

4. The Secret of Success

Passage – Daniel 9:1-27

Daniel as we have seen from these sessions together is a character eminently worthy of study

- he rises from nothing to be Prime minister in a country whose language and culture were at first completely unfamiliar to him
- he serves seven kings as a leading official – though two great empires – not just Babylon but Medo-Persia too
- he is visited by angels and receives more dreams and visions from God than any other OT character
- he remains faithful to God through great tests of faith

It is said that all power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely

But we see no trace of it here – Daniel had absolute power and yet despite corruption and power-seeking and idolatry in Babylon – he remains untainted

'It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."' (Daniel 6:1-5)

The NIV says he was neither corrupt nor negligent

His three friends also were placed in to high office

'the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.' (Daniel 3:30)

And we remember back to chapter one where the author tells us that all four excelled themselves together because God blessed them

As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams... And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers that were in all his kingdom. (Daniel 1:17-20)

And yet in spite of his great achievements Daniel was also a humble man with a very simple approach to life – he simply read his Bible, prayed and obeyed

Read his Bible

'In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.' (Daniel 9:1,2)

Jeremiah and Ezekiel – two of the major prophets were contemporaries of Daniel

Ezekiel mentions him three times by name – 14:14, 20 and 28:3 – refers to his righteousness and wisdom and puts him alongside Job and Noah (Only Matthew refers to him otherwise)

'This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy** years. Then after **seventy** years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.' (Jeremiah 25:11-12)

'For thus says the Lord: When **seventy** years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.' (Jeremiah 29:10)

Then the angel of the Lord said, 'O Lord of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these **seventy** years?' (Zechariah 1:12)

All of the Bible points to Jesus

Jesus appears in this book as

1. The rock that crushes the statue in Ch2
2. The fourth man in the furnace in ch 3
3. The hand that writes on the wall in Ch 4
4. The Son of man in Ch 7
5. The angel in the lion's den in Ch 6
6. The anointed one cut off in Ch 9
7. The man clothed in linen in Ch 10 and Ch 12
8. The hand writing on the wall in Ch 5

Read his Bible – told him that God was in control

Prayed

So his prayer was a response to what God had already promised in Scripture

A habit with Daniel

2:18 – asked them all to pray

6:10 – with the window open

9:3-19 – Prayer of intercession

Pattern of Daniel's prayer

1. Recognised the need to pray and was answered – wanted to be part of God's plan – 10:12-13

2. Made time to pray

3. Started with a right view of God – 9:4-9

4. Confessed his sin

5. Relied on God's promises

6. Prayed according to God's will

Prayers led by Scripture as all great prayers are

Praying according to God's will

Elements of prayer in Daniel 9

What does it take to stop us praying?

Obeded

The Word hand – listen, read, study, meditate, memorise

But obey more important and key to guidance

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5,6)

"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (John 14:21)

God's word a light to our path

Christian world view – creation, fall, redemption, consummation

The divine drama – why I wrote it – it's not about you but about God's glory

History is 'His Story'

Key to guidance

Trust and Obey for there's no other way to be happy to Jesus

Discussion about how God guides

Summarise the prophecies

The statue with four metals

The Four beasts

The ram and the goat

The abomination of desolation

Antiochus Epiphanes 167 BC (Daniel 9:27)

- 1 Maccabees 1:20-22, 'After Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the year one hundred and forty-three (167BC), he returned and went up to Israel and to Jerusalem with a strong force. He insolently invaded the sanctuary ... and stripped off everything. V54 the king erected the horrible abomination upon the altar.'

Titus - Rome 70 AD (Matthew 24:15)

- Josephus, 'Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them.'

The detail on Daniel 11 about Greece

The end times and the resurrection

We live in the period between Jesus' first coming, in which he achieved our salvation through his death and resurrection, and his second coming leading to the final judgment and the establishment of a new heaven and new earth.

We know that the final days before Christ's return will be days of great turmoil and torment.

In the Revelation of John he describes the final death of human culture which he calls 'Babylon the Great' epitomising a state in full rebellion against God.

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,' which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." (Revelation 14:8)

God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. (Revelation 16:9)

Babylon the great the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.(Revelation 17:5)

With a mighty voice he shouted: "'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!' She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.(Revelation 18:2)

“When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her.(Revelation 18:9)

Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: “Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!”(Revelation 18:10)

[The Finality of Babylon’s Doom] Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. (Revelation 18:21)

And then finally - After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God (revelation 19:10)

Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; (Revelation 18:4)

We don’t know the future holds for our nation – and we don’t know if we are living in the last generation.

But we do know that this is the last chance for this generation so we must live as if it is the last.

We don’t know whether as Christians we will live out our days as a small remnant on these islands or whether by God’s grace we will see another great revival like that of the 18th century which transforms our whole history and culture. It is in God’s hands.

But regardless as his people we are called both to be distinctive and to be engaged – both salt and light – in the world but not of the world – daring to be different whilst seeking the good of the city in which God has placed us.

It will require grace, compassion, courage and discernment. But it is our calling by God’s grace and by his spirit.