

(Daniel: The Man God Uses #1) Christ the Goal

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of studying the book of Daniel to know God intimately and understand His sovereign plan through history.

Duration: 1:12:46

Scripture: Daniel 1:8, Daniel 2:21, Daniel 3:25, Daniel 4:37, Daniel 5:27, Daniel 6:10, Daniel 9:3

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker makes three non-controversial observations about the book of Daniel. These observations are agreed upon by people who love the Lord. The first observation is that God's people are in captivity. The second observation is that even the best of God's people are a mess. The third observation is that God wants to make Himself known in history and He chooses to use His people, despite their flaws. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the character of Daniel and how it can help us understand God's heart in the rest of the prophets.

Transcript

Daniel, Man God Uses, TAPE 1, CHAPTER 1, CHRIST THE GOAL Chris, certainly in your presence we find all things. We pray that you might teach us what it means to abide in the presence of the Lord. Thank you for every part of your word and in a special way tonight we thank you for this section of Daniel that we'll be looking at.

We've sung, in thy presence, in thy presence there's light. In thy presence, in thy presence there's sight. We just pray that we might have eyes to see your light.

We'd ask you to deliver us from all that is flesh and all that's from man and man's ideas. Ground us thoroughly in yourself, in your heart. Thank you.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me say a few things by way of introduction.

Now, I didn't know who was going to be coming to this first study, and I see it's those that have been here before. And so welcome again. But let me just say this by way of introduction.

Whatever we study, what we're going to begin now or when we resume our Thursday nights, whatever we study, whether they be book studies, whether they be topical studies, character studies, whether we're in the Old Testament or the New Testament, it's our one purpose to study the Bible in order to know the

Lord. That's why we gather, that's why we meet together, and that's what we're going to be looking at. We want to know the Lord more intimately.

Since 1965 or there around, I've been convinced, and I believe it's by God, I've been convinced that the only profitable, edifying, even legitimate scriptural way to study the Bible is to study the Bible in order to know Him. And so that's why we gather. Really, when you think about it, what good is prophecy, and what good is doctrine, and what good are dispensations and theology and all the rest if you don't know how to walk with God? If you don't know intimate fellowship with the Lord, what good's all the rest? And so that's why we're going to gather and look into God's Word.

We want to see from God what His revelation of His own heart is. We want to see Him, His will, His purposes, and so on. A second thing that I'd like to mention is this.

I really attempt, and I'm not saying I always succeed in this, but I really attempt to make each study stand on its own two feet. And what I mean by that is this. It's true that the studies build.

Lesson two is built on lesson one. Lesson three is built on lesson one and two, and so on. But because we're studying to see the Lord, let's say that you miss a few lessons, and you come in the middle, or three quarters of the way through.

You don't need to be embarrassed about that, because each study is a study in itself. And so even if you miss, it's true that there's some building. But if you miss each study, hopefully, because of the age-abiding principles, you'll still be able to see the Lord and profit through it.

And if you miss one or two or five or ten studies, and you'd like those, they're all being taped, as you see, and you're welcome to have those tapes without cost. Just let us know. Let Lillian know.

She's the one that does all the work. And then she'll make sure you get those. In this connection, just a reminder, since we are taping, and many of these tapes go out to many different places, we would ask you, if you have any questions or comments, if you'd be so kind as to hold them till the end.

We want to hear your ideas and your comments, but rather than break up the continuity for those studying by tape, if you'd just hold those till the end, or jot them down or something, and then we can discuss them. And even our discussion will be on the tape, but at the end, so that others might benefit from your light, if you have some light. I just don't want to break up the thought, so if you'd be so kind as to do that.

And then I suppose I should make one comment about, we've had so many calls about babysitting, and do we have facilities in all the babysitting? And you know, that's tough, because we've tried that in the past, and it's been, it's sort of overwhelmed our girls, because at one time we had 30 children. And it's just, there's no way, there's no possibility that we can accommodate all of the requirements. And it's a little tough on us to, in a place like this, down in the cellar, to have that many people.

And one child did get hurt, and we were a little nervous about that. So we'd appreciate it if somehow you could make some kind of accommodations. I hope that that doesn't inconvenience you in such a way that you won't be able to attend.

Now, that's our desire, but that's not an ironclad rule. I mean, if somebody brings a child, we're not going to call the sheriff, or anything like that. And if you can attend the needs of your child, and still listen to the Bible study, and it's not disturbing anybody, there's not a problem.

But as far as babysitting itself, we're not going to provide that. So we just hope that you'll understand that and cooperate with that. Okay, having said that, I don't know what else we need to say by introduction.

Everybody knows where the restroom is, and so on. If you don't, it's right across the hall there on the other side. Okay, let me share what I'd like to look at this fall.

I'll ask you to open to Daniel, if you would, chapter 1. There's a series of studies that I've been working on now for some time. And Lillian still hasn't finished my research on all of it, so we're still working on that. But it has to do with the heart of God in the prophets.

And it's a very general look at the place of God in the writing prophets. And rather than studying the message of Obadiah, and the message of Nahum, and the message of Micah, and so on, it's not a book study. But it's sort of a standing back and seeing where Nahum fits in the whole history of the Old Testament.

And it is really an eye-opener. As far as your understanding of the whole Old Testament, it's a real key to unlock an awful lot. And we're going to get into that, but before we do, there's something that is sort of an introduction that God just broke on our hearts this summer as we were studying the prophets.

And so I want to spend the first five weeks on this. The first six chapters of Daniel. Now, Daniel is unique among all the prophets.

He's different than all of the prophets. And what we want to do is get a good look at him. Not the book of Daniel.

The man. We're going to look at the prophet himself. Daniel from the first six chapters.

And I believe it will take us far into the understanding of God's heart in the rest of the prophets. I think that will make sense as we go along. So this will sort of be a character study of the man Daniel.

If I had to give a title to this series, these five lessons, it would be the man God uses the man. By the way, if you want that fan on, I don't know if that, if it's not, no, you don't want it on. All right.

If it is, just push the button. Jim, you just come up then. You're in charge of the fan.

Okay. Kurt, make sure he does it right. It would be the man God uses.

God has done something wonderful in this book of Daniel. And God has given man Daniel just sort of stands out among the prophets. Now, I think some of you have sat through some of our introduction studies before, and I find I'm always chewing my tongue to a stump trying to apologize for introduction lessons.

And yet they're important and they're necessary. And my wife keeps nudging me and I'll say, hurry up, get through that and get into the meat. But really some of the meat doesn't taste as good if you don't get some of this background.

So I want to do a little donkey work and ask for your patience as we just sort of fly over the whole book in order to catch the flow of the Holy Spirit and try to key in on what will become the master key to all of the prophets, I believe. Now, I don't know what your background is and what you're familiar with in the book of Daniel. But I think in many cases, some people are afraid of Daniel.

And they just sort of lump Daniel together with Revelation. They say, Daniel and Revelation. Oh, no.

Full of mystery. Full of prophecy. Full of symbols and weird creatures.

How in the world are we going to understand massive images of men with heads of gold and shoulders of brass and silver and hips of silver or the other way around and legs of iron and feet of iron and clay? How are we going to understand a tree that reaches all the way to heaven and whose branches shade the entire globe? Strange beasts like winged lions and lopsided bears and four-headed leopards and ten-horned beasts and rams and he-goats and large-mouth horns and so on. And you go through that and you say, oh my, I give up. To understand Daniel, you almost have to be a mathematician.

You go into chapter 9 in his 70 weeks and so on and you have to understand Egyptian and Medes and Persian and Greece and Roman history and background and all of that. You realize you can know all of that and miss the Lord. You can memorize every word in Daniel and miss God.

Wouldn't that be a tragedy to be an expert on the facts, on the bark, on the shell of Daniel and miss the Lord himself and the revelation of himself? Even if you were able to nail down what those things meant and say, now this applies to Babylon and this applies to the Medes and this applies to the Persians and this belonged to the Macedonian Empire and this is Alexander the Great and this is Antiochus Epiphanes and here's where it divided up into four and this is Rome. Even if you were able to trace it to the coming of Messiah and outline all of those, that timetable for the coming of Messiah and the cross, you can still miss God. In fact, thousands and thousands of Christians study Daniel and never see the Lord and that's tragic.

And so when we study Daniel or any book in the Bible, it's got to be in order to know the Lord. Now, let me make three non-controversial observations. I say that because Daniel is such a controversial book and almost everybody that approaches it has their system of theology and they all approach it a certain way and if you don't approach it that way, then you don't understand the book and so on.

There are three observations that I make from this book that everybody who has a heart for the Lord, I'm not talking about the destructive critics. I wouldn't give two cents to study them. But I'm talking about people who love the Lord.

They all agree on these three things. And so there's no controversy here whatsoever. And I think those three things that are so clear contain the message of the book.

So let me give you those three observations and we'll sort of fly over the book as a whole. What I'm going to ask you to do, I'm going to spot check verses and you just come through the whole book and then we'll home in on the six chapters and then I think you'll see where we're headed. Alright, whatever else you see in Daniel, everybody agrees on this.

God is doing something in Daniel. Now that's pretty general isn't it? God's doing something and it's clear what he's doing. In the book of Daniel, God is making himself known.

That's what he's doing in the book of Daniel. You see the story of Daniel is more than a history of one nation conquering another nation. Some people approach Daniel, they say, well, Babylon beats up Israel.

And then the Medes and Persians beat up Babylon. And then Greece beats up the Medes and the Persians. And then Rome comes along and kicks them and so on.

It's more than that. There's a war and you see it right in the first verses. There's a war going on behind the war.

There's something going on behind the scenes and you're going to miss everything if you miss the significance of the invisible world in Daniel. One of the great sins that God was dealing with in his people that brought them to captivity and in this book they're in captivity, or at least they're beginning their captivity, was idolatry. They had run to other gods.

When you open the book of Daniel, don't just start reading la la la. It was a great crisis when Jerusalem was destroyed, when the wall was torn down, when the holy temple was invaded and the holy vessels were taken out of that temple. They were taken out of the temple of the house of God and they were brought into the temple of the false god, the heathen god.

See this wasn't just a battle, man against man, Babylon versus Judah. In their thinking it was the Babylonian gods against Jehovah. It wasn't men fighting men.

And when they had a victory they praised their gods because their god conquered the other god of that particular nation. When you go through Daniel you're going to be reading about Bel and Nebo and Merodach and Aku and some of these Babylonian gods and the whole idea is they're more powerful than the god of heaven. You're only two verses deep in the book.

Look at chapter 1 verse 2. Good evening. And 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 gods.

See we're changing gods. And he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. And the book begins with that victory.

And Babylon is now victorious over Israel, Babylon's gods. And the book ends our victorious over the true God. The word Daniel means God is judge.

And my you're going to see that God is going to show himself as judge in this book. We're going to be reading as we go through the book of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion. But I'll tell you this is more than one man getting saved.

One man coming to the Lord. This is the man that burned Jerusalem. This is the man that raped the holy temple and carried away the kings and the princes and the priests and the prophets of the Lord.

And then adorned his heathen temple with the vessels of God's holy temple. To see the true God loving that man to his knees. That's an amazing thing.

To see God bringing out of Nebuchadnezzar's mouth a confession, an adoration, changing his heart to promote God's glory and worship and pronounce peace on the very people he oppressed. That's an amazing thing. You see it in every chapter.

In chapter 1 you see this change of God. God has been defeated and now the heathen gods are victorious and they're rejoicing and celebrating their great victory. All through chapter 1 and we'll see it when we do a detailed look.

All through chapter 1 you see behind the scenes there's God. There's the true God. In chapter 2 if you just glance at the chapter, it's the true God that gives Nebuchadnezzar his strange dream.

It's not an accident, glance at verse 10, that Nebuchadnezzar requires an impossible saying so that the wise men of Babylon have to cry out. Chapter 2, 10, there's not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king. No one else who could declare it to the king except gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

Everything in this chapter presses you outside of politics and into the realm of God. And now Nebuchadnezzar is demanding something that only God can do. Glance at verse 17 and 18.

It's to the true God that the Hebrews pray. The true God answers in verse 28. There's a God in heaven who reveals mystery.

And then look how chapter 2 ends. God makes himself known. And finally he says, surely your God is a God of gods, a Lord of kings, a revealer of mysteries.

Turn to chapter 3. Look how chapter 3 ends, verse 28. Bless it, be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who put their trust in him, violating the king's command, yielding up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap in as much as there is no God who is able to deliver in this way.

Now don't forget, this is politics. These are the nations of the earth. And at the end of every chapter, God makes himself known.

Turn to 4. Look how it begins. Verse 2. It seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. How great are his signs! How mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

His dominion is from generation to generation. That's how it begins. Look how it ends.

Verse 34. At the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven. My reason returned to me.

And I blessed the Most High. I praised and honored him who lives forever. His dominion is an everlasting dominion.

His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing. He does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth.

No one can ward off his hand or say to him, What hast thou done? Verse 37 please. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven. All his works are true.

His ways just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride. Don't read that la la la.

Daniel above all other books may be Jonah excepted. Daniel above all other books is a book on evangelism. It's a book of soul winning.

It's a book of missions. It's a book of revelation. God is making himself known.

Every chapter. Every chapter. It's been said that Daniel covers the period of time called the age of the Gentiles.

See that's not an accident. What's God doing during the age of the Gentiles? He's making himself known. It's all about it.

He's making himself known. Chapter 5, same thing. Another king.

The great grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. It's the true God that writes upon the wall. It's the true God that calls him into judgment and allows his kingdom to be overthrown.

Look at verse 22 of chapter 5. You've not humbled your heart. You've exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. They've brought the vessels of his house before you.

You've praised the gods of silver and gold and bronze and iron and wood and stone which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life breath and your ways you have not glorified. Chapter 6. Another king.

Another kingdom. What's God doing? Still making himself known. God's everywhere in this chapter.

And at the end again a decree is written. Verse 26. I make a decree says this heathen king.

That in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel. He's the living God and enduring forever. His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

His dominion will be forever. He delivers and rescues and performs signs, wonders in heaven and on earth. Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lion? Whatever else you see in Daniel, everybody has to agree on this.

God is making himself known. Now hold that fact. Here's fact number two.

And everyone that studies the word has to agree on this. Daniel is also a book of history. It's a book of history.

There are real people, real events, real kings, real kingdoms, real nations going against other nations, wars and victories. Nebuchadnezzar really lived. And so did Belshazzar his great grandson.

And so did Darius the king of Persia. And so did Cyrus. There are real people that really lived.

Now some people get all afraid because there's such symbolic language in Daniel. No symbol is left unexplained. Yes, it's symbolic language, but it's just talking about history.

They say, oh, there's this man with a golden head and he's a giant. Look at chapter two verse thirty-eight. At the end of that verse, he explains it.

You are the king of Persia. The head of gold. You don't have to wonder what it means.

Verse thirty-nine, after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you. Then a third kingdom of bronze. Then there'll be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron.

He explains those symbols. There's a tree that reaches all the way to heaven. You say, how in the world am I going to understand that? Look at chapter four verse twenty.

The tree that you saw, the tree that you saw was the king of Persia. And then glance down to verse twenty-two. It's you, O king.

You don't have to wonder what it means. He comes out and tells you. He even interprets the handwriting on the wall, everything.

In chapter seven, you scratch your head and say, four beasts and what weird beasts they are. My, you just read that and you wonder if you'll ever understand. Look at chapter seven verse seventeen.

These great beasts which are four in numbers are four kings who will arise from the earth. He tells you. You don't have to wonder what they are.

You say, yeah, well what are the ten horns? Verse twenty-four. As for the ten horns, out of these kingdoms ten kings will arise. You say, yeah, but then in chapter eight there's a ram and he's colliding with a he-goat.

What's that all about? Look at chapter eight verse twenty. The ram which you saw with the two horns represented the kings of Media and Persia. Verse twenty-one.

The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece. And the large horn that's between his eyes is the first king. That's Alexander the Great.

He tells you. You don't have to wonder. Yes, it's full of strange language, but in every case he tells you what it means.

He tells you what it means. And in every case it's history. It's history.

Masons, people, kings, kingdoms, wars, men. The book of Daniel is describing history until the end of time. Not just four kingdoms, but it takes you all the way to when he sets up his kingdom at the end of time on the earth.

We won't go into it now, but he's that little stone in chapter two. Verse forty-four. In the days of the final kings he comes down and he destroys the kingdom and then that little stone grows into a mountain and fills the earth.

That's the final. That's his kingdom. The whole book is history, history, history.

I call attention to that because of this. What is God doing in Daniel? He's making himself known. What is God's stage? His platform? What is the scene of God's activity? Where does God make himself known? It's always in history.

Always. Always through history. History of nations.

History of individuals. At all times and in all places, God is making himself known in history. The book of Daniel, I think, is the greatest revelation in the Bible.

Showing us that history is not just an arbitrary sequence of events that just happen. In this book, God's behind the scenes and God's at the helm and God's pulling the strings and God's pushing the buttons and

God is controlling. God gives you a one-time look at four different nations and he says, I want you to see Babylon didn't just come in.

I did it and I was with the Medes and I was with the Persians and I was with Greece and I was with Rome. Get a good look at that. And then God steps back again and he says, now what you saw here will be true throughout all the age of the Gentiles.

I'll show you once so you'll know forever. That's what Daniel's all about. God is behind the scenes and what was true of the Babylonians and the Medes and the Macedonians and the Romans, God is doing that now, today.

God is behind history. Daniel shows you an act of God. He's alive.

He's moving whether we see him or not. In the most insignificant event, in the most catastrophic event, he's behind every festival. He's present at every funeral.

He is involved in everything. He's behind the baby's cradle. He's behind the monarch's throne.

He's ruling in history. He's behind history. He's forgiving.

He's neutralizing. He's ruling. He's overruling.

He's initiating. He's creating. He's upholding.

He's regulating. He's restraining. He is doing all things.

He's moving in every fact and in every event, in every place in all of history. History is not some dry chronicle. I remember when I was in school, taking the same history course five times.

That must have been a record. And finally they allowed me, that Lillian will explain maybe later. I filed my diploma under M for miracle.

I really did. In my file, my diploma is under M because I was going to flunk out again because of history. And I just closed my eye and I just, you know, all multiple choice, A, M, C, O, B. And I aced the test.

And I didn't even read most of the questions. Now that's grace and that's why I put my diploma. But that's history.

To me it was just a dry chronicle of departed mummies and all these ancient ruins that meant nothing. But in Daniel you see that God is always moving on the stage of history. Behind all the fume and all the smoke of world events, great things, small things, history of nations, history of people, your history, my history, their history, our history.

God, God, He's there, He's alive. History is not just dead facts. It's program.

It's alive. It's progress. It's finale.

It's the Lord moving. And it will be consummated according to chapter 7, 12 to 14 when the Lord Jesus comes the ancient of days and sets up His kingdom and so on. History is the stage on which God always works.

That's His platform behind the scenes weaving in and out of all events, God. Now you're not going to understand Daniel if you don't see that God is making Himself known. You're not going to understand Daniel if you don't see that God is making Himself known on the stage of history.

In every event that comes into your life, God's there somewhere doing something. It's the third observation. And I think once we see this, we'll understand where we're heading.

Average person thinks of the book of Daniel, especially these six chapters, he thinks, wow, what wonderful faith of these servants of the Lord. Let's study the fiery furnace. Let's study Nebuchadnezzar's conversion.

Let's study the handwriting on the wall. Let's study the lion's den. These are stories the artists have found.

These are the Sunday school stories. We have a brother that shares with us at the men's conference sometime. I think some of you know him, Dana Cognon.

And Dana, he's just a wonderful teacher of the Word of God. And he has a saying. You share a blessing with him and he'll go, that'll preach, that'll preach.

Well, when you come to these six chapters, that'll preach. It just stands on its own. Who isn't thrilled to hear about the fiery furnace and the fourth man in the furnace? That'll preach.

It just preaches itself, these six chapters. But if these six chapters aren't more than something that some artist can put on a canvas and some hymn writer can put into a hymn, this is more than good flannel graph lessons. It is that, and praise God, I don't want to take it away from the teacher.

These are wonderful stories and they're great topics for conference preachers and so on. But there's something about these six chapters which is fantabulous. Something that's great.

And the Holy Spirit does something over and over and over again in these chapters. Now, if you're going to see this common denominator in these six chapters, you need to realize in a little background that the Holy Spirit focuses on a group. And then he focuses on a group within the group.

And then he focuses on a group within the group within the group. I'll show you those groups. In the first, in a general way, the whole book has to do with God's people.

And at this, they're the group, the big group. And at this time, they're under discipline. God didn't just say, live in Jerusalem.

That was intentionally named Jerusalem, Salem, peace, because God intended that his people live in the city of peace. And because his people sinned, they were taken out of the city of peace and brought to a place called Babylon, confusion. And they were, they moved from peace to confusion and now they're, when this book opens, this is the first of three invasions.

And they're going to spend 70 years here. And now the group, the big group, they're enslaved. They're in captivity.

They're in bondage and they're about to spend a couple of generations in this terrible bondage. And then the Holy Spirit takes his spotlight and says, now you see the whole group, the people of God, sadly they're in captivity. And I don't mean this to degrade God, because I know he can, but he says, I won't use them.

See, they're in captivity. And then the spotlight falls to another group, illustrated in chapter 1, verse 3 and 4. The king ordered Asphenes, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, youths in whom was no defect, who were good looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, who had ability for serving in the king's court. And he delivered him to teach them the literature and the language of the Chaldeans.

Now, of course, there was a military reason for this kind of a thing. This is the first of three invasions. And Daniel, he's about 14 years old now, not more than 20, but probably around 14 or 15 years old.

And he was taken as a prisoner of war. And the policy of the foreign tyrants was to control their captors, or their captives, by stripping them of their brains and their wealth. And so they'd go into a land and they'd take out all the politicians and all the smart people and all the educated people and they'd just leave a lot of the peasants.

And they said, we'll have no trouble from them because they're not going to operate, they have no leaders. And that was the military reason. But God is writing a spiritual history here too.

This group was the royal family. The nobles, the princes, the skilled. You see, the Holy Spirit said, I want you to see God's people.

And then he says, they're in a mess. They're in captivity. And then he says, let's look at the best of God's people, illustrated by good looking and smart and intelligent and noble and royal and rich and so on.

And so he looks at the best of God's people, the ones that had the most light and the most privilege and the most opportunity and the most responsibility. And they were a mess too. God's people, they're in bondage.

God's heart is pounding saying, I've got to make myself known. I've got to make myself known in history. Who will I use? My people.

They're in a mess. The best of my people, they're in a mess too. And then the spotlight falls again on four men.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. The group within the group within the group. Now for the next six chapters, the Holy Spirit is going to begin to tell the stories of these men.

Men who are known for their union, their heart, their walk with the Lord. To understand the book of Daniel, you've got to know that God's doing something. He's making himself known.

You need to know that God's doing something on the stage of history. That's where he always makes himself known. May I suggest to you brothers and sisters in Christ that God always uses men like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, every place on this globe where God is making himself known in history, he finds a Daniel.

He finds a Shadrach, a Meshach, and Abednego. Those are his instruments. God never makes himself known in history until he has that.

That's the remnant of the remnant. That's the best of the best. And I felt like we couldn't get into the study of the prophets unless we understood what these men look like.

We need to get a look at the kind of men that God always uses on the stage of human history when he makes himself known. And it's my prayer as we look at some of these things, look at some of the characteristics of this select group that God would raise up from among us, men like this. God's going to make himself known.

There's no question about that. And he's going to do it in history. He wants to use men like these.

So now you know what we're after. This is what we're looking at. And I believe that's the theme of the book of Daniel.

It's how God makes himself known in history using men like these godly men. Daniel chapter 1. I'd like us to look at the first principle and then we'll close and that will set us up for next time. By the way, these chapters are rather lengthy.

And it's fall, it's school time, so can I sign some homework? It would really help if you would read the chapter in advance. But I don't want to take the time to read 54 verses and put that on tape, you know. So, in other words, next week we'll do chapter 2 and then the week after chapter 3 and so on.

So each week, sometime during the week, just read the chapter and maybe some of you more ambitious people like to even study it and do a little digging, that'll be beneficial and so on. Daniel chapter 1, just a couple verses here. In verse 5, the king appointed for them, that is this select group, a dearly rationed from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Meshach and Azariah, that's Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego with their other names. Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them. To Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Meshach and to Azariah Abednego.

But Daniel 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. Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials.

Now let me just tell you the story here, I think you might know it. He finally talked his commanding officer into allowing them to eat vegetables, lentils and they were tested for ten days and at the end of ten days they came out stronger and fairer than all those who fed on the king's dainties and so on. And of course then after the three years was up and they had their education they were tested and they came out ten times smarter than all of the Egyptian wise, I mean the Chaldeans and the magicians and so on.

Let's home in on this first principle. God is making himself known. God is making himself known in history.

God is always using men like this. I'm going to suggest something and I realize it's up to me to prove it and I think I can. That God has not only given us principles in these six chapters but he's put the principles in order.

In other words, chapter two has got to follow chapter one and chapter three has got to follow chapter two. You're going to experience if you're a true person of the Lord, you're going to experience in this order the making of a man of God. If you're going to be used by God to make him known in history it's got to begin with chapter one and then the next thing that will follow is chapter two and then you will experience

chapter three, then you'll experience chapter four and so on.

In that order. And I think you'll see that as we go along. And so what we're going to look at now is just step one.

This is the foundation. There is no man of God without this. This is the beginning.

Without this there's no missions, there's no evangelism, there's no being used by God. It seems like the heart of Daniel is expressed in verse eight. But Daniel made up his mind literally and the margin says it, set his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine that he drank so he sought permission from the command of the officials that he might not defile himself.

And we see from verses 11 to 15 that the three Hebrews agreed with him and with his purpose and they joined Daniel in that. And as far as the record goes there's only those four. Even of the other nobles only these four and the original language here is set their heart.

There's a wonderful simplicity and beauty in this. In the making of a woman of God, in the making of a man of God, this is always the beginning. This is always the start.

There has to be the setting of the heart. The direction. The will.

The choice. The deliberate decision and Daniel set his heart and it says that he would not defile himself. His heart was set that God would not be dishonored.

And to put it in simple words, here's Daniel's decision. All I want to do is please the Lord. I don't want to dishonor him.

I just want him happy. I just want God satisfied. Don't think that he refused these king's dainties because of some external religious law.

That's not why he refused it. Now it's probably possible that what the king offered him had been offered to idols. Some think that's why he refused it.

Maybe it had been improperly slain and not bled according to the Levitical laws. That's why he refused it. Maybe some of the ban in Leviticus 11 was included on the tray of the king.

In other words, maybe they were having pork chops because that would be forbidden. Or rabbit stew. They couldn't eat rabbit.

Or lobster. Or fried clams. Or anything like that.

They couldn't have that. Stuffed crabs. I doubt if the king's dainties included snakes and bats and seagulls and eagles and pelicans.

But he did. Who knows in those days. But it's deeper than that.

That's not why he refused to eat it. You see, when God gave those laws. Some people say, well, it was just hygiene and they didn't have refrigeration in those days and that food would spoil and all that kind of stuff.

Maybe that was part of it, but that wasn't the main reason why God gave those laws. He explains why he gave the laws. There are pictures of salvation.

Where life is in the blood. And God was saying that fellowship with him is life and holiness and cleanliness. You see, Daniel had enough problems.

If you have the King James Version, in verse 3, when Daniel was under Athanaz, it says the chief of the eunuchs. You know what a eunuch is? You see, there's a good chance that one of the first things that these Hebrew boys experienced was emasculation. Castration.

Now picture this young fellow, 14 years old. Isn't that an amazing thing? Young teenager to fame. 14, 15 years old.

God had told Hezekiah in chapter 39 of Isaiah that some of your sons who issue from you will become eunuchs in the king's palace in Babylon. I tell you, these guys had enough problems. They were robbed of their manhood, denied the pleasures of marriage and family life, given a brand new culture.

You got a picture? Well, they were rooted out of their culture. They were given a new temple, new gods, new names, new environment, new language, new everything. The culture shock involved with such a transplantation is almost unbelievable.

They don't need Leviticus 17.10. They got enough problems. Leviticus 17.10 says, I will set my face against the person that eats blood. Had to do with fellowship with God.

And when Daniel set his heart to murder the Lord and refused to eat that, he's saying all I want is fellowship with God. I set my heart to make Him happy. I don't want to be defiled.

I just want fellowship with God. I got enough problems. I don't want His face against me.

I don't want God to be my enemy. Daniel and those three Hebrews, now whether they learned that at their mother's knee, or whether they were taught it in some temple back in Jerusalem, or whether God revealed it to them, or whether they stumbled on it, I don't know, but it was the right thing. Somehow in those young teenagers, they did the right thing.

And they set their heart and all I want to do is please God. All I want to do is honor Him. I don't want to be defiled.

You know, it's amazing. They didn't object to their names being changed. Because really, you know, you can call me anything you want to call me.

That's not going to change the reality. And they gave them these heathen names. And they took the God out of their name and put one of their own gods in their name.

And they said, oh, we're not going to object to that. Let them do that, you know. They called the Lord Jesus Beelzebub and so on.

And they called him a drunkard and so on. Jehoiakim, their king, he was called the king, but he wasn't a king. That's just a name.

He was just a slave. He was just a puppet. It says in Revelation of the church of Sardis, they have a name that they're alive, but they're dead.

Names mean nothing. Titles. So they said, you can change that.

And you know what else is interesting here? I don't want to get into a controversy, but I was interested in the fact that they didn't object to their education. Three years they were going to be inculturated in this secular system, this Babylonian, this secular university. And they didn't object to that.

They put their head on the line for a sandwich. And they said, we're not going to be defiled. We're not going to feed on this.

But they allowed themselves to be educated by the heathen. These days we hear so much about Christian education and don't let the public schools defile your children and so on and don't go to a secular university. I was told if I went to a secular university, one of my professors at Bible school told me this, if I went to a secular university, it was the same thing as having Satan sign my diploma.

Well, I know Daniel wasn't afraid of being defiled by a secular education. I'm not pushing against Christian education, but I am saying this, if your heart is set like Daniel's, all I want to do is, oh God, you're not going to be hurt by a secular education. And Daniel wasn't afraid of that.

And when Daniel made that single choice, he discovered some tremendous things. Let me just say them and you'll see them as we go through this. You see, Daniel and his three friends, this remnant of the remnant, this group within the group within the group, he was looking for happiness.

I think he sort of gave up on that. Now he's a prisoner of war and if I said, well, I can't get married, can't have kids, I'm sort of stuck here as a prisoner of war. All I want is him happy.

And when he set his heart to make God happy, he found his own happiness. He found his own fulfillment and his own joy. Just honoring the Lord brought this happiness to him.

When Daniel went after God's joy, he found his own joy. You'd expect in reading the record to see some bitterness in Daniel. If it were me, I speak as a fool, but great, that 14-year-old boy going through what he went through, I would probably say to the Lord, hey, you know, what's going on? And if you're so sovereign, how come you allowed this? My whole life has been robbed for me.

Or else he would blame his fathers and say, because they neglected the Sabbath for 490 years, we got to suffer the consequences and have the 70 years in captivity? But the opposite is true. You don't hear one groaning, one grumbling, one sign of discontent. In fact, you see the opposite.

You see a man who has found his peace. And he's found his joy and he's found his happiness. And may I suggest, he found it by not seeking it.

He didn't go after his own happiness. He set his heart one day, I want God happy. And when he said I want God happy, he found his own place, his own happiness.

And they weren't able, and as you'll see through the record, through 80 years, they weren't able to shake that out of him. Circumstances mean nothing when your heart is set on the Lord. The book opens, he's a prisoner of war, but great day, it's a good thing it told you that, because this man's free.

He might be a prisoner of war, they might have shackles on his wrist, but they don't have shackles on this man's heart. My, this guy's free. Daniel's free.

He found another thing. He wasn't looking for it. He just set his heart on the Lord.

And he said one day I'm just going to please God, that's all I want. And all of a sudden he found his own joy. And the second thing he found was the blessing of God.

There's no doubt about the psychology of Nebuchadnezzar. When he was feeding him that King's Danish and all, he was trying to enculturate him. He was trying to make a Babylonian out of him.

He was trying to deprogram him, de-Hebrewize him, take away his name, take away his God, take away his memory, pour in all this other stuff, and enculturate him, change him, give him a new culture, a new name, a new environment, a new language. He says, feed on this. In our world system, you can eat like a king.

And what Daniel was saying in effect was this, I don't have to eat what you're feeding me. See that's what he was saying. I don't have to swallow what you think is so great.

And outside it looks good, the King's Danish and all the best food. And I'm sure it was the best. And if there was steak and all that, it was all there, the best.

Because they were going to make a worldly man out of him. And what he said is this, I choose vegetables, boy you just give me a few tomatoes, that's it. And when he ate on that which pleased God, when he fed on that which honored God, all of a sudden he was strengthened.

He got the blessing of God. And others didn't even know what he was feeding on. They didn't know that.

That's a secret diet. And if the King needed to take it off his head, it was a secret diet. But they could see the results and they looked at him.

You would think if you feed on what pleases God, you're going to become anemic and skinny and pale. But the opposite is true. No man is ever a loser for feeding on that which pleases God.

You're not a loser. You get the blessing of God. Once again, what I'm trying to point out is Daniel didn't go after that.

He just went after it. He said one day as a young teen, he said all I want to do is honor God. And when he said that, he found his own happiness.

And when he said that, he found the blessing of God. As far as the record goes, Daniel found another thing. He not only found the blessing of God and his own happiness, but he found his place in God's redemptive history.

He found his fame. Now remember, Daniel doesn't know God's using him as a pencil to write a Bible. Daniel doesn't know he's involved in this great history and that he's going to be talking about history until Jesus comes again.

He's not trying to be a foreign missionary. He's not trying to make God known. In fact, he's just trying to survive here in a lot of this.

You think Daniel's saying, oh, I'm going to be courageous. I'm going to be a mighty man of God, a good testimony. I'm going to become an instrument of God.

He can use me here. Almost every Christian in the world has heard of Daniel. I've got a son named Daniel, named after this Daniel.

I did a study some years ago on Daniel, and I said, if I ever have a son, I'm going to name him Daniel. And the only reason David wasn't named Daniel is because I wanted to name my first son after the man who led me to Jesus. And so he's David.

But then Daniel was coming next, and I'm glad it was a boy, because she'd have been Daniel. I just wanted Daniel. Every Christian in the world has heard of Daniel, but Daniel didn't live to be remembered.

He didn't live and say, oh, I hope someday people name their kids after me. He wasn't saying, I want to do some great thing to be remembered forever. There's a difference between trying to be remembered and laying hold of that which God holds in everlasting remembrance.

Did you follow what I said? There's a difference between trying to be famous and embracing some truth that God honors and remembers forever. That's why Daniel's known. There's a good chance we'd never known a Daniel.

If one day he hadn't said his heart, I just want to please God. That's all he did. He did nothing else.

Later on, we're going to look at his great ministry. Quite honestly, he had no ministry. Interpreted a couple of dreams.

What did he do? He said his heart, I just want to please God. And all of a sudden, he found his own happiness. And he found the blessing of God.

And he found his place in God's redemptive program. And he found his fame. And he found purpose.

God's making himself known in history, and he uses men like this. It always begins there. There's never an exception.

Someday, some way, somehow, if you're going to ever be used by God, you got to come to that place where you just say, all I want to do now is make him happy. I don't care about anything else. I want God honored.

I want God happy. Then you're going to find yourself. You're going to find your own joy and so on, and the blessing of God.

1 John 2, 17 says the world's passing away with its lusts. But he that does the will of God abides forever. Daniel's sure an illustration of that.

Well, Daniel said, well, I've got one responsibility. I'm just going to honor him. And then God took over.

As soon as he said his heart, God took over. You see, this is a great illustration. Chapter 1, A Man's Part and God's Part.

Setting your heart to honor God's one thing, performing is another. It's one thing to say, I'm going to honor God no matter what. Now let's see you do it.

You read the book of Daniel. You're reading the book of miracles. God miraculously gives him an interpretation.

God miraculously keeps him in the fire. God miraculously takes him out of the lion's den. God miraculously helps him understand the writing on the wall.

He didn't look for a miracle. When he made his decision to honor God, he didn't plan on performing. He planned on dying.

He thought he was going to die. He set his heart to know God. He said, I'm just going to honor God and I don't care if you kill me.

And that's what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Noah said. They said, put me in the furnace. I'm going to die.

All I want to do is honor God and I'm going to die. And may I suggest that that's God's part? We get so disturbed about trying to live the Christian life and all this kind of thing. Brothers and sisters in Christ, just set your heart to please him.

And here was the miracles. You don't have to worry about the miracles. Daniel, as you go through this, is mightily used by God.

But in order to be mightily used by God, he's got to have some gifts. He's going to have to have the gift of insight and the gift of interpreting dreams and he's going to have to have supernatural wisdom. You think Daniel says about, Oh Lord, give me this gift and give me that gift.

He didn't know anything about gifts. He doesn't care about gifts. He's not looking for gifts.

He set his heart one day to honor the Lord. And God said, you do that, I'll give you the equipment you need. You don't have to say I'm inadequate and I'm not going to be able to perform and how you ever going to use me in human history to make yourself known.

There's only one thing. And Daniel sets his heart to just want to honor God. He sets his heart and he finds himself.

He sets his heart and he finds the blessing of God. He sets his heart and he finds his place in history. In redemptive history, he finds his fame.

He sets his heart and God performs. He doesn't have to perform. He sets his heart and God equips him.

And look at the last verse in this chapter. Daniel continued until Cyrus. This man lived to be in his nineties.

Continued. The grace of God. Daniel as a young man of 14 years old, he didn't say, I wonder how I'm going to persevere to the end.

I wonder how I'm going to continue. He didn't worry about continuing and the perseverance of the saints and all of that. The grace of God made him continue.

And you talk about changes, you know, this isn't just a change of address, folks. This man went through changes. This man went through nine kings.

This man went through three kingdoms. This man had a revolution. These were changes.

How did he continue? And all the changes of life. The grace of God. That's God's part.

What's his part? He set his heart one day. I'm just going to please God. I'm just going to honor him.

All I want is God happy. Then God enabled him and God equipped him and God enabled him to continue. That's what Daniel's all about.

God's doing something. Making himself known. God's doing it on the stage of history.

And God's using men like this. And the first step is always setting your heart. Don't go looking to your own happiness and don't go looking for the blessing of God.

And don't go looking to be some kind of ministry or to be used in some mighty way to be remembered. And don't try to look for your spiritual gift and wonder how you're going to be equipped for whatever God calls you to. Forget about that.

That'll come. That's what America's breathing. You set your heart to honor him.

Decide. Will. Choose.

I just want to please him. And you watch how everything else fits together. When you do that, you're in for chapter 2. Chapter 2 will always follow chapter 1. And we'll look at that next time.

Well, you get the idea. This is the flavor of where we're heading. Oh my, when you get into these chapters and see the man God uses, this is the person he's always going to use.

Alright, comments or questions? I was thinking this past week about the book of Judges. All the man God used in Judges had very specific weaknesses, I mean very obvious weaknesses in every one of them. Alright? And then I was thinking of Moses and David and Elijah and Daniel.

But they're not noticed as much for weaknesses. Their kind of qualities are more like they just set their hearts to do God's will. What can you tell me, if you take those men and you take the men in Judges, is there a parallel between them? There were men all who set their hearts to know the Lord, I think.

And God is showing that he uses inadequate instruments. Daniel certainly had nothing, you know, naturally, it was all supernaturally given to him. And even those gifts, my how he prayed, he was exhausted using his gifts.

As he prayed for God to open, it didn't just come and say, I've got the gift of insight, so just give me the problem. When he prayed and laid before the Lord one time for 30 days, and he said, no strength was in me after that. See, legalism is a cop-out.

Legalism just makes your head sweat. You know, you run around and you get busy. Real spiritual living is an exercise to the soul and it exhausts you.

And Daniel was exhausted before God constantly. To really lay hold of the Lord is exhausting. And he did that.

But I think they all had that in common, that they were nobodies who came to know somebody. Comments? Yes, Julie. Do you think God has people in mind in this part of history? Oh yeah.

That's why the book of Daniel covers the age of the Gentiles. Because what he did there was to show us forever how he does now during the age of the Gentiles. This is what he's doing now, and he's using men like this now.

You know, nothing's changed. And that's why I wanted us to see this before we looked in the prophets. We've got to see this prophet because he represents all the prophets.

This is the man God uses. And that's what he's doing now. And that's why all my prayer is that we'll be these men.

Still nothing but nobodies out here. Bless God. Well, let's commit our time to the Lord.

We can still fellowship. Our Father, we do thank you. Not for what we think we know these things mean, but for how consistent your word is and how you can take these truths and make them real in our heart, what you know they mean.

Lord, we want to be men like Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Instruments, the remnant of the remnant, through whom you can make yourself known in history. Oh Lord, work these principles in our heart, we pray.

We thank you in advance that you're going to do it. Now guide our fellowship together and enable us to edify and build one another up. Thank you for the refreshments provided and nourish us with them.

And thank you for those that have provided them. Just give us a good time in the Lord, enjoying the Christ in each one of us. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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