

## **Daniel: A Middle Aged Teenager**

Daniel 1

(preached Pine Grove 1/8/17; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

Take your Bibles and find your way to the book of Daniel.

On Sunday nights for the next few months, we will look at the book of Daniel from beginning to end.

And the reason I chose Daniel is because it is a great companion as we move through the book of Revelation on Sunday mornings as a church..

The book of Daniel is OT's version of the book of Revelation, as God gives Daniel a look at all of human history..

Therefore, the book of Daniel is key to understanding to understanding the book of Revelation, which mainly covers the period of time before the second coming of Christ..

To understand the book of Daniel, we must set ourselves in the time period in which Daniel was written..

So, let me take just a minute to put us in the book of Daniel by looks at a timeline of Jewish history...

Now as we look at this chart we are taken all the way back to the the beginning of creation in Genesis 1..

We see Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, and the flood and Noah and the tower of Babel on the first line...

This first line is a time without the nation of Israel....

God simply worked in the world through individual people, but when we get to the second line, we notice that God called Abraham out of his land to follow Him...

This was in effect the birth of the nation of Israel...

Now, Abraham was not anything special...

He was simply called to obey God and he did, and because of his obedience, God blessed his descendants who became known as the nation of Israel..

Now, this nation started small but God blessed them and they grew into millions...

And God revealed Himself to Israel and gave them the privilege of keeping His law and writing down His word in Scriptures...

And God gave them a land at the end of line 2, and the nation settled in the Promised land and got a human king in roughly 1100-1000 BC...

First Saul and then David and eventually Solomon, but Israel was a disobedient people to God..

They broke His law and they worshipped false gods and idols, and though God warned them of the consequences of such sin, they continued in it...

So, as we get to the 3rd line, Israel experiences a consequence of their sin as their nation is divided into two parts...

Israel in the north and Judah in the south...

But even those nations continue in their sin, and God eventually allows both of them to be conquered...

The northern nation of Israel falls in 722 BC to the Assyrians, and beginning in 605 BC, the southern nation of Judah begins to fall to the Babylonians..

It will take 3 sieges and almost 20 years, but the entire nation of Judah is conquered by 586 BC..

Now, Daniel was a teenager in 605 BC when the first overthrow of Judah took place...

And we are going to find out that Daniel loved his homeland..

But more than that, Daniel loved his God..

And even though it was a time of unrest for Daniel and all of Judah, God was going to use Daniel in a mighty way in writing the book of Daniel...

Because the book of Daniel is going to serve as a source of comfort for the nation when there is no much comfort to be found as they are led away from their homes and way of life..

Everyone needs hope in times of trial, and the hope of the book of Daniel is this...

This isn't the end for the nation Israel.

They may be Babylonian captives now, but the people of Israel are not done as a nation...

God is punishing them for a while, but it will not be like that forever...

And the book of Daniel is a word from God that Israel has hope....

And look, we all need that right...

In 2017, I need hope as a believer...

Though many people their hope placed in a new president, I have serious doubts...

This world is fallen and headed in the opposite direction of God as fast as they can...

My only hope is found in the book of Revelation where I see the hope of Christ returning to set the world back in order...

Well, the book of Daniel was Israel's hope when their world was falling apart because in the book of Daniel, God reveals that his people will continue forever..

Though the Babylonians will conquer them, and though other gentile nations will rule over them...

God is not done and will never been done with Israel...

He will not only protect them physically, he will one day send a Savior to save them spiritually...

It may look bad as they walked to Babylon in chains, but Daniel was a teenage boy who God was going to use to give them a look down the hallways of time to a bright future...

God is going to lay out future history through Daniel that describes what will happen in the world from 500 BC until the return of Christ...

And as we are able to look back over what God said through Daniel 2500 years ago, we are able to see God's predictions through Daniel came through with incredible accuracy...

The book of Daniel is a book of hope for Israel, but it is also a book of God's sovereignty and power...

We will see that more in the next few weeks..

Now, as we see the time of Daniel's writing and the setting for Daniel's writing and the purpose of Daniel's writing, we need to look closer at the person behind Daniel's writing and that will be our focus tonight in Daniel 1....

Because the first chapter of Daniel is simply background of this ordinary teenager who God used in extraordinary ways...

So, as we look at chapter 1, let us consider this teenager Daniel and learn from his example...

I want to give you 3 qualities that lead God to use your life for his quality...

## **I. God Uses People Who are Content in Every Situation (1-7)**

Let's begin tonight in verses 1-2....

*1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his [a]god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his [b]god.*

The first 3 verse just give us the background of the book of Daniel, which I mentioned earlier...

Babylon was a world power to the east of Israel in the 600s BC...

Nebuchadnezzar was their king.

WE will learn more about him in the coming weeks as well..

For now, just see him as the Babylonian king hungry for more conquest and power...

And his hunger leads him to Israel where the Lord allows him to overthrow the southern kingdom of Israel beginning in 605 BC...

Jehoakim was the king of Israel's southern kingdom at the time, and the Babylonians barged in and conquered Judah.

And the Babylonians carried off some of the treasures of Israel and some of the people back with them to Shinar, which is another name for Babylon...

And this is standard practice in the ancient world...

You may have heard the saying...

“To the victor go the spoils.”

Well that saying comes from this era.

As a nation conquered another nation, they would carry off the spoils of that nation and the people as well..

The spoils of gold and silver would often be placed in the temple of their false god to show that their god was greater...

And the captured people would often be forced into slavery for their new king...

So, what we have in verses 1-3 is the standard practice of warfare and victory in 500 BC...

Verse 3...

***3 Then the king [c]ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his [d]officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the [e]royal family and of the nobles, 4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for [f]serving in the king's [g]court; and he ordered him to teach them the [h]literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be [i]educated three years, at the end of which they were to [j]enter the king's personal service. 6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.***

Here is where the story of Daniel begins...

The king of verse 3 is the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar...

And Nebuchadnezzar orders his top official to pick some young men of Israel for a special project...

These young good looking, intelligent and able young men of Israel would be brought into Babylonian and taught the customs and ways of the Chaldeans, which is another name for Babylonians..

Now, what is the point of singling out these young men to train them in the culture of Babylon...

Well, as people of a foreign nation were conquered, they were always a threat to rebel against the conquering nation..

So, conquering kings sought to make the conquered people feel like a part of their new nation..

The quicker the Israelites felt like Babylonians, they less likely they were to revolt in the years ahead...

And there is no better way to help the conquered people fit in than to train some of their own and let them teach the new culture to their fellow countrymen...

Daniel and these other men were going to be trained to be Babylonians so that they could lead other Israelites to be good Babylonians as well...

Now, to help these young men become good citizens of their new nation and to encourage them be loyal to their new nation, they were treated like royalty in their training....

Verse 5 tells us that they were given the same food and wine as the king of Babylon..

They received the same level of education as the king's children...

So, Daniel and the others were set to have it made in their new city...

And we learn their names in verse 6...

Daniel, Haananiah, Misahel, and Azariah, which were their Jewish names...

However they were given Babylonian names in verse 7..

Daniel became Belteshazar.

Hananiah became Shadrach..

Mishael became Meshach..

And Azariah became Abednego...

You will all know them from Sunday School fame of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace.

So, these young men are all selected and begin their training...

And what I simply want you to notice about them is their contentment with the plans of God in their lives...

Though none desired for their nation to be conquered and be carried off into captivity, they simply took it as the plan of God in their lives...

They went to their new nation and were willing to serve their new king with willing hearts...

You may say that they were forced to do it, but I would say that we don't see any kicking and screaming here...

As long as their new king didn't cause them to disobey their God, they simply followed the plan of God and tied to live contently wherever the Lord sent them..

There is a lot to be said about contentment in 2017, where there is a constant stream of discontentment from many people and even from people who call themselves Christians...

Complaining is the favorite past time of many people who want better jobs, more money, better homes, more clothes, trips and material possessions, and basically better lives...

No one seems to be happy with what they have and content to serve the Lord where they are...

There is this constant flow of I wish my life was better...

And if your highest goal is to have a better life on this earth, you will not be useful in the hands of God....

Because you can't serve two masters...

You will love one and hate the other...

And if you love trying to make your life more comfortable, you will hate God who wants to make your life more useful for Him and His purposes...

Daniel and his friends were strangers in a strange land, but they trusted God and set out to serve him with content hearts...

What more do you really need if God is your God?

If God be for you, who can be against you?

The secret to contentment is this....

Wherever I am and whatever I have is simply God's design for my life, so I will trust Him regardless of what I have and where I go...

Set your hearts to be content in 2017, and you will make yourself useful to God no matter what comes your way..

The second quality of a person who is useful to God is found in verses 8-10...

## **II. God Uses People Who Won't Compromise (8-10)**

Verse 8...

***8 But Daniel [k]made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God granted Daniel [l]favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, 10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would [m]make me forfeit my head to the king."***

Now in an interesting move, Daniel and his 3 friends refuse to the king's food and wine in verse 8...

You may ask what is the big deal?

They took Babylonian names, but they won't take Babylonian food...

Well, here is the issue...

Taking a foreign name was not prohibited by God's law, but God's law had many requirements about the eating of food...

God even had prohibitions about the methods of food preparation, and since Daniel and his friends would have no knowledge of how the food was prepared, they were right to avoid the food so not to break the law of God...

Now remember, this is the OT.

Israel is under the law of God.

Jesus has not come to fulfill the law for the believer, so Daniel and his friends are very conscious of keeping the law of God in a foreign land..

Now, what about the wine...

Though there was no OT law against the drinking of wine, the problem is the wine of the Babylonians was offered to their false gods...

This would also be true of the food and may have been a more important reason than the preparation of it for Daniel and his friends to refuse it..

Bottom line, Daniel and his friends were not going to eat food and drink wine that had been offered to the false gods of Babylon...

Though they took Babylonian names, they wouldn't take Babylonian food and drink...

They would not offend their God even if it led to their comfort...

That my friends is conviction, which always does the right thing no matter the cost..

Daniel and his friends were not going to compromise their convictions even if it meant T-Bones and choice wine for every meal...

The church needs more people like Daniel in it in 2017...

People who aren't willing to compromise their obedience to God no matter the cost...

We live in an age where churches and pastors love compromise...

This is never more evident in our day as churches across our world have compromised on the issue of gay marriage..

This is never more evident in our day as churches across our world have compromised on the issue of the inerrancy of the word of God...

This is never more evident in our day as churches have compromised over the biblical qualifications to be a pastor...

The majority of churches of 2017 are churches of compromise, and that church will never be useful in the hands of God...

But neither are people who compromise..

God uses people who are faithful to his word no matter the cost...

IF you know the word of God, stick the word of God, obey the word of God and in doing so, you make yourself useful to God...

Daniel made himself useful to God by holding firm to his convictions in verse 8 and refusing the food and drink of the king...

And God was with him...

Look at verse 9...

God showed compassion on Daniel and his friends by making the Babylonian official agree to their requests even though he was fearful for his life...

Because if Daniel and his friends started looking pale and unhealthy, the king would know something was up with their diet and probably kill his servant who was responsible for their well-being...

However, Daniel has a clever and courageous proposal to the official...

So, let's look at verses 11-16 to see his plan and identify the 3rd quality of someone who is useful to God...

### **III. God Uses People Who Are Courageous (11-16)**

Verse 11...

***11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance be [n]observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.”***

***14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and [o]they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food.***

***16 So the overseer continued to [p]withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.***

In a bold move and courageous move, Daniel asks the official for 10 days to show that God will be faithful to them..

So, the men are given vegetables for 10 days and brought before the official and they look healthier than the others who had been eating and drinking the king’s food and wine..

I would simply say this...

Conviction is not enough without the courage to follow the conviction...

There were millions of New Year's resolutions made last week, but most of them fail because words are not enough without the courage to trust God to follow them..

The Lord doesn't use people who say something but lack the courage to follow through...

Anybody can have strong convictions...

But the people of God are the ones who live out their convictions by courageously trusting the Lord...

Talk is cheap...

But the people of God talk and then walk courageously trusting Him..

Do you remember as Moses died and Joshua was given the role of leading Israel into the Promised Land?

Moses was a spiritual giant and well respected by the people, and though Joshua was no slouch, he was also no Moses..

Yet, listen to what the Lord told him as he took over for Moses...

Joshua 1:1...

*1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' [a]servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; [b]be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may [c]have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may [d]be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will [e]have*

***success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.***

Joshua knew the promises of God...

He had them in his head, but courage takes the promises of God and puts one foot before the other one...

We need courageous people in 2017...

People who don't just speak about the Lord, but who live courageously for him in the world...

Daniel had convictions that he wouldn't compromise, but he also had courage...

And when Godly convictions are combined with Godly courage, you find Godly men who are dangerous weapons in the hands of God...

Martin Luther was a nobody in the Catholic church, but the word of God filled him with strong convictions about the errors and sins in the Catholic church...

Yet, Luther didn't keep those things to himself, he stood against the Catholic church and the whole world on the Word of God...

And God used Luther as a mighty weapon in His hand to church back to biblical Christianity that still exists today...

Daniel knew the right to do, and he had to courage to do it...

May we be just as brave, and may God use us just as mightily...

A final quality of someone who is useful to God is found in the closing verses of chapter 1...

#### **IV. God Uses People Who Are Committed (17-21)**

Verse 17....

*17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of [q]literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.*

*18 Then at the end of the days which the king had [r]specified [s]for presenting them, the commander of the officials [t]presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.*

*19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they [u]entered the king's personal service.*

*20 As for every matter of wisdom [v]and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the [w]magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel [x]continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.*

If you remember from verse 5, how long was this training of Daniel and his friends to last?

It was a 3 year training...

And verse 18 lets us know that Daniel and his friends made it...

In other words, they were committed to the task that God had put before them....

They were committed to take advantage of the education...

They were committed to eat vegetables for 3 years....

And let me tell you...

That takes real commitment...

But more importantly, they were committed to follow the plan that God had put before them...

I am sure after a year, they had doubts about what God was doing...

The same could probably be said after 2 years as well...

Im sure thy were tempted to give up and refuse to serve the king...

Im sure they were tempted by a porterhouse and a glass of the king's finest wine...

But commitment to the Lord looks beyond what is right in front of you and sees eternity...

You can't be committed to anything unless you are fully committed to the Lord...

Only the Lord can empower you to stand firm when your body and mind say to give up...

Commitment is a rare thing in 2017, even among Christians...

We live in a day where no one is committed to anything...

Make me mad and I am taking my toys and going home...

Let someone insult me and I am leaving and never coming back...

Let me get discouraged and I am throwing in the towel and looking for something better...

Commitment is tough in a world that doesn't value loyalty...

But committed people are the ones that the Lord uses...

Committed people are the ones that the Lord blesses...

What do you need to be committed to in 2017?

Where should your loyalty be?

Let me offer you a suggestion...

Commit yourself to the Lord and His church...

For so many people, church is just another thing on their weekly schedule like work, family, grocery shopping and eating out...

In 2017, resolve to be committed to the Lord's church, and have the courage to say no to things that hinder your commitment to it...

Daniel didn't just talk about his commitment to the Lord, he lived his commitment to the Lord.

Daniel didn't just say he didn't want the king's food and drink to sound spiritual, he committed to not having it..

Daniel didn't just agree to be a part of this special training, he committed to it and followed through with it for 3 years...

There are plenty of Christians who resolved to be more committed to their churches in 2017, but many churches sit empty tonight because commitment is more than talk, it is action...

Will you be like the rest who talk a big game, but never follow through or you will be like Daniel who says it and then does it?

I hope it is the second option for all of us in 2017...

### **Conclusion**

So, this gets us into the book of Daniel and what is going to be a very fascinating journey over the next few months on Sunday night...

We have the book of Daniel tonight because Daniel was a man who was ready to be used by God..

He was content in where the Lord had placed him...

He wasn't willing to compromise for to make life easier for him...

He was filled with courage to live out his convictions.

And he was committed to doing what was asked of him with his whole heart.

I pray we can be like Daniel in 2017...

The Lord needs more Daniels today than ever.

Let us pray.