

Patterns and perspectives in Daniel

Its all about Jesus. And salvation.

Why was Daniel written?

Why was Daniel written? I cannot believe that Daniel just sat down one evening and said, "I think I'll write a book about prophecy." I really can't believe that. I also do not believe that the book of Daniel was written down all at once.

I do believe that he recorded events pretty much as they happened. At the last vision the book was finished. As a matter of fact, it is the angel that gives the ending of the book.

So why was it written?

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV)**

<sup>16</sup> All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

<sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

As we find Daniel in scripture, we must assume that it is given by God through his Spirit for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness that God's children should be perfect, or complete in righteousness.

So how are we to get this understanding from the book of Daniel?

First and throughout, in the book of Daniel God reveals himself awesomely in his justice, judgment, endless existence, unfathomable wisdom, love of his children and limitless power.

And by the way, in the book of Daniel, God is claiming everyone as his child.

We have some part of the vastness of God expressed in every portion of Daniel. He can bring down wicked nations, he can restore repentant nations, he can reveal the future to anyone he chooses, he can stop the natural effects of fire, he can put down and restore individuals no matter what their status, he can tame the hungry lions, he can appear to people on earth, and all of this supports the prophecy that he will come again and rescue those who lean on him.

So I believe that the overarching reason that Daniel is given to us is to give us faith in a God who can, a God who is able, who is willing that his people should be saved, but to also warn us that there are limits beyond which he cannot extend his mercy. Those who do not seek his mercy will not receive it.

It is also written so that we might understand the importance of a relationship with this deliverer God.

Let's deal with some specifics. We are going to look at 5 areas.

Progressive revelation of history

Progressive difficulties of tests

Progressive fierceness of God's enemies.

Progressive power of deliverance.

Progressive revelation of God's power and working in this world.

### **Progressive revelation of history**

If you are familiar with the book of Daniel at all, this already means something to you.

Daniel 2 gives us the foundational outline prophecy of all Biblical prophecy. It outlines the three major kingdoms which will follow Babylon, and how each kingdom becomes less valuable, and more brittle down into the feet and toes which represent the modern division of nations.

It also makes it clear that in the end, it is only about God. His kingdom is an eternal kingdom.

Daniel 7 expands the theme, giving us more characteristics of the nations. They begin to be fleshed out somewhat. We will actually be dealing with that in our next sessions this evening.

Daniel 8 repeats the previous lineup, leaving out Babylon since it is virtually off the scene by the time Daniel wrote this. The troubling little horn is expounded upon, as it is becoming more and more into focus in prophecy.

Daniel 9 drops the broad view and puts the microscope on the coming of the Messiah and the second destruction of Jerusalem.

Daniel 11 goes over everything from Daniel 7 on, only as a literal explanation of the symbolic prophecies.

Then in Daniel 12, Jesus reveals eternity. Evil destroyed. Righteousness reigning.

### **Next we see a progressive difficulties of tests for people.**

Daniel 1: What shall we eat? Will we be faithful in the little things?

Daniel 2: Will we rely on our own intelligence or will we turn to God for an answer to our problems? By the way, they were targeted, not for anything that they did, but because of what the senior wise men could *not* do. And because of the righteous few, the rest of the wise men were save.

Daniel 3: When worship is a matter of life and death, who will we honor? Will we refuse to do what we are ordered to if it concerns our God? Will our witness effect the course of a nation?

Daniel 4: Will we let pride run / ruin our lives? God shows his concern for a pagan king. He cares so much that he gives Nebuchadnezzar a time out, so that he might realize what things are really important.

Daniel 5: Will we blaspheme God or not?

Daniel 6: Different kind of test. This test is not about being required to do something like the 3 Hebrews were. This test is about NOT doing something that should be done. This is a much more subtle test, and probably is one of the hardest ones to pass. A little shrug, a little closing of the eyes or ears, a little ignoring of the voice of the Spirit of God

Daniel 7-11: The tests move from individuals to nations and powers. These tests revolve around how they relate to God. One by one the nations fail the test and fall. Finally they have all failed and God sets up a kingdom.

Daniel 12: Those who are faithful are saved. There are no kingdoms saved, just individuals.

### **Progressive power of deliverance.**

Daniel 1: As we look at Daniel 1, we do not see any terrific threat to the Hebrews. The test was simple enough, and their lives were not particularly threatened. However, God honors their faithful choices with visible changes in their appearance.

Daniel 2: God delivers his faithful from death by giving Daniel a vision... after a prayer meeting. The vision that saved the lives of not only Daniel and his friends, but also the rest of the wise men. It is well to note that the wise men were saved ONLY because God revealed the dream to Daniel. Here we have verification that God is merciful to all, not to just his own.

Daniel 3: God's faithful were delivered in a way no one had ever seen before. Not only were they delivered, God was with them in that deliverance. But not before they had one of the worst death sentences possible.

Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar was delivered from his pride and arrogance. That was probably harder than delivering from the fire.

Daniel 5: Daniel was delivered from dying with Belshazzar, and Israel's deliverance was put into motion by king Cyrus' taking of the kingdom.

Daniel 6: Daniel was delivered from the wise men who wanted to see him dead by going through the lions den. After all, the lions were not the problem. It was the princes.

Daniel 7: The world is delivered from the persecuting, blaspheming little horn power. God begins setting up his kingdom that will last forever.

Daniel 8-12: Ultimately, Michael the Prince stands up and there is a mighty universal deliverance from all oppression.

### **Progressive fierceness of God's enemies.**

Chapter 1: Mild opposition to the idea of avoiding the king's diet.

Chapter 2: Deliverance from an indirect death threat through a vision.

Chapter 3; Deliverance from a horrible death decree and the execution of that decree. They were not delivered from the fire, but through the fire. God walks with the Hebrews in what could have been their worst time, but may have been their best time.

Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar was delivered from the fierce working of the great enemy through the power of God.

Chapter 6: Daniel is delivered from a ugly conspiracy to have him killed. Legally. Note that!! There were more than one plotter in this scheme to rid the empire of the faithful Hebrew. They were determined to stop Daniel.

Daniel 7: The enemy becomes not just an individual, but a grotesque power that performs all types of evil against the world.

Daniel 8: This power is explained further.

Daniel 9: A power is described that opposes God and destroys his city.

Daniel 10-12: We have more detail on the destroying powers. As we go through the prophecy and history for us now, we find that there are no powers that honor God and uplift his kingdom. Just by their multiplicity, these kingdoms are more determined in their destruction and evil.

But God wins.

### **Progressive revelation of God**

Daniel is not a book that really ends. I mean, yes it has a conclusion, but it has a pattern of progressive revelation that is continued by the book of Revelation in the New Testament.

It does not end, in that within the book, we have a progression that continues until the end of this world's time, and the first steps into eternity.

As we go through the chapters, there is a clearer and clearer picture of the God of heaven and what he desires for all of the people of the world.

In Chapter 1, we have 3 young men who have accepted a relationship with their God. God is revealed in their actions and choices. But it becomes clear from almost the first verse that God is in charge of the situation. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take Jerusalem. It was not his ideal plan, for through the prophets he had urged Israel to submit, pay tribute, and survive as a nation. But they would not, so God gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

So right here in the first chapter of Daniel, we see that God is a God of judgment. He judges Israel for their backsliding. He judges his faithful servants as worthy of honor. That is shown in the wisdom, skill, and health that he gave them in just 10 days.

In chapter 2, God reveals a very basic outline of the future of the world, from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar down to the time when God will set up his kingdom. The response of the king is to acknowledge God as Daniel's Great God. "A" god. Not "the" God.

In chapter 3, God honors the faithfulness of his 3 servants, but more than that, he gets the attention of Nebuchadnezzar again. The king praises the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Not very often does someone turn around towards God in one encounter. Usually there are multiple encounters before things really take root. But the seed has to be planted somewhere, somehow.

In chapter 4, that seed sprouts in Nebuchadnezzar's life, after being fertilized with plenty of grass. When the light dawns upon the king, he responds with one of the most beautiful songs of praise in the Bible. This time Nebuchadnezzar is not praising the God of the Hebrews, he is praising THE God. Period. The God who Nebuchadnezzar describes as "The Most High God who has worked for me." Now God has become personal to Nebuchadnezzar. Each of us has to have that personal God, or we will not be saved.

In chapter 5, God reveals himself and his judgment through King Cyrus, who has often been referred to as a type of Christ. Isaiah quotes God as saying that Cyrus is "My shepherd", and "My Anointed." (Isaiah 44 and 45) The judgment and fall of Babylon under Cyrus makes possible the deliverance of the Jews who chose to be delivered. This is prescient of Revelation, where the symbolic drying of the Euphrates and the fall of Babylon makes possible the deliverance of God's children who choose to be delivered for eternity.

In chapter 6, God reveals himself through his faithful servant. Now Darius the king is confronted with his own frailty, his vanity and pride: God delivers Darius from his frailty through the deliverance of his faithful servant, Daniel. Now the Persian king praises God in a poetic decree.

In chapter 7, God is seen in his heavenly courtroom, high and lifted up. The glory is awesome. Tens of thousands of angels are seen. Judgment is begun, and Jesus comes to him and Jesus is given dominion of this world. This vision depicts great difficulties for those who are faithful, but in the end, the kingdoms who claimed this earth are no more, and God's faithful reign, serve, and obey him.

In chapter 8, more detail is given about the little horn power that would rule. He would think to rise up against God and bring him down. But instead, he brings about his own destruction. There is a specific period of time given until God begins his final work before Michael stands up.

In chapter 9 we have a prophecy that pinpoints in time the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. His special atoning work described. He was not to rule as expected. But his rule is based on sacrifice. A sacrifice that was so great that it made every other sacrifice irrelevant.

In chapter 10, we see a physical picture of Jesus Christ in all of his glory. He appears to his faithful servant who falls down with fear and trembling. Jesus describes how he is intimately involved with the affairs of men. He persuades, but he does not force. He touches the aging prophet and gently lifts him to his feet, showing love and concern.

In chapters 11-12, we get a clearer picture of what God has in mind for his people. While chapter 11 focuses on an expansion of the ebb and flow of power in this world, it is described how earthly powers will rise up against Jesus himself, and against those who follow him.

In one of the clearest depictions to this point in scripture, the angel describes how Michael the prince, Jesus, will finally say "enough", and end history, and rescue the saints.

So step by step we get a clear vision of God and his working.

So there you have it. The book of Daniel, given by God. A progressive revelation of history. A progressive difficulty of tests. The progressively intense fierceness of God's enemies. The progressively greater power of deliverance demonstrated. The progressive revelation of Who God is, God's power, and working in this world.

And finally, the ultimate, final demonstration of God's power in his reclaiming the world for his own and the total, absolute deliverance of his people from every nation, kingdom, tongue, and people.

We live in fearful times. We are going to see the destruction of our nation as we knew it. We can see that process now. We will see institutions that we had faith in fail. We will see people that we felt were faithful to God turn aside to the enemy.

That's why we need the stories AND the prophecies in the Book of Daniel. The Book of Daniel gives us faith. In the end, God wins. He wins on the world stage. He wins on behalf of his people. In the end, those who stick with God, even if it looks like it is a losing cause, will win with him. We may feel like we are in the fiery furnace, we may feel surrounded by lions, we may feel like we are being surrounded by enemies. You may be. But God is there with you.

He assures us that he will never leave us or forsake us.

And he assures us that, after the tests, there is peace and harmony eternally.

God wins.

Stick with God, and you win.

Kind of wants to make you say, Praise the Lord, does it not?

Our gospel text for this session tells us what is coming for God's people:

**Revelation 15:1-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

<sup>2</sup> And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

<sup>3</sup> They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints!

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

Song Victory in Jesus