); and be faithful (v. 27).

*Apply:* This remains our call amid the upheavals of history.

## **2. DANIEL WAS HUMBLLED BY WHAT HE READ (9:1-19):**

Daniel likely did not understand all the end times, but following the fall of Babylon he was given to perceive what was immediately upcoming (vv. 1-2), namely the exile. Its end is prophesied in Jeremiah 25 and 29. Faced with this prospect, Daniel's humility becomes apparent:

### ***A. Daniel's humility in his posture (v. 3):***

Besides faithfully working in the place, prayer was also his call. It was one thing to know that the nations would crumble, but what of God's people? In exile Daniel cannot set his face to the temple or ark of the covenant, but, under the blood, he can ever face the Lord. Here we see him seeking God earnestly and with understanding. He leaned hard into God not to extract what was not God's will to give, but precisely because the restoration was divinely promised.

*Apply:* Likewise, amid all the mayhem of our day, we lean hard into God to fulfill his promises. Chiefly, he has promised us the downfall of the kingdoms

the spread of *the* kingdom.

### ***B. Daniel's humility in his praise (v. 4):***

Daniel has not allowed familiarity to breed contempt in his relationship to God. He extols God for his greatness. He is great, awesome, and his Lord. He extols God for his faithfulness. He keeps his covenant, he never wavers in his love. He extols God for his honesty. God had since the days of Moses said that the blessings of the covenant were dependent on our loving obedience (Deuteronomy 28–29).

*Apply:* How we need, amid the tumults of our day, to extrapolate from Scripture the truths needed to praise God.

### ***C. Daniel's humility in his penitence (vv. 5-19):***

Although Daniel lived a blameless life, he understood several important truths:

*(i) The unbreakable bond among God's people (vv. 5-6):* Although Daniel has lived blamelessly, he knows the bond cannot be broken.

*(ii) The treachery against God (vv. 7-12):*

*(iii) The right of God to punish (vv. 1-15):*

*(iv) The need for God's mercy (vv. 16-19):*

*Apply:* We need to be most careful in opposing today's wokism that we do not allow ourselves to break the unity of God's people. Amid Western individualism we are quick to detach ourselves from the sins of former generations, but that is not what Daniel does. In God's covenant he sees himself related inextricably not only to God but to his people past and present.

## **3. DANIEL WAS HUMBLLED BY WHAT HE REALIZED (10:1-12:12):**

By this time the exiles had returned to Jerusalem two years before (Ezra 1:1, v.1). Daniel, now about 86 or 87, was too old to return and to join in the rebuilding of the Temple. In vv. 2-3 we read of him mourning. After all, he has thought of Jerusalem all his days, and now that he could return he is unable to. But he also mourns because there are those who could return but have become too comfortable in Babylon. God, however, has not forsaken Daniel in exile. He calls him to realize that:

### ***A. He is loved (10:4-21):***

Daniel is reassured about this by ~

*(i) The vision (vv. 4-7):* The vision closely resembles the one John had 600

years later on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:13-17). Daniel, though, sees a preincarnate appearance of Christ. The vision is uniquely personal (v. 7).

*(ii) The interaction (vv. 8-14):* In the sleep that falls on him, Christ lavishes on him one token of love after another. He is touched (v. 10), he is wooed and emboldened (v. 11), assured (v. 12-14), strengthened (vv. 15-21).

Apply: How God loves to commune with his people. When we walk with him he makes his presence felt and lets us into some of his secrets.

### ***B. He is trusted (11:1-45):***

The Lord Jesus continues to speak, entrusting Daniel with inside information “the truth” (vv. 1-2a) about what is to happen. History beforehand! Notice ~

*(i) The course of old covenant history (vv. 2b-20):* Xerxes to Ptolemies (Egypt) and the Seleucids (Syria).

*(ii) The climax of old covenant history (vv. 21-45):* The rise of the “contemptible person” ~ Antiochus Epiphanes (a type of the Antichrist to come). Compare v. 36 and 2 Thess. 2:1-5. All seems dark, but note v. 45b: “he shall come to his end, with none to help him.”

Apply: What inside information we have of the future who trust the Scriptures. Recall the use we are to make of it. Since “evil people and imposters will go one from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” we are to “continue in what [we] have learned and firmly believed . . . the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:13-15).

### ***C. He is safe (12:1-12):***

Although at the end of history there will be “the shattering of the power of the holy people” (v. 7), the book ends with comfort:

*(i) God’s people will be delivered (v. 1):* Whether Daniel refers to the restoration of the Jews or not (“your people”), we can unite on the view that certainly the elect will be delivered.

*(ii) God’s people will be resurrected: (vv. 2-4):* Resurrection to life, to judgment. The resurrection coincides with the new world that Jesus will inaugurate (Matt. 19:28).

Apply: We want more details about how history as we know it will unfold. Significantly, the man in linen cloth clearly prohibits the probing of the remaining secrets of God. Specifically, the length of time until the end (vv. 5-7) and “the outcome of these things” (vv. 8-9). In what is surely a word to those

prone to speculate in our day, Daniel is told to go his way “for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end” (v. 9).

**CONCLUSION:** In light of Daniel’s life and witness, I leave us with two questions to close ~

### ***A. Will we be faithful unto our end?***

It depends, v. 10: “Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”

### ***B. What will be standing at the end?***

Will we “rest and . . . stand in [our] allotted place at the end of the days” Or will we know the turmoil and rejection of our allotted place? God grant us to know, for the glory of his name and the welfare of our souls.

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