

Daniel Is Taken To Babylon

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church
June 7, 2008

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Based On Daniel 1

Last week we began a study of the book of Daniel and noted, among other things, three reasons to study this book. There were

- Jesus pronounced it a worthy book for our study, particularly in the context of the last days (Matthew 24:15)
- The book of Daniel has a lot to do with the roots of our church
- The book of Daniel is foundational; that is, it's the basis for understanding later prophecies

We also noted four themes brought to view in the book of Daniel

- God knows
- God cares
- God is in control and is involved
- God rewards

We'll see how these themes surface in the first chapter, which opens with these tragic and life-changing words: "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god." Daniel 1:1-2.

As we continue our look today at the book of Daniel, we'll first

- Take a brief historical review to place the story in its context
- Introduce the characters brought to view in these verses
- We'll take a look at the purposes of Nebuchadnezzar, Satan, and God in this chapter
- Then we'll notice 4 lessons from Daniel's life we see in chapter 1.

Somewhere on the back of your bulletin and in an available corner of your mind write down these few dates: 1800 B.C., 1445 B.C., 1000 B.C., 722 B.C. and 586 B.C. With these few dates as reference points, the historical events of the Old Testament can be understood more easily. The 1800 B.C. represents the time period of Abraham, the 1445 the Exodus from Egypt (and since you know that they were in the wilderness 40 years, that means that the entrance to Canaan was 1405 B.C.).

The 1000 is for the reign of King David who reigned for 40 years, followed by his son Solomon who reigned 40 years and then the kingdom split into two. The northern ten tribes, called Israel with their capital as Samaria fell in 722 B.C., leaving the southern two tribes of Judah and Benjamin called Judah. Its capital Jerusalem fell to Babylon on the third attack in 586 B.C. (not the one reported in Daniel 1). The people of that kingdom became known as "Jews," a word derived from the word "Judah." This means that every Jew was an Israelite (a member of the 12 original tribes), but not every Israel was a Jew (or descendant of Judah).

Why had God called Abraham? It was so that he and his descendants could leave idolatry behind, on "the other side of the (Euphrates) River" (Joshua 24:2, 3) and be a missionary nation, keepers of the flame, to guard and share the light of the Gospel, and to announce and prepare for the coming Messiah. Unfortunately, the Old Testament is a sad history of the people, as a general rule, failing in that assignment, and instead of

sharing the blessings, hoarding them and becoming exclusive and proud, thinking that they alone were heirs of the blessings.

More than that, they became influenced and corrupted by the pagan practices of their neighbors, so that the light of God's love was dimmed by the misleading and disgusting religious rites of the peoples that surrounded them. Immorality mixed with religion, idolatry, human sacrifices, as well as a decline in the ethics of their society led to courts where justice was a stranger, streets where violence was seen often and pulpits where falsehood about God was taught.

Many times God sent His messengers, the prophets, to try to lead them back to the truth, but more often than not they treated them with apathy or outright rejection. In His great mercy God bore long with their rebellion, but at last action had to be taken. First the northern kingdom, which seemed to stray more quickly than Judah, was attacked and overtaken by Assyria in 722 B.C. God's prophets lifted up their voices to the people of Judah and attempted to use that as an illustration from which to learn, that they should repent and spare themselves a like experience. But it was to no avail.

One of the last good kings was Josiah, in whose reign the temple was cleaned and remodeled. As shocking as it might seem that they would be there at all, the idols of the Baals and Asherahs were removed from Jehovah's house. In the process of their cleaning and refurbishing, lo and behold they found the Scriptures (imagine, the Bible was lost in the church!), and for the first time in who knows how long a Passover was celebrated and a short-lived revival sprung up.

But it lasted only a moment, and when Josiah was killed only three years before our story in Daniel 1 opens, his sons continued the pattern of willful rebellion that had been set by the kings of both Judah and Israel. Jehoahaz ("Yahweh grasps my hand") reigned only 3 months and was replaced by his brother Jehoiakim ("Yahweh has exalted"). It was during his third year as king of

Judah that verse 1 says Nebuchadnezzar came and attacked Jerusalem, the first of three assaults. It was as if God said "I brought Abraham from Babylon to leave idolatry behind, so if you want to persist in that form of worship, I'll have to send you back to Babylon."

Let's think about what this attack of Nebuchadnezzar meant. They didn't have scud missiles and mortar launchers or jets that start with "F" back then, but when battle took place, death was in the air. Armored soldiers had swords, bows and arrows, a possibly a war-club, or mace, sometimes called a "battle axe". Soldiers could be on foot, on horseback, or in chariot.

Keep in mind too that back there it wasn't just "my armies against your armies," it was "my gods against your God." These military campaigns were not just battles but crusades, jihads. That's why it mentions in verse 2 that as trophies, Nebuchadnezzar robbed the temple of Jerusalem of some of its furnishings to show off in his own temple museum. This was his way of saying, "My gods are stronger."

What was a "siege"? Back then, your city became your fortress against an enemy's attack. Cities were walled for protection, but usually the farms and pasture lands were not included inside the walls, because if you tried to do that, the wall would become so long it couldn't be defended. That meant if you didn't think your army could stand up to the enemy in the field, you would retreat to your walled city and try to wait out the attack. If the enemy persisted in his attack against your city, this was called a siege. He would surround your city and prevent food and supplies from entering (those would be outside the walled area), and try to starve you out. In verse one it says that Nebuchadnezzar "besieged" Jerusalem.

Sometimes those sieges would last years (Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for 13 years), with horrors and privations unimaginable. The enemy would mount ladders to try to scale your wall; he might try to conquer it by simply building a earthen

ramp, or he might try to weaken it by ramming it with a device called a "siege engine," a structure several stories high with wooden beams and large wheels and a battering ram affixed on the front that he would use to bash your gates or walls down. On these siege engines would be constructed ingenious catapults which would hurl their stony missiles into or over the wall.

Go to the museums and you can see all this depicted on their "videos," the carved stone murals that decorated kings' throne rooms. If you're ever in London, be sure to go to the British Museum where you can see the very arrow heads, catapult balls, sword blades and armaments that were used by the armies of Sennecherib in the attack against Lachish, a city in Judah, at the time that Samaria fell in 722.

If your city fell, it was likely that there would be a judgment held, in which the ringleaders of the losing regime would be held accountable, especially if they had held out on the payment of tribute money. More often than not they would be executed, sometimes in a most inhumane style. Booty and captives would be transported to the kingdom of the conquerors, with handcuffs and leg-irons, and sometimes nose rings and flesh hooks encouraging the march of the vanquished. Mercy was absent on those occasions; if you got too tired to continue, you were likely killed on the spot. Those deemed either too young or too old to complete the journey were killed before it ever began, as at the organization camp at Ramah spoken of in Jeremiah 31:15, the slaughter of the babies.

Let's think about King Nebuchadnezzar ("may Nebo protect the son") and what he hoped to accomplish in all this, as we read Daniel 1:3-7. "Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. And the king

appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego."

Actually we know him by the name Nebuchadnezzar, but if you read in other places of the Bible, for example in Jeremiah 25:1 (KJV) you will find it spelled Nebuchadrezzar, which seems to be closer to the original. You may want to remember that when you shake hands with him some day on Hallelujah Ave.

He was king of Babylon, or what historians call "Neo-Babylon." I know it sounds strange to call something from 2600 years ago "New Babylon," but you have to remember that during the days of Abraham 12 centuries before this there was also a Babylon, whose king Hammurabi was famous for putting together a compilation of laws that we call the code of Hammurabi.

The New Babylon that concerns our study was a kingdom put together through the influence of Nebuchadnezzar's dad, Nebopolassar. In a short span of 20 years he brought Babylon to a position of influence and prominence, but now he was ailing, so he sent his son in 606/605 B.C., who was perhaps his mid-twenties, on this military campaign, whose primary target was the Egyptian forces at Carchemish in the upper Euphrates region. Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians there and pursued them toward Egypt, and on the way accepted the surrender of Jerusalem and arranged for the removal of the captives. But, as they chased the armies of Pharaoh to Egypt, on the way Nebuchadnezzar received word that his father had passed away on what we would call August 15, 605 B.C., and so the campaign was scuttled, the prince left his generals in charge and flew across the desert due eastward to secure the throne, which he did three weeks later on September 7.

What was Nebuchadnezzar trying to accomplish in all this. He hoped to enlarge his territories, fill his treasury with annual tribute payments from those he conquered, and, as it impacts Daniel and his friends, bring a few of the elite of the captives and train them to take positions of responsibility in his government. As part of that plan, he wanted to convert them from their Jewish culture and religion and essentially make them Babylonians. To this end he enrolled them in a 3-year curriculum to learn the language, laws, and religion of his kingdom, and de-culturate them, or re-culturate them into his society.

Very importantly, notice that he gave them new names as a part of all this. When you think about, there's hardly anything more closely identified with you than your name; it's something you take with you wherever you go, and so it was a significant thing that Nebuchadnezzar did in changing their Hebrew names, which reflected their religion (Daniel means "my judgment comes from God") to Belteshazzar ("may Bel {baal} protect the king").

Changing your name can be a step in becoming a new you, sometimes for good or evil. God changed Jacob's ("cheater") name to Israel ("prince of God") and Simon's name to Peter and so on. But here Nebuchadnezzar wanted to "take the Hebrew out of the Hebrews." It's always interested me that somehow we know Daniel by his Hebrew name, but his friends by their Babylonian names! Can anyone explain that to me? When you meet those veterans of the fiery furnace up there, please don't insult them by calling them the names that were given them to obliterate remembrance of the true God!

Don't think that this story has to do just with Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem. The Bible opens to our eyes a much bigger picture, with God and Satan being part of the drama. Behind Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, stood Satan, who also had his agenda in all this. What did he hope to accomplish? As always, it was the **extermination of God's people**, which began with Cain's murdering his brother, and

continued throughout history. During the time of Moses Satan inspired Pharaoh's command to destroy the male babies. During the time of Esther he inspired Haman to propose an attack against the Jews.

And why should the devil not anticipate success in this? In the Assyrian attack against Israel, the result was that identity of that nation basically was lost. Satan hoped that this attack by Babylon against Judah would bring about the loss of Judah's identity in the same way, and frustrate God's plan to send a Messiah. What happened to Daniel also reflects the devil's purpose toward us. He wants to bring us to "Babylon," change us and make us his subjects.

And what about God in all this. Where was He? That was a question many Jews wanted to ask at that time I'm sure. What was His purpose in allowing this to happen? We need to study history from the divine perspective. When we study history we need to include the "God-factor." I know the world thinks differently. Wasn't it General Patton who said "God is on the side with bigger cannons"? But that's not the view of history I read in this Book. What I read in this Book is that "man proposes, but God disposes." There is a definite "God-factor" in human history.

Remember that we talked about the four main themes contained in the book of Daniel: God knows, God cares, God is control and involved, and God rewards. We can't get past the second verse of chapter one before we are reminded that *God is involved* in the affairs of human beings. It says "God gave" Judah into his hand. I know that that might have been the furthest thing from Nebuchadnezzar's mind; he was just going about his business. But the Bible says that God was using him for His purpose. In fact, in Jeremiah 25:9 the Lord says Nebuchadnezzar was "His servant," just as He called the Persian General Cyrus His "war club" in Jeremiah 51:20.

Fix in your mind the concept that His presence and His protection are indivisible. When the Jewish nation pushed God

out, they forfeited His protection as well. Do you remember when Jesus came into Jerusalem just before His death and had some serious words with the Jewish leaders about their straying from God's path, He used an example from nature that we're all familiar with. He said in Matthew 23:37, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to you! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

Make a connection in your mind between that verse and what we're studying in Daniel. The shocking truth is this: the attack of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem **could have been one of those times of protection**, but they *would not*. Did God want it to happen? No! They pushed Him, and His protecting grace away from them, and so they were *left unprotected* against the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Could God have protected them if they had been willing? Absolutely! Look at what happened in 722 B.C. when Assyria came against Jerusalem and Hezekiah prayed. One angel of the Lord smote 186,000 Assyrian soldiers. Psalm 91 could have been fulfilled for Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar came, had their hearts been right.

Does that same principle apply today? Indeed it does. That doesn't mean that bad things happen only to bad people; it's more complicated than that, and we have the story of Job to tell us that at times God allows Satan to harass godly people. Some times bad things happen for no apparent reason at all because we live in a world of sin. But in a general way, as Jesus said, if we push Him away, we forfeit His protection. This applies to nations as well as to individuals. Are you listening, America? It will especially apply in the very last days when the plagues described in Revelation are poured out. You will want the protective mantle of God's grace then for sure. But know this: **God's protection does not come independently of His presence.** You can't have one without the other. Human nature wants the goodies but not God, but that's not the way it works.

But through this discipline, God hoped that His people would learn a lesson, and grow from it. And within this experience, God did not abandon them. Notice two times in this first chapter how God was involved in the story as it unfolded. In verse 9 it says that God brought Daniel into favor with Ashpenaz; that is, God worked on the heart of this heathen master of the eunuchs to make him open to the suggestion that Daniel brought. This same God wants to be involved in your life in the same way, and He can work on the hearts of those you meet; fellow worker, a teacher, a neighbor or a family member. God through His Spirit can work on the minds of even those who don't acknowledge Him, if you ask Him to.

Then later in verse 17 it says that God gave them knowledge and skill in literature and wisdom. Yes, it broke God's heart to see this tragic event happen, but He was still there, just as He was there with Noah in the flood, with Joseph in his prison cell, with Jeremiah in his pit, and with the friends of Daniel in the furnace. When tragedy strikes your life, even though we sometimes bring it on ourselves, God hasn't abandoned you; He's there to share your experience and give you the strength and wisdom to get through it.

Let's think for a moment about Daniel, the central character of this book. He is an amazing study. Notice that the ones selected on this trip were the cream of the crop; good-looking, intelligent, of noble birth ("royal seed") and so on. Daniel must have been quite young, because we know that he lived through the rest of Babylon's empire, which ended in 539 B.C., and lived for a short time during the time of the Persian Empire.

It's likely that he would have been in his late teens when this first attack occurred in 605 B.C. Being of royal blood, he might have aspired to be a future ruler of Judah. But, his life changed forever when that attack occurred. From possible king to captive overnight! Ripped from his home, family and friends, never to see most of them again, he found himself on a forced march of some 800 miles in a giant north and then eastward

loop, up the Euphrates River Valley toward Babylon. Roughly speaking, that would be like walking from San Marcos 400 miles or so to St. George, Utah, and then back downward to Tucson Arizona. At about 20 miles per day, that's about 40 days of hard travel.

When he approached Babylon, his eyes would have been met by a most impressive sight. We'll talk more about the city later, but at a distance the color-coordinated architecture was designed to dazzle.

They didn't have much lumber, but they had a lot of clay which they could fire and make into ceramic block with various colors glazed on the outer surface. Its outer walls were yellow, while the gates were a brilliant azure blue. The palaces were rose-red and the temples a glistening white. Even today, 2600 years later, archeologists have recovered some of the very bricks that Daniel would have passed by as he was escorted through the Ishtar Gate, now rebuilt in the Berlin Museum, with their life-sized reliefs of bulls alternating with dragon-like creatures of various colors. And down Procession Way the walls would have featured colorful lions, the national symbol, in relief, and other creatures emblazoned on them, their colors still dazzling.

As we look at the lessons Daniel's life gives in this chapter, let's notice four things:

- beauty from ashes
- courage with courtesy
- effort plus blessing
- honor that's honorable.

Beauty from ashes. I suspect Daniel was like most of us and had his hopes and dreams as a teenager. Being of royal blood, perhaps he imagined himself becoming an admired prince or even king, with a lovely queen at his side. Whatever his anticipations were, they were dashed the day Nebuchadnezzar came and Daniel became not a king but a captive, and wore cuffs, not a crown. He may

have hoped that his life would be spent in a palace or a king's court, but never dreamed that it would be in the palace and court of Babylon and not Judah. I can assure you Daniel didn't say "I sure hope that Jerusalem is conquered and I'm taken captive to Babylon."

By the way, it was the practice back then, that those who came into frequent and close contact with the king's family and harem were **eunuchs**, so that there would never be any suspicion but that the offspring of the queen or members of the royal harem were fathered by anyone but the king. There is nothing in the story of Daniel to suggest that he and his friends were exempted from this tradition. More than a century before, Isaiah had prophesied, "They shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Isaiah 39:7. Notice that Daniel and his friends are placed under the charge of Ashpenaz, the **chief of the eunuchs**. Nowhere do we read in the story of Daniel that he became married and had a family, like we do in the story of Joseph. If it is true that Daniel was made a eunuch, it would have been one more tragic component to what seemed like a disastrous turn in his life.

If anyone ever had an excuse to throw in the towel and say "religion, well I tried it, but it didn't seem to work," it would have been Daniel. Torn from his home, physically mutilated, forced to become a part of a regime whose religion and principles were the opposite of what he cherished, Daniel had every opportunity to give up his faith and "go with the flow."

But God had not abandoned Daniel, and His grace has a way of bringing good out of bad. Daniel's life was going to be Romans 8:28 before Paul wrote it. God was going to bring **beauty from the ashes**. Did God do these horrible things to Daniel? No, no more than God approved the way that Joseph's brothers mistreated him. But He worked through those unfortunate circumstances to bring good.

Have you ever thought about the ***theology of a kaleidoscope***? You've seen those tubes. If you look at the outside of one end, you will see there are bits and pieces of variously colored fragments. But when you *look through the tube at the other end, and hold it up to the light*, you see a beautiful pattern. There's a lot of theology there. We all have a choice; we can be bitter about the bad things in life, or we can look at them through the kaleidoscope of God's grace. We can hold them up to the light, His light, and see how He can take the broken pieces, the painful fragments, and bring them into a beautiful pattern; He takes the rain and makes rainbows. Daniel's life is eloquent on that principle. Did Daniel become bitter? Did he go around and carry a chip on his shoulder and say, "You know, I didn't plan for my life to turn out this way. This is not the sketch I saw on the drawing board." Hardly! When you meet him some day he's going to be singing, "Jesus led me all the way."

And God's grace can operate in the same way in our lives. Yes, there have been tragedies, terrible things. Did God "do" those bad things? No! But God has a way of helping you get through those moments and somehow bringing good out of bad. Trust him to do that in your life as He did in Daniel's. And by the way, if Daniel wasn't taken captive to Babylon, would he have had those visions and those opportunities? Who knows?

Courage with courtesy. Daniel's life illustrates an amazing marriage of courage with courtesy. Even as a young man, the maturity of his godly character is remarkable. Daniel was not wishy-washy; he was no willy-nilly. Daniel stood firm for principle, as in this matter of the food offered from the king's table. But he took his stand in a Christ-like, courteous way.

What about this business of the food anyway? "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:8. There were probably a number of reasons why Daniel's conscience forbade him to eat it.

- First of all, there was no doubt a lot of the food there that came from the “unclean” list; pork and other flesh foods from animals that did not have split hooves and chew their cud and so were off-limits.
- Secondly, in order for meat to be okay, it not only had to be on the “clean” list, but must have been slaughtered so that most of the blood, which contains a lot of the impurities and poisons, would have drained out when the animal died. It had to be “kosher.” Daniel would have been pretty sure that this was not the way they did it in Nebuchadnezzar’s royal butchery.
- Thirdly, the preparation of the food would have been such that it was probably laden with animal fat and grease, and therefore not the best for good blood circulation, especially for someone in school trying to learn a new language and laws. Aramaic was the spoken language, which wasn’t too different from Hebrew; but he was about to be introduced to cuneiform; wedge-shaped markings that the Chaldeans used as a written language. His mind needed to be sharp.
- And fourthly, there was a custom that the food was “offered to idols,” that is, it would have been “blessed” by a pagan deity, maybe Marduk or Bel before being placed on the table, and for Daniel to eat it would have been construed as acknowledging the role of that deity. For him, it would have been a type of idolatry. On the other hand, it would have been a most serious insult to refuse to eat the food offered, from the king’s kitchen. I suppose that Nebuchadnezzar thought he was going the second mile in providing the “best” for them. Ashpenaz was afraid to even suggest a change because he thought his own life would be in jeopardy. So there was risk in stepping out to stand up for his faith, just as there’s risk if you’re in a public school and you ask for another test date than Sabbath.

But notice Daniel’s demeanor, his courtesy, humility and reasonableness in making this request. His approach was in a winsome way. Verse 9 says that “God brought Daniel into the

favor and good will" of Ashpenaz. Someone said "You have to be winsome in order to win some." Daniel's character and personality were such that he moved with grace. When God's Spirit takes control of a person's life, He smoothes out the rough edges and gives dignity and nobility. I don't find that "rudeness" is among the gifts of the Spirit. Always we find Daniel acting with courage but with courtesy.

Effort plus blessing. Here's the secret for success. It's a very simple formula. Success comes from the combination of human effort and divine power. We see this principle acted out in Daniel's life. Someone said you should "work like praying does no good and you should pray like working does no good." It says in verse 17 that God gave them knowledge and skill in all wisdom and literature. Does this mean that they didn't study their lessons; they didn't crack the books, but relied on God to implant the answers in their brains? No, I'm confident that Daniel and his friends invested many an hour in their textbooks. But they **also** relied on God to assist them, and did whatever they could. One time my wife's father was on a crew doing some heavy, strenuous work. One of the members of their group disappeared, and showed up later when the work was done. "Where were you, Brother Moore? We missed you. We could have used your help." "Oh, I knew the work was hard," he said, "so I was praying for you." That didn't go over too well! It's a lesson of life: *the combination of human effort plus divine blessing is the secret of success.*

Honor that's honorable. We noted four themes that shine in the Book of Daniel: God knows, God cares, God is involved and in control, and God rewards. We've seen these coming to light even in this first chapter, which closes by pointing out the success and honor that come to Daniel and his friends on their graduation. It seems that the king himself proctored the final exam and was so impressed with their superior learning that they were given a special position, serving

“before the king,” it says in verse 19. God has promised, “those that honor Me I will honor,” and He was true to His word for Daniel.

So many people today spend their lives seeking that acclaim, that recognition, that honor that the world gives, that 15 minutes of fame. But getting that kind of honor is like trying to ***pick up mercury***. Have you ever done that? The thermometer fell and broke, and now you’re trying to pick up that slippery little ball of mercury. But the harder to try to grasp it, the more it breaks apart. That’s what it’s like to try to grab onto worldly fame. So many people spend their lives like greyhound race dogs, going in endless circles chasing something that isn’t real. And then, if they ever catch up to it, they find it wasn’t all they hoped it would be anyway.

And what happens so often is that some people, in their feverish efforts to try to become famous use devious means which result in not honor, but dishonor. They don’t end up famous, but infamous! But if you decide to serve God, and follow the example of Daniel, He will honor you.

When he was young, Daniel may have thought he might become famous and his name would be added to the king’s lists of Judah. There would be David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah and Daniel; but it didn’t turn out that way. But you know what? That’s okay; ***everybody knows about Daniel***. If I were to ask you the names of the last kings of Judah, would you be able to recite, “Jehoaikim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.” We may have forgotten them, but everybody remembers Daniel. Because he served His Lord, honor he didn’t seek came to him anyway.

One day you’ll be walking down that street of gold and see a huge crowd, and you’ll ask, “What’s going on? Who’s there?” And someone will tell you, “Oh, that’s Daniel. He’s telling his life story.” Everyone’s going to want to meet Daniel. *Honor that’s honorable*. Don’t spend your life trying to achieve the fickle and fleeting recognition the world offers; it’s chasing a mirage.

Instead decide, no matter how difficult or challenging the circumstances, to follow God and serve Him faithfully, and in due time He will place upon you lasting honor. It may be in this lifetime or after you've passed, like the glow of the setting sun, or in the great hereafter. But His promise to you is, "those that honor Me I will honor."

This same God we see in Daniel's life also wants to be a part of your life and mine. He wants to bring order from the chaos, beauty from the ashes. He wants to add His blessing to our efforts. And He wants to honor us, too, with honor that will never dim. One day very soon He will come. We'll look up and see Him in that eastern sky, and He'll place a crown of life, a crown of victory on your head that will never fade. Maranatha!