Daniel 1

Introduction…

- **The whole counsel of God**
  - Our desire to is to teach through the whole Bible…
  - **Acts 20:27** – "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."
  - We finished **Ezekiel** – the 3rd and book of Prophecy in the Old Testament…
  - **Daniel** is the 27th book of the Old Testament - and 4th of 16 prophetic books in the OT
- **The prophets…**
  - 1st - Who were the prophets…
    - The prophets of Israel were sent by God to call Israel to repentance…
      - First and foremost - through the preaching of the Word of God…
      - Because it is through the Word that there is conviction – it reveals our sinful nature…
      - Just like people today – Israel thought they were GOOD PEOPLE…
      - They did not see anything wrong with their idolatry / sexual immorality…
      - Because they did not realize the standard of righteousness that God required…
      - So the prophets came to declare the Word of God to them – show them their need to repent!
    - But there was also an aspect of the Prophets to foretelling the future…
      - Not so much because God wanted His people to know what the future held…
      - But so that when the future came – people would know see God knew in advance…
      - Because only the Lord is outside of time – only he sees the end from the beginning…
      - The prophecies in the Bible are His fingerprint proving He is the author of the Word!
      - **Isaiah 46:9-10** – "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure."
  - 2nd – The 3 periods of the prophets…
    - The Divided Kingdom…
      - 930 B.C. - After the death of Solomon the Kingdom of Israel was split in two…
      - The Northern 10 tribes – called Israel - ruled at first by Jeroboam…
      - Judah and Benjamin – called Judah – ruled at first by Rehoboam…
      - Israel would not be reunited again as one nation until 1948 – **Ezekiel 37:21-22**
      - 40 Kings would rule over the two kingdoms – 20 in Israel / 20 in Judah…
      - This is the period of Israeli history that we studied in **I** and **II Kings** / **II Chronicles**…
      - Most of the prophets wrote during this time – **Isaiah** / **Jonah** / **Micah** to name a few…
      - The period ended with the Diaspora - 722 B.C. - the fall of the Northern Kingdom …
      - And 586 B.C. – when the southern Kingdom was taken captive to Babylon for 70 years!
    - The Babylonian Exile…
      - There were 3 sieges of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon…
      - The first took place in 605 B.C (*Jehoiakim*) – this is when Daniel was taken captive...
      - The second was in 597 B.C. (*Jehoiachin*) – this is when Ezekiel was taken captive…
      - The final siege was in 586 B.C (*Zedekiah*) – led to the destruction of the Temple and exile!
      - It was during this captivity that **Jeremiah** / **Ezekiel** / and **Daniel** were written!
    - The post exile Kingdom…
      - 536 B.C. - the Jews returned to the Land - Fulfilling the prophecy of **Jeremiah 29:10**!
      - The captives returned to Judah in 3 waves - Zerubbabel / Ezra / Nehemiah…
      - It was during this time that the prophets **Haggai** / **Zechariah** / and **Malachi** prophesied

- **The book of Daniel – 5 things…**
  - 1st - Who wrote the book of **Daniel**…
    - It turns out there is quite a lot of modern *scholarship* that casts doubt on the authorship…
    - The dilemma for them comes in the incredible accuracy of the prophecies of Daniel…
    - He laid out all the major gentile powers from Babylon / Medo-Persia / Greece / to Rome!
    - They argue there is no way it could have been written during the 70 year Captivity!
    - Instead they view the last 6 chapters as a compiled work from the time of the Maccabees
    - Yet Daniel credits himself as the author – **Daniel 8:1 / 8:15 / 8:27 / 9:2 / 10:2/ 10:7**
    - More importantly – Jesus event credits Daniel as the author – **Matthew 24:15**
  - 2nd – The theme of the book is the sovereignty of God…
    - We see God is sovereign over His people – protecting them from fire / and from the lions den…
    - We see God is sovereign over all kingdoms of this world – till the very end…
    - We see that nothing happens apart from His purposes / and His plans!
    - **Proverbs 21:1** – "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD… He turns it wherever He wishes."
    - This is a VERY encouraging message – especially in light of the upcoming election…
    - Even when life seems uncertain – we can be confident ultimately God is in control!
  - 3rd – When was the book written – the exile prophets…
    - Jeremiah was the prophet to Judah – writing from Jerusalem…
    - Ezekiel was the prophet to Judah – writing from the Babylonian captivity…
    - Daniel was the prophet to the Gentiles (*nations*) – writing from Babylon!
    - Written in the later years of his life - he lived to be around 90 – until after the fall of Babylon
  - 4th – The importance of Daniel…
    - The prophetic influence of the book of Daniel cannot be overstated…
    - The book of Daniel is to the Old Testament / what the book of Revelation if to the NT!
    - The timeline given in **Daniel 9:24-27** – is the outline for the entire book of Revelation!
  - 5th – The division of the book…
    - The book of Daniel is broken up into 2 very simple divisions…
    - The first half the book – chapters 1 to 6 – deals with the life of Daniel…
    - The second half of the book – chapters 7-12 – deals with the prophesies of Daniel

No Compromise… (*3 things*)

- **Indoctrination**
  - There is a lot of emphasis in our culture today on being politically correct…
  - If we do not *tow the line* / agree with the common view – we are a bigot / bad person!
  - In an era of safe places / #love wins / gender fluidity / moral relativity…
  - It can be reasonably asked – What is the truth! And how can we stand up for it!

- **1st – The fall of Jerusalem… vs. 1-7**
  - 1st - In the third year of Jehoiakim (*Eliakim*) king of Judah – 605 B.C… vs. 1-2
    - Egypt was conquered by Babylon – never again rose to a world power - **Jeremiah 46:2**
      - Judah had been under the authority of Pharaoh Necho for 4 years – **II Kings 23:34-36**
      - So when Nebuchadnezzar took Egypt – he also took Judah as a spoil!
    - Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and removed some of the gold articles from the Temple…
      - He did not take them all – because in this first siege – he only made Judah a vassal state…
      - Jehoiakim was left to rule in Judah – and worship continued at the Temple…
      - Nebuchadnezzar took the gold articles – and brought them into the temple of his god…
      - It was his way of saying – see – my god defeated and is better than your god…
      - But those same gold cups and plates what would later be used by Belshazzar – **Daniel 5:2**

- And the hand of God would come and write on the wall – proclaiming the fall of Babylon!

- Because there is no other God like the Lord – no one who can compare to Him!
  - Too often people make the mistake of thinking God has an equal – satan...
  - Satan is not Gods equal - God has no equal - God has absolute power over all...
  - God kicked satan from glory - kicked out of heaven - **Revelation 12:9**
  - He and the angels that followed suffered quick reprisal for rebelling against God...
  - He fell like a flash of lightning - so quick if you had blinked you would've missed it!
  - One day all of them will bow down and kneel before Jesus - **Philippians 2:10**

o 2nd - Nebuchadnezzar instructed Ashpenaz – take captive the best of Judah… vs. 3-6

- Young men – likely teenagers – who were handsome and smart…
  - Included were Daniel – God is my judge / Hananiah – favor from God…
  - Mishael – who is like God / and Azariah – God is my helper
  - I am sure at that point these boys did not understand what God was doing…
  - Yet God would use three of them to stand up to Nebuchadnezzar – defying death…
  - And God would raise Daniel up to become 2nd only to the King of Babylon!
  - Too often we focus on the negative - and as a result miss what God is doing...
  - Anytime we get our eyes off Jesus and onto our circumstances we are in trouble...
  - If we focus what is happening around us - we are bound to be overwhelmed!
  - It is when we keep our eyes on Jesus that we see what God is doing in spite of our troubles!
  - **II Corinthians 4:18** – "We do not look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen [*Jesus*]. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever."
- The captives were to be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians…
  - They were to be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians (*indoctrination*)!
  - They plan was to destroy the faith of these boy – and replace it with a pagan philosophy!
  - Not that different from what we see today…
  - The common convention today is – if you want to be wise then go to college…
  - Yet more often than not – universities today are turning out fools!
  - **Psalms 14:1** – "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"
  - Because they are not teaching the Bible / about the consequences of sin...
  - Instead the students are told there is no right or wrong - it is all relative...
  - There is no sin - as long as you think it is ok - it is good!
  - **Judges 21:25** - "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
  - Do not mistake knowledge for wisdom – universities might give LOTS of knowledge…
  - But the knowledge of men – if we listen – can blind us to our need for Jesus…
  - That is not wisdom – that is foolishness – because it keeps us from God!
- Like evolution – **Romans 1:20-22**
  - There are only two possibilities for the origin of life – design or accident…
  - Today the smartest - most educated men in the world – believe in 'Evolution'…
  - Because men choose to deny the creator – they instead believe life is all an accident!
  - I wear a watch on my wrist so I can tell the time – it is relatively simple device…
  - But suppose I tried to convince you it was the result of an accident…
  - I threw some gears up in the air – and they fell down as a working watch – foolish!
  - How much more foolish to think we are an accident – deny the God who created us!
- Like gender identity…
  - As part of rejecting the creator - the very definition of gender has been challenged…
  - We see people today questioning the design of the creator – there is no non-binary!
  - **Genesis 1:27** – "God created man in His *own* image… male and female He created them."

- Why so much pressure to deny God / the creator – deny His design…
  - For one simple purpose – because men LOVE sin!
  - Because men LOVE (agape) sin they hate the light – Jesus - that reveals their sinfulness!
  - **John 3:19-20** - "This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved (agape) darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.."

o 3rd - The names of the 4 young boys were changed… vs. 7
- The were given names to dedicate them to the 4 leading heathen gods of Babylon
  - Daniel: Belteshazzar - *Bel's* (*Marduk*) prince – chief deity of Babylon / god of judgment…
  - Hananiah: Shadrach – belongs to the god *Sheshach* – the sun god…
  - Mishael: Meshach – who is like *Shak* - the Babylonian goddess of earth / love…
  - Azariah: Abed-nego - servant of Nego – the god of the shining fire…
  - The Chaldean *(Babylonian)* Bible translates 'Lucifer' in **Isaiah 14:12** - as *Nego*…
- The names were meant to destroy their connection to the God of Israel…
  - But these men would defy their new names – and refuse to bow to peer pressure…
  - It would end up getting them thrown in the flames of *Nego* – **Daniel 3**…
  - But God would keep them safe from those flames – it is when they walked with God!
  - We live in world that would love try to and change our name / our character…
  - Try to get us to belong to this world – rather than look for a better home in heaven…
  - Convince us that nothing is better than living for this life – seeking love…
  - Ultimately trying to make us servants of satan – rather than children of God!
  - But the good news is when we stand up – though it will mean trials and tribulation…
  - We ultimately will find we are victorious – we are saved from the fire (*here and eternally*)!
  - **Hebrews 11:25** - "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin…"

- **2ND – SET APART… VS. 8-17**

o 1st – Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the Kings wine and food… vs. 8
- Daniel and the 3 boys did not partake of the Kings wine…
  - Because alcohol will impair your judgment - keep you from thinking clearly...
  - The Bible does not say that it is wrong to drink alcohol (*except for Pastors*)…
  - The Bible does say it is wrong to be drunk – to loose self control - **Ephesians 5:18**
  - When full of wine you will do things you will regret (*and not remember*)...
  - But when you are full of the Spirit you will do great things for God that never fade!
- Daniel and the 3 boys did not partake of the Kings food…
  - There are likely 3 reasons why the Daniel saw the food as defiled…
  - Babylonians ate unclean animals that were forbidden by the Jewish law – **Leviticus 11-12**
  - They also ate animals that had been strangled – still had blood – **Leviticus 7:23-27**
  - And the animals that were eaten were first offered to their false gods
- Instead Daniel asked to only eat vegetables (*first vegetarian in the Bible*)…
  - Not that there was any problem with eating meat – it is not Biblical to be a vegetarian…
  - In fact Jesus would go on to say you can eat anything – **Matthew 15:11**
  - It was not about the wine and food – it was about being holy (*kadosh*)…
  - If someone saw Daniel eating bacon that had just been offered to Marduk...
  - The natural assumption would have been that he was a believer in that false deity!
  - If we as Christians look and act just like those who do not know Jesus...
  - Why would anyone want to hear about Jesus - come to church...
  - God calls us to be Holy - we are called to be saints...
  - The NT word saints – *hagios* – means to be holy – set apart...

- We are called saints – it means we are to be set apart from the world for God!
- The NT word for church - *ekklesia* - mean to be called out - of the world...
- It is only as we are HOLY - that we are able to shine and point others to Christ!

o 2nd – Not living for this life… vs. 9-17
- The chief eunuch was hesitant to grant the request of Daniel…
  - He was concerned if Daniel and his 3 companions did not eat / drink their appointed food…
  - They would start to noticeably loose weight – and look unhealthy…
  - Then he would come under the wrath of the King for disobeying his orders!
  - So Daniel offered a test – just give the 4 youth water and vegetables for 10 days…
  - Vegetables – *Myerzh* – means seeds – so they were eating vegetables and grains…
  - And if they looked unhealthier than the rest – who ate the kings meat / drank his wine…
  - Then they would agree to do whatever the eunuch thought was best
- After 10 days – the 4 young men looked healthier than all the rest…
  - This was not a result of a great new fad diet (*though there is one*) – it was a miracle of God…
  - And it had nothing to do with looking healthy – or trying to get fit…
  - It was about realizing there was something far more important – obeying the Word!
  - As a result God gave them health – AND blessed them with wisdom / knowledge / and skill!
  - AND Daniel was given a spiritual gift - understanding in ALL visions and dreams!
  - We live in a culture that is obsessed with outward appearances…
  - Americans spend $3 billon a year on gym memberships / $46 billion on diets…
  - **I Timothy 4:8** – "Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things…"
  - Yet no matter how much we work out / diet – the end is still the same – we die…
  - That is not to say we should pork out – there is wisdom in being a steward of our body…
  - But why do we waste exorbitant time and effort on something that cannot last…
  - Like Daniel we would be much wiser to instead invest in obeying the Bible…
  - Then we would find the Lord taking care of our health – as we serve Him…
  - But far more than that – we will find we grow in the Lord – so we can be used by Him!

- **3RD – BLESSED BY THE LORD… VS. 18-21**

o 1st – At the end of 3 years – all the young man came before Nebuchadnezzar…
- The king interviewed them all – and none were as impressive and Daniel and the boys…
  - Notice they are referred to by their Hebrew names / not the Babylonians ones…
  - Therefore they served the King directly – the highest appointment…
  - And he found them to be 10 times better than ALL of the officials in his kingdom!
  - And Daniel continued to be used by God into the reign of King Cyrus (*70 years later*)!
- The result of being set apart / holy – is a life long legacy of being used by God!
  - God is going to use our lives no matter what - but how will He use us...
  - **II Timothy 2:20** - "In a [Great house] some [pots] are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive [pots] are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special [pot]..."
  - Are we going to be special pots used for extraordinary purposes - or ordinary pots...
  - I think a lot of people are baffled at why the Lord does not use them more…
  - The better question is – how much of ourselves do we give to the Lord to be used!
  - There is no limit to what God desires to do with our lives – **Ephesians 3:20**
  - But we can limit what God does with our lives – by how we live our lives…
  - Do we choose to live for this world – living for ourselves / momentary pleasures…
  - Or like Daniel – do we purpose in our heart to be set apart for the Lord!