

INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

TEXT: DANIEL 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. The book of Daniel is both historical and prophetic. For example, chapter 1 is historical, and chapter 2 is prophetic, etc.
2. The book of Daniel has been attacked by unbelieving critics.
3. Sir Robert Anderson was the Chief Inspector for Scotland Yard back in the days of Victorian England. He was renowned for his excellent work as an investigator. Among many other cases, he helped investigate the Jack the Ripper murders.
4. He also wrote many Christian books. One of them is called, *Daniel in the Critics' Den*. This was Sir Robert Anderson's response to the liberal skeptics who believed the Book of Daniel to be a forgery.
5. Sir Robert Anderson also wrote, *The Coming Prince*, an excellent book dealing with the antichrist and Daniel's seventieth week.
6. Sir Isaac Newton, the famous English physicist and mathematician, said "to reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion."
7. Critics have insisted that Daniel could never have made all of these amazing prophecies. But our Lord said in Matthew 24:15, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)." Our Lord was referring to the coming antichrist.
8. That alone should end all of the foolish arguments about the authenticity of the book of Daniel. Furthermore, Daniel is mentioned three times by the prophet Ezekiel -- Ezek. 14:14, 20; and 28:3.
9. Actually we know more about Daniel than any other prophet. His name means, "God is my judge." He was of royal or princely descent (cf. 1:3; Isaiah 39:5-7), and he was deported to Babylon in the first invasion about 607 BC (*Scofield Bible*).
10. John Walvoord said, "The book of Daniel is the most comprehensive and sweeping revelation recorded by any prophet of the Old Testament...With the possible exceptions of Moses and Solomon, Daniel was the most learned man in the Old Testament and most thoroughly trained for his important role in history and literature" (*Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation*).

I. THE DEPORTATION OF DANIEL (1:1-7).

II. THE DEPARTMENT OF DANIEL (1:8-16).

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANIEL (1:17-21).

I. THE DEPORTATION OF DANIEL (1:1-7).

1. The opening verses of Daniel present the historical background to the book of Daniel, which includes the first siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army.
2. According to Daniel 1:1, this siege occurred "in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah," or approximately 607 BC.
3. Parallel accounts are found in II Kings 24:1, 2 and II Chronicles 36:5-7.
4. The capture of Jerusalem, and the first deportation of the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon, including Daniel and his companions, were the fulfillment of many warnings from the prophets.
5. Second Kings 24:2 says the LORD sent Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon up against Judah to destroy it, "according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets" (cf. Dan. 1:2 -- "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...").
6. Because of their idolatry and other grievous sins, the people of Israel were carried off captive to Babylon, a center of idolatry.
7. In fact, Babylon was not only a center of idolatry, but the fountainhead of idolatry. That is why the end-time harlot church is called, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17:5).
8. "It is significant that after the Babylonian captivity, idolatry never again became a major temptation to Israel" (John Walvoord, *Daniel*).
9. "The land of Shinar" (1:2) refers to Babylon and is always associated with idolatry -- "which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god..."
10. "Shinar" is associated with Nimrod in Genesis 10:10, and it became the location of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:2).
11. In Zechariah 5:8-11, it is the place to which wickedness is banished. Babylon was one of the most wicked cities in the ancient world.
12. King Nebuchadnezzar told Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel to Babylon for training to be servants of the king (1:3).
13. A major part of their education was separating them from their previous Jewish culture and environment and teaching them "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans" (1:4).
14. Their training was for "three years" (1:5). "That at the end thereof they might stand before the king" (1:5b) means to stand before the king as his trained servants.

15. Their indoctrination included changing their names from Jewish names to Babylonian names (1:6, 7). It was King Nebuchadnezzar's plan to erase every vestige of identification between them and their Jewish heritage.
16. King Nebuchadnezzar's plan didn't work. As we see in Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.
17. And Daniel 6:10 says Daniel continued to open his windows toward Jerusalem, and kneel and pray to the true God of Israel.
18. But this name-changing is common in Scripture. Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name. He called him Zaphnathpaaneah (Genesis 41:45).
19. And this religious name-changing is very common even today. For example, when the boxer Cassius Clay converted to Islam, he changed his name to Mohammed Ali. Basketball player Lew Alcindor became a Muslim and changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Malcolm Little was a thief who converted to Islam in prison and changed his name to Malcolm X.
20. Sometimes the LORD changes peoples' names -- Abram to Abraham; Sarai to Sarah; Jacob to Israel (Genesis 17:5, 15; 32:28).
21. The word "Chaldean" (1:4b) is used in different ways in the Bible.
22. Over a period of time, the Chaldeans gradually acquired domination in Babylon, and as a result the terms Chaldeans and Babylonians are sometimes used interchangeably in Scripture.
23. In the book of Daniel, the term oftentimes refers to the Chaldean people as a whole (5:30), but sometimes it refers to a special class of learned men (2:2).
24. The meaning here in Daniel 1:4 may include both meanings. Daniel and his friends were to get a thorough Chaldean (Babylonian) education, and specifically they would be taught the skills of the Babylonian wise men, such as astrology and magic and sorcery (cf. 2:2).
25. It is important to note that the skills of the Chaldeans were useless when King Nebuchadnezzar needed them to interpret his dream (cf. 2:10-13).

II. THE DEPORTMENT OF DANIEL (1:8-16).

1. The "deportation" of Daniel means he was forcibly transported by the Babylonian army. The "deportment" of Daniel refers to the wise manner in which he conducted himself in Babylon.

2. We could say his "behaviour" or his "conduct" but alliterated outlines are easier to remember -- the deportation of Daniel; the deportment of Daniel; and the development of Daniel.
3. Daniel 1:8 tells us that Daniel and his companions were confronted with the problem of compromise in the matter of eating food provided by the king.
4. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat..." (1:8).
5. "No doubt, the provision for them of the king's food was intended to be generous and indicated the favor of the king" (Walvoord, *Daniel*).
6. The problem was that the meat and the wine had been dedicated to idols. That was the custom in Babylon. Therefore, to partake would mean recognizing these heathen idols as deities.
7. First Corinthians 10:20 says, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."
8. For Daniel and his three friends, this was a supreme test of their faithfulness to God's law, but they would not compromise in this matter. Daniel understood that God had brought Israel into captivity because of their failure to observe the law (cf. 9:1, 2).
9. When Daniel brought his request to the prince of the eunuchs, we are told that God had brought Daniel "into favour and tender love" (kindness and compassion) with him (1:9).
10. It is clear that God intervened on Daniel's part, and this is similar to what happened to Joseph in Egypt, to Nehemiah in Persia, and to Paul before various Roman officials and soldiers.
11. The prince of eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king" (1:10). If Daniel appeared to be in worse condition ("worse liking") than the other young people their age, he might lose his head.
12. John Walvoord said, "Life was cheap in Babylon and subject to the whims of the king. The prince, therefore, did not want to be caught changing the king's orders in regard to the diet of the captives" (*Daniel*).
13. Daniel then came up with an idea, a counterproposal. He appealed to Melzar, the steward who the prince of the eunuchs had put in charge over Daniel and his companions, for a ten-day trial (1:11, 12).
14. "Pulse" included a wide variety of vegetables (1:12).
15. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his companions were not only "fairer" in appearance but also were "fatter in flesh" than those who had continued to eat the king's meat (1:15).

16. On the basis of their test their request was granted, and their water and vegetable diet continued.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANIEL (1:17-21).

1. The closing verses of Daniel chapter 1 deals not only with the development of Daniel, but also the development of his three companions -- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
2. Verse 17 refers to them as "these four children," but they were probably teenagers -- perhaps late teens.
3. These few verses are a summary of their three years of diligent study and the result of God's blessings upon them -- "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (1:17).
4. By the time they completed their three-year training, they were probably close to twenty years of age.
5. Verse 17 mentions that only "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." This proved very helpful in chapter 2, and in the chapters which follow.
6. Verse 18 tells us that "at the end of the days" (end of the three years) the prince of eunuchs brought Daniel and his friends before King Nebuchadnezzar.
7. During this interview with Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and his three companions were found to be "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm" (1:20).
8. Chapter 1 concludes with the statement that Daniel continued working unto the first year of king Cyrus. Daniel 10:1 mentions that he lived even longer than that -- even to "the third year of Cyrus king of Persia."
9. The point of Daniel 1:21 is that Daniel's career and ministry spanned the entire 70-year Babylonian captivity, and he was still alive when Cyrus took the throne.
10. It was God that elevated Daniel into a position of leadership that lasted through the reigns of several kings. That is amazing when you think about it. Through all the upheavals, changes of administration, wars, political intrigue, backbiting, double-crossing, and so on.
11. Nebuchadnezzar died, but Daniel was still there. Belshazzar was slain and the Medes and Persians took over the kingdom, and Daniel was still around.
12. And Daniel did it all without compromising. God blessed Daniel because Daniel obeyed God.

CONCLUSION:

1. Young people, when ever you think of Daniel the prophet, think of these words, "But Daniel purposed in his heart..." (Dan.1:8). This means Daniel made up his mind he was going to serve God.
2. It is best to make up your mind when you are young. Daniel did not waver. He did not compromise. He purposed in his heart that he was going to do right. He would serve God. He would be faithful.
3. Young people, be like Daniel. Do not wait till you're old to get right with God. Too many young people lack conviction. They are pulled in every direction. One day they say they love God and want to serve Him. The next day they are out with their worldly friends listening to rock music.
4. It was a difficult decision for Daniel.
5. And yet when we read our Bibles, we see that those who follow the Lord are always faced with tough decisions. In Daniel 3 we will see how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who refused to bow down to the golden image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar and were thrown into the fiery furnace?
6. Remember Joseph who would not allow Potiphar's wife to seduce him?
7. If you want to serve God you will be faced with some hard decisions in this life. How you deal with these challengers will determine the direction your life will take.
8. Young people: start making the right decisions now. Otherwise you will find it even harder when you're older (1:8).

P. P. Bliss wrote a song called "Dare to be a Daniel."

The words of the chorus go like this:

Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone!

Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!