

Moments *for* You

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Theme: Daniel



PURPOSE OF HEART

A prison chaplain noticed an inmate who had been tasked with mending uniforms. Greeting the man cheerfully, he said, “Good morning, friend! Sewing?”

“No, sir,” replied the inmate with a grim smile. “Reaping!”

As the book of Daniel opens, the southern kingdom of Judah is about to reap a bitter harvest for long years of disobedience to God’s Word. Judgment should not have come as a surprise, for as far back as Moses, somber warnings had been clearly sounded regarding the price of departure from God (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

When judgment came, it was for two clear reasons. First, the Mosaic Law specified that every seventh year the land was not to be farmed since it was a sabbatic year, a year of rest for the land, symbolizing that “the earth is the Lord’s.” But apparently the Israelites had not observed this law for 490 years, because the writer of Chronicles states that the captivity was 70 years in length because: “As long as [the land] lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years” (2 Chronicles 36:21).

God’s judgment also fell on Judah for the sin of idolatry. The northern kingdom of Israel had been swallowed up by this evil practice in the forms of Jeroboam’s calf worship and the worship of Baal. While Judah resisted it for a time, eventually the sordid story was repeated and there were even idolatrous orgies in Jerusalem. No wonder we read in Daniel 1:2, “The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into [Nebuchadnezzar’s] hand.”

With this, we are introduced to the great theme of the book of Daniel, that is, the sovereignty of God in the affairs of the nations. We are taught here that God is the Master of the situation. Of course, He often uses human instruments to accomplish His will—Nebuchadnezzar in this case—but God is always in control and the outcome is assured.

Daniel was about sixteen when Babylon’s armies stormed through Judah and besieged Jerusalem. It was then that Daniel’s world crumbled about him, for he was captured and deported to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was looking for choice young men who could occupy important positions in Babylon, particularly in the administration of Jewish affairs.

The requirements for selection were high (Daniel 1:4), but Daniel, along with his three friends, met them. We learn that Daniel had no physical blemish, was intelligent, and poised. Daniel was an unusual teenager, and stands as a striking model for today’s young people!

If Daniel and his friends were to be of any value to Nebuchadnezzar, they had to be re-educated so that they would no longer think or act like Judeans, but like Babylonians. For three years they were taught “the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 1:4). They were exposed to Babylonian education at its very best, or rather at its pagan worst. The goal was clear—change their way of thinking!

God’s people today must be aware of the Enemy’s brainwashing program. Satan would, if at all possible, change our patterns of living and thinking until we are

conformed to this present age and culture. Not only do Christian young people face this problem in school, but so do Christians of all age-groups because of the pervasive and powerful influence of the media.

Let us learn from Daniel how the Enemy can be defeated. “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8). The food set before him was from animals that were slaughtered ceremonially and offered to the Babylonian gods. In addition, the food no doubt often included meat the Mosaic Law declared unclean (Leviticus 11).

Daniel could discern the fact that the Babylonian culture was in conflict with the Word of God, and he had the maturity and moral courage to say a firm “no” to cultural pressures. Involved in this is the clear implication that Daniel was a keen student of the Scriptures and that he had the ability to apply what he knew to the problems of his daily life.

God vindicated Daniel and honored him greatly because he stood by his convictions. God always does!

Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm, dare to make it known!

—Condensed from *Daniel: God’s Man in a Secular Society* by Donald K. Campbell.

KINGS, AND A KINGDOM

“In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him” (Daniel 2:1).

Already in the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar was having divinely prompted nightmares. Daniel, through wisdom given to him by God, describes the king’s dream and

shares with him its significance.

Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a huge statue, magnificent in its design and awe-inspiring in its size. It had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of a mixture of iron and clay. As the king watched, a strange stone struck the image on its feet, breaking them into pieces and crushing the entire statue. Rather than break into pieces itself, however, the stone mysteriously grew and became a huge mountain, growing until it filled the whole earth.

Daniel indicated that the different segments of the statue’s body represent successive kingdoms or empires. Of these, the Babylonian Empire is the first: “Thou art this head of gold” (v. 38). The second (chest and arms of silver) predicted the Medo-Persian Empire. The “kingdom of brass” foretold the Greek Empire. It was to “rule over all the earth” (v. 39). Here we instinctively think of the remarkable rise to power of Alexander the Great, who is said to have wept while still in his twenties because there were no more lands for him to conquer. Daniel describes the fourth kingdom in greater detail because it marks an era in which especially significant events would occur. It is strong as iron and shatters everything in its path: “as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things” (v. 40). Again almost instinctively we think of the Roman Empire—of which it was said, “they make a desert and call it peace.”

Notice, however, none of these great empires takes center stage in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream; the centerpiece of the vision is the kingdom that God establishes. This kingdom has several features. It is God’s creation: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven

set up a kingdom” (v. 44). It is an indestructible and infallible kingdom “which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people” (v. 44). It is an all-victorious kingdom, eternal in its duration: “it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (v. 44). Furthermore, it will be a universal kingdom: “and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (v. 35). All this will occur despite the obscurity and apparent weakness of its origin; it is represented by a mere stone, “cut out without hands” (v. 34).

The stone of course represents Jesus Christ. He is the stone that crushes the kingdoms of this world because He is the one into whose hands the Father has committed all judgment (John 5:22). He is the stone that the builders rejected which became the chief cornerstone (Acts 4:11).

Daniel and his friends were receiving a message that would give them strength, hope, and confidence in the dark days that were still to come; a message that has had the same effect on God’s children in every age. Whatever other elements of this chapter might fascinate us, we must allow nothing to obscure this: God’s kingdom will triumph. He must reign (1 Corinthians 15:25; Revelation 11:15; Hebrews 12:28).

This has often been the great hope that has encouraged the people of God in times of physical trials and in spiritual darkness. It gave courage to Daniel and has given hope and energy to many Daniels since. Does this chapter not give heightened meaning to the prayer: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. *Thy kingdom come.*”

—Condensed from *The Preacher’s Commentary: Daniel* by Sinclair B. Ferguson.

UNQUENCHED FIRE

“When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2).

We have now reached the well-known story of Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image, his rage at the three Hebrews who refused to worship it, and his casting them into the furnace of fire. Earlier, the three young men had purposed in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with the king’s food. They had also purposed in their hearts that they would not displace the Lord in their affections by acknowledging the king’s idol.

The king was not accustomed to any of his subjects questioning his absolute authority, and therefore he was determined to make a public example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His heart was “full of fury” as he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual (Daniel 3:19). The mightiest men in the king’s army were ordered to bind the youths and cast them into the midst of the flames. But rather than killing them, the fire only burned the ropes that held them. The God in whom they had trusted was proving His ability to save them from the fire and from the hand of the king as well.

The burning fiery furnace is one of the most solemn pictures God has given us of the awfulness of Hell. The king’s soldiers, whose bodies were not prepared by God, were unable to endure it. If we were to come to the mouth of Hell in our present bodily condition, none of us could survive. The God who preserved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego alive in that furnace long ago will also preserve sinners forever in the Lake of Fire.

There are, however, differences to be carefully noted. These men felt no pain. This is an amazing thing. They were in that fire, and yet they felt nothing of the flames that swept around their bodies. Only God could accomplish such a miracle. What a contrast to the final state of sinners in Gehenna who will be preserved from annihilation but will yet cry out: "I am tormented in this flame."

We are not told how long the Hebrews were in the furnace, but their trial came to an end when the king called them to "come forth" (Daniel 3:26). Those who are consigned to the Lake of Fire will never hear such welcome words. The everlasting condition of punishment, without mercy, is one of the fundamental teachings of the Bible. With this being so, let all who are unsaved flee from the wrath to come, to the Lord Jesus Christ and His sin-atonement blood which alone can save the sinner from eternal woe and fit him for the blessed regions of peace and happiness in Heaven.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:16,36).

—Condensed from *This Daniel* by Harold S. Paisley.

DANIEL IN THE DEN

"My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (Daniel 6:22).

Who does not know the story of Daniel in the lions' den? Yet there are precious thoughts here not always noticed. In this story, Daniel typifies our blessed Lord and Savior in several ways. Daniel's enemies "could find

none occasion nor fault ... in him" (v. 4). Pilate said the very same thing three times about Jesus: "I find no fault in Him" (John 18:38; 19:4,6).

The opponents of Daniel succeeded in having a law passed saying that the king alone was to be prayed to. This law condemned Daniel. The eternal God passed a law, too, ordering all men to honor Him and to worship Him alone. As a result, all men fell under the sentence of death, for no one ever fully obeyed that command. Though innocent, our blessed Lord was condemned by God's law when He took our place.

Darius labored to find some way to deliver Daniel from his fate. Didn't our God, too, seek for some way to avoid Christ's terrible suffering and death? Didn't our blessed Lord, as it were, look for a way out when He prayed three times in Gethsemane, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26:39-44)? Of course He knew that this was not possible (He must die if our sins are to be forgiven), but He prayed these solemn words so that we might know there is no way except the Cross.

Daniel was cast into the den of lions. Our Savior, too, was cast to the lion, as He prays in Psalm 22:21, "Save Me from the lion's mouth." Animals (or enemies) in Daniel's case; Satan in the Lord's case.

A stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet (v. 17). There was also a stone rolled to the mouth of the tomb where our Savior lay, and it was sealed as well (Matthew 27:66). Neither stone succeeded in keeping the guarded one there. Daniel came forth unharmed, and our Lord arose triumphantly!

—Condensed from *Daniel: The Man and The Message* by August Van Ryn.

SEVENTY WEEKS

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city” (Daniel 9:24).

The first thing that I want you to notice is that this is a prophecy concerning something which cannot be changed. The weeks are “determined”—they are all set and fixed and planned by Almighty God. The second thing I want you to notice is that this seventy weeks deals with the people of Israel, “thy people,” and the city of Jerusalem, “thy holy city.”

Here God is saying that His dealings with the children of Israel, until the setting up of the millennial kingdom, will cover a period of seventy weeks. As it is put in verse 24, “seventy weeks ... to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” The word translated as “weeks” may be translated either as “sevens” or as “weeks.” We find in other passages of Scripture (i.e. Genesis 29:26,27) that a period of seven years can be called a week. With that in mind, notice that the seventy weeks make exactly four hundred and ninety years.

The seventy weeks are divided into three parts. The first section contains seven weeks, or forty-nine years. The second part covers sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years. That leaves the last week, the seventieth one, by itself: “From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself” (Daniel 9:25,26).

Now if you turn to Nehemiah 2:1, you will have the exact date given when the command to rebuild Jerusalem was made: “It came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king...” The record goes on to show how Nehemiah made a request of the king that he might be permitted to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple and the wall. History fixes the date of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes’ reign as 445 BC. It is also a matter of history that the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple and all of the streets, took exactly forty-nine years, fulfilling the first division of the seventy weeks of Daniel.

Then, from that period on, we are told, “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off.” History records how, four hundred and thirty-four years after the rebuilding of the Temple, the Messiah, which refers of course to the Lord Jesus Christ, was crucified. After the first sixty-nine weeks, the city of Jerusalem was to be destroyed and trodden under foot: “And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Daniel 9:26). This, too, is a matter of history. In 70 AD Titus, the Roman, swept down upon the land of Palestine and destroyed the city and the sanctuary, and carried away the rest of the children of Israel as captives into all the lands of the world.

Then God began to deal with the Church, calling out a Bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel, as it were, is sidetracked for the present until God resumes his dealings with them in the last of Daniel’s seventy weeks. All of this is corroborated by the rest of Scripture. We read, for instance, concerning the Antichrist: “he shall confirm the covenant with

many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate” (Daniel 9:27). Jesus has told us that this “abomination of desolation” will take place in the future Tribulation Period (Matthew 24:15). See Revelation 11-13 for more details about these times and events.

I trust that you will be able to see what God meant to reveal to Daniel. There are seventy weeks during which God will deal with Israel. The first sixty-nine expired at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. At the Rapture of the church, God will continue the last week, and this week we call the Tribulation Period. The last part of it, the last half of it, is called the Great Tribulation.

May I again ask you if you are ready to meet the Lord Jesus Christ? If He should come today, would you be prepared to meet Him in the air?
—Condensed from *Daniel the Prophet* by M. R. DeHaan.

“NOT FOR HIMSELF”

The conversion of Marcus Bergmann, who translated the Scriptures into Yiddish, is exceedingly interesting. His father belonged to the strictest sect of Jews in Germany, the Chasidim, and died when Marcus was only a year old. Six years later, Marcus and his mother went to live with an uncle, and he was brought up strictly. At the age of twenty, Mr. Bergmann arrived in England and established a small synagogue in London.

Because of an illness, he was admitted to a hospital, where he found a Hebrew Bible which he began to read and study. While reading the ninth chapter of Daniel, his eye caught the prophecy contained in verse

26: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.” Though he was very familiar with other sections of the chapter—parts of which he prayed every day—he had never noticed this expression, as the rabbis discouraged the reading of Messianic prophecies such as Daniel 9 and Isaiah 53. In fact, the rabbis pronounced a curse upon anyone who would investigate the prophecy of Daniel’s seventy weeks.

Mr. Bergmann threw down the book, but could not rid himself of the words he had read. Why should Messiah be “cut off”? Why should He die if not for Himself? One morning he took up the Bible again, and as he read part of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, his eyes fell upon the words, “He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken” (Isaiah 53:8). He quickly laid hold of the soul-saving truth of the Gospel, as for the first time he understood that the Lord Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. That day, he put his trust in the crucified One.

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

—Adapted from *Twice-Born Men* by Henry Pickering.

THE CRITICS DEN

Because of its miraculous prophetic revelations of kingdoms and of Christ, no other book in the Bible has been attacked like the book of Daniel. For more than 1,700 years, the book has been in the “Critics Den” and fiercely assailed by sceptical writers. Their claim is that instead of being written by Daniel in the sixth century BC, it was a forgery written in the time of the Maccabees in about 168 BC.

But there is no question that the book of Daniel existed long before the critics say. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that when Alexander the Great, who is foretold in Daniel's prophecies (Daniel 8:5-8), came in the course of his conquests to Jerusalem in 332 BC, Jaddua, the High Priest, showed him the reference to himself in the book of Daniel. Alexander was so pleased that he spared the city. According to this, Daniel *must* have been written before 332 BC.

Furthermore, Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel, and wrote in Babylon the book which bears his name. Three times he mentions Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14,20; 28:3). Thus Ezekiel bears witness to the fact that Daniel existed, and that he was so noted for his righteousness as to be classed with Noah, and for his wisdom as to be linked with Job.

But the highest authority for the authenticity of the book of Daniel is our Lord Jesus, who said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15). Whosoever therefore denies the authenticity of the book of Daniel impeaches the integrity and wisdom of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Condensed from *The Book of Daniel* by Clarence Larkin.

GREATLY BELOVED

One of the fallacies taught by some media evangelists is that those who come to faith in Christ will find that their troubles will evaporate and they will have good health, peace, and prosperity for the rest of their lives. Such teaching is contradictory to Scripture and to our personal experiences.

Daniel suffered deeply during the term of his service for God. The very nature of the service in which he was engaged took a tremendous physical and emotional toll on him. We read, "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days" (8:27); "I was left alone ... and there remained no strength in me" (10:8). These afflictions came upon Daniel, not because of sin, or from the persecution of the world, but from the impact of receiving and imparting the mind of God.

The sufferings of Daniel afford us a unique glimpse into the love and concern of God for His suffering servants. For example, four times we read, "[He] touched me" (8:18; 9:21; 10:10; 10:16), and each touch imparted the strength and comfort that Daniel needed. After the first touch Daniel says, "He set me upright." After the second touch Daniel received "skill and understanding." Concerning the fourth touch, Daniel tells us "one like the appearance of a man ... strengthened me." It is a great comfort to know that there is a Man (Jesus) at God's right hand, and that He is the one who touches us in our time of distress, and who Himself is touched by our sorrows. We read in Hebrews 2:17, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."

We all need to feel His touch from time to time. There are times in our lives when we are down and needing a lift. Our God is not so uncaring that these things do not come to His notice. In the infinite tenderness of His love, He allows us to feel His touch, and we find ourselves renewed and refreshed for the battle again.

—Condensed from *Daniel: Godly Living In A Hostile World* by William Burnett.