

Preparation for the End Time

Daniel and the End Time

Lesson #2 for April 14, 2018

Scriptures: Luke 16:10; Daniel 1; 2; 3:1-6,13-18; 4; 6; Revelation 13:11-15; John 3:7.

1. It is no surprise to those who have studied the Bible that ancient Israel did not fulfill God's plan for it. After spending about 200 years in Egypt with about 100 years in slavery and then being miraculously delivered from Egypt by God's power, instead of faithfully representing God, the Israelites fell back into their evil ways soon after being established in Palestine. Eventually, they were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon three times.
2. This was a serious problem for the children of Israel. Being in captivity and even in slavery in Babylonia caused a lot of concern among the Jews. We need to remember that in ancient times people believed that the nations were divided up among the different "gods" so that each god had his/her own territory. So, if you wanted to worship that god, you had to worship him/her on his/her own territory. (See 2 Kings 5, especially verses 16-18.) So, their concern was: Would God still hear their prayers as they were in Babylonia?
3. But, fortunately, Daniel and his three friends after arriving in Babylon were not concerned about God's ability to hear their prayers way over in that foreign country. Thus, they became witnesses to the nations in a way that the entire nation of Israel should have been hundreds of years earlier.
4. While we recognize that Daniel and his three friends lived in very different times and circumstances than we do, what can we learn from their stories?
5. Read Luke 16:10 and Daniel 1. There were at least two reasons why Daniel and his friends refused to eat the king's food. Not only was it less healthy than the water and vegetables that they were given but also the king's food had been offered to his gods before it was served. Thus, if Daniel and his friends had eaten the king's food, it would have been believed that they were so successful because of the blessings from the king's gods. Proof that Daniel did not always avoid the eating of meat is seen in Daniel 10:2-3 where Daniel specifically said that he did not eat any meat or drink any wine for a short period of time until the three weeks was over. (The ancient word used for *wine* could mean either fresh grape juice or fermented drink.)
6. So, by refusing to eat the king's meat or drink the king's wine, they were not only choosing a healthier diet but also they were rejecting the king's gods!
7. Fortunately for Daniel and his friends, the vegetables were not offered to the gods. It is interesting to note that the root word—translated *vegetables* in most modern translations—actually means things that "grow from seeds." That is the same word used in Genesis 1 to describe the Edenic diet. But, Adam and Eve's diet was fruits, nuts, and grains and did not include vegetables! Vegetables were not added to their diet until after sin. (Genesis 3:18)
8. God obviously worked closely with Daniel and his three friends repeatedly on different occasions. Would He not have worked with the entire country/nation of Israel back in Palestine if they had been as faithful? Of course, He would have!
9. So, what about us in our day? Are we carefully adhering to the truth revealed in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White? Are we being good witnesses to those around us?
10. Those who clearly follow the biblical advice and the additional advice given us by Ellen White have been shown by the *Adventist Health Study* to have benefitted by having less cancer, less heart disease, more energy, and to live up to 10 years longer than the average population around them. That is why Loma Linda was one of the four locations in the world to be

declared a “blue zone” where people live longer and healthier lives than their peers.

11. Seventh-day Adventist evangelists have used the story of Daniel 2 many, many times to begin evangelistic series. Thousands of people have come to believe in the Bible through those meetings. If one is willing to admit that God can predict the future, then Daniel 2 is powerful evidence even for God’s existence.
12. Read Daniel 2. How would you compare the Europe of today with the prophecy in Daniel 2:40-43? How could any human being acting alone 2600 years ago have accurately described what would be happening in Europe today?
13. Daniel 2 and, later, Daniel 7-12 prove that God is able to predict the future far in advance. In Isaiah 40-55, (See Isaiah 40:25-26; 41:21-29.) God repeatedly challenged the other “gods” to do that. In the book of Isaiah, God told Isaiah that there are two main criteria on which to base one’s judgment about who is a God: (1) The real God created everything; (2) The real God is able to predict the future far in advance, in one case over 2300 years in advance!
14. Try to imagine how you would feel as a young upcoming star student at the University of Babylon if a government official arrived at your door one day and announced that you were among a group who was to be executed! Do you think Daniel and his three friends were already known to Nebuchadnezzar? The officials who received Daniel’s reply seemed to trust him. How do you think you would have prayed that night? Would you have been able to sleep?
15. When Daniel appeared before Nebuchadnezzar, he reminded him that none of his human wise men, enchanters, or magicians was able to help him in any way. Daniel could have taken credit for what he was about to reveal; but, he did not. He stated clearly that only the true God could do what Nebuchadnezzar was demanding.
16. In our daily activities and especially when we seek to evangelize by sharing our faith, do we take a humble attitude? Do people see that we are witnessing for God? Do they praise God because of what they hear from us? (Matthew 5:16) Paul felt that he could only boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 6:14)
17. The story of the three Hebrews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—on the plain of Dura as recorded in Daniel 3 has some interesting parallels to Revelation 13. Is it possible that sometime in the near future our lives could be threatened if we do not worship in the way and at the time demanded by a political power? Specifically, compare Daniel 3:16 and Revelation 13:11-17. What similarities do you see in these two passages? In both cases political powers were/will be seeking to force people to worship in the way and at the time they wanted/want them to worship.
18. What would you have said to Nebuchadnezzar if you had been called before him because of your defiance of his command to worship his idol? (See Daniel 3:13-18.) No doubt, Nebuchadnezzar was reminded about the vision that he had seen in the night, and the fact that he was trying to change God’s version of history to his own version of history. He became very angry when those three young man defied him. But, incredibly, the three young men were preserved in the fire. More than that, Jesus Christ was seen walking in the flames with them.
19. But, what if they had not been preserved in the fire. Would it have still been the right thing to do to stand firm for their faith? Could such a challenge face some of us in the near future? We must come to be so convinced that God is right and that He is able to take care of us that even if we are killed and rest in the grave for a while, God will ultimately rescue us in the end. Do we have the courage to trust God that far?
20. Daniel 3 ends with Nebuchadnezzar making a great confession about the true God. But, it

was not long thereafter when he made the statement found in Daniel 4:30.

Daniel 4:30: he said, “Look how great Babylon is! I built it as my capital city to display my power and might, my glory and majesty.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Daniel 4:30). New York: American Bible Society.

21. We know what the result was. About a year later, Nebuchadnezzar was cast away from the habitations of human beings and lived as an animal for seven year.
22. Read John 15:5; Acts 17:28; and Daniel 5:23. These verses and many more that could be cited make it very clear that our lives are totally and completely dependent upon the God of heaven. When Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his position as king of Babylon, he finally admitted the truth. Do you expect to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven?

The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. He who had defied and blasphemed the God of heaven, now acknowledged the power of the Most High and earnestly sought to promote the fear of Jehovah and the happiness of his subjects. Under the rebuke of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Nebuchadnezzar had learned at last the lesson which all rulers need to learn—that true greatness consists in true goodness. He acknowledged Jehovah as the living God, saying, “I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 521.2.

23. Nebuchadnezzar had finally admitted the truth. See Daniel 4:35.
24. Daniel 4 tells an interesting story. A powerful Gentile, the Emperor of the world, was apparently converted to believe in the Hebrew God. Shouldn't that have been the work of the children of Israel as they lived in Palestine hundreds of years earlier?
25. In the book of Daniel, we see that his wisdom and faithfulness led him to a top position in the government of Babylonia. Then, when Babylonia was conquered by the Medes and Persians, it was not long before he was in a top position in that government. That is an almost unheard of thing. So, what do we know about Daniel that might help us to explain why that was?

Daniel 6:4-5: ⁴Then the other supervisors and the governors tried to find something wrong with the way Daniel administered the empire, but they couldn't, because Daniel was reliable and did not do anything wrong or dishonest. ⁵They said to one another, “We are not going to find anything of which to accuse Daniel unless it is something in connection with his religion.”—*Good News Bible** (Daniel 6:4-5).

26. Daniel's enemies thought that they could trap Daniel by getting the king to sign a decree that everyone must worship only him for a month.
27. Compare Revelation 13:4,8,11-17. Once again, the beast, and the dragon behind the beast, will try to force the entire world to worship according to their dictates.
28. When Daniel learned of this decree, he went about his activities as usual. Daniel could have done many different things to prevent his enemies from seeing his prayers: (1) He could have prayed somewhere else—out of sight. (2) He could have prayed at some other time of the day when no one was watching. (3) He could have offered his prayers silently and inconspicuously, even at work. There are other possible ways that Daniel could have avoided being arrested. So, why did he continue to pray as usual?

29. Daniel had a very close relationship with God. (Daniel 9:23) He had had numerous previous contacts with God in different ways. Repeatedly, he had stated that his God could care for him and that his God was more powerful than any of the pagan God's that others were worshipping. By hiding at that point in time, he would have been suggesting that his God maybe was not able to take care of him as previously suggested.

The prophet's enemies counted on Daniel's firm adherence to principle for the success of their plan. And they were not mistaken in their estimate of his character. He quickly [541] read their malignant purpose in framing the decree, but he did not change his course in a single particular. Why should he cease to pray now, when he most needed to pray? Rather would he relinquish life itself, than his hope of help in God. With calmness he performed his duties as chief of the princes; and at the hour of prayer he went to his chamber, and with his windows open toward Jerusalem, in accordance with his usual custom, he offered his petition to the God of [542] heaven. He did not try to conceal his act. Although he knew full well the consequences of his fidelity to God, his spirit faltered not. Before those who were plotting his ruin, he would not allow it even to appear that his connection with Heaven was severed. In all cases where the king had a right to command, Daniel would obey; but neither the king nor his decree could make him swerve from allegiance to the King of kings.

Thus the prophet boldly yet quietly and humbly declared that no earthly power has a right to interpose between the soul and God. Surrounded by idolaters, he was a faithful witness to this truth. His dauntless adherence to right was a bright light in the moral darkness of that heathen court. Daniel stands before the world today a worthy example of Christian fearlessness and fidelity.

For an entire day the princes watched Daniel. Three times they saw him go to his chamber, and three times they heard his voice lifted in earnest intercession to God. The next morning they laid their complaint before the king. Daniel, his most honored and faithful statesman, had set the royal decree at defiance. "Hast thou not signed a decree," they reminded him, "that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 540.4-542.2.

30. Do you think that Daniel prayed in Aramaic? Or, in Hebrew? Or, did he pray silently to himself and God? Did his enemies hear what he was saying? Did he pray about the king's decree?
31. Read Daniel 6:16. Did these words from King Darius indicate that he already knew a lot about Daniel and his faithfulness?

As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living. With them should be linked the teachings of the last book of the New Testament Scriptures. Satan has led many to believe that the prophetic portions of the writings of Daniel and of John the revelator cannot be understood. But the promise is plain that special blessing will accompany the study of these prophecies. "The wise shall understand" [Daniel 12:] (verse 10), was spoken of the visions of Daniel that were to be unsealed in the latter days; and of the revelation that Christ gave to His servant John for the guidance of God's people all through the centuries, the promise is, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Revelation 1:3.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and*

*Kings** 547.2-548.0. [Content in brackets is added.]

32. The book of Daniel is divided between two general types of material. Stories of miraculous protections and deliverances and, then, incredible predictions of future events. Which of these two types of material from the book of Daniel is most appealing to you? In the last half of the book of Daniel, we are going to read some incredible prophecies stretching all the way to 1844. Could God somehow have known all that was going to take place that far in the future? Daniel is written in two different languages: Hebrew and Aramaic. Daniel 1-2:4 and Daniel 8-12 are in Hebrew; Daniel 2:4 until the end of Daniel 7 are in Aramaic.
33. Somehow, Daniel got a copy of Jeremiah's prophecies from Jerusalem. He must have rejoiced when he heard that the children of Israel were to return home after 70 years. (Jeremiah 25:8-14; 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:21; Daniel 9:2) As the end of the 70 years approached, Daniel began fervent prayers to God to act on behalf of His people. It is very interesting to notice what we read in Daniel 9:1-19. Repeatedly, Daniel admitted that as the children of Israel, they were still far from God's plan for their lives. Repeatedly, he mentioned that they had sinned, and he included himself among that group of sinners.
34. But then, as recorded in Daniel 9:15-19, he did something very remarkable. Essentially, he said: "God you need to act for Your own name's sake. It is Your city and Your nation and Your people who are in trouble. So You need to act to restore respect for Your name among the nations."

Daniel 9:15-19: ¹⁵ "O Lord our God, you showed your power by bringing your people out of Egypt, and your power is still remembered. We have sinned; we have done wrong. ¹⁶You have defended us in the past, so do not be angry with Jerusalem any longer. It is your city, your sacred hill. All the people in the neighboring countries look down on Jerusalem and on your people because of our sins and the evil our ancestors did. ¹⁷O God, hear my prayer and pleading. Restore your Temple, which has been destroyed; restore it so that everyone will know that you are God. ¹⁸Listen to us, O God; look at us, and see the trouble we are in and the suffering of the city that bears your name. We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done right. ¹⁹Lord, hear us. Lord, forgive us. Lord, listen to us, and act! In order that everyone will know that you are God, do not delay! This city and these people are yours."—*Good News Bible** (Daniel 9:15-19).

Daniel really cared about God's reputation.

35. When Daniel received a copy of Jeremiah's prophecy, how did he know that it was inspired? Remember that when Jeremiah was making those prophecies, he was surrounded by false prophets saying contradictory things. (Jeremiah 29:21-23)
36. Surely, the experiences of Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 should give us a clue about how we can prepare ourselves for what is coming. Are we prepared to stand firm and true to the truth? Are we tempted to compromise with the truth even in small ways in our lives today? If we are compromising now, will it be even easier to make larger compromises later?
37. Try to imagine what an incredible witness Daniel was. How many peoples' lives were impacted? How many of them actually made decisions to follow the true God after witnessing all that Daniel did and said?
38. Read Luke 14:26-27. Did Jesus really want us to hate our parents? Or, was He trying to tell us how absolutely essential it is that we be witnesses for the truth no matter who else may do so?

39. How can we best witness to family and friends who may not believe as we do? If we live a loving, caring, honest, faithful life, will that make it more likely that others will listen to us when we talk to them about our God?
40. Sometimes, we might be tempted to think that God is far away in heaven and does not have time to be concerned about every little detail of our lives. But, clearly, God was with Daniel and his friends when they refused to eat the king's diet. Do you think the environment in which Daniel and his three friends lived was more or less friendly than our environment today to Christianity?
41. If we truly believe the book of Daniel and all of the events pictured there as well as the prophecies, we are setting ourselves apart from all other religions and Christians. If you really understand the correct interpretation of Daniel 8 and 9 and work out the dates of those prophecies and really want to follow God's plan for your life, you must be a Seventh-day Adventist.
42. As we study the books of Daniel and Revelation in this series of lessons, why not get a new version of the Bible with wording that is a little different from what we are familiar with and try to take a fresh approach to these prophetic books. Try to be careful not to pick a version which is particularly sponsored by a single religion or group of religions with particular views.
43. Read Daniel 12:9. Daniel was instructed to keep secret or seal up his book until the time of the end. Do you think we are living now in the time of the end?
44. It should be clear that you cannot antagonize and persuade at the same time. Holy lives lived and visible to those around us are powerful sermons.

The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power which it is impossible wholly to resist.—Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul** 331.1 (1883); 3SP* 439.1; SR* 318.1.

45. Read Daniel 1:12. What did Daniel think would happen after only 10 days of eating vegetables—things that grow from seeds—and water to drink? Did he really think that the Babylonian officials would be able to recognize a difference in them that quickly?
46. There are several suggestions in Daniel 3 of characteristics of false worship as opposed to true worship. Compare Revelation 13:11-17 again. For example: (1) False worship is commanded by those who are not God. (2) False worship is done in public places for all to see. (3) The authorities are watching to see if you obey or not. (4) You are not given a choice as to whether you will worship or not! (5) Those in charge will try to kill you if you do not comply.
47. As you review the stories and prophecies from the book of Daniel, is it obvious to you how they are related to us in our day? In Daniel 7 we see a little horn making claims that he is to be worshiped. Is it clear who that is talking about?
48. Seventh-day Adventists have been quite successful at reaching the less-educated, poor, ordinary people with the messages of Daniel through evangelistic series. Why have we been so much less successful in reaching out to the powerful, wealthy, or the highly educated? Could we and should we do better? What could we do to make the gospel more appealing?

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