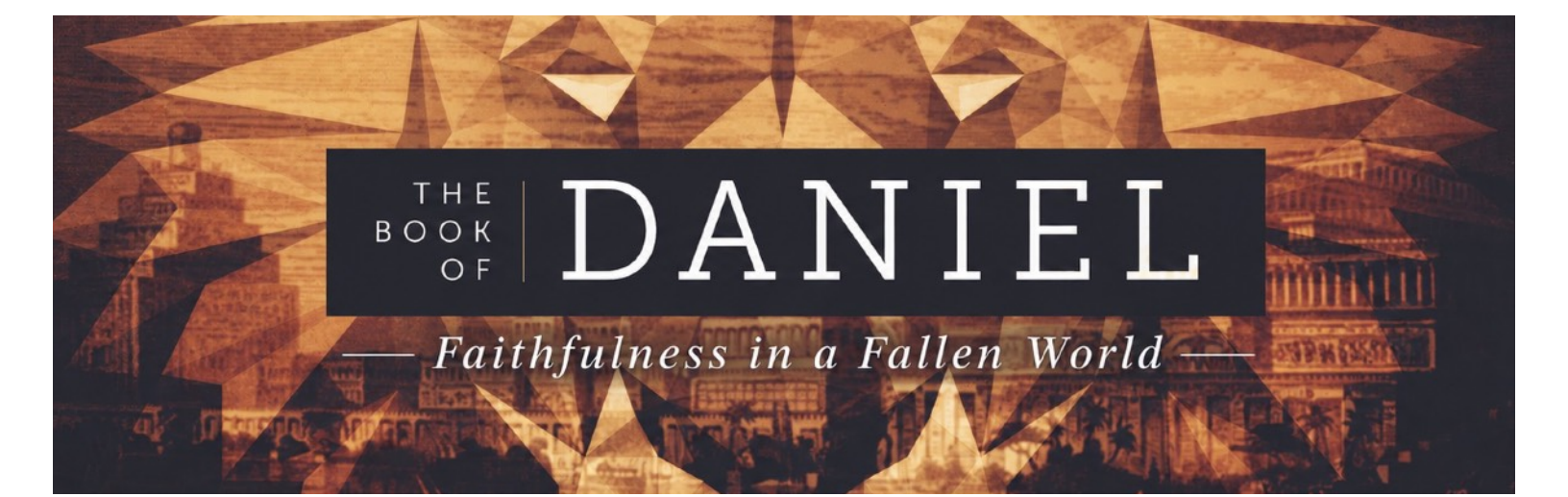




THE
BOOK
OF

DANIEL

— *Faithfulness in a Fallen World* —

DANIEL

8/16/2026

#1 - Distinctly Christian

Intro:

What a great day together! I am excited to begin a new series in the book of Daniel. Men, we're taking a closer look at this book in our 9am fellowship study... so, you should be experts on this book in a couple months. You can order your workbook, using the link on our app, and jump in with us next Sunday as we talk about being different to make a difference.

I love the book of Daniel. Its both historical narrative and has a few wild chapters of apocalyptic literature toward the end. Here's a little trivia for you... Daniel is the only OT book written outside of Israel, it was written from where Daniel was exiled in Babylon. And, its also written in 2 languages: Hebrew & Aramaic. The opening chapter is in Hebrew, then chapters 2-7 are in Aramaic (the common language of Babylon), then the final chapters are back in Hebrew again. That layout helps give some of the structural bones needed to study it properly. And, it shows practically how entrenched Daniel and his friends were in the culture of Babylon, and that Daniel wanted the Babylonians to read in their own language about the greatness of the one true God.

When studying the Bible, spend some time with the context. Here's a brief historical context...

Around 605BC, Jerusalem was besieged by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. (2 Kings 24 / 2 Chron 36). The Lord had promised his people that if they continued in rebellion, he would give them over to their enemies, and allow them to be taken from the promised land. So, Jerusalem has fallen, the temple has been plundered, their future generation of leaders have been taken captive and are now living as exiles under the authority of Babylon.

Most scholars would say that Daniel and his friends that were taken into the King's court to be trained would have been between 14 and 19 years old. These are only teenagers whose world has been turned upside-down. But, as we saw last week, teenagers have incredible potential if they embrace it.

You know, the story of Exodus is God rescuing his people out of a land of darkness... but Daniel is the story of God allowing his people to be taken into a land of darkness. One shows God's power to deliver us from the enemy, while Daniel shows God's power to deliver the enemy through us.

The theme of Daniel is — *Faithful in a Fallen World*.

Now that ought to peak your interest, because the world we live in today is also a fallen world... and we are called to be in it but not of it. What does it look like for you to live a distinctly christian life?

How do you live faithfully in a world that rejects your faith?

That's the book of Daniel... and that's us. Daniel isn't just a book about the faithful courage of a few teenagers — they aren't the true

heroes. Its actually about how God's people can remain faithful because God is faithful... He is sovereign over all. No matter who is king here and now, God is The KING everywhere always! Our God rules over kings, presidents, cultures, and conflicts.

The culture around us may be shifting like sand, but God is unchanging, He is the eternal rock - a firm foundation. James 1 says He is the Father of lights, in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. God does not change. His word doesn't change. His calling to His people hasn't changed and King JESUS will never change! We can be steady, immoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing its not in vain because He is the everlasting King.

Turn with me to Daniel chapter 1 and Stand in honor of the reading of Scripture.

READ — DANIEL 1

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be

educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

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. At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 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 inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

PRAY

Heavenly Father... Even in our failings, you are faithful. We praise you sovereign Lord, there is nothing outside your control, no king rises and no crumb falls to the ground apart from you. You know the hairs of our heads, you clothe the flowers of the field, and feed the birds. Calm all our anxieties and fears. Give us the confidence to stand faithfully for you as salt and light in this world. Give us courage and conviction. Raise up strong men, strong leaders in this church. Guard our children and our youth from being pulled away by the corrupt propaganda of godless ideologies. Be our refuge and our firm foundation. We want to live to the honor and glory of King Jesus.

In His Holy name we pray, AMEN.

SERMON

This is move-in weekend for most college campuses around the country. I remember feeling like a tiny goldfish in an ocean my freshman year of college, and it didn't take long to realize it wasn't like Sunday School. One professor came to class the second week, and the other students had been partying with him over the weekend. My sociology professor started the class by saying, "in order to know where we're going, we have to know where we've come from..." then, he showed what looked like a chart from

Planet of the Apes. Another professor opened the class with: “Is anyone here a christian, raise your hand?” I did... and maybe 2-3 others. Then, he said “you need to leave all that behind and come to this class with an open mind, ready to learn the truth.”

And that was 25 years ago.

How do you live for God in a world that rejects Him?

1. Remember God is in control.

Now, verse one gives us the facts and the history. But, verse two gives us Daniel’s perspective. His whole world was turned upside down. His home destroyed. His life in turmoil. He’s now the property of King Neb... but, how did all this happen? “The Lord gave” them into the hand of their enemies.

In the midst of chaos... the best thing you can do is remember who’s in control. Babylon had real power, just not ultimate power. King Neb was a force to be reckoned with, but God remained in charge.

When things begin to crumble, remember God hasn’t lost control. We don’t have to understand everything He does... some things are a mystery, we may not ever fully understand. When you don’t see his hand, trust His heart.

2. Don’t let the World tell you WHO YOU ARE. (1:1-7)

The strategy of Babylon isn’t first to destroy Daniel, but to redefine him. Daniel was isolated and indoctrinated, immersed in the anti-god culture.

- He was removed from his family and his home and everything he knew.

- He was immersed Babylonian language and education... imagine the jaded version of history he was learning. Revisionists often brainwash the youth by twisting history to turn the heroes into villains. Surely, they want to convert Daniel to believe “their truth” instead of the truth.
- He was made a Eunuch... meaning, at 15 years old when these boys were just coming into manhood, the dreams of being husbands and fathers were literally crushed. And, biblically Eunuchs were put out from the people of God. Physically and spiritually, they were “cut-off” from God’s people.
- He was given a new name. The emphasis of His Hebrew name was to give glory to the one true God, but the new name praises their false gods.
 - Daniel means - “YHWH is my judge” Babylon renamed him Belteshazzar - “Baal protects the King”
 - Hananiah - “God is gracious” / Shadrach - “Under the command of Aku (the moon god)”
 - Mishael - “There is none like Elohim” / Meshach - “There is none like Aku (moon god)”
 - Azariah - “God has helped me” / Abed-Nego - “the servant of Nebo (god of wisdom)”

Imagine, you’re used to people calling your name, and even in the sound of your name, the God of your Fathers is praised... but now, when you are summoned, that name exalts a false god. You have to respond to a name that rejects the only God you’ve ever known.

- He was given Babylonian clothing, culture, and cuisine. There’s a lot of focus in this chapter on the food.

To be clear... this is an all out assault on their IDENTITY.

The danger here is to live in Babylon in a way that Babylon starts living in you. You are being discipled constantly. The world is telling you— who you are... what makes you valuable... what success is... what is true and what is not... what is beautiful... and what deserves your worship.

Daniel belonged to God. He never lost who he was.

Now, suppose you get your first big boy job. On your first day, they give you a new company laptop and cellphone, give you a title, and sit you down for your onboarding classes which require you to adopt the company's values - even the ones that clash with your convictions. The pressure is real... Daniel teaches you how to manage that pressure without caving.

Don't lose your identity.

3. Decide before the decision.

If you wait until the heat of the moment to make a hard decision, the chances you make the best decision go way down.

Daniel got ahead of it. He resolved in his heart that he would not eat the food that would defile him before the Lord. They had forced Babylonian ways on them in so many things, but Daniel drew the line in the sand. "I will not eat the things against what my God has commanded." — now, its tough to force someone to eat something if they're determined not to eat it.

If you've ever tried to feed carrots to a toddler, you know that cramming food in there does not mean you've won the fight. My mother used to force my brother to eat green beans, but when she looked away, he would spit them into his milk. She thought he

was such a good eater... until she poured that milk in the sink.
LOL.

Daniel didn't stage a protest, but He made a principled decision, and respectfully presented His case. "I want to honor my God, so I cannot eat that food..." Eating the delicacies from the king's table would be to find the forbidden to be savory, and would have trained them to think that God isn't protecting them from evil, but keeping them from what is good.

This makes me think about the temptation to be sexually involved with a person outside of marriage. If you wait to decide what you'll do, until you're in the heat of the moment, you might do the wrong thing. And, if you do the wrong thing, you might begin to think that all this time God has been keeping something good from you. So you not only disobey, but you no longer trust His character. He isn't a good Father, who knows how to give good gifts. He's a slave owner, who keeps the best things from us.

Daniel purposed in his heart... before the decision was to be made. He devoted Himself to honor the Lord. And, God blessed him.

4. Trust God and OBEY, even when the outcome is uncertain.

Daniel couldn't have known what would happen. He proposed a test. We'll eat what God commands, and let them eat from the king's table... in 10 days, judge for yourself. He trusted God to be good, but he couldn't have known.

He simply knew that God is good and He is worthy of my faithful obedience. Faith and Obedience are inextricably linked.

For some reason, we like to separate them. We say we believe in Jesus, but we don't obey Him. He rejects that entirely. Jesus said

in Luke 6:46 “Why do you call me Lord, but you do not do what I say?” — Jesus knows that words are cheap. People say all kinds of stuff, but at the end of the day, real faith actually obeys the Lord.

Daniel believed and obeyed. And, notice the emphasis on the Lord’s actions:

- “God gave Daniel favor...” (vs 9)
- “God gave them learning...” (vs 17)

The story isn’t ... and Daniel is such a great hero of faith. No, the story of faith is never mainly about the person who has faith, it’s always about the God in whom they believe. God is faithful! That’s the truth here.

Now, the reality is that you can do the right thing, and stuff doesn’t immediately get better. You take a stand at work, and get called to HR. You raise your children to know the Lord and one still goes off the rails. You share the gospel with love and boldness and still get rejected. — We don’t do for God, to get from God. We obey the Lord because we know the Lord... He is good and worthy of our faithful obedience.

5. Live Distinctly Christian to be an Effective Christian.

Daniel and his friends cling to their distinctive dietary restrictions. We’re not told exactly what the issue is here, but presumably the King’s food has come from idol worship: Every dish presented in honor of some false deity. But Daniel received his food as a blessing from the God who gave bread from heaven and water from a rock. God knows best, and has told him what to eat and what not to eat.

Its really interesting isn't it. Food just doesn't seem like a big deal to us. But, what was the first sin? Wasn't it a sin of eating the forbidden food? — if when everyone sits to eat, you're the one who is a super picky eater, it kinda becomes a thing. Everyone knows. It limits the options. Oh, Susie can't have gluten, so no pizza, no pasta, no bread... oh, and Bart has totally cut out sugar, so he can't eat... ANYTHING. - that's not true btw. LOL.

Point is, this dietary thing seems insignificant... but it is going to set them apart at every meal time. Several times a day there will be a noticeable distinction. "They're not like us." — "He is different, Why?" Its meant to set you apart.

Romans 12 says "Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." - We aren't supposed to be like the world, we're meant to stand out, to be set apart.

I don't know what it is for you. Maybe you're the one guy at the business social that declines to drink alcohol. Or, you're the one soldier in your unit that refuses to even go to the sketchy places while on orders. Or, you're the one student who takes time to pray before your lunch. Or, you're the couple that has chosen to stay pure until marriage... or, you're choosing to stay pure after your marriage ended. — Will you live in a way that doesn't just go along with the flow? That doesn't look to cultural trends to determine what you'll do. Will you choose to honor Christ? Will you obey God rather than men?

Daniel did. And it set him apart... and, throughout the book it made everyone see the glory of the One he lived for.

Notice how the chapter ends — it takes a narrative leap to give a timestamp 4 kings ahead. Daniel will be serving the true KING,

no matter who is crowned king, all the way to King Cyrus... ironically, it was under Cyrus that the Lord began bringing His people back home.

Daniel was blessed to be the Lord's ambassador, dealing with one king after another because He was faithful to God.

Leaders come and go. Governments rise and fall. Cultures shift this way and that. We don't sway with the wind or rise with the tides... we are called to be faithful to an unchanging God in an ever-changing world.

What does that mean? Well, let's look beyond Daniel to the truly Faithful One, Jesus Christ.

Daniel was forced to live faithfully in fallen Babylon. Jesus chose to come to our fallen world. Daniel resisted pressures from evil rulers. Jesus endured every temptation from the Evil One himself. Daniel was willing to suffer rather than compromise. Jesus stood strong, and actually did suffer and died. Daniel was favored by God and was protected from death. Jesus was abandoned at the cross and entered death, and then conquered it. Daniel served earthly kings, because He knew there is a greater King. Jesus Christ is the King of kings to whom Daniel was looking.

We live in a fallen world that, in many ways is more corrupt than ever. But, we belong to a Sovereign God. Don't let Babylon define you, don't let it compromise you, and don't let it discourage you. Our God reigns. Kings are but pawns in His hand.

Live faithfully this week. Let's live Distinctively Christian lives for the glory of King Jesus. Amen.