

LIVING BY CONVICTION

Daniel 1:1-21

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² 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. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ 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.

⁸ 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. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. ESV

Frances Schaeffer's How Should We Then Live emphasizes the necessity, even the urgency, of having a scriptural base for moral values and absolutes. In our society now molded by secular humanist philosophy [rationalism: denial of the authority and sufficiency of the Bible] and then topped off with the New Age Movement influence [no absolute truth, pantheism, no death – Genesis 3]; can you say Oprah?], and now a full-blown postmodern culture [no absolutes, no judgments, pluralism], it is the **exception** to find someone who believes the Bible and is willing to take a stand for its values.

On Sunday, May 20, 2007, I saw a man at the Rest Area in Clanton, Alabama and he was wearing a shirt with “In the beginning, God created....” I rather snidely asked him, “Do you believe what is written on your shirt?” He wasn’t sure what my problem was but he answered, “Yes, I do.” I smiled and said, “So do I.”

Daniel is right up to date as far as relevance to our day. Daniel and his companions believed God and were willing to take a stand at any cost to themselves. I believe they understood the principle taught in Hebrews 11:32-40, that God’s faithful don’t necessarily see the reward of their loyalty to Christ while they live.

Hebrews 11:32-40

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy — wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. ESV

Jesus said His disciples were in the world but not of the world (John 17:11, 16).

What is a Christian’s responsibility in at home, in society, in politics, etc?

Was Daniel writing detailed predictive prophecy?

What is the implication of that question: If yes? If no?

Daniel is rejected as the author of the entire book by those of the liberal camp because it absolutely insists on the inerrancy of the Scripture. How could anyone write in such detail about events that had not yet occurred, but it did happen in precisely the way and the time that the writer predicted?

If God inspired Daniel would it be accurate?

Daniel claimed to be the writer (12:4); the Jews included Daniel in the Scripture.

Jesus attributed a quote to "Daniel the prophet" from 9:27:

Matthew 24:15

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Perhaps Jesus did not know as much as the liberals of today?

The theme of Daniel is God's sovereignty over the affairs of men.

1. AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY 1:1-7

Does God have anything to do with the daily affairs of men?

Discuss the captivity.

Were the invaders doing what they did freely?

Who really directed their actions?

2. A COURAGEOUS STAND

1:8-16

“But!” Was Daniel’s refusal based on physical, moral, or ceremonial principle?

Physical? Food and wine was not necessarily prohibited; only Nazarites took a vow not to drink strong drink.

Moral? What you eat doesn’t defile you. (Mt 15:11)

Ceremonial? This was food offered to pagan idols.
The same principle is carried forward in the N.T. (1 Cor 8)

Daniel showed great discernment for a teenager in a foreign environment.

Discuss the process of Daniel’s argument. His tactfulness.

3. A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME

1:17-21

Daniel was a trusted advisor in the Babylonian court for over 70 years (1:21).

He lived well into the period of the Medes and Persians.

No other Hebrew in the O.T., except Joseph in Egypt, had such influence in the affairs of a foreign nation.