

36. Daniel and Devotion

Daniel was of the tribe of Judah, likely of a branch of the royal family, which could mean that he was a descendant of David, but we do not know his father's name.

Daniel was in his early twenties when Jerusalem was first besieged by the Babylonians and defeated, and was among those chosen for the king's court in Babylon. Thus Daniel was part of the first captivity to Babylon; in fact the first chapter ends with these words, "Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus," making Daniel the count of seventy years until the return.

Daniel grew up hearing Jeremiah's word.

Four Young Men. Young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the **king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.**

Daniel was accompanied by three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who also had grown up hearing Jeremiah speaking to the people and court of Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar was not a cruel tyrant, though he did want to rule. Rather, his goal was to make Babylon the most beautiful city on earth – which goal he did accomplish. These young men were part of his scheme.

Belonging to God. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with **the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank.**

The point is not the outward, but the inward. The law did not require these young men to eat only vegetables. Nonetheless, most animals were "offered to idols" when they were butchered, a practice unacceptable to the Judeans.

We realize this, that finding themselves taken far from the city and temple of God, these young men wanted to stay true to the God of Israel, somehow. That was their heart. And it was this heart of devotion, then, that God honored and anointed with His Spirit.

Wisdom and Understanding. As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in his realm.

This is something I found in secular colleges. Those who had some form of Christianity taught meaningful things, but those who did not taught mostly gibberish.

Walking Carefully. Daniel and his three friends would “walk a tight-rope” all their lives in Babylon. On the one hand, by the Spirit of God inside of them, they respected the authority over them and embraced learning what they were taught.

But on the other hand, their hearts and lives were devoted to God, and, to them, that meant drawing a distinction between their own conduct and practices and all the loose living going on around them. Of truth, their lives were God’s definition of devotion. “We belong to God, though we live our lives in service to others.”

Their conduct won them favor from those over them, but jealousy from their peers.

Knowing the Man. We have two lessons on Daniel. In this first lesson, we want to understand the man and his heart towards God; then, in the second lesson, we will place the visions that he saw.

These two things are all woven together, however, and so we will bring in portions of the vision chapters, just to know the man. At the same time, in the next lesson, we will have to bring in the man in order to have any idea of the visions.

Daniel and his friends are in Babylon no more than a year when they hit their second great test. The king had a dream, but he will kill all who cannot tell him his dream.

Humble Yourself. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Later, Gabriel will say this to Daniel, “You set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God.”

This is the ONLY entrance into the knowledge of God, and this is the key to the difference between substance and appearance, as well as between truth and fantastical stupidity.

Father as Contention. Yet this point of difference is actually shocking to me, something I never understood in the past, a human reality that always left me very confused.

One of the great turning points in my knowledge of God came exactly halfway through the first five *Symmorphy* texts, with 14.3 A Highway for God.

Just before that, I wrote [12.1 Father as Contention](#) in which I expressed my confusion over the absence of something in most Christians that I never comprehended. Rather than bring the whole thing in here, I would urge you to read it again. I will include one slide from that.

Fixated Eye to Eye. I am simply without comprehension. Everywhere I look throughout Christianity, every one of my brethren seems to be pursuing this and pursuing that, and NO ONE is looking God in the Eye. I have never been able to do anything else.

Since I was nineteen years old, I have been fixated, eye to Eye, face to Face, heart against Heart with this Mighty Being who claims He is God, who claims He created me, and who claims He is my Father. And this PERSON, who has contended with me from the start, has grown over these forty years so large in my view that I am incapable of seeing what everyone else claims to be “seeing” with their eyes tight shut.

Out from Father’s Heart. Nothing we think we know can be true unless we are seeing all things out from the Father’s Heart.

And there is only one Person who will ever show you the Father’s Heart, let alone place you there. And that Person is NOT the Bible nor Christian theology nor all the preachers in Christendom.

I find that this contention fills the first few chapters of my book, *Knowing God by Scripture*, here is one quote. – I have no interest in teaching you “how to” study the Bible. In fear and in much trembling, I would take you face to Face with this Holy and Mighty Being who would speak WITH you. –

Missing the Main Thing. When I read the writings of so many, including, say, Norman Grubb, I do not find them in the position of being on their face on the floor contending with God in Person with their Bibles widely open and their mouths tightly shut.

They might be able to share “true” things, but they cannot know what any of it actually means.

In fact, again, I would have you read this entire lesson, [2.3 Missing the Main Thing](#). – Actually, read this for next time, because I want you to have the poem “Six Blind Men from Hindustan” fresh in your mind when we consider Daniel’s visions.

Three Qualities. Daniel had three qualities that made him different than most other humans, including all the other thousands who had also been brought from Judah to Babylon.

First is that he treated with God as a Person, heart to Heart and face to Face. Daniel would not know anything unless God Himself personally showed it to him. Second, Daniel placed himself before God in humility, as a vessel of weakness through whom God might speak.

And third, Daniel was void of any thought of “*there are two lives in me.*” Daniel was with God; God was with Daniel; there was no other thought.

Ask in Faith. As I have pointed out elsewhere, a huge part of the difficulty in Christian thinking is Paul’s habit of contradicting himself big-time and never explaining it.

I no longer see James as in any way contradicting Paul’s gospel, but I do see in James an excellent rebuttal of Paul’s contradiction of his own gospel in Galatians 5, a rebuttal that brings Paul’s confusion in line with Paul’s gospel. This whole passage explains Daniel for us.

Now, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask alongside of God, the One who gives to all generously without finding fault, and wisdom will be given to him. Let him ask in faith, however, doubting nothing.

Wild Instability. For the one who hesitates is like a wave of the sea, being blown and tossed by the wind. One who is hesitant, lacking in confidence, should not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. For he is a two-souled man, with two stories of self, wildly unstable in all of his ways (James 1:5-8).

Yet this “wild instability” became a foundation of “correct” Christian thinking.

On the other hand, there are many who are NOT hesitant and who are filled with confidence, yet because they do not treat with God's Heart, they present to God's people a unified message that is not God's.

Respecting King Neb. Then, because Daniel treated with God as a Person, he turned and respected the king of Babylon. This is the man who will destroy Jerusalem and the temple that God filled with His presence. Yet Daniel did **not** say, "*You pagan idolator.*" Here is what he said.

You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory.

Nothing is taking place outside of God, and everything is being turned towards the completion of God's desire. In fact, Daniel's respect toward King Neb gave God the open door to win Neb's heart before his death.

The Proving of Christ. The story of Daniel in the lion's den, comes years later, near the end of Daniel's life. I believe that God added this experience to Daniel in order to show the proving of Christ faithful and true across the whole span of Daniel's life.

And the reasoning of God is NOT to give license to an orgy of intellectual speculation, "I've got the interpretation; I've figured this thing out."

The reason God proves Christ faithful and true is for one thing only, for the sake of His Church, and thus we see that the point of Daniel's life is found in Chapter 9.

The Just for the Unjust. I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request...

Daniel begins by placing the Covenant before God. Then he says this, “We have sinned and committed iniquity.”

Compare that with these words. – **My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.”**

Sharing Hheart with God. Daniel is sharing Hheart with God, the Lord Jesus – And we also.

Daniel is placing himself before God as an advocate for the sake of his brothers and sisters in Israel.

“Our God, hear... and for **the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary,** which is desolate. O my God... see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not **delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”**

He Meant the Church. In Acts 2, when Peter said, “This is what was spoken,” he did NOT mean, “I’ve figured out the signs and I have the interpretation.” He meant, this CHURCH, these people gathered together filled with the Spirit of God, this is THE fulfillment of everything God speaks.

People who despise other Christians never consider the Father’s Heart. They simply don’t care.

Daniel and his three friends were the exception and not an example to us of the practice of most Judeans in Babylon. Most worshipped the beast and Ezekiel found the foreheads of most hard against God. Most refused to return.

My Care for All the Churches. To Daniel, that wasn't the point. – "For Your sake, Oh God, and for the city that is called by Your name." To care about God is to care about the entire Church.

Besides these outer things, the tumult coming on me every day, my care for all the churches. Who is weak and I am not also weak? Who is ensnared and I do not burn inwardly? (2 Corinthians 11:28-29).

Who, then, is our hope, or joy, or crown of boasting and exultation? Is it not even you, in the face of our Lord Jesus, inside of His presence? For you are our glory and our joy (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

The Completion of All Word. The Church is His body, the fullness of Christ, that is, the full meaning that is Christ filling full all inside of all, that is, Jesus filling with Himself everything in everyone (Ephesians 1:23).

The Church walking upon this earth, a woman clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, is the fulfillment and completion of every Word God speaks.

And when we say, "Church," we are speaking of two distinct things both at the same time. We are speaking of all whom the Father has given to Jesus AND we are speaking of that small local group of believers with whom we gather.

The Heart of God. Right after Daniel prayed this prayer, placing himself in the place of the wickedness of the people of Israel, just as Jesus did, and placing Jerusalem, God's city before God for His sake, Cyrus decreed the return of the captives to Judah.

This is the Heart and Contention of God; this is the opposite of where "Christian thinking" has placed our brethren, for they all see "salvation" as an escape.

We see salvation as the Church, including all “foolish” Christians across the earth, even the “foolish virgins” with the wise, it matters not to us – the Church filled with Jesus being the Tree of LIFE inside God’s creation.

Reading for Next Time. The next lesson is “Daniel and Visions.” For that lesson read Daniel Chapters 2, 7, 8, 10, and 12, as well as the lessons linked to in the text.

Now, in dividing the study of Daniel into two lessons, we are attempting first to show the man who saw these visions and then second to show the meaning of the visions. You have to know the first before you can know the second, and the second is “meaning,” NOT “figuring out.”

Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.”

Let’s Pray Together. We have turned, now, to prayers specifically for the Church and for the establishment of Christian Community as God intends the fullness and completion of Christ to be.

And so we will start with Daniel’s prayer, converted into Paul’s gospel and the Church in our day.

“Oh God, our Father, You are so wonderful to us, for You keep Your Covenant with us in all things, the Lord Jesus written upon our hearts. And You have made us part of that Covenant with You, that we would be Your mercy to others because we love you. Father, we keep and watch over Your Word in our hearts.

Your Wondrous Mercies. “God our Father, we stand in Your presence for Your people’s sake, all our fellow Christians all across the earth. Father, except for Your wondrous Mercies to us, we have been as any. We have not believed Your word, and we have spent our lives cursing Your goodness.

Father, when we hear the serpent's gospel in the mouth of our brethren, we know that we have spoken the same things against You as well.

"Father, just innocence belongs to You alone; apart from the Lord Jesus Christ in His kindness to us, only shame belongs to us, for we have walked as if You were far away from us, as if You were being unkind to us.

For Your Name's Sake. "Father, all that is coming upon Your people, all the difficulty, is to get our attention, because we have not listened carefully to hear Your voice. God, our Father, hear our prayer this day; cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, the Church of Jesus Christ, regardless of all our refusal and unbelief.

"Father, we do not ask because we are anything or because our prayers are anything, but because of Your great Mercies. O Lord hear! O Lord forgive. O Lord, listen and act.

"Father, move upon Your people now in power, Your Jerusalem, for Your name's sake, cause us and they with us, to hear and to live, in Jesus' name."