

Dare to be a Daniel

By David Feddes

We're going to be reading from a number of different places in the book of Daniel, seeking to understand what it was that made Daniel the kind of person he was. He was a remarkable, tremendous person who served in several different empires and under some very different rulers, but always understood who he was, and was a mighty man of God.

Who Am I?

If you think about Daniel's life and start at the very beginning of the book of Daniel, he's immediately confronted with a very challenging question: Who am I? He is taken from his hometown, and from his family, and hauled far away. As a teenager, he's separated from his family, probably never sees them again, and never again returns to his homeland or his home city. He was born in Jerusalem, but now he's living in Babylon. Once he was a free person who was of a noble family, and now he's a captive. He was brought up trained in God's Word, and now Daniel has pagan teachers. His name that he was given at birth was Daniel, meaning "God is my judge." But he gets renamed Belteshazzar, after the pagan god Bel. Ripped away from family, taken away from his city, turned into a slave rather than a free man and a noble, given a pagan education and renamed, he must wonder, "Who am I?"

His response: "I'm still Daniel, whatever anybody else calls me. I answer, first of all, to God my judge, and not to Bel or any other idol or ruler. I still trust God's Word, no matter what any pagan teacher tells me. My heart is still noble and free, wherever captivity brings me. Even in very old age, I still pray toward Jerusalem, no matter how long I've lived in Babylon." Daniel never forgets who he is, no matter what changes, no matter how hard the circumstances are. He is still who he is. He is still a man of prayer. He's still a man of the Scriptures. The same guy he was as a teenager torn away, he remains through to old age.

Maybe you've had to confront that question, Who am I? When you've gone off to college, or when you've moved away to a totally different area, or when you're living far from where you grew up, or when the people you hang out with are quite different from the ones you grew up with, or when this institution where you're educated is hostile to the faith instead of supportive of it, you are confronted with that same question: Who am I? Some people decide, "I really never knew who I was until now," and they become somebody totally different.

Who am I? I am a Christian. As a Christian, I bear Christ's name. I have that name on me. I was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the Holy Trinity. I have the name Christian on me. I might live and work in worldly Babylon, but I'm never fully at home here. I'm a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Listen to words of Jesus spoken to people living in a different Babylon under the Roman Empire. Jesus says, "Hold on to what you have. I will write on you the name of my God and the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God. And I will also write on you my new name" (Revelation 3:11–12). Jesus gives an identity. If you know Jesus, that's going to be your identity throughout the rest of your life, and all the way into eternity.

Without knowing Jesus, it's pretty easy to forget who you are and to lose your soul. When we speak of losing your soul, that's not just going to hell forever—although it is that. Losing your soul is also losing your identity, losing who you are, who you were designed and created to be.

Daniel is somebody who remembers who he is. And so I want to challenge you today to dare to be a Daniel.

Dare to be a Daniel

- Knowing who I am
- In but not of world
- Excellence without excuses
- Gifted by God
- Glorifying God
- Guided by Scripture
- Wisdom and tact
- Fearless resolve
- Disregards threats and rewards
- Always praying
- Seeking mercy
- Helped by angels
- Faith in God and His Anointed

I'm going to highlight quite a number of things from throughout the book of Daniel that characterize him. And here's just a quick preview. He knows who he is. He's in the world but not of it. He has excellence without excuses. He's gifted by God, and he glorifies God. He's guided by Scripture. He's somebody who operates with wisdom and tact, but at the same time with fearless resolve and courage. He disregards threats; he disregards promises of reward; and he simply does what is right. He's always praying; he won't quit praying no matter what. He seeks mercy for his own sins—even though when you read the book of Daniel, he is one of the very few people in Scripture that you don't read anything bad about. But he confesses his sins; he seeks mercy. He's helped by angels. Above all, he's a man of faith in God, and faith in the Anointed One—the coming Christ. That's a theme all the way through the book of Daniel—that Christ is coming. And Daniel trusts him.

In the world but not of it

Daniel was in the world and not of it, and that started very early in life. He and his three friends refused the king's food, refused to participate in the feast of idols. Right off the bat in Daniel chapter 1, they were operating in Babylon. They were being educated for the king's service. They're going to be doing important things in the government. So they didn't just land somewhere in the middle of the desert far from anything else where they could simply meditate on God all day and have nothing else going on in their life. The world was all around them. And the important activities of running a government were a part of their education, and then part of their life. And yet they remained faithful to God in that setting. They were never controlled by the world or shaped by it. They were in the world, but not of it.

That's one of the beautiful phrases that comes through in a letter written shortly after the New Testament was written—the Letter to Diognetus. that letter speaks of Christians wearing much the same clothing as the rest of the people around them, but being very different from them. Sharing and fellowship and not just sleeping around. And it lists a whole bunch of differences in which Christians are very different from the world they're in and yet very involved in it. they are among its best citizens and its hardest workers, and yet, they're not identical to those around them.

Excellence without excuses

Another thing about Daniel and his friends is they were characterized by excellence without excuses. Now, if you are looking for excuses to fail, there may be plenty. But do you really have better excuses and more excuses than Daniel did? Have you been ripped away from almost everybody you knew, totally torn away and settled somewhere else? Have you been part of a persecuted racial minority, part of a very persecuted religious minority? Have you ever been in terrible circumstances with some of the nastiest people in the whole empire out to get you and bring you down?

What do we do when that happens? For some of us, we may decide it's time to host a really fabulous pity party. "Oh, poor me. I am so picked on. Oh, woe is me. Life is so hard. God, how can you possibly expect me to shine in these circumstances? How could you expect me to come through and even excel when so much is against me?"

But Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego don't make excuses. Instead of groveling in the dirt like turkeys, they soar like eagles. You read about them in chapter 1: "In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better" (Daniel 1:20). Later, "Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom" (Daniel 6:3). Then, after the whole lion's den episode, Scripture says, "he prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Daniel 6:28).

Daniel was an exceptional person—someone who, despite everything against him, rose above it all. One of the most terrible things that we can do is to think that there is no potential for us and no opportunity to excel just because of the things that are against us. If you know God, and if you keep trusting in God and relying on him, you can have excellence. Get rid of the excuses. The Bible says we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:37). We need to get over any kind of victim mentality that keeps pulling us down. We need to stop stop saying, "You really can't expect me to amount to much." You can. the Bible encourages us again and again to be excellent, not to be excuse-makers.

Gifted by God

Daniel and his three friends were gifted by God. They didn't excel totally on their own. "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And to Daniel he gave this ability to understand the visions and dreams of all kinds" (Daniel 1:17).

Nebuchadnezzar says, "None of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret my dream for me, but you, Daniel, can, because the spirit of the holy god is in you" (Daniel 4:18). The king is talking kind of like an idol worshiper, but he knows there's something about Daniel—something from the supernatural realm that gives Daniel this insight.

Many years later, when wicked King Belshazzar is having his big feast, the old queen mother comes in and tells him about Daniel. Notice what she says: "There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods... This man Daniel... was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means" (Daniel 5:11–12).

Daniel has amazing gifts, and he knows it. He knows not just that he's gifted, but where the gifts came from. His gifts come from God. And so when God gives him the ability to understand Nebuchadnezzar's dream and to interpret it, and thereby saves the life of Daniel and a whole bunch of other advisors, Daniel says, "To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might and have now made known to me what we asked of you" (Daniel 2:23). When he's called before the king after God gives him the insight, the king says, "You must be some super-duper guy to know what my dream means." Daniel humbly answers: "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (Daniel 2:27–28). Daniel has supernatural ability, but he doesn't puff himself up or say, "I am fantastic." He says there is a God in heaven who knows everything, and he sometimes chooses to reveal these mysteries to people. Daniel glorifies God and not himself for his gifts.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul says, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). If you earned or did something on your own, well, maybe you can brag about it. But when you get tremendous gifts and abilities from God, then it's an occasion to say, "Glory to God in the highest," and not to say, "Glory to me in the highest." Daniel glorified God for his gifts.

Guided by Scripture

Daniel was also guided by Scripture. His actions in chapter 1 are guided by the Word of God that was in force for Jewish people at that time. God had commanded them to stay away from some foods and to stay away from food dedicated to idols in particular. And so as one of God's holy people in Old Testament times, Daniel lived by that Scripture.

When his enemies are looking for an accusation against him so that they can throw him in the lion's den, what do they say? "We'll never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). He is a man of the Word of God. He's a man of the Scriptures who is saturated in the Scriptures. His everyday conduct was guided by God's commands in the Scriptures.

When Daniel understands times and events, it's not always by direct revelation from heaven through dreams or through angels, although God did show things to Daniel in those extraordinary ways. But sometimes his understanding of deep mysteries and what was going to happen came to him because he was such a student of the Scriptures. In chapter 9, he says, "I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years" (Daniel 9:2). Daniel knew the words of Jeremiah the prophet. Perhaps he even had a scroll of the writings of Jeremiah along with other Scriptures. Daniel was a man who kept studying the God-inspired writings and understood the times in light of those writings. His life was one shaped by the Word of God.

It's very important to understand this, because if you just read the story of Daniel in the lion's den, or if you remember it from somewhere back in your youth, you might say, "Wow, that was a brave guy. I really ought to work on being a brave guy of principle like Daniel." Good luck with that! You can make a New Year's resolution: "Dare to be a Daniel." But how do you get to be a Daniel? Not just by wishing you were so brave and principled. You get to be a Daniel by knowing the Word of God and soaking yourself in and immersing yourself in it, as well as these other things that we're talking about. You don't just wake up one day and say, "I really would like to be a better person." You become a better person by certain means, and this one of the greatest of them all—to know the Word of God and to be guided by the Word of God.

Wisdom and tact

Now, in all of this—being extraordinarily gifted and guided by the Word of God—Daniel didn't become rude or obnoxious. That can sometimes happen to people who pride themselves on being biblical and bold people of principle. Maybe you know a few. I know I can sometimes be one. "I'm know I'm right, and you are going to just listen. I'm going to straighten you out, and you're going to take it whether you like it or not."

Daniel is a different. Of course, if being rude and obnoxious could get you killed at any moment, that would encourage a certain amount of tact! Still, notice how Daniel handles things. When he's facing that test in chapter 1, where he asks the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself, he doesn't say outright that he will never eat the king's meat no matter what. Instead, He quietly asks for a ten-day test of the impact of eating only vegetables. And later on, when the decree goes out to kill all the wise men because Nebuchadnezzar's dream hasn't been interpreted, Daniel speaks to the official with wisdom and tact. "With wisdom and tact, he asked the king's officer, 'Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?' Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time so that he might interpret the dream for him" (Daniel 2:14–16). Daniel was always eager to do the right thing and willing to take a stand, but he was always looking for the least obnoxious and confrontational way to do it.

If your survival depends on wisdom and tact, you obviously want to be wise and tactful. But even if your survival isn't at stake, it's an excellent policy for Christians to act with wisdom and tact, and not just take pride in what bold people of principle we are.

Fearless resolve

Still, when you act with wisdom and tact, you do have to have fearless resolve. We know too many politicians who are only tact, who are always going along to get along, always compromising, always cutting corners, never standing up for what is right. Daniel has great political skills, but Daniel does stand for what's right.

That's probably what he's most famous for—taking a stand. He won't defile himself with the king's food (Daniel 1:8). He won't quit praying when he's faced with the lion's den. "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before" (6:10). Daniel is God's man. He knows who he is. And he's not going to give that up. His wisdom is combined with his courage and his fearless resolve.

Disregards threats and rewards

You can't pay him off or scare him into going against God's way. You can't use a carrot-and-stick approach on Daniel and say, "If you do what I tell you, I'll give you lots of goodies. If you won't do it, I'll blow you up to smithereens." You can use all your promises of reward on Daniel, and you can issue all your threats against Daniel, but he does the right thing. He's not going to run after the promised rewards, and he's not going to shrink away from the big threats. He will simply say it like it is and do God's will.

Again and again and again, when he's in the face of the most powerful man on earth, he will say what needs saying. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that dream pictures him becoming like an animal and losing his mind. Daniel tells him the meaning of that dream. Daniel could have stopped after telling the meaning, because that's all Nebuchadnezzar wanted—to know what the dream meant. But Daniel thought it was a good time to give a bit of advice: "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue" (Daniel 4:27). It takes guts to tell the guy who thinks he knows everything and has the right to decide everything that he ought to change and shape up. But Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, "You better repent, or these bad things are going to happen to you."

When Daniel is in front of King Belshazzar and the writing is on the wall, he says bluntly to Belshazzar, "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). When the king first saw a hand writing on the wall in front of him, he panicked. He asked for somebody who could interpret it. When Daniel was brought, the king told him, "I'll give you lots of gold and fancy robes, and I'll make you the third most powerful man in the kingdom." What was Daniel's response? "Let your gifts be for yourself and your rewards for another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means" (Daniel 5:17). Daniel was not going to be a spokesman for God because it would pay well or because he might be threatened if he refused to tell the meaning. He simply said, "You can keep your stuff."

One of the keys to that kind of attitude is knowing how long that stuff is going to last. On that particular occasion, Daniel literally knew that it was not going to last the night. He knew. It turned out that despite refusing the gifts, Daniel was given that gold, he was given that fancy robe, and he was promoted to third in the kingdom. But by the time the night was over, the guy who promoted him was dead. Belshazzar the king was dead. When your only rewards in life come from those who could be destroyed at any moment, you ought to take those rewards less seriously. When the only punishments come from those who can't destroy the soul, then you don't fear those punishments quite so much.

That's the key to Daniel. He can stand up to Nebuchadnezzar, he can stand up to Belshazzar, because he knows all their rewards don't last anyway.

Later, when the Persian king Darius issued a decree that nobody should pray for a month, his officials reported that "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing" (Daniel 6:13). Daniel wasn't normally an obnoxious, disobedient guy. He was the most honest and faithful of all the king's officials. But when the king issued a decree contrary to God, then Daniel was going to obey God rather than man.

If you want to be a Daniel, you have to be somebody who can't be bought off by the rewards, who can't be scared off by the threats. Some of us may be more vulnerable to one than the other. Some of us are hard to buy off because you can't just dangle goodies in front of us—but we may be timid, and we can get scared off. Others may be bold, and we're never going to be scared off. But the devil knows that we're maybe a little easier to buy off. There are some people for whom the pleasures of this world will lure them to a place where no sword or gun could drive them. There are folks who, if they faced direct persecution and were told at the point of a gun, "Deny your faith," they would say, "Never!" But when some little trinket comes along, or some pornographic image on the internet, or some little corner they need to cut in order to make a more money, they'll do it. They can be bought off by the rewards, even if they can't be scared off by the threats. Each of us needs to examine ourselves in light of what our particular weaknesses and vulnerabilities are, and then focus more and more both on the greatness of God on the one hand, and the weakness and worthlessness of the threats and rewards of the powers that be in this world.

The Bible says that before God, all the rulers of this world are nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing (Isaiah 40:17). We need to have that same perspective on the threats and rewards in this world.

Always praying

Daniel is always praying. He's not just a man who's listening to the Word of God, but he's in communication with God. Here are just a few examples from the book of Daniel. In chapter 2, when the decree goes out that everybody is going to be wiped out unless the king's dream can be interpreted, all of the stargazers, astrologers, and what-have-you of the kingdom immediately say, "Come on, king. Nobody can do that. No way."

What does Daniel do? "Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery" (Daniel 2:17–18). He says, "Guys, we've got problems. We need to pray. And we need to pray right now. And we need to pray hard." That's what they do. And God answers that prayer.

When he's faced with his enemies in the lion's den administration, "three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before" (Daniel 6:10). This was his lifetime habit. He was always praying. He prayed without ceasing. It was a built-in pattern of his life, and he wouldn't quit.

In chapter 9, Daniel understands the prophecy that God is going to bring his people back to the land of Judah after seventy years in captivity, because that's what God had told Jeremiah. And what does Daniel do? He doesn't just say, "Well, good, glad to know it." He says, "I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). Why would Daniel do all that? God has already said he's going to bring his people back. Why would Daniel pray? Who needs to ask God for what he's already said he's going to do? Well, that is what prayer is. It's knowing what God says he's going to do and then taking hold of his promises through earnest prayer and fasting. Daniel understands prayer not to be some shot in the dark, begging wildly for what you have no reason to expect. He knows what God has promised, and his prayers are earnestly claiming of what God has promised.

Again, let me remind you: don't just take "Dare to be a Daniel" as a nice resolution to work on. Understand what makes Daniel who he is. It was that lifetime of prayer that made him the kind of old man who could stand up to anything.

Polycarp lived in the second century after Jesus. As a very old man, he was hauled into a Roman arena and threatened with being burned unless he denied Jesus. Polycarp said, "Eighty-six years I have served him, and I'm not going to quit now. He's been faithful to me all these years. I'm not quitting now." He was burned by the Roman officials for his faith. But he was a man who for his whole life had been a person of faith and prayer. And so when the trial came, he could stand firm. You don't endure that trial and remain faithful to the end if your whole life has been spent out of fellowship with God.

Helped by angels

Daniel was helped by angels. He said, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions" (Daniel 6:22). Angels play a big part in the book of Daniel, not just in rescuing him from lions.

As you read on in the book, there's a particular angel whose name you might recognize: Gabriel. Daniel says, "While I was still in prayer... Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight" (Daniel 9:21). And Gabriel, this angel who announces the future to Daniel, will make other appearances later in history. He will announce the birth of John the Baptist to the old priest Zechariah. And he will announce to the virgin Mary that she will conceive and give birth to the Savior of the world. This very same angel Gabriel helps Daniel.

In chapter 10, Daniel says, "One having the appearance of a man"—that's an angel—"touched me and strengthened me. And he said, 'O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.' And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, 'Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me'" (Daniel 10:18–19).

This is not just ancient history for Daniel's time but not ours. The Bible says, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Psalm 34:7). We can count on this help from angels. God tells us about his angels to bolster our courage and our confidence.

Admitting sin, seeking mercy

Now, having said all that, it is hard to believe that there's anything wrong with Daniel. He was an amazing man of integrity. In reading the book of Daniel, I can't find anything he ever did wrong. This doesn't mean he never did anything wrong. The Bible selectively reports what we need to know for God's purposes of revealing. There is much about Daniel that we're not told. At any rate, Daniel never said, "Lord, I am perfect. I have done everything right. I am a spiritual superstar."

Read chapter 9 of Daniel and you find quite a different picture. Daniel identifies himself as a sinner, and his people as sinners. He tells God that our only hope is God's mercy. "We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets... we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name. (Daniel 9:5-6,15, 18-19)

Notice what Daniel is doing. He's appealing to God's name. God had revealed his name as "I am who I am"—the Lord, the Merciful and Compassionate One. So Daniel says, "For the sake of that name, for the sake of your mercy and your compassion—not because of who I am or anybody else. We are sinners. We have acted wickedly. We've ignored your voice. But please, forgive and show mercy and take action."

To put it in a nutshell, Daniel was a man of grace. He depended totally on God's grace and on God's determination to act for his own name's sake as the God of mercy and love—not based on Daniel's own qualifications.

When I say "Dare to be a Daniel," you might say, "Okay, I'm going to try to become the greatest spiritual superstar in the world and become the best guy who ever lived." That's impossible. This was a man of grace, and he was full of the grace of God. In the New Testament, we read of Stephen and others that they were full of the Holy Spirit and faith. That's what made them who they were. They were sinners seeking mercy. And they found mercy. They found power and help from the Lord.

Faith in God

Ultimately, it was faith in God that made Daniel who he was. What kind of God did Daniel have faith in? I want to highlight three things that are major themes of the God of Daniel—the living God revealed in the book of Daniel.

First, he is **Ruler**. "The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Daniel 4:17). That's a big theme of Daniel. God puts some people in power and knocks others out of power. Back to that question of who I am and what's going on. Daniel's country had been seized and its king dethroned. And how did that happen? Well, the very first few lines of the book of Daniel say the Lord did it. And Daniel knew it. Daniel knew that it was not some big accident that some bad stuff had happened to Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord did it for his own reasons—to discipline his people. The Lord could bring down Daniel's homeland. The Lord could turn Nebuchadnezzar into a raving lunatic. The Lord could throw Belshazzar from the throne of Babylon into hell in one night. The Lord is the ruler. And when Daniel looks into the future, he sees visions of the great coming world empires—the empire of Nebuchadnezzar, the empire of the Persians, the empire of Alexander the Great, the empire of the Romans. And seeing all that, what does Daniel say? The Lord rules all of it.

Second, God is **Revealer**. You see that again and again. In the early parts of Daniel, there are those dreams. Even more in the last half of the book of Daniel, there are the dreams that God gives about the future, visions of what is coming. "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (Daniel 2:28). That sums it all up. He's a revealer. He doesn't keep everything hidden. He shows something of himself—not everything, but he shows a lot. He's a revealing God who has chosen not to remain hidden.

Third, God is **Rescuer**. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the fiery furnace and said, "The God we serve is able to save us" (Daniel 3:17). Daniel said, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions" (Daniel 6:22). The Lord is a Savior God, and Daniel knows that kind of God—Ruler, Revealer, Rescuer.

And so when he's got to do hard things in the presence of these mighty kings, Daniel is encouraged to do it by the fact that God rules. Daniel knows which kingdom is going to last. He's had that vision of the rock cut without hands that wipes out the statue representing all the great world empires. He knows this God who rules. And he knows that his kingdom lasts—and that no other kingdom lasts.

Daniel is awed by God, and not by kings. Daniel has seen Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest and one of the smartest and best administrators and generals in the world—one of the great geniuses of world history—turned into a guy who thinks he's a cow. Just like that. He's seen God just wipe out a brilliant man's mind, and then later on, when he's been humbled, give that man his mind back again.

Daniel has seen another king in the midst of a big party, suddenly reduced to his knees knocking and his face white with fear because God sends one little hand to write a couple of words on a wall. That's all God needs to do with the most proud, tough, arrogant king in the world—send a

hand to write a couple of words on a wall saying, "You've been weighed. You came up short. You're gone."

Daniel had seen all that. So is it any wonder that when it came to the challenge of the lions' den, he wasn't scared of an emperor? He'd seen the greatest and the most powerful brought down again and again and again. Daniel was awed not by any politician, not by any ruler, but only by God himself.

One who will come

- Rock of Ages
- Atonement for sin
- Son of Man enthroned
- Resurrection and eternity

Daniel didn't just know God in general as a great Ruler and Revealer and Rescuer. More and more, God gave Daniel visions of Somebody still to come. This one who comes is the **Rock of Ages** who destroys all kingdoms and fills the earth with his own reign. This one who comes is going to provide atonement for sin. He's described as someone like a Son of Man who takes a seat on God's throne. This one who comes is going to judge the world, raise the dead, and determine where people spend eternity. Daniel's visions are of Jesus.

"The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed..... It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end" (Daniel 2:44). Daniel sees a statue representing four great empires to come. During the fourth empire, the iron one symbolizing Rome, a stone comes along that will destroy the empires and fill the earth. Daniel was given the ability by God to know that in the time of the Roman empire, God's kingdom in Christ would begin growing and growing and growing to fill the whole earth.

Daniel chapter 9 speaks of a decree "to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to **atone for iniquity**, to bring in everlasting righteousness... an anointed one shall be cut off" (Daniel 9:24-26). He says this is going to come seventy sevens after the temple has been rebuilt and then rededicated. I won't get into all the complexities, but if you do the math, seventy sevens is 490. That's the number of years from the rebuilding of the temple until the death of Jesus. "The Anointed One shall be cut off" (Daniel 9:26).

Daniel is not just believing in a higher power or in a god somewhere out there. He has increasingly clear glimpse of the coming Messiah, the **Son of Man**: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a Son of Man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).

When we celebrate Christmas, we're not just celebrating a baby in a manger. When Jesus used the words "Son of Man" to describe himself, he wasn't just being a really humble guy saying,

"I'm just human like the rest of you." In one sense, that's true—he is a son of man, he is human like the rest of us, and he did humble himself greatly. But when he used the title "Son of Man," Jesus was picking up on the prophecy of Daniel 7. Jesus is the Son of Man who comes to the Ancient of Days and is presented before him and receives dominion and power and glory over all things. We do not celebrate Christmas just to look at cute baby pictures of Jesus. If you're celebrating the president's birthday, you don't just drag out the president's baby album. You can do that if you want, but you may want to pay attention to who that person is now. Jesus is no longer a baby in a manger; he has come into the presence of the Ancient of Days and received dominion and power and glory.

Daniel chapter 12 speaks of the coming **resurrection and eternity**. "There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:1-3).

Philippians 2 speaks of Jesus coming down and giving up his power and dying, and then receiving the name that's above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. And then it says, "You need to shine like stars in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation" (Philippians 2:10–15). When you live in light of the coming of Jesus, then you begin to shine like stars. There was a beautiful star that once shone above the place where Jesus was as a baby. But now Jesus has a whole bunch of stars that are meant to shine and to direct people to the Savior. And you're one of them.

Dare to be a Daniel. Know who you are. You're in this world; you are not of it. Pursue excellence without excuses. Know the gifts God has given you. If you belong to God at all, you've got gifts. It's just a matter of knowing what they are and maximizing them and reaching your full potential in the Lord. Glorify God with your life and your gifts. Be guided by Scripture. Use wisdom and tact. At the same time, don't give up on your principles. Don't let the threats or the rewards of the world sway you. Instead, be a person who prays without ceasing, where prayer is a daily pattern of your life. And as you do all that, don't be weighed down by the burden of "Oh, I can never live up to that." Instead, be a person who's always seeking mercy and forgiveness, and living in the power of God's grace—and being picked up again and again and again by him. Be someone who knows that God's angels are with you. And live by faith in God and in his Anointed One, Jesus Christ.

Jesus sounded like the book of Daniel when he spoke about himself and said, "God has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:27–29). The book of Daniel is not mainly about Daniel. It's mainly about the One Daniel saw coming. He has come! And he is coming again!

Dare to be a Daniel
By David Feddes
Slide Contents

Who am I?

- I am a teenager, separated from family.
- Born in Jerusalem, I now live in Babylon.
- Once a free noble, now I am a captive.
- Brought up in God's Word, I now have pagan teachers.
- Originally named Daniel, meaning "God is my judge," I have been renamed Belteshazzar, after the pagan idol Bel.

Who am I?

- I am still Daniel, whatever anyone else calls me. I answer to first of all to God my judge, not to any idol or ruler.
- I still trust God's Word, whatever my teachers teach me.
- My heart is still noble and free, wherever captivity brings me.
- In old age, I still pray facing Jerusalem, no matter how long I live in Babylon.

Who am I?

- As a Christian, I bear Christ's name.
- I live and work in worldly Babylon, but I am never fully at home here. I am a citizen of heavenly Jerusalem.
- Jesus says, "Hold on to what you have... I will write on [you] the name of my God and the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on [you] my new name" (Revelation 3:12).

Dare to be a Daniel

- Knowing who I am
- In but not of world
- Excellence without excuses
- Gifted by God
- Glorifying God
- Guided by Scripture
- Wisdom and tact
- Fearless resolve
- Disregards threats and rewards
- Always praying
- Seeking mercy
- Helped by angels
- Faith in God and His Anointed

In the world but not of it

Excellence without excuses

In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better. (1:20)

Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. (6:3)

Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. (6:28)

Gifted by God

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. (1:17)

None of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you. (4:18)

There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods... This man Daniel... was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means. (5:11-12)

Glorifies God, not self

To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you. (Daniel 2:23)

No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. (2:27-28)

Guided by Scripture

Keeps God's dietary laws as one of God's holy people in Old Testament times.

We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God. (6:5)

I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. (9:2)

Wisdom and tact

He asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself... Daniel said, "Test your servants for ten days." (1:9-12)

When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. (2:14-16)

Fearless resolve

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. (1:8)

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (6:10)

Disregards threats and rewards

Tells Nebuchadnezzar: "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed." (4:27)

Tells Belshazzar: "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another." (5:17)

Disobeys Darius: "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing." (6:13)

Always praying

Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery. (2:17-19)

Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (6:10)

I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. (9:3)

Helped by angels

My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.

While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight. (Daniel 9:21)

Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” (Daniel 10:18-19)

Admitting sin, seeking mercy

We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets... we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name. (Daniel 9:5-6,15, 18-19)

Faith in God

- **Ruler:** the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes (4:17)
- **Revealer:** There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. (2:28)
- **Rescuer:** The God we serve is able to save us. (3:17) My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. (6:22)

Knows which kingdom lasts

Awed by God, not kings

One who will come

- Rock of Ages
- Atonement for sin
- Son of Man enthroned
- Resurrection and eternity

Rock of Ages

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed..... It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end. (Daniel 2:44)

To atone for iniquity

...to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness... an anointed one shall be cut off. (Daniel 9:24-26)

Son of Man's Kingdom

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Resurrection and eternity

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:1-3)

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Resurrection and Eternity

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:24-29).