



Daniel Masterclass

Copyright © Chris Hamer-Hodges, Living Rock Church, 2021

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the author.

Contents

The Life of Daniel

1.1 Daniel 1

- 1.1.1 The Character of Daniel
- 1.1.2 Tested and Proven
- 1.1.3 Trained by Man but Instructed by God

1.2 Daniel 2

- 1.2.1 Daniel and Joseph
- 1.2.2 Comparisons
- 1.2.3 As types of Christ, who
- 1.2.4 God's mystery revealed
- 1.2.5 No one else but Jesus could reveal this

1.3 The King's Dream

- 1.3.1 The nations represented in the Statue
- 1.3.2 The Kingdoms of man are temporary, but God's Kingdom endures forever

1.4 The Nature of the Kingdom

- 1.4.1 All Conquering
- 1.4.2 Relentless Growth

1.5 Understand God's Plan

- 1.5.1 Understand the end times
- 1.5.2 Understand Church history
- 1.5.2 Global Destiny
- 1.5.3 Christ Centred

Appendix I



| The Life of Daniel

1.1 Daniel 1

1.1.1 The Character of Daniel

Identity

The first thing that marks Daniel out in this book is that he had an unshakable sense of identity. He knew who he was, and that determined what he was prepared, or not prepared to do.

What determines who we are? When someone asks, "Who are you?" we give them our name. When they ask, "What are you?" we give them our job. We also talk about ourselves in terms of where we live, where we are from, our family and friends.

Daniel and his friends had all this taken away from them. They lost their homes, their jobs, their family, friends, their country, their place of worship; even their names were changed. Yet they did not lose their sense of identity. They had something deeper.

God also changes names in scripture. To Abram he gave the name Abraham (father of many), to Simon, Jesus gave the name Peter (Rock). In both cases it came after a powerful encounter or revelation of God, and deepened their sense of identity. It shows that our true sense of identity comes not from without (the things we have) nor even purely from within... but from above. We will never really know who we are until we know God, and know who we are in him.

Leadership

Daniel displays the character of a true leader. It is Daniel alone who decided to take a stand and not eat the King's food. Yet when he petitions the guard he does so on behalf of not just himself but his three friends as well. Daniel was not just looking out for his own interests but those of his friends too. When Daniel prospered he made sure his friends prospered too. Leadership is not just about striding ahead on an adventure of faith, but about taking others along with you. True leadership is not just about what you can achieve, but what you can enable others to achieve.

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Philippians 2:4

Friendship

Daniel was also a true friend. In this and in the next chapter we see that his three friends prospered because they had Daniel as a friend.

Who we have as friends is vitally important. Good friends support us and build us up, look out for our interests and challenge us when we need it, but bad friends lead us astray and hinder us from moving on in the purpose of God.

“A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.”

Proverbs 12:26

1.1.2 Tested and Proven

Daniel and his friends were tested and proven in this chapter. And there is a subtle use of words that provides an interesting link.

- Daniel and his friends were to be tested for 10 days
- At the end of that time they were found to be 10 times better than all the others

The use of 10 is interesting. Why did Daniel choose 10 days? Why not 7 and make it a week? And how did the king know they were 10 times better? Did they score 100% in their Wisdom exams when all the others got 10%? Or could it be that the wording has been chosen to establish a link between these two events?

Their trials and their faithfulness during this time was instrumental in the multiplication of their gifts and abilities. No trial seems pleasant at the time, but if we take a step back we can often see God’s hand at work, shaping us, strengthening us, and equipping us for what lies ahead. And God is no-man’s debtor, whatever we give to him or give up for him, he gives back many times over.

This establishes a pattern that we shall see again and again in Daniel. God does sometimes take us through times of trial, but they only last an allotted time, and afterwards we come out stronger.

There is another reference to a trial of ten days in the scriptures that is also illustrates these points:

“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 2:10

We shall also see this is just the first of many links that exist between the books of Daniel and Revelation.

1.1.3 Trained by Man but Instructed by God

Daniel and his friends were trained by the Babylonians for three years, but it was God that gave them knowledge and understanding. It was as if they were in two classrooms simultaneously, one earthly and one heavenly.

When listening to the word of God preached, the same can happen. You can receive instruction from the man, but can often also receive separate revelation from the Holy Spirit at the same time.

What is exciting about this passage is that this was happening not during spiritual instruction, but secular training! Even in our day-to-day work we can receive revelation from God, and not just about spiritual matters, but on how to do our Jobs. God can teach us how to be productive in our workplace better than our employers. God wants us to be shining examples like Daniel and his friends, not just by our behaviour and attitude while at work, but by how well we do our jobs too

1.2 Daniel 2

1.2.1 Daniel and Joseph

There are many similarities, in this chapter, between the accounts of Daniel and Joseph¹. Both men were taken against their will into exile in a foreign land. Both served the king, initially in humble circumstances, but were eventually exalted to his right hand. Both interpreted dreams for the king, that no one else could, and both by their interpretation spared the lives of many who would otherwise have died.

1.2.2 Comparisons:

- Carried into exile
- Started in humble circumstances
- Entered the service of the King
- Rose to glory at the King's right hand
- Interpreted the King's dream that no-one else could
- Spared many who would otherwise have died

Most importantly both Daniel and Joseph are types (examples and foreshadows) of Christ himself. [The whole Bible is about Jesus, Not just the New Testament] They are both prophetic in their lives by pointing forward to one who would come in humble circumstances, reveal God in a way no-one else could, save many from the curse of sin and death, and ultimately be exalted to right hand of the throne of God in glory.

1.2.3 As types of Christ, who:

- Left the glory of heaven and entered the world
- Came in humble circumstances
 - A baby in a manger
 - Took the nature of a servant
- Did not do his own will, but the will of the Father
- Was exalted to God's right hand in glory

¹ Genesis, chapters 37-50

- Revealed the Mystery of God that no-one else could
- Brought life to those who were perishing

Thus Daniel is a prophet not just because he saw what was to come, but his very life was a prophetic demonstration of what he saw. This is the same for all of us who are called to be God's prophetic people. It is not enough to be prophetic by what we see and what we say. We must be prophetic by the way we live, pointing people to Jesus and his coming Kingdom by our actions and life.

1.2.4 God's mystery revealed:

This raises an interesting question. If both Daniel and Joseph interpreted dreams of the King that no-one else could, and if these two men, are also types of Christ; what was the mystery that only Jesus could reveal that they were foreshadowing?

We don't have to look far in the New Testament to find out that Jesus revealed the greatest mystery of all – the ultimate purpose of God, revealed in *The Gospel*.

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”

1 Peter 1:10-12

”And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”

Ephesians 1:9-10

“I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To

them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Colossians 1:25-27

”Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”

1 Timothy 3:16

1.2.5 No one else but Jesus could reveal this

“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” But no-one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no-one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Revelation 5:1-5

1.3 The King's Dream

Scripture reveals God as the *King of Kings*. This is a phrase we use often and so its meaning is often overlooked. There are many kings in this world, many who exercise rule and authority, some for good and some for bad, but they are not the ultimate authority that most of them think they are. There is a higher King and a greater Kingdom. God is king over all those who rule as kings on the earth, he holds control, rule and authority over them, just as they do over others. There is no authority on the earth that God has not put in place, and there is none that he cannot remove in an instant.

God is sovereign over the nations – this is one of the reoccurring themes in Daniel. So it is not surprising that the greatest vision of God's kingdom, comes during the reign of one of the greatest kingdoms that there has been on the earth – that of the Babylonians, and that the revelation from the King of Kings comes to the greatest king of this kingdom. For this was not a dream that was given to Daniel, the interpretation came to the prophet, but not the dream. Daniel would have his own dreams later. The Babylonian king who's Royal title was "King of Kings²", was about to receive a vision from the true owner of that title!

1.3.1 The nations represented in the Statue

Vision	Interpretation
Head of Gold	The Babylonian Kingdom
Chest and Arms of Silver	The Medo-Persian Empire
Belly and Thighs of Bronze	The Greek Empire
Legs of Iron	The Roman Empire

1.3.2 The Kingdoms of man are temporary, but God's Kingdom endures forever

The King was shown by his vision and informed through Daniel's interpretation that not only was his mighty kingdom temporary and destined to fall, but that all

² Daniel 2:37, Ezekiel 26:7



the other kingdoms that followed would suffer the same fate. All the kingdoms of man are destined to rise and then to fall and be forgotten³. Only the Kingdom of God is eternal.

The vision shows the futility of man's labour without God. Even the greatest achievements of his greatest empires are destined to turn to dust and blow away. Only what we do for the Kingdom will last. If we live our lives for ourselves or for any other worldly ambition or gain, it will not last, but if we labour for God and for his Kingdom, we know that what we do is part of something that will last forever.

³ See Appendix I - P. B. Shelly's Poem *Ozymandias*

1.4 The Nature of the Kingdom

It was not just the nature of the kingdoms of the world that the King’s dream revealed. It is also one of the clearest pictures of the Kingdom of God that we have anywhere in all the Scriptures. God wants us to know what his Kingdom is like. A correct understanding of the Kingdom of God is one of the most important things we can gain. All of Jesus’ parables were about the Kingdom. When he sent out the disciples, he sent them out to heal, deliver, and proclaim the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is the unifying thread that runs through the whole of the Scriptures. It is the great eternal and unchanging purpose of God for the world. If we understand the Kingdom we will be closer to understanding the heart of God, and it will save us from many false doctrines and futile controversies. This vision has much to tell us about God’s Kingdom.

1.4.1 All Conquering

The first thing we note about God’s kingdom is that it is *all conquering*. It does not co-exist with worldly rule or authorities; it displaces them. The vision shows that just as all authority on earth comes from God, so it is destined to return to God. The Kingdom will not exist as an appendage to a kingdom here, and an empire there, it is a separate and superior government that will out grow and outlast them all.

But it is not just in the world that the Kingdom comes. Jesus said that the Kingdom must first come within⁴. The same principles apply when the Kingdom comes into our lives. It will not, and it cannot coexist with the worldly rules we used to live by. To accept the Kingdom we must abandon the ways of the world. The Kingdom cannot exist in our lives as just an appendage it must occupy all. This is what Jesus meant by the parable of the *Pearl of Great Price*⁵, and the parable of the *Hidden Treasure*⁶. To acquire the Kingdom you must be prepared to give up everything else.

1.4.2 Relentless Growth

The next aspect of God’s Kingdom revealed by the dream is its relentless growth. It is not just eternal in existence, but in increase too.

“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and

⁴ Luke 17:20-21

⁵ Matthew 13:45-46

⁶ Matthew 13:44



upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”

Isaiah 9:7

This may seem simple, but the implications are profound. If we believe this, it should shape our understanding of God’s plan, the end times, and church history.

1.5 Understand God's Plan:

Some understand God's dealings with man as broken up into separate stages or "Dispensations." In each of these God institutes a plan that he expects man to follow, but in each case man fails, and God starts over with a new dispensation (e.g. the Dispensation of Innocence in the Garden, the Dispensation of Law under Moses, etc). The dispensationalist viewpoint sees the purpose of God, divided into a multitude of different strategies and plans, all of which end in failure. This is totally contrary to the teaching of the Kingdom of God. God has only ever had one plan, to fill the earth with his Kingdom, and it is destined for success.

God's commission to Adam was to be fruitful and to fill the earth and rule over it. As a man in the image of God, he was thus to bring the rule of God (the Kingdom) to the whole earth, by filling it with a people in the image of God. This plan is still on track. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded his church to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations teaching them to obey everything. Before the fall it was natural birth that produced men and women in the image of God, for in the image of God they were created. In the New Covenant it is Supernatural Birth, or being Born Again that produces men and women who are being continually transformed into the image of God. Thus the means has changed but the mission, and the commission are the same. God has only ever had one great eternal plan A for this world, and as the King's dream showed, it is destined to progress relentlessly without any hint of failure until it is accomplished.

1.5.1 Understand the end times:

Like all other dispensations, the current church age, according to the dispensationalist is destined to end in failure. Things will go from bad to worse, evil will prevail in the world, the Antichrist will rise and take control, and all the church can do is to hang on and wait for the Rapture! It is alarming how widespread this eschatological⁷ view has become, particularly in the U.S.A, helped by the popular Christian novels by Tim LaHaye - the "Left Behind" series.

A correct understanding of the Kingdom is vital for a correct understanding of the End Times. The church is not destined for failure; our mission is not to hold on until can be "airlifted" to safety. The notion of a Secret Rapture, where the world wakes up to find all the Christians missing - whisked up into heaven, is not biblical! When Christ returns there will be nothing secret about it. When he returns, he is coming not for a beleaguered rear guard, but for a beautiful bride. Daniel saw⁸ the Kingdom fill the whole earth, not retreat into a corner. The Kingdom is destined to fill the earth with the glory of God, before Christ returns, and the Church as the agent of the kingdom is destined to play its part in achieving it. God's Kingdom is unstoppable!

⁷ Doctrines concerning the "end times"

⁸ To be pedantic, Nebuchadnezzar saw it first, but Daniel did see it too. I will use the phrase "Daniel saw" for simplicity.

1.5.2 Understand Church history:

Another thing that a correct understanding of the Kingdom will help us understand is Church history. Many Christians take a very dim view of Church history. By the way they talk you would have expected Daniel to see the rock grow steadily for 300 years, only to fall into decline for over a millennium until the Reformation, the Charismatic Renewal, and the introduction of Cell Groups! It may seem amusing, but by the way some people talk, you would think that God's plan was in trouble before they came along!

It may be popular to see Church history with a big dip after the initial good start of the New Testament, a level that we are still seeking to get back to – but this is not correct! This is not what the message of the Kingdom teaches. The eternal growth of the kingdom did not start with us, or even with the reformation, but with Christ. Since that time God's Kingdom has been advancing in every generation. Individuals may fall, church organisations may wander from the truth, nations may give up on the godly foundation they once had – but God's Kingdom knows no decline! God has had a growing testimony in every generation. If we have taken it further, it is only because of all who have gone before. If we do not take it further, God's Kingdom will continue its relentless advance without us. Our mission is not to try to go back to the New Testament, but forwards to the fullness of the Kingdom.

“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther 4:14 NKJV

1.5.2 Global Destiny

The Kingdom of God is destined to fill the earth. There is nothing parochial or small-minded in God's Kingdom plan. His purpose is never limited to national or regional borders or boundaries. If all we are concerned about is what God is doing in our town, we have not understood the Kingdom. It's not about our town; our mission is to the world. Although we do work that out first where we are, we need to think big.

Someone who has grasped the nature of the Kingdom has no problem supporting what God is doing in other regions or other countries, or even in other churches. It's all part of the same work to bring God's Kingdom in the whole earth.

1.5.3 Christ Centred

The most important thing we learn about the Kingdom in Daniel is that it is Christ centred. Every kingdom has a king, and the king of God's Kingdom is Jesus. He is the rock that Daniel saw not cut by human hands. The Kingdom is all about Jesus; it is ultimately all about bringing all things to their rightful place under Christ's feet.

To live Kingdom lives, we should be totally submitted and centred on him, and do all things as unto him.

“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”

Ephesians 1:9-10

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Colossians 3:23-24

Appendix I

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

P. B. Shelley