

Role Models For Last Day Living Part IV Daniel

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Last Sunday afternoon one of my members called me on the telephone and asked if I had watched a certain TV program that day called “Sunday Morning,” on CBS. When I told her I had not been watching, she described a little of it, though she had tuned in toward the end of the program. I quickly went to the website (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/01/30/sunday/main4764503.shtml?tag=cbsnewsTwoColUpperPromoArea>) and read along as she told of what she had seen.

Seventh-day Adventists have long seen the Bible’s picture of life in this way: a mighty angel, Lucifer, sinned against God in heaven and challenged the authority of His throne. Satan and his angels were evicted, and Adam and Eve, our first parents on this earth, were given an opportunity to choose whether they would join Satan’s rebellion. This test involved a tree in the Garden of Eden called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” God selected one tree among many and made it a test. By obeying God in this simple way, they would express their loyalty to Him.

But Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate of the forbidden fruit, thus jeopardizing their future. Jesus Christ, the second Member of the Godhead, pledged to become man’s Savior and pay the penalty Himself. When He died on the cross He paid for our sins and the sins of the whole world, that “whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

The test of loyalty comes to each person; whom will we obey? We’re not saved by our obedience (Christ’s own righteousness is given to us by grace), but we indicate our love and loyalty by choosing to obey God in all things. The Bible is filled with admonitions to obey the Lord and keep His commandments. In the context of Jesus’ last message to the world, proclaimed in Revelation chapter 14, we read, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. This description immediately follows that of those who have received the “mark of the beast” and have “worshiped” him and are destroyed.

So it is clearly set forth that there will be only two classes at the end; those who worship God, the One “Who made heaven and earth,” the ones who “keep the

commandments and the faith of Jesus,” and those who worship the beast and his image. Since the Sabbath is God’s appointed memorial of His creative act and the commandment which is forgotten by majority of the Christian world (though it begins with the word “Remember”), this will be the test question which will exhibit where loyalty lies in our day. Keep in mind; obedience is the highest form of worship. The Lord has a controversy with the secular world because it has rejected the fact of creation. He has a controversy with the religious world because it has forgotten the memorial of creation.

It isn’t just about a “day,” any more than Eden’s test was about a “fruit.” It’s what it stands for. In Eden, it was by refraining from the forbidden fruit that our parents could have said, “I believe in the word of God. I trust Him to be the Author of my happiness and safekeeping. I obey Him because I love and honor Him.” It is thus that keeping the Fourth Commandment will also declare one’s allegiance and fidelity to the Creator God Who deserves our homage and loyalty. That is why the message we bear to the world today is summed up in the phrase, “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

With great interest we have watched current events to see how the prophecies of Revelation might be coming to pass. It’s true that agitation over the question of the day of worship is not new. Late in the 19th century the “Blair Bill” (do a Google search if you wish) was introduced into Congress to enjoin Sunday as a national day of rest. It was defeated. But prophecy clearly shows that at some time our country, the “second beast” of Revelation 13, will be in the forefront and collaborating with the “first beast” of Revelation 13, the papacy, to advance legislation that will promote the first day of the week as a national rest day and eventually include sanctions against those who dare to disobey.

So, it was with great interest that I read the transcript of the CBS show “Sunday Morning,” hosted by Charles Osgood, which had the title “The History Of Sunday.” It was a re-run episode originally aired in February of 2009. After discussing much of the tradition of Sunday in America, Osgood closed the program by introducing a book to be released next March, 2010, by author Judith Shulevitz called *The Sabbath World*. Don’t be misled by the use of the word “Sabbath”! Listen carefully as Charles Osgood speaks of her forthcoming book.

“She wants to keep Sundays timeless. In a world of 24/7 commerce, she's pushing for a return to laws that would shut down businesses one day a week. ‘If everybody has to stop working, then they have to, sort of, pay attention to their family, to themselves, to their community,’ she argues.

“So in this campaign, where do you even start?’ Charles Osgood asks.

“I don't pretend to have the answer in terms of legislation. I just start by trying to point out the benefits and to just say ‘Let's remember the Sabbath. Let's remember what it did for us in the past. And let's think about what it could do for us in the future,’” Shulevitz explains.

“It's fast becoming like other days, because of the commercialization of Sunday,’ says Miller, who wrote a book entitled *The Peculiar Life of Sundays*. ‘We're losing a day of rest. We're sort of “on” all the time now. What effect does this have on our psyche? So I think we are losing something.’

“Which brings us back to the Puritans of the 1630s: their measures may now seem extreme, but what if they were actually onto something?”

Very interesting, that this topic would be cast in a favorable light on a major network, and even be selected to be shown again as a re-run. This, especially in the light of the letter (“encyclical”) Pope Benedict XVI issued last June 29, “*Caritas in veritate*,” (“charity in truth”) in which he cited today's lamentable economic conditions and the need to manage and distribute world resources to alleviate the needs of the poor. Although it's quite long, you may wish to look up and read the entire letter. Just Google “*caritas in veritate*” and you can read the whole text.

It's couched in very noble clothing; a philanthropic garment of seeking the uplifting of the poorer classes. Here are some of his words: “In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making. This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical and economic order which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity. To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some

years ago. Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth. Furthermore, such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights. Obviously it would have to have the authority to ensure compliance with its decisions from all parties, and also with the coordinated measures adopted in various international forums.” Paragraph 67 of “Caritas in veritate”.

It’s as if he sees himself as a 21st century “Joseph” appointed to the commission of gathering and distributing the “grain” of the world. For students of prophecy, especially the prophecy of Revelation 13, his words sound ominously familiar. For the perceived “good of all,” a new world authority with “teeth” must be recognized, having the capability of administering the decisions and challenges of global need. His desires for the recognition of Sunday as a global day of rest, as a part of this world order, are candid.

Are we on the very brink of the fulfillment of these things? Could it be that Jesus will soon return and take us home? I hope and pray so. And yet, if that be the case, are we prepared for these last closing scenes? Are we allowing God to discipline, train and shape us so that we can, by His grace, “stand” in the “evil day”? He will do it if we allow Him! He has given us precious promises and sparkling examples of those who exemplified last day living. Among such, as we have seen, were John the Baptist, Elijah and Noah. Today we add to that list the name of Daniel.

Daniel’s life has so many lessons that are given for our encouragement that we can only touch the highlights. He was taken as a youth from his home in the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, from his beloved home in Judah to Babylon, among a select group to be trained in the duties, language, culture and religion of the new regime. Of royal blood, he might have aspired to one day be at home in the palace of Jerusalem, but instead found himself in the court of Babylon. Thus God disciplined a wayward nation and placed His witnesses where the light of truth could shine among foreign nations.

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would be true to his God, come what may. The first test was one of appetite, just as it was with Adam and Eve, and also with Christ. Would Daniel defile his body with the king’s rich and unhealthful repast? Would he put into his body those foods pronounced unclean by Scripture? Would he bow to heathen deities by eating food “blessed” by Baal? Daniel and his friends

decided that they ought to obey God rather than man. This victory over appetite prepared the way for success in all other endeavors in Daniel's journey. Are we allowing God to prepare us for the times ahead by heeding the counsels we have been given in regard to healthful living? Do our decisions at the table reflect our love for God and appreciation for the fearfully and wonderfully made bodies that He has given us? He or she who would aspire to survive the test that is to come must choose wisely in the matter of diet. Be like Daniel! When the Bible tells us to "eat what your heart desires," careful consideration should be given to that phrase. There's wisdom in it! What is it that your heart desires? What would it say, if it could talk? How can we eat so that our heart is benefited? Be Daniel at the dinner table.

Daniel was given unusual skill in the interpretation of prophecy. God has revealed through His prophets the broad scope of future events. Today we find ourselves in the very toes of the prophetic image the king saw in his dream. Every part of that dream has been fulfilled. The march of the monarchies has confirmed the minutest detail of prophetic insight and God's ability to both foretell and control the events of humanity. Like to the mighty tide, God has said many a time to an ambitious leader, "Thus far and no farther." Those who would have reunited a fragmented Europe and go on to rule the world have seen their empires crumble into ruin.

You and I have the privilege of standing on the solid foundation of fulfilled prophecy. Like no generation before us, we have the advantage of seeing how the dreams and visions of former seers have come to pass with unerring accuracy. Do we take full advantage of the opportunities to saturate our minds with the prophecies of the Word? Could we explain the king's dream of the statue to a neighbor if asked? Could we interpret the vision of the animals of chapter seven to someone sitting next to us on an airplane if God arranged it so? Be like Daniel!

Daniel was a man of humility and prayer. He freely confessed the sin of his nation and pleaded for God to fulfill His promise for His name's sake. Read the prayer of Daniel nine and make it your own! Acknowledge, confess, repent and plead for the restoration of your own "sanctuary," the temple of your heart. This is what Jesus especially wants to do for us right now!

Daniel was true to his God even when his life was at stake. When Medo-Persia succeeded Babylon, the new king appreciated the faithful ministry of Daniel (one of the great mysteries of antiquity!) and allowed him to serve in the new empire. Most unusual! But this act incited the jealousy of his colleagues, especially when Darius considered placing Daniel above the rest of them. All they had to do was

find one small flaw in Daniel's past which would discredit him, and the king would have to fire him or solicit his letter of resignation. We know about things like that today, don't we!

But try as they might, his enemies could find no occasion against Daniel! What a lesson for us! The day will come, my friends, when those who seek to discredit the message we bear will scrutinize our lives in an effort to find fault. That is why it is of utmost importance that those desiring to stand for Christ live above reproach. Have the honor of Christ in your heart when you fill out your tax return. Make sure there's nothing in your house, no DVD or CD, nothing on your computer, which will prove embarrassing as you stand for Christ. Can you imagine being questioned by a diligent prosecutor about the facts of your faith, and being presented with media that takes the name of Jesus in vain or depicts murders and violence and being asked, "Do these belong to you? How do you reconcile these things with your profession to be a follower of Jesus?" Do you think Satan is blind to the details of your life? Do you not know that his Scriptural name is the "accuser of the brethren"?

When faced with the test, Daniel would rather give up his life than give up his faith. The day will come when you and I may have a similar choice. When the pressure is brought to bear, what will be my choice then? The truth is that my choice then, on the day of the big test, will be largely be a reflection of my choices now, in the little tests. Ask Jesus to bring you victory today, and you will be like Daniel!

Our last glimpse of Daniel comes from the fifth chapter of his book, the story of Belshazzar's last feast. Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, who had at first repulsed the influences of God's Spirit. Although warned in a dream about the dangers of his blind ambition, a year later the king reclined into an attitude of pride saying, "Is this not great Babylon that I have built for the honor of my glory and majesty." During the next seven years the dethroned king ate grass like an animal, portraying the "animal" that he had become inside. But through God's mercy, he came to a different way of thinking and was truly converted.

This lesson was a textbook in the hands of his grandson, but a textbook never opened. Belshazzar stubbornly and defiantly strode to the precipice of pride, challenging the wondrous mercy of the Lord. With the armies of Cyrus on the march, with the information available by the interpretation of his grandfather's dream of the statue with different kinds of metals, Belshazzar in a bold and blasphemous move, ordered that the vessels from the temple of Yahweh be brought

to his banquet hall, and it was from these that he drank and toasted his gods of wood and stone.

But this revelry was interrupted by the writing on the wall by the bloodless hand, causing the king's joints to loosen and quake. Answers were sought; wise men were brought, but they couldn't decipher the cryptic and flaming letters. At last, under the urging of the queen mother who showed more sense than her son, Daniel was brought in. She knew him to be a man of stalwart integrity and wisdom. She knew him to be one who could solve riddles and conundrums. She knew Daniel to be the one to turn to in a crisis. He was able, with God's help, to unknit the puzzle. Be Daniel!

Seventh-day Adventist Christians ought to have such a reputation that the world turns to them for answers in a crisis. No matter what your vocation, be the best! Be the one that others turn to when questions come up. If you are a plumber or carpenter, a nurse or a doctor, a teacher or a pastor, be the best! Be the one, who, for Christ's sake, has the reputation of integrity, honesty, sincerity and wisdom.

More than wisdom in the matters of mundane and physical concerns, be the one who has the answers to the great puzzles that affect life and eternity. Be the one who has the answers to what's happening on this planet and where things are going. Be the one who has the answers that can point to prophecy and the fulfillment of God's plan as the ultimate solution to this world's need.

How did this come to be for Daniel? "Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed and his lords were astonished. The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. And the queen spoke, saying, 'O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. There is a man in our kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your (grand)father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your (grand)father--your (grand)father the king--made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. Inasmuch as an excellent Spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.'" Daniel 5:8-12.

The queen was right. It was because Daniel was filled with God's Spirit that these blessings were conferred on those he met. Are you praying each day to be filled with His Spirit, to take those things that would hinder His ministry out of your life?

A few days ago we had some guests at our house to celebrate two birthdays. It being a very warm day, our fans were churning to the max. One of the birthday girls noticed that two of the standing fans weren't operating at top efficiency. We had not been as observant as she, to notice the accumulation of dust, lint and other debris on the surface of the fan grill, which served to inhibit the wind from flowing freely. Quickly and deftly, Bob, one of the husbands, dismantled the parts of two fans and took the grill outside, where they were treated to a shower from the hose. In minutes, they were put back together, clean and fresh. It was amazing how much more wind they pushed, with the lint and dust gone! I wonder, is it possible that there is "lint" and "dust" in our lives that prevent the flow of God's refreshing Spirit? Ask Him to wash us, so that His Spirit can flow freely in blessing to others. Be Daniel!