

Daniel's Display

Historically, Daniel came on the scene coincident with the first dispersal of the Jews from Judah. In fact, he was a part of the first group of captives to be taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar's army. Of course, many of you already recognize him from the well-known Bible stories in the book that bears his name in the scriptures.

He was a prophet and one of distinction, as Jesus validated him in the New Testament. However, he not only recorded prophecy and interpreted prophecy but he himself lived or rather portrayed a prophetic picture. You see, in a very beautiful way, Daniel pictures the mostly gentile church which is unusual because all his prophetic writing focuses upon the Jewish people. I'll present some examples for you to consider and then explain why this is important.

First, by reason of persecution, Daniel wound up in a foreign

land and never did return to Jerusalem. In like manner, it was principally persecution that resulted in the early church, which was comprised of Jewish believers, being scattered into gentile lands and since that time, the church has never really returned to take root or blossom in Israel.

Next, in this foreign land, Daniel's name was changed, and like manner, the Bible tells us that the believers were first called Christians in Antioch, a city in present day Turkey.

Next, Daniel's life spanned the entire time of the Jews' banishment from Jerusalem during which he was exalted to prominence, ultimately being promoted highly by each of four kings. We also note that his first promotion took place after a period of testing. Likewise, the church, after an initial period of testing and persecution, rose quickly to become the dominant cultural and authoritative body in the world second only to the sovereigns.

Next, in chapter six, Daniel was thrown to the lions and survived. Many Christian martyrs were likewise thrown to the lions in Rome but the church survived.

Next, Daniel is a rare figure in scripture in that he has no recorded sin and was only imprisoned with the lions because of his devotion. This mirrors the sinless state of sincere believers in God's eyes since it is the atoning blood of Christ that covers our sin. Meanwhile it is our devotion to Christ that generally brings the world's scorn and anger.

Next, in chapter nine, it was Daniel's understanding of the scriptures and the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy that drove him to his knees in prayer seeking God's forgiveness of His people and their return to Jerusalem. In like manner, it was partly by the instigation of many fervent praying Christians that the major governments of the world ultimately brought the nation of Israel back into being in May of 1948.

Next, Daniel is the only man in the Bible to "confess" his sins and to ask for God's mercy and forgiveness, asserting that his coming to God was not based upon man's righteous acts but on God's great mercies. God responded through the angel Gabriel and quickly told him that

he was "greatly beloved". Of course, the similarity to the church is clear – as believers, we are instructed to confess our sins and to ask for God's forgiveness, trusting completely in the sacrifice of Christ – the expression of God's mercies. And, we are told by Jesus in the Word that we are greatly beloved because of Him.

Next, Daniel's vision of the divine messenger in chapter 10:4 and 11:16 – 19 is strikingly similar to John's record of Christ's appearance in Revelation 1:10-20 which we should also note prefaces Christ's detailed address to the seven churches of the "church age".

OK, so those are quite a few examples of Daniel's "display" of the mostly gentile church. But the reason this is of importance for us beyond the interesting similarities is that there is another display that is yet to be fulfilled. We find it in Daniel chapter three. You may recall the story.

In the previous chapter (ch 2), Daniel and his three companions revealed the prophetic dream of Nebuchadnezzar and interpreted it for him. It was a dream of a

large statue of a man with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, an abdomen of bronze, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay mixed. Daniel told the king that he was symbolized by this head of gold. That must have been an ego-stroke for Nebuchadnezzar. The downer, however, was the clear indication that his kingdom was to be replaced by others in successive order of the metals in the statue.

In chapter three, 'Nebby' had apparently decided to assert his own 'divine' plan by constructing what would appear to be his own version of the dream statue, you see he made it entirely of gold. In his arrogance, he was defying the prophetic dream-message and declaring that his kingdom would last forever – a messiah complex, if you would.

Well, he commanded everyone in the kingdom – all officials specifically – to gather around the immense golden idol and when the music played, to bow down and worship this false god. Anyway, the music played and all the people bowed except for three – Daniel's companions – who remained standing.

When the king learned of this defiance to his dictate, he was incensed and had them brought before him. With the intent to utterly intimidate, he gave them another chance to bow or be thrown into a fiery furnace. Their response was awesome – in essence, they said, "God may or may not deliver us from you, king; but, we won't bow".

Now, the king went ballistic and had the furnace heated up seven times hotter than normal – so hot that it fried to death the soldiers who tossed the three of them in. But then the king's choler turned to confused amazement. He asserted to everyone around that he saw the Son of God walking with them in the fire and they were untouched by the flames – only their binding ropes were burned off.

Now, many of you know this story, and how it accurately portrays the coming seven year Tribulation time in which the Antichrist, portrayed by Nebuchadnezzar, will attempt to force the worship of his own idol – the image of the beast (Rev. 13:15) on the whole world and specifically the Jewish people and how a 'remnant' of faithful, born again Jews will stand up against this incurring the fire of his hatred.

This believing "remnant", however, will be divinely protected by Christ and will in fact be freed from their bondage to death and sin to preach the good news worldwide.

So, what's the big deal about Daniel??

It's simple. Where IS he?

As the senior-most advisor of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, he of all people should have been present, but he is not even mentioned. Did he bow? NO WAY. He's simply gone. Do you get the picture?

In like manner, we as the church, will not be present during the seven year Tribulation. Our calling to be a witness for the Lord to the world will soon be passed to the Jewish believers of this coming period. (Rev. chapter 7 specifies their divine anointing and the outcome of their evangelism.) The church will be in heaven – see our lesson "Breakpoint and Beyond" for more on this, and our exposition of the book of Revelation, "Fire Eyes".

That's great news for all believers. Even when Daniel is not displayed in his book, he's

prophetically portraying the church and God's plan for us. Just as he stood courageously to speak the truth of God's plan to Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter two, so must we speak the truth in love in this present age. We are racing toward the end when we will disappear! May we all faithfully display the Gospel!