



The Daniel Series

21 Day Devotional

THE CITY

14 Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD... 16 even if these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate...20 even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. (Ezekiel 14:14, 16, 20)

Introduction

Daniel's life seems relatively obscure, and the book he left behind quite short. However, the word to Ezekiel reveals that God saw Daniel as one of the greatest intercessors in Israel's history. Careful study of Jesus' teachings also reveal that he quoted Daniel more than any other prophet.

Daniel's life and message are central to the gospel.
It is time we give serious attention to Daniel.

Samuel Whitefield's survey of Daniel's life makes a compelling case that he is a prototype for the end time church unlike any other in scripture:

1. He lived through a prototype of the end of the age.
2. He lived through a delay in the fulfillment of God's promises.
3. He was identified as one of the greatest intercessors in history.
4. He was identified as one of the wisest human beings.
5. His life was very symbolic when viewed in light of the end times.
6. He was told repeatedly he was dearly loved in heaven.
7. His prayers provoked God to give him insight and set in motion heavenly conflict.
8. There are no flaws in the way he was presented in Scripture — both in his own book and outside his book.

My prayer is that God will mature His church to be a corporate Daniel. And when the words written in the book comes to pass, then we will see Him face to face.

Maranatha,
Andrew

Day 1

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision. In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. (Dan 10:1-2, 11-12)

Daniel had been faithful for nearly 70 years now. He lived through the Babylonian and Medo-Persian kingdoms. He witnessed his friends being thrown in the fiery furnace, and experienced dramatic deliverance from the lion's den. He had seen kings go mad and murdered by violent revolt. Through all of this, he persisted in righteous living, faithful intercession and hopeful longing over decades. He stewarded the visions received throughout the years, humbling himself before God to gain understanding.

Near the end of his life, Daniel received a profound revelation from the Lord. It would be the longest sequential prophecy about the career of the beast in the final hour of human history. Sobered by the word, Daniel entered into a 21 day fast as a response.

Friends, we could be witnessing a global Daniel 10 moment. The church has been faithful across two millennia in stewarding the gospel, and has outlasted all earthly kingdoms. As we approach the final hour before Jesus returns, greater revelation will be released across the body of Christ. In May 2023, millions around the world joined in a 21 day fast in the spirit of Isaiah 62 contending for the salvation of Israel and the return of Jesus.

Could the word for us be the same one to Daniel: O dearly beloved, from the first day that you humbled yourself and set your heart to understand, God had heard your words. Angelic activity was initiated, sparking spiritual conflict, setting into motion the divinely ordained timeline.

Lord, today we set our hearts to understand as Daniel did. Grant us understanding of your word revealed to Daniel. Though we do not comprehend fully at this point, we take our place in your storyline to set into motion the things you said you would do. Bring about everything that you promised would happen before your Son returns, that we may see Him face to face. Amen.

Day 2

Main Text: Daniel 1

Further Reading: Deuteronomy 32, Ezekiel 5, Jeremiah 5

The long and painful trek from besieged Jerusalem to Babylon must have precipitated a crisis of faith in the Jewish exiles. Had God abandoned Israel? Has he turned his face away from us?

Daniel and his friends were made slaves to a megalomaniac who destroyed his nation and killed his loved ones. They were likely made eunuchs, and forcibly assimilated into Babylonian culture. The programme was an all-out assault to remove their cultural and religious identity, backed by this statement: our god is stronger than yours, because your god was unable to defend you against our forces.

The pressure was so intense that out of all the exiles, we are told that only four boys (the faithful Jewish remnant) resolved to resist Babylon. The rest of the book details how God preserves them through increasing persecution to destroy the people of God.

What is offensive to many yet so plainly laid out by the prophets is that the disaster on Israel was the Lord's judgment (Deut 32:20–35). Further, the prophets speak of the horrific desolation of Jerusalem not just as a thing of the past. Daniel would later be shown that what he had experienced as a young man would be a reality for Israel again in the last days. But the prophets are also clear: the judgments on Israel are discipline unto purification, pruning unto final salvation.

Lord, we cry out for mercy. We are sobered by your jealous love and righteous judgments towards Israel. We echo Moses' cry of intercession for Israel (Deut 32:36): LORD, will you vindicate your people and have compassion on your servants, when their power is gone and their hearts are softened toward you!

Day 3

Main Text: Daniel 1

Further Reading: Genesis 3, Matthew 26:36-45

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, many Jewish exiles must have given up on Israel. What pain and offense they had experienced, and how overwhelming the temptation of Babylon must have been! History instructs us that every nation exiled in this fashion would never be reconstituted, and fade into a distant memory. Every human sense and logic pointed to settling in Babylon.

The same temptation presented itself to the first humans in the Garden of Eden. Would we trust our physical senses, what is delightful to our eyes; or would we trust in God's word? Humanity's fall, and underlying sin, is that we rather trust ourselves than God. It is far easier to live by sight, than by faith.

Surrounded by the hanging gardens of Babylon, Daniel now faced the same test. Do I trust in what I see or in what God had said? There must have been the same whisper of "Did God really say He would redeem Israel? Surely you are too far gone for salvation now." Daniel is a prototype of a church that passes the test. He resolved not to defile himself with Babylon, and 'lived in Babylon but yet was not of it'.

Father, make us like your Son. We behold Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, who resolved to drink the cup despite every fibre of being overwhelmed by the cup of wrath. Convince our hearts to trust in your Son more than ourselves.

Day 4

Main Text: Daniel 2:1-30

Further Reading: Matthew 24:15-28

In just the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Daniel and his friends found themselves in the crosswinds of the mercurial king's rage. They were staring imminent death. Daniel's response to the crisis reveals what he had been doing consistently in the background: faithfully engaging in prayer with a community of like-minded friends.

While Daniel was blessed with outstanding wisdom and understanding (Dan 1:20), the interpretation of the dream was supernaturally revealed to him "in a vision of the night". In other words, it was God's response to prayer (rather than the exercise of natural abilities) that delivered Daniel and his friends. This is a repeated theme throughout Daniel: that God preserves his people from the rage of beastly kingdoms via supernatural deliverance.

Another repeated theme in the book is that of 'mystery' and 'understanding'. Arioch declares that among all the wise men, it is a man from among the exiles in Judah who is able to interpret the dream. The events of the end times (which will play out exactly as scripture predicts) will be plain for all to see. But many would fail to understand, in the same way all the wise men were clueless about the king's dream.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus references the abomination of desolation spoken about by Daniel as the landmark sign that the great tribulation has begun. Jesus connects the timing of his return, to the prophecies entrusted to Daniel. Jesus further emphasised: let the reader understand the book of Daniel. It is of paramount importance that the church diligently seeks supernatural understanding of the message in Daniel's book.

Jesus, we take heed of your instruction to read and understand the book of Daniel. We humble ourselves and confess that we do not have the ability to discern the times and know the right response in our human wisdom. We ask for divine revelation and understanding, as you revealed to Daniel, as we humble ourselves in prayer. We trust in your ability to reveal to your servants what we need in the right hour.

Day 5

Main Text: Daniel 2:31-49

Further Reading: Rev 11:15-19

Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image as three successive earthly kingdoms from Babylon, followed by a final kingdom which is destroyed by a divine eternal kingdom. The head of gold looks impressive, but is built on unstable foundations of brittle feet. The passage of time will reveal the true nature of earthly kingdoms, before its inevitable destruction.

Most commentators agree that the first three kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persian and Greece. Daniel 2 predicts that successive kingdoms become increasingly inferior, typified by the relative splendour of gold, silver and bronze. Making predictions in the timescale of Daniel's lifetime would later confirm the truth of the interpretation, which gives confidence in prophecy for a distant future.

Another theme in Daniel is the 'fast forward' to the final kingdom, or the 'pause' in the prophetic timeline (Dan 9:27). Here, Daniel predicts the emergence of a strong and terrible kingdom typified by iron that is also marred with disunity and instability. This final kingdom is destroyed by a stone that is not of human origin, which brings an end to the age of earthly, temporal kingdoms. The emergence of the fourth kingdom and the comprehensive transition to an eternal kingdom is yet future.

This is the first vision and interpretation recorded in the book of Daniel, and the later visions expand on this main idea: that God is sovereign over history, and promises an eternal kingdom which will replace all human kingdoms. In later visions, Daniel is again given detailed descriptions of events that would later come to pass, and then 'fast forwards' to the events of the the final hour where the final kingdom is replaced by God's eternal kingdom on the earth (Dan 9:27).

Father, we thank you that you lead history to reveal the glory of Jesus. We thank you for the kingdom of heaven that was proclaimed by Jesus when he first came to dwell with us, and the culmination of his salvation when he returns again. We look forward to the final trumpet where the kingdom of the world gives way to the kingdom of Christ, and He reigns forever and ever.

Day 6

Main Text: Daniel 3:1-7

Further Reading: Rev 7:9-17, 13:5-9

Many emphasise the promotion of Daniel at the end of chapter 2 as the main point of the narrative, i.e. God has a plan to elevate the status and influence of the faithful. While there is an element of truth in that, the flow of the narrative focuses on the true nature of the earthly kingdoms: Nebuchadnezzar, despite seemingly acknowledging Daniel's God, proceeds to build the very golden statue he had dreamed of to receive worship.

Nebuchadnezzar is one of the foremost shadows of the Antichrist. He is the premier enemy of Israel, and God allows him to destroy the temple and exile the Jews. He covets the worship of people from every tribe, nation and tongue. But unlike the true God, he intimidates and overpowers them if they are unwilling, eventually killing any who resist him. He might seem peaceable and even tolerant of God's followers for a season (Dan 2:47-49), but will reveal his utter disregard for God eventually (Dan 3:15).

In other words, Daniel lived in close proximity to a type of Antichrist. He lived under the intense intimidation and the allure of prosperity. Despite being promoted to high places in the king's court, Daniel's primary task was not to reform Babylon from the inside (e.g. influence the king to tolerate Jews, or rebuild the temple). Instead, Daniel and his friends were called to patiently hold to the promises of God, and faithfully await the deliverance from God.

Father, to you alone belong the worship of people from every tribe, nation and tongue. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the willing love of the nations. We freely choose to worship you because of who you are. Grant us endurance to be faithful to the end. Help us overcome the fear of death and allure of the culture.

Day 7

Main Text: Daniel 3:8-30

Further Reading: Rev 20:7-15

Twice in the book Daniel and his friends are threatened with death, over the issues of worship (Dan 3) and prayer (Dan 6). We must realise that while Daniel and his friends' earthly influence was impressive, the real threat to the spiritual powers was their faithful worship and prayer.

The antichrist spirit intensely covets human worship. Babylon is set up to lure us away from worship and prayer. The end of age will be a battle for worship, because that is the most valuable thing in the universe. The spiritual powers use everything at their disposal – be it pleasure or fear, to gain the prize of human fascination. Yet Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had resolved to reserve their worship only for the one true God. This is a prophetic picture of the mature church at the end – those who love God more than their own lives.

Their response is profound: God is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace, but we will remain faithful unto death even if he doesn't. Note this is not a simplistic faith that precludes any suffering or loss. This same posture of surrender reaches its highest heights in Gethsemane: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:6)

God's deliverance comes with dramatic poetry: the faithful are unharmed by the fiery furnace, yet the soldiers who cooperated with the beastly king are killed by the fire. The book of Revelation foretells the devil's final fate: thrown into the lake of fire.

Father, we trust in your ability to deliver us from the power of the enemy. We ask for supernatural deliverance for believers who are threatened because of their faith. We ask for the preservation of Israel from the rage of the enemy. And if it be your will to grant us the honour of martyrdom, strengthen our resolve to remain faithful in worship and prayer, even unto death.

Day 8

Main Text: Daniel 4

Further Reading: Ezekiel 28, 31

Daniel 2 to 4 progressively unveils the true nature of the Babylonian kingdom: it is a beastly kingdom personified by a beastly ruler. The great Nebuchadnezzar, swollen with pride at his power and glory, is dramatically humbled to live like a wild animal.

It underscores one of the central messages of the book: that the God is sovereign over earthly kingdoms and gives them to anyone he wishes (Dan 4:25). No king can prolong their rule a day beyond what God ordains, nor do anything without his permission. Daniel 2 predicts that the successive march of earthly kingdoms will be brought to an end by the kingdom of heaven.

A second theme in this chapter is the casting down of the prideful tree/beast to the earth. Ezekiel 28 introduces a divine creature placed in Eden that was created blameless, but became corrupted because of pride. The devil (typified by the king of Tyre in the passage) was cast down to the earth before coming to a violent death. In chapter 31, Ezekiel also uses the image of a towering tree (choicest among those in Eden) that is suddenly 'brought down to the earth below' before dying. In later visions, Daniel will be given incredibly graphic visions that expand on the theme of pride causing a fall of a spiritual being on the earth.

**God of gods, we praise you for you are sovereign over all kingdoms and rulers.
We thank you that at the end of the age, all the people of the earth will acknowledge
that your dominion is an eternal dominion, and your kingdom will last forever.**

Day 9

Main Text: Daniel 5

Further Reading: Isaiah 2

The carefully arranged narrative skips over around 40 years to 539 BC, to sharply contrast Nebuchadnezzar's admission at the end of Daniel 4 to Belshazzar's prideful display. Belshazzar outrightly taunts the God of Israel by drinking from the vessels of the temple, while praising false gods (made of the materials seen in Daniel 2 vision). Daniel is also forgotten by the now ruler of Babylon, until he is remembered by the queen mother.

Daniel's rejection of the promised promotion and gifts is telling. The earthly kingdoms cannot be reformed from within; they need to be replaced by the heavenly kingdom. With understanding of the earlier vision in chapter 2, Daniel understood that the king's promised reward was fleeting. In fact, the writing on the wall spelled the near demise of the Babylonian kingdom, fulfilled that very night.

The geo-centricity of the chapter also cannot be overlooked. Nearly 40 years after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the vessels carried over to Babylon are still central to the narrative. History awaits the fulfilment of Isaiah's words that the temple mount will be raised as highest of the kingdoms, and the law go forth from the hill of Zion.

King of the Universe, you reign over all the earth. We long for the day of your return, where you establish your kingdom of heaven on the earth. Look upon the hill of Zion, the mount of Jerusalem which bears your name. How long more before you humble the proud, remove the idols, and give your Son his promised inheritance?

Day 10

Main Text: Daniel 6

Further Reading: Matthew 26

The narrative of Daniel 6 presents one of the clearest foreshadows of the Messiah. Would the Lord open the eyes of the people of the book to see that every word testifies of Yeshua:

Daniel 6	Matthew 26-28
The high officials plotted to find a ground for complaint against Daniel, but could find none because he was faithful and faultless.	The chief priests and elders plotted against Jesus, but could not find any grounds to put him to death (Matt 26:3, 59).
Daniel prayed three times as he had previously, and immediately after the officials deliver him over to the king for trial.	On the eve of his arrest, Jesus prays three times in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-43). Immediately after, Judas comes to arrest him.
Darius, who holds the authority to execute people, is unwilling, loses sleep over the injustice, and tries to save Daniel. However, he is bound by the law to deliver Daniel to certain death.	Jesus is delivered over to Pilate; whose wife loses sleep over the injustice to an innocent man (Matt 27:19). However, he is compelled by the crowd to crucify him.
Darius tells Daniel: "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" before delivering him to the den of lions.	On the cross, Jesus is taunted: "He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Matt 27:43)
A stone is laid over the mouth of the den, sealed by the king's signet. At the break of day, Daniel is found to be alive.	A stone is rolled over the entrance of the tomb where Jesus lay, sealed by the Roman guards (Matt 27:60-66). At break of dawn, Jesus is resurrected.

Day 10

Main Text: Daniel 6

Further Reading: Matthew 26

Daniel 6	Matthew 26-28
The men who accused Daniel were cast into the lion's den, together with their families. The lions overpowered and kill them swiftly.	Jesus earlier predicted Jerusalem's judgment (Matt 23:37-39), which was fulfilled in the subsequent destruction of the temple and exile from the land.
A decree to all people goes forth: God's kingdom is forever, and his dominion shall be everlasting.	Matthew ends the gospel account with: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

King of the Universe, you reign over all the earth. We long for the day of your return, where you establish your kingdom of heaven on the earth. Look upon the hill of Zion, the mount of Jerusalem which bears your name. How long more before you humble the proud, remove the idols, and give your Son his promised inheritance?

Day 11

Main Text: Daniel 1-6

Well done for making it to nearly the halfway mark of the fast and the book of Daniel!

The book is not chronological. It was deliberately arranged that the first half (Dan 1-6) consist of narrative, and the last half (Dan 7-12) mostly visions/prophecies. The literary structure is also a chiasmic one, i.e. an ordered sequence of ideas (A) that leads to an apex (B), after which the ideas are presented in reverse order (A'). It is even more obvious when one reads it in the original language: the first half is written in Aramaic, and the latter half in Hebrew. The structure of the book emphasises that God uses history (A) to illustrate prophecy (A').

For example, Dan 1 starts with God giving Daniel the gift of understanding. The book concludes with the emergence of a people of understanding at the end of the age (Dan 12). The book shows us a prototype of a person of understanding, provides the template on how to pursue understanding, and gives a prophecy that a people of understanding will emerge.

In Daniel 1-3, Daniel and his friends overcome the antichrist prototype (Nebuchadnezzar). From Daniel 4 to 6, God humbles three kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius. Through all of this, Daniel is presented as flawless, which is very rare in scripture. Daniel's life is prophecy for the church. God is using history to paint a picture of his people walking through suffering, pressure, tests, trials, seduction, and disappointments:

1. Crisis of faith: God had "failed" to deliver his people from the conqueror, evil had triumphed, bringing about immense suffering.
2. Personal suffering: Daniel is a slave that has his identity wiped away and put through cultural re-programming
3. Seduction: Offered pleasure, power and privilege for conforming to Babylonian culture
4. Spiritual Warfare: Wise men in Babylonian court likely practiced witchcraft; Daniel experienced principalities resisting his intercession (Dan 10)
5. Great falling away: Most of the exiles did not remain faithful, and gave in to the seduction and threats of Babylon. Of those exiled, we are only told of a small faithful community.
6. Persecution: Daniel and his friends are threatened with death over the issues of prayer and worship.

Yet Daniel is preserved by supernatural intervention, receiving divine wisdom and help in his time of need. As a type of the chosen people of God, Daniel outlasts several pagan kings.

Father, give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know your Son, understand your will and discern the times. Give us grace to walk like Daniel did – unwavering in faith, persistent in intercession, and hopeful in your salvation. Help us resist the seduction of the times, and remain steadfast in worship and prayer through suffering and persecution.

Day 12

Main Text: Daniel 7

Further Reading: Daniel 2, Revelation 13, 17

Daniel 7 records the first vision that Daniel receives directly (rather than interprets for kings), and is placed at the centre of the book. Given the chiastic structure, Daniel 7 is the apex revelation and the interpretive grid for the message of the book. The chapter itself is also arranged in a chiasm, beginning with the vision of the four beasts (A), the revelation of the Ancient of Days and Son of Man (B), ending with an interpretation of the beasts (A').

Recall the vision of the four kingdoms in chapter 2. Once again, Daniel is shown three successive beasts (gold, silver and bronze parts of the statue) from his time, before focusing on a fourth beast (ten horns, corresponding to ten toes of the feet). Despite living in close proximity to the premier Antichrist prototype of the Old Testament, Daniel is floored by the vision of the final beast – it is terrifying, frightening and powerful. Most critically, it is “different from all the former beasts”. This is an important clue that the little horn is something beyond the earthly kingdoms we have thus far witnessed.

Revelation 13 and 17 both draw on the imagery of Daniel 7. In Rev 13, the final beast emerges from the sea, has ten horns, and have characteristics of the other three beasts in Dan 7. It is given authority (42 months in Rev 13, 3.5 years in Dan 7) to persecute the saints.

The fulfilment of the vision is yet future, because the fourth kingdom is suddenly and completely destroyed by the eternal kingdom of God in both Dan 2 and 7. Daniel 7 ends with the great hope: that one day, all nations and peoples of every language will worship the Son of Man.

Ancient of Days, would you grant us understanding of what you revealed to your servant Daniel. We lean in with the same posture as Daniel: would you tell us the meaning of the vision? We want to understand the times and respond rightly. Most importantly, we want to see the Son of Man at the center of it all.

Day 13

Main Text: Daniel 7

Further Reading: Revelation 1, Matthew 26, Psalm 110, Acts 7:54-58

Daniel was specifically drawn to ask about the meaning of the fourth beast, because of its unique and devastating nature. After explaining, the angel directs his attention to the scene where the heavenly court sits and the beastly kingdom is destroyed. Similarly, we need to make the central revelation of Daniel (7:9-14) our primary focus. Why? Because the revelation of Jesus is the main point of the end times.

Daniel 7 is the most referenced chapter in Jesus' teachings. The term "Son of Man" is by far Jesus' favoured way to explain his identity (more so than "Christ", "Son of God" and "Son of David"). In Matthew 26 alone, there are numerous Daniel 7 references:

- The Son of Man would be "handed over to be crucified" – in Dan 7 the saints are handed over to the beast
- Jesus will next drink the fruit of the vine when he receives the kingdom from his Father's (Ancient of Days)
- Jesus quotes Dan 7:13 to the Sanhedrin in his trial: "From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

In Revelation 1, John sees the risen Jesus on the island of Patmos: "the son of man" who now has the divine effulgence of the Ancient of Days (Rev 1:14-15, cf. Dan 7:9). Rev 1:7 also reiterates Jesus' quotation of Daniel's prophecy that when He comes back on the clouds (Matt 24:30), every eye will see him and the tribes of Israel will mourn in repentance (Zech 12:10). In fact, given how many quotations of Daniel there are, the entire book of Revelation cannot be well understood apart from the interpretive grid of Daniel.

In fact, Daniel 7 might be the most complete description of the gospel of the kingdom in a single chapter:

- The eternal Father rules over history and all the kingdoms
- He decides to give the eternal kingdom over to a divine man, who comes on the clouds of heaven (cf. Deut 33:26)
- His kingdom spans heaven and earth; consisting people from every nation and language
- There is great contestation, especially from the fourth beast, over the kingdom
- The holy people suffer at the hands of the beast, until God pronounces judgment in their favour
- The kingdom is handed over to the holy people, who reign with the Son of Man

Son of Man, there is no one like you. To you alone belong the authority, glory and sovereign power. You deserve the worship from every tribe, nation and tongue. Your kingdom is everlasting, never to be destroyed. How long more, O God, before you make his enemies a footstool for his feet? How long more, O God, before you pronounce judgment over the beasts? How long more, before you give Jesus everything He deserves?

Day 14

Main Text: Daniel 8

Further Reading: Revelation 12-13

Daniel 8 is the first time Gabriel appears in scripture. Gabriel carries a very significant assignment to deliver the messages on the mysteries of godliness and the mystery of iniquity (more on this in Day 20):

- **Mystery of godliness:** the fullness of God will dwell in a man. A virgin will conceive when the power of the Most High overshadows her, and God will give him an eternal kingdom (Luke 1:26-38). Jesus' ministry lasted 3.5 years, empowered by his Father to heal the sick and raise the dead. He will be exalted by the worship of every tribe, nation and tongue for eternity.
- **Mystery of iniquity:** the fullness of the devil will dwell in a man. After the dragon is cast down to earth (Rev 12:13), he gives his authority to the beast (Rev 13:2, Dan 8:24). The beast is given 3.5 years (Rev 13:5) to exercise his authority, during which he wages war and kills. He covets the worship of the nations, but is killed by God (Dan 8:25, 9:27, 11:45).

In God's mercy, Daniel received a glorious revelation of Dan 7 two years before the Dan 8 vision. Similarly, God reveals the mystery of godliness (Jesus) before the mystery of inequity (beast). The vision builds on the earlier ones (Dan 2, 7) where it focuses on three successive kingdoms (Babylon/gold/lion; Medo-Persian/silver/two-horned ram; Greece/bronze/shaggy goat). In the same fashion as the previous visions, Gabriel 'fast forwards' to focus on a fourth and final beastly kingdom.

Many commentators will notice the foreshadowing of the "little horn" (Dan 8:9) in the career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes who came to power in 170 BCE. While Antiochus indeed was a prototype (Seleucid king that came to power through intrigue after the Greek kingdom was divided, conquered Jerusalem, profaned the temple by sacrificing pigs on the altar), Gabriel is repeatedly clear that the vision "concerns the appointed time of the end" (Dan 8:17,19, 26).

This is also the first time the abomination of desolation is introduced. Dan 8:11-13 makes it clear this concerns the surrender of the temple sanctuary and the removal of the daily temple sacrifice. Later visions will expand on this, and Jesus will make specific reference to this landmark sign of the end times (Matt 24:15) leading up to his return. Jesus also instructs us to understand Daniel's vision on the abomination.

God, give us wisdom and understanding, that we may discern the times. When we see iniquity, let us recognise it for what it is, and resist its seduction and deception. We put our hope and confidence in the mystery of godliness, and the One who is soon coming again.

Day 15

Main Text: Daniel 9:1-19

Further Reading: Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28

Daniel is best known for receiving stunning apocalyptic visions. As a result, many disqualify themselves from the invitation to walk as Daniel did, thinking his life is for a select spiritual 'elite'. But chapter 9 reveals that Daniel's daily routine was actually quite simple (yet profound). Daniel studied the scriptures to discern the will of God (Jer 25). He gained understanding of the heart, will and timing of God by diligently meditating on His word. Daniel then responded in humble prayer and fasting. Daniel did what every believer is called and is able to do: seek God by studying His word and agree in intercession.

Daniel's intercession for Israel was effective because it was not based on human sentiment, nor his own notions of mercy. He acknowledges the judgments as the result of Israel turning away from God's commands and law: "the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses... have been poured out on us" (Dan 9:11). In Leviticus 26, Moses outlines that blessing and peace in the land, crowned by the manifest glory of God, is predicated on Israel's covenantal faithfulness. However, if Israel persists in stubborn rebellion, ever increasing judgments (culminating in 'desolation') will come at the hand of God.

The desolation of Jerusalem is God's doing, but so will be its restoration. Leviticus 26:40-45 is the invitation of God to partner with His heart: "But if they confess their sins and the sins of their fathers... I am the LORD their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God."

God of mercy, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. A terrible calamity has befallen them who rejected your precious Son. O God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servants. For your sake, Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.

Day 16

Main Text: Daniel 9:20-27

Further Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2

Gabriel's word (9:24-27) is one of the most significant prophecies in all scripture. The first thing Gabriel says is: Daniel is dearly loved, and the vision was given because of his intercession. There is an important progression in Daniel's role in the narrative: he matures from being overwhelmed by apocalyptic visions (Dan 7-8), to taking an active role to drive divine activity (Dan 9-10). One of the most significant things that is happening to the church in the nations as they fast and pray during these 21 days is to hear from the Lord that they are dearly loved. The love of God fuels our intercession as we grow in desire to draw near and hear from Him.

Recall Daniel is interceding for the restoration of Jerusalem based on Jeremiah's prophecy that its desolation would last 70 years. The response is a vision of 70 weeks (or sevens, which are 7-year periods). The 70 weeks prophecy culminates in the fulfilment of redemptive history: finishing transgression, ending sin, atoning for wickedness, securing everlasting righteousness, fulfilling of visions and prophecies, and anointing of the holy temple. Gabriel is giving details to the earlier visions on the "appointed time of the end" (Dan 8:19, Ps 102:13) where God hands over the kingdom to the saints (Dan 7:22). The Lord has a set time for the seemingly endless cycle of sin and judgement on Israel to finally conclude, as envisioned by the prophets (Jer 31:31-37, 50:20).

Understanding the timeline is simple if we discerned the pattern established in the earlier visions (Dan 2, 7, 8): detailed predictions from Daniel's time marked with verifiable events, and a fast forward to the period of the end. From the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild the temple (458BC, Nehemiah 2), Jerusalem was rebuilt in 49 years (7 weeks), and the Anointed One was publicly revealed to Israel after 483 years (26/27 AD). The accounting of dates is the subject of some debate, but key landmark events are compelling enough to verify the accuracy of the prophecy. The same 'fast forward' or 'pause' then occurs again, before the 'seventieth week'. The same landmark sign, the abomination of desolation, marked by the destruction of the city and sanctuary and end of the daily sacrifice in the temple, is given again.

Father, we take your invitation to drive the divine timeline. As Daniel interceded using Jeremiah's word for seventy years, so we take hold of the seventy weeks prophecy. Would you bring about all that you promised, swiftly? We ask you to put an end to sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. We ask that you fulfil your word to Daniel in our day. We ask that Israel and the nations would embrace Anointed One before the day of His return.

Day 17

Main Text: Daniel 10

Further Reading: Ezra 4-5

2 years earlier, Gabriel reveals that Jerusalem would be rebuilt in troubled times (Dan 9:25). Soon after, the rebuilding effort would commence. But opposition from Persia would arise (Ezra 4-5). All these occur in between the events of Daniel 9 and 10 – a clear statement that Daniel’s vision and intercession thousands of miles away are affecting the physical events in Jerusalem.

We often do not persist in the place of prayer because we rely on our natural sense to evaluate its effectiveness. Having prayed three times a day from his youth until his mid-eighties, the veil is now lifted for Daniel to peer into the spiritual reality. The message is clear: spiritual conflict between principalities determines physical events, and our intercession directly affects it (Ephesians 6:12). Daniel’s intercession was so threatening to the powers they directly attacked him, goading the king to sign a decree that stops prayer and throwing him to the lions’ den (Daniel 6).

Wise as he was, Daniel did not understand the revelation immediately. He needed divine help. But there is incredible spiritual opposition against such understanding of the end. Daniel’s response was not passive; he recognised a decisive season to press in with mourning and fasting for three weeks. More accurately, he fasted until he gained understanding, and it took 21 days for the breakthrough to occur.

The angel’s message is resonating to many believers who fasting globally, with only partial understanding of the end times and God’s plan for Israel: “From the first day you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”

Lord, would you help us to understand as Daniel did. We set our hearts to understand, and humble ourselves before you. Would you overcome the spiritual opposition to the church walking in full confidence of the assignment to intercede! We want to take our places on the walls as watchmen to call on you: Make Jerusalem a praise on the earth. Establish the throne and kingdom of your Son here on earth.

Day 18

Main Text: Daniel 10

Further Reading: Revelation 12

More than five million believers across the entire world are engaging in a Daniel 10 fashion, fasting and contending for Jerusalem for 21 days. If Daniel's example is meant to illustrate an invitation to the end time church, what is at stake?

Revelation 12 describes the dragon (devil) with imagery from Daniel's visions: a beast with ten horns (Rev 12:3, Dan 7:7). It is responsible for casting a third of the stars (principalities) from the heavens to the earth (Rev 12: 4, Dan 8:10). The same spiritual conflict is occurring in the heavens between Michael and the evil principalities. The period where the woman (Israel) flees to the wilderness is also 3.5 years (Rev 12:6, 14 Dan 7:25, 9:27, 12:7).

Rev 12 tells us that it is actually the saints who initiate the spiritual conflict in the heavens, and bring about the hour where the salvation and power and the kingdom of God dawns. They triumph over the devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, not loving their lives as to shrink from death. Three points are critical:

1. Our intercession is based on the blood of the Lamb. His blood was the costly price to purchase for God saints from every tribe, nation and tongue (Rev 5:9). The finished work on the cross is sufficient, and is the only way to triumph in the war against the enemy. When we are gripped by the reality of the blood spilled by Jesus for our redemption, we will truly know what we are dearly loved.
2. We respond by the blood of the lamb by the word of our testimony. His love, demonstrated by the blood, captivates us to give ourselves fully to testify of Him. In the same way that Daniel interceded based on God's covenant with Israel, our intercession is based on the blood of the new covenant.
3. Why is the defining mark of the end time church ones "who did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (Rev 12:11)? Because once the ten horned beast is revealed, he will persecute the holy people for 3.5 years (Rev 12:17, Dan 7:25). The church knows the cost of her intercession is suffering and possible martyrdom, but is lovesick enough to initiate the great tribulation.

Here is what is at stake: Are we willing to initiate the divine timeline to cast the dragon from the heavens? Are we willing to endure his wrath, so that the Son of Man can finally receive the reward of his suffering?

Jesus, you have waited far too long for the reward of your suffering. You have done everything to redeem us from every tribe, nation and tongue. We long for your return, and your kingdom to be established on earth. We ask for an acceleration of the divine timeline – cast the dragon from the heavens. Reveal your mature bride who love you unto death, and is ready for the marriage supper. We are no longer content to prolong this age without You present.

Day 19

Main Text: Daniel 11

Further Reading: Matthew 24

In Matthew 24, Jesus specifically instructs that “when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation’” we are to recognise the unmistakable sign of his imminent return. He adds: this is “spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand” – Jesus commands us to understand Daniel. Chapter 11-12 contains the longest sequential prophecy about the events leading to time of the end, and includes two of the four references of the abomination of desolation.

By now we are familiar with the pattern of the visions: a long sequential prophecy of near-term events (11:2-20) before the ‘fast forward’ to the time of the end (Dan 11:21-45). Daniel 11:2-20 is fulfilled in detail from Daniel’s time to the rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (536 to 164 BC). The vision again builds on the previous revelation – the four horns that replace the Greek kingdom is repeated (8:22, 11:4). What has divided commentators is that Antiochus gave us a very strong foreshadowing of Dan 11:21-32: a person who rose to power through intrigue, waged many wars in the region, conquered Israel following military defeat, and finally sacrificed a pig on the altar (abomination). (See Day 14.) As a result, some view most of the passage as already fulfilled. However, the hinge of the chapter is marked by the time the “contemptible person” is introduced in v21: the angel shifts to a repeated emphasis that the vision concerns the “appointed time” (11:27, 29, 33), “the time of wrath” (11:36) and “the time of the end” (11: 27, 40, 12:4, 9, 13).

Many shy away from detailed descriptions of the end times because they assume it is mostly negative. However, the Lord reveals details in advance to prepare our hearts to be faithful and hopeful. There are 6 themes emphasised about the end times (Dan 11:32-35), most of which are positive:

1. Understanding: The people who know their God, called the wise, will rise up (12:3)
2. Great harvest: The wise instruct many, leading them to righteousness (12:3)
3. Supernatural help: miracles, great exploits (11:32) and angelic ministry (12:1)
4. Faithful unto death: the saints are persecuted and martyred, but remain faithful (11:33)
5. All these occur in the most difficult 3.5 years of human history; in God’s mercy, there is a pre-determined limit to the time of tribulation (12:1, Matt 24:21)
6. There is an appointed time of deliverance, where God himself will deliver them and bring final salvation (11:45, 12:13).

Lord, prepare your bride. We repent of putting off the day of your return. We earnestly desire the end of all things, where the Son of Man comes on the clouds to deliver his people. Break the power of our self-reliance, that the time of the end may come speedily. Grant us understanding, send forth the laborers into the harvest, release angelic help, keep us faithful unto death, even in the trials of fire.

Day 20

Main Text: Daniel 11

Further Reading: Revelation 13

We must not lose sight of the main point of the prophecies of the Antichrist: it should lead us to greater love and fascination of Jesus. The darkness of the Antichrist is the backdrop on which God has chosen to display the beauty and brilliance of His son. The choice between godliness and evil is partially veiled now (2 Thes 2:7). At the end of the age, the Lord will reveal the true nature of the evil that is animating everything that is not of His kingdom. This will vindicate God's choice for Jesus to reign over all creation.

There are striking parallels between the slain lamb and the beast. Yet they are as different as light and darkness, life and death; we are called to choose and follow Jesus (cf. Joshua 24:15):

Jesus came from humble beginnings: Bethlehem & Nazareth (Micah 5:2, John 1:46)	The beast comes from non-royal lineage, and starts as a little horn (Dan 7:8, 11:21, 23).
Jesus ministers for 3.5 years, after receiving an unusual anointing from the Holy Spirit and authority from the Father (Luke 3:21-22).	The beast rules for 3.5 years (Dan 7:25, 12:7), after receiving unprecedented authority and power from the dragon (Rev 13:1-2).
Jesus claims to be one with God, and receives worship (John 1:1, 8:58, 9:38). He fully demonstrates the nature of the Father (John 14:9-10).	The beast exalts himself as God, and covets worship (2 Thes 2:4). The beast expresses the fullness of Satan on the earth (Rev 13:2).
Jesus fulfils the covenantal ordinance of sacrifice by laying down his life (Dan 9:26, Heb 10:12).	The beast rages against the holy covenant and removes the daily sacrifice (Dan 9:27, 11:31, 12:11).

Day 20

Main Text: Daniel 11

Further Reading: Revelation 13

<p>Jesus faces opposition over his kingship. He does not coerce anyone to submit, but intercedes for his murderers (Luke 23:34, Matt 23:37-39).</p>	<p>The beast's rule is challenged, and he responds with rage, trampling down all who oppose him with cruelty (Dan 7:7, 11:28, 30, 44).</p>
<p>After 3.5 years of public ministry, it was the Father's will that Jesus' life was given as an atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world.</p>	<p>After 3.5 years, the Ancient of Days will proclaim judgment and the beast will be killed (Dan 7:26, 11:45).</p>
<p>Jesus is resurrected from the death, bringing eternal life with Him to those who believe (Heb 2:14-15).</p>	<p>The beast recovers from a mortal wound, but brings war and death (Rev 13:3, 17:8).</p>
<p>Jesus receives the eternal kingdom that will never pass away (Dan 7:14). He rules with the saints forever.</p>	<p>The beast receives a kingdom but it is destroyed by God's judgment (Dan 7:26, 11:44-45). He is tormented in the lake of fire forever (Rev 20:10).</p>

Jesus, slain lamb of God, there is no one like you. Worthy are you to receive the reward of your suffering – the love and worship of people from all tribes and nations whom you have redeemed by your blood. Help us see evil for what it truly is, and for your people to freely choose the beauty of Jesus over the horrors of evil.

Day 21

Main Text: Daniel 12

Further Reading: Amos 8, Revelation 12, Romans 8

Twice the angel says the message is sealed up until the time of the end. But if Daniel's book is accessible to most, how is it sealed? By a mysterious blending of near and far, partial and complete fulfilment, the prophecies have befuddled many. In fact, Daniel is the most undermined book in scripture, especially by liberal theologians. However, this does not mean we cannot understand the message. Rather, unprecedented grace will be released for the people of the final generation to understand – the simple meaning of the plain text in plain sight, to grasp the consistent witness of all the prophets and scripture.

The whole book illustrates that understanding is not simply an issue of knowledge or comprehension – Daniel, the exemplar of a man of understanding, says of the final message: “I heard, but I did not understand” (12:8). Instead, understanding is demonstrated in the manner of living – trusting and choosing God through persecution and seduction, remaining faithful unto death, and marked by worship and prayer.

The book began with God giving Daniel and his friends understanding. It concludes that God will raise up people of wisdom. The wise lead many to righteousness (great harvest!) and are numerous and brilliant (like the stars). God raises up this company of the wise to feed many in the hour of a famine of hunger for his word, where people will be desperately seeking for understanding (Amos 8:11-12, Dan 12:4). The people of understanding are fasting, praying and longing for the return of Jesus – setting in motion the final Daniel 10 and Revelation 12 moment, which starts the time of the end. Indeed, all creation is groaning in expectation for the wise to arise (Romans 8:19-21).

Heavenly Father, help us understand by the power of Spirit. Let those who are wise arise, and shine like the stars, leading many to you. Ready us for the suffering that lie ahead. Give us courage to dare to believe your word, and take our place to conquer the dragon. The trouble will last momentarily as you have decreed, and pales in comparison to the eternal weight of glory that lies before us. So let us join in your groaning, for the day where you redeem all creation. For nothing in all creation will separate us – and Israel – from your love. Amen.

Personal Notes

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