

Message #1  
Daniel

Kurt Hedlund  
1/1/2023

DANIEL: A STATESMAN FOR OUR GENERATION  
DANIEL 1:1-6

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that it is January 1, 2025. After a grueling election campaign between Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders and Republican candidate Donald Trump, which is decided by Nevada's five electoral votes being given to Donald Trump, Communist leader Xi Jinping decides that he must take action. As part of his election campaign Donald Trump pledged that he will see to it that the US places an embargo upon products coming from China including fireworks, face masks, and Chinese Checkers.

With Donald Trump scheduled to take office in just a few weeks, the Chinese president decides that he must take action. The Chinese have developed a new weapon, based on stolen American technology, of course, which they call "the Death Laser." There are no effective defenses against this satellite-based weapon, and the US has not yet developed a similar weapon. The Chinese demand an immediate US surrender. The US administration hesitates. To show that they mean business the Chinese use their weapon. In five seconds the city of San Francisco is totally wiped out. Despite protests from an angry Nancy Pelosi, who was not in San Francisco, the US has no choice but to surrender.

So now the Chinese have come to the US. On March 1 they arrive in Nevada and even Boulder City. One of the first things that they are doing is looking for the young people who are the best looking, most intelligent, most athletic, and most talented. Obviously they pick our kids and grandkids. They pick all of the teens in our church youth group.

The Communists then take this cream of the crop back to Beijing to train them for government service. This training will include a regimented program of instruction in the Chinese language, Marxism-Leninism, Chinese history, and Communist government. How would our young people fare? What would happen to their spiritual commitment? What would happen to their parents who wonder how God could allow such an evil empire to gain control of our country?

If that situation sounds a bit far-fetched, consider this second scenario. A. G. Is a 13 year old girl who has struggled with the restrictions imposed upon schooling through the pandemic. She suffers from ADHD, and she hangs out with three friends who have all labeled themselves "transgender." On September 8, 2020, school officials meet with A. G. and develop a "Transgender/Non-Conforming Student Support Plan." They discuss preferred pronouns and names and bathroom accommodations. The plan specifically states that her parents are not to be notified of these developments. The plan follows a guide developed by the school district's equity and diversity department.

A. G.'s mom, who is a mental health counselor, is pretty upset when she eventually finds out about this. A school counselor tells the mom that her daughter is now "protected" under a nondiscrimination law that does not include parental notification or input. This incident actually happened in Florida. (*Daily Citizen*, 12/3/2021)

Both scenarios involve the challenge of living in a culture which has become hostile to godly values. The first scenario was similar to the situation that confronted the people of God in about 600 BC when the Babylonians invaded the land of Israel. In coming weeks as we look at how Daniel and his friends responded to these circumstances, we will discover answers to two very relevant questions.

The first is: How should we live in an often godless society? How do we respond to a culture where Christians on TV are frequently portrayed as buffoons or charlatans? How do we react to an educational system that puts forth evolution as the only explanation for the origin of life and that says that the only moral absolute is tolerance of various lifestyles and different world views, a system which encourages children to question and change their gender identity without parental input? How do we live in a society that measures success by the accumulation of material wealth? How do we deal with a culture that is constantly undermining a Biblical view of the family? How should we live in an often godless society?

The second question that the Book of Daniel is going to answer for us is this: Is God worthy of my trust? Can I really trust God? In the midst of an economy where inflation is eating up our savings and where our retirement portfolio is threatened by a looming recession, can I trust God? With a health crisis on my hands and family ties that are broken or under stress, can I really trust God? Is God really sovereign, and does He truly care for me?

I.

Before we dig into the book, it is helpful to consider some background information about Daniel and his Old Testament book. There are three areas to look at as we try to put this book into proper perspective. These three areas are the historical background, the authenticity, and God's purpose for Daniel and his book. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND) First, we want to understand how this subject fits into Biblical history. So let's briefly review Israel's history as we consider THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND of Daniel.

(OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE) Around 2000 BC God brought Abraham from Ur, in what is today Iraq, into the land of Israel. Abraham had a son named Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons who became heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph, one of his sons, was sold by his brothers to traders who brought him to Egypt. Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt and, because of a famine, eventually brought the rest of his family to that country. The Hebrew people grew greatly in number during the next 400 years in Egypt.

In roughly 1500 BC Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before Joshua led them into the Promised Land. They conquered much of the land and settled down. The next 400 years were known as the time of the Judges. A little before 1000 BC God appointed Saul to become the first king of Israel. He was followed by David, who led his people to a position of prominence in the Middle East. David was succeeded by his son, the wise King Solomon.

After Solomon the kingdom split into two halves. God judged the northern kingdom of Israel for its waywardness, and it was overrun by the Assyrians in 722 BC. It ceased to exist as a nation. The southern kingdom of Judah was ruled by David's descendants. It remained in existence until it was overrun by a series of three invasions around 600 BC.

Rather than having a positive influence on the nations around it, Judah had been the recipient of the bad influence of these countries. The Judeans adopted many of the idols and pagan gods of their neighbors. God sent prophets, like Isaiah, to warn them about their errant ways. Sometimes there were revivals. But always Judah lapsed back into idol worship and disobedience to God.

(2 CHRONICLES 36:16) We read in 2 Chronicles 36:16, **“But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy.”**

During this time in the seventh century BC God was raising up the nation of Babylon. (BABYLONIAN EMPIRE 2) Early in that century a delegation of Babylonians came to visit King Hezekiah of Judah. He showed them all of the riches of Judah in Jerusalem. Afterward Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and, according to 2 Kings #20 (2 KINGS 20:17), said, **“Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord. (2 KINGS 20:18) And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”**

Hezekiah showed these treasures to the Babylonians in order to impress them that he and Judah would be a worthy partner with which to form an alliance to fight the Assyrians. But God's perspective was that Hezekiah and his people should trust God rather than to rely on political means to solve the Assyria problem.

In 605 BC the Babylonians invaded Judah. (BABYLONIAN EMPIRE 3) A few people were carried off to Babylon, and Judah was forced to submit to the Babylonians. In 597 Judah rebelled and was again conquered by Babylon. More damage was done to the cities of Judah, and more people were carried off to exile. In 587 Judah again rebelled, and this time the country was devastated by the Babylonians. Jerusalem was torn to the ground, and the temple was demolished. Only a small group of people was left to populate the land.

It was during the first Babylonian invasion in 605 BC that Daniel and his three friends were carted off to Babylon. (BABYLON CITY) They were teenagers and members of the royal family. Their experience fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah made decades earlier that some of the king's sons would be carried off to Babylon and would become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon. (PROJECTOR OFF)

We know from Babylonian accounts of this first invasion that Nebuchadnezzar, who is also a major character in our book, led his army to Jerusalem and laid siege to the city. As he was attacking Jerusalem, word came that his father, the ruler of Babylon, had died. So Nebuchadnezzar quickly finished the job, made Jewish King Jehoiakim promise to obey him and returned to Babylon to receive the crown as the new king of the Empire. Little physical damage was done to Jerusalem, but among the captives taken to help insure the obedience of the Jewish king were four young men from the royal family--- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who become the main characters in the first part of this book. Having members of the royal family held in captivity might make the kings of Judah think twice about rebelling in the future.

II.

We want to consider then, for a few minutes, THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK) Since one of the two basic questions that we are going to consider in our examination of Daniel is the question "Is God worthy of my trust?", it is important that we make sure that we can trust this book to be true. Is it an accurate record of events that took place in Babylon 600 years before the time of Christ?

One of the standard Old Testament textbooks used in many seminaries and colleges for several decades is *A History of Israel* (HISTORY OF ISRAEL), by John Bright. In it Professor Bright writes, **"...it is generally agreed that the book in its present form was composed during the persecution of Antiochus, not long after the desecration of the Temple, probably ca. 166/165 [BC]. Its author was certainly one of the Hasidim..."** In other words the Book of Daniel was actually written 400 years after the events it describes, and it is not really a contemporary account of events in the sixth century BC which at least includes first person accounts by a statesman named Daniel.

Among liberal scholars there is probably no other book in the Bible about which there is such unanimous consensus that it is a fraud. (PROJECTOR OFF) In many seminaries and secular colleges that offer survey courses of the Old Testament the idea that Daniel is a fictional story is regarded as a certainty. It isn't even a subject for debate.

For us who are evangelicals these are serious charges. There are at least three places in the book where the author Daniel claims to be an eyewitness of the events that he describes. If we can't trust the reliability of this book, how can we trust the rest of the Old Testament, or even the New Testament? If we can't trust the Bible, how can we trust the God of the Bible? How can we trust the claims of Christ? For in Matthew #24 v. 15 (PROJECTOR ON--- MATTHEW 24:15) Jesus quoted from the Book of Daniel,

saying, **“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)...”** Jesus indicates that these words were written by Daniel the prophet, not by some ghost writer who wrote 400 years later.

Let me mention a few of the arguments that the critics use so that you can get at least a flavor of the complicated debate that is involved in discussions of the authenticity of Daniel. (PROJECTOR OFF) One thing that the critics have done is to look at the original language used in the Book of Daniel. Part of the book was written in Hebrew, and part was written in Aramaic. For many years the theological liberals have argued that the Aramaic language used in Daniel fits better with the language that was used in the second century BC rather than what was used in the sixth century. They actually had little evidence to make that assertion.

But in recent decades at Qumran and in Egypt archaeological discoveries were made that affect this issue. Two sets of ancient documents written in Aramaic were discovered. (ELEPHANTINE PAPYRI) One was called the Elephantine Papyri. These documents from Egypt were known with certainty to have been written in the fifth century BC. The other set of documents, called the Genesis Apocryphon (GENESIS APOCRYPHON), was part of the Dead Sea Scrolls and was dated to the first century BC. The form of the letters and the grammatical style in the Daniel manuscripts were clearly much closer to the older Elephantine Papyri than the later Genesis Apocryphon, thus indicating that the liberals were wrong.

Another argument dealing with language that has frequently been raised concerns three Greek terms used for musical instruments in the book (DANIEL 3:5). Alexander the Great and his Greek army overran the territory of Babylon and Judah in 332 BC. The Greeks remained in control of the area for almost three centuries after that.

The critics argue that the use of these Greek terms for the musical instruments gives good evidence that the real author of the book was writing after the Greeks had gained control of the entire region. Whoever wrote Daniel must have lived in the region after the time that the Greeks came and long after the Babylonians were around.

But the truth is that throughout ancient history the royal courts of the various countries brought in musicians from all over the civilized world. The Greek terms for these three different instruments could well have been used in Babylon and other countries of the Middle East long before the Greeks conquered the region. If the Book of Daniel had actually been written when the region was controlled by Greece, we might expect that there would be many more Greek terms in Daniel. But there aren't, because Daniel was written two centuries before the Greeks came. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Another area where critics have criticized the authenticity of the Book of Daniel is in terms of historical accuracy. A number of objections have been raised over the years about the truthfulness of the events that the book describes. A classic example is

Belshazzar, who is mentioned in #5. He is the one who is involved with the handwriting on the wall episode. He is described as the last king of the Babylonian Empire.

The liberals for years pointed out that all of the secular historical records said that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon. In fact there wasn't even a mention of Belshazzar anywhere else. So the story in #5 was cited as another example where the author just made something up.

Then the archaeologists began to discover more ancient records where the name Belshazzar did appear. Still they all called him the son of Nabonidus, or the crown prince, never the actual king. So Daniel was believed to be factually inaccurate.

Then in 1979 a statue was found that dated back before the time of Daniel. On that statue an inscription was found. That inscription was written in both the Assyrian language and the Aramaic language. In the Assyrian translation mention was made of a man who was the governor of a province in Babylon. But in the Aramaic version a word appeared for this same official that was later used only for "king."

The Aramaic word for "king" was used for what we might call a governor and for a king. So instead of this being a problem for the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, it was actually proof that Daniel was written in the sixth century. For nobody in the second century BC even knew that Belshazzar existed four centuries earlier, and they certainly would not have been familiar with this usage of the Aramaic word for king. It was used only to describe what we think of as a king in the second century, not as a governor..

If this evidence is really so convincing, why do liberal scholars continue to attack the authenticity of the Book of Daniel? Why do they continue to teach that it was written in the second century, long after the events it supposedly describes?

Look at Daniel #8. In this chapter Daniel has a vision, and the angel Gabriel comes to explain that the vision describes two kingdoms that will follow the Babylonian Empire. In vv. 20-22 (PROJECTOR ON--- DANIEL 8:20-21) the angel says, "**As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. (DANIEL 20:22) As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.**"

Some of the political events described here occurred over two hundred years after the time of the Babylonian Empire. After Alexander the Great died, his Greek empire was divided into four parts that never achieved the power of the original empire. Theologically liberal scholars look at that and say, "The only possible explanation is that this was written after the events that are being described. Daniel had to be written no earlier than the second century BC."

Chapter 11 is filled with even more political details concerning the future. Beginning with v. 5 (DANIEL 11:5) we read, "**Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of**

**his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority. (DANIEL 11:6) After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.”**

If you glance at much of the rest of the chapter, you will see that detailed political maneuverings continue to be described. Historians recognize this as being an accurate description of events in the Greek empire in the second, third and fourth centuries BC. So the critics conclude: This had to be written after the third century, at least. It is too specific and too correct to have been written centuries earlier. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Do you see what the real problem is? The underlying assumption of the critics is that God --- if there is a God--- could not have spoken through prophets with such accuracy centuries before these things happened. There has to be an explanation apart from the presence of a sovereign, active, supernatural God.

That is the source of the real conflict in the intellectual arena. The problem is at the level of presuppositions, or assumptions. If the presupposition is that there is no God, there have to be alternative explanations to things like the predictive prophecy in the Book of Daniel. That is also why we have the theory of evolution. The creation has to be explained apart from the existence of a sovereign, creative God.

The Old Testament Book of Ezekiel was also written in the sixth century BC. The prophet there makes many detailed historical references concerning things going on in his day. The critics have a harder time writing off his book as a product of later times. Yet in his book we find this fascinating reference. (PROJECTOR ON--- EZEKIEL 14:19-20) God speaks through the prophet, saying, **““Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, 20 even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness.”** Ezekiel refers to Daniel as his contemporary and as a well known righteous individual. He was not a fictional character invented centuries later.

The truth is that the Book of Daniel was written in the sixth century, at least partly by the statesman Daniel who was under the inspiration of God. We can trust its authenticity.

III.

Consider then GOD’S PURPOSE WITH DANIEL AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY. (III. GOD’S PURPOSE WITH DANIEL...) **One** thing that God was doing with Israel in its defeat and captivity by the Babylonians was punishing it for its sin. Israel enjoyed a position of prominence in the plan of God. The Lord had chosen to bless the descendants of Abraham and to reveal Himself to them in a way that he had not done to the other nations of the world.

But in the 300 years before the time of Daniel the Jews had turned away from God. They had fallen into worship of idols, and they followed other gods. Again and again the

Lord sent His prophets to tell them to repent. For the most part they did not listen. Finally God's patience ran out. They needed to be brought face to face with the holiness of God and with their own sin. So the Lord sent the Babylonians to be his instruments of judgment. The land of Israel was ravaged, many were killed, and some were taken into exile back to Babylon.

Our country cannot claim to have the unique position in God's program that Israel had and has. But we can see the blessing of God on our history. We can see the influence of Christianity on our heritage. What many of us see now is trends that depart from that Judeo-Christian heritage. The Supreme Court has overturned its earlier *Roe vs. Wade* decision, but hundreds of thousands of unborn babies are still be killed in much of the country. The family is under attack through redefinitions of marriage and easy divorce. Cultural institutions and some governments are promoting the crazy idea that people can change their gender identity. Euthanasia is a movement that is gaining traction in state governments. Christianity is an object of attack in our institutions of higher learning. We overspend and saddle future generations with major debt. Perhaps we as a nation are also in danger of the judgment of God.

Tough times can serve to purify the lives of individual Christians. God does not send trials our way primarily to punish or discipline us as individual Christians. But tough times can serve a helpful purpose in motivating us to make sure that our priorities are straight, that worship of the true God is central to what we do. Tough times as a nation also provide more opportunities to tell people about Jesus.

There was a **second** specific purpose that God had with Israel. During the seventy years in which the Jews were in captivity in Babylon God did a purifying work among His people. Idol worship was once and for all eliminated among them. Idol worship had been a horrible problem for Israel for centuries. Never again would the Jews worship physical idols to any great extent.

**Thirdly**, during this time the institution of the synagogue developed to promote worship of Israel's God. The books of the Old Testament were brought together and became the standard for Jewish worship in this synagogue setting. Thus the godly remnant that returned to the land of Israel 70 years later was prepared to set the stage for the coming of the Messiah.

In the Book of Daniel and the events of the Babylonian Captivity we are going to see that God accomplished His purposes with the Gentiles as well as the Jews. To the Babylonians the conquering of Israel seemed to demonstrate the superiority of the Babylonian gods. The Babylonian gods were superior to the God of Israel.

But in the Book of Daniel we also see Babylon fall to the Medes and Persians. In the midst of these pagan governments God plants His spokesman--- the prophet Daniel. As rulers come and rulers go, God uses Daniel to demonstrate that He is in control of history and that other religions and other philosophies are bound to fail in a universe



that is ultimately controlled by the God who is there. So a **fourth** thing which God is doing in the Book of Daniel is showing that God is sovereign over all of life.

The sovereignty of God and the bankruptcy of philosophical systems not based upon the true God are perhaps nowhere else better demonstrated than in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism that many of us have witnessed in our generation. For 70 years the Russians tried to establish a successful political and economic system that excluded God. It didn't work. In the midst of that evil empire God had His spokesmen--- people like Alexander Solzhenitsyn who declared that his people had forgotten God.

In the fall of 1991 a delegation of evangelical leaders from the US visited Russia. One of their stops was the KGB headquarters in Moscow, site of the infamous Lubyanka Prison (PROJECTOR ON--- LUBYANKA PRISON). They met with the vice chairman of the KGB, Nikolai Stolyarov. At one point in the discussion Stolyarov said, **"...political questions cannot be decided until there is sincere repentance, a return to faith by the people. That is the cross I must bear. In the study of scientific atheism, there was the idea that religion divides people. Now we see the opposite: love for God can only unite."** A bit later he added, **"There can be no perestroika apart from repentance. The time has come to repent of [the] past. We have broken the Ten Commandments, and for this we pay today."** (*What's So Amazing About Grace*, Yancy, p. 127) (PROJECTOR OFF)

Unfortunately it appears that the Russian government has not learned this lesson. Its leaders have turned to a superficial religion. But it is a religion based on Russian nationalism and not upon Biblical truth.

In a nation that seems to be straying away from God we American Christians need to learn the lessons that the Book of Daniel has to teach us. My hope is that as we study it, we will grow in our understanding of how we ought to live in an increasingly godless society, and we will become increasingly convinced in our minds and hearts that God is worthy of our trust.