

Daniel: A Life On Mission For the King

Daniel 1:1-7

MPS God is sovereign and worthy of full surrender to live for the purpose He ordains for His glory.

OBJ Every person should trust God's sovereignty in Three Realms because of His plan and purpose by three gospel applications.

READ Daniel 1:1-7

*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. ³Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego. **Daniel 1:1-7***

The book of Daniel holds some of the most iconic of all Bible stories, and in only twelve chapters. The fiery furnace and the lion's den may be most notable, but the opening story of food and diet as well as the dream interpretations stick in the mind and heart as well. The book spans seven decades, multiple foreign rulers, and cultures that were worlds apart. And in the midst of it all are four men whose lives were fully surrendered to demonstrate the faithfulness of a sovereign God who was sufficient to empower them to fulfill the destiny of His purpose ordained for their lives. Daniel is not a study to learn how to be like him. But in studying his life, Daniel reveals a God who is worthy of a life fully surrendered to His purpose and plan.

Are you ready and excited to study Daniel? Who's ready to walk into the fiery furnace, or be thrown into the Lion's Den?

God is sovereign and worthy of full surrender to live for the purpose He ordains for His glory.

Sovereignty, in a nutshell, simply means that God is superior in all His attributes and in every way over all things. The Psalmist records (115:3), "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." And Jesus himself states, "with God, all things are possible." (Matt 19:26) so when we say that God is sovereign, we mean to say that He does what He wills and there is nothing that can thwart, challenge, or stop Him from accomplishing His will. **If you are going to entrust your whole life you want to know that they are sovereign!**

OBJ Three Realms to trust God's sovereignty.

God is sovereign over history. 1:1-2

Daniel begins in the familiar pattern of setting the historical context of his time. Judah has been headed in this direction now for a long time because her kings have did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord but walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. (see 2 Kings 16:2-3) With threat of a Babylonian invasion looming, here we learn that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, besieged Judah in 605BC. As was customary for Babylonian invasion, they took some of the vessels of the house of God and put them in the temple of the Babylonian god. This gesture was a reminder of who was superior through conquest, and which god was greater. While there were no statues that represented the God of Judah, the items of the temple for worship would serve the same purpose. This practice reminds us that universal to all humanity is the impact on a people when their freedom of religion is impeded. And the greatest threat to that freedom is always government. But before a government could impede, the people had already forsaken their freedom.



The book of Daniel begins with two presiding realities; man striving to make a name for himself in annals of history, and a faithful God directing history for His purpose and glory. Nebuchadnezzar is taking over the world. But there's already a King who is Lord of all creation. God rules over kingdoms and cultures, over all kings and rulers, over all events and history. And this is what we read in verse two; "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into the hand." **Why would Daniel state that God had done this(.2)?** Daniel was not privy to information no one else had. The only thing Daniel had, that others did not, was his faith in God and remembering His prophetic promises. That's why he opens his record as he does, declaring the hand of God at work in history and the lives of people. Babylon is only as powerful and victorious as God allows and purposes to use. The Apostles make this same faith statement in Acts 4 when they recognize, "to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." Author Sinclair Ferguson counsels, "We should never forget that this is the meaning of history on both the cosmic and personal scales. A spiritual conflict lies at the heart of every event, however great, however mundane."¹ **Be careful, Christian, that your eyes are open by faith to see the hand of God at work in all of history. God's sovereignty over history comforts us that no matter what is going on, we can always rest confident that He is in control.**

TRANS God is not only steering the overall course of history. He is intimately involved in the events of life and people.

God is sovereign over events. 1:3-5

The Babylonians were known to disperse people once they conquered a land. They divided the royal families, likely because this would cause greater disruption in unity of government from that country. They didn't move everyone but were strategic about who they chose, with specific qualities they looked for in youth. Daniel and his friends were among those chosen. They would bring these youth to Babylon where they were immersed in Babylonian culture, education, literature, traditions, and even food. And as we later learn, Babylonian religion was included as well; from divination to astrology, Daniel and his friends would be forced to study everything that opposed their view of the world and life. They distanced these young people from every influence that was familiar to them to conform them to a new worldview. The strategy of their foreign policy was simple; immerse the younger generation to brainwash them so they see the world from a Babylonian perspective, to value what made Babylon great, and become an ambassador of Babylon. As one scholar notes regarding their training, "The deeper issue we need to recognize is that the ungodly think differently from the Godly. This is evident not simply in the language used, but in the whole way of looking at life. The ungodly view life without God. God is not in their thoughts, and there is no fear of God before their eyes. Their writing and teaching convey a completely different worldview from that of Scripture."² We will later learn that Daniel and his friends not only succeed in their studies, but they excel beyond everyone else. And instead of losing their religion, it is strengthened in them. **As it turns out, the One leading Daniel and his friends was greater than those warring against them.**

APPL How often we ask God to show us His will. But when He leads us in it, we look for a different way. I confess, when I look back on my life, had I known God's will and all that it included or involved for my life, I likely would have done all I could think of to avoid it.

Daniel and his friends become for us a model, not to emulate them, but to follow the Lord Jesus as they did. Though immersed, they did not conform to the culture of their world. In each situation, they were transformed by the One who was within them, and remained faithful as a witness, even under the threat of life and safety. Maybe the best verse for our understanding comes from Joseph, who demonstrates faith when he comforts his brothers for selling him into slavery by saying, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good,"(Genesis 50:20). **Regardless of what others intended against Daniel and his friends, God had other plans and a higher purpose for their relocation. God's sovereignty over events strengthens us that no matter what we face, we can remain steadfast, knowing that He is working for our good.**

TRANS But maybe what we most want to know is this: **is God in His sovereignty sufficient for and worthy of my life?**

God is sovereign over life. 1:6-7

Four main characters of this book are identified here, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Placed under the chief

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, [Daniel](#), vol. 21, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1988), 26.

² Sinclair B. Ferguson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, [Daniel](#), vol. 21, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1988), 31.



eunuch, Ashpenaz, they were given new names to align with their new Babylonian home. Daniel was called Belteshazzar, Hananiah was called Shadrach, Mishael was called Meshach, and Azariah was called Abednego. These verses hold greater significance for them than we might think now. First, names were deeply significant in their culture; a new name gave a new meaning to life. This was one way of stripping these youth personally of their old allegiances and trying to force them to embrace a new identity. Their new name represented the purpose of their new education and training, to embrace a Babylonian heritage in the fullest extent. But maybe of greatest significance is the new reality they had to face, which is the likelihood that they were made eunuchs to serve the king. In every way, their life was radically altered on the outside. One can only imagine, “**what would this significant of changes do to them on the inside?**” It also causes one to ask, “**Is it fair that young men who love God get treated this way?**” But while we may ask that question, Daniel never hinted at it; he never wavers from his faith in God. And that’s really what we must ask; “**How does one remain resolute and faithful to trust and serve God when life gets turned upside out and inside down?**” (See what I did there?) This is the exact purpose for Daniel to write. Daniel wrote to encourage people to stand for God, confident that He is in control at all times, in every situation, to accomplish His purpose.³ Daniel declares God’s sovereignty in the biggest issues of history and the most intimate details of life to ensure that the reader knows “He is worthy of all your faith” and encourage us to trust in Him. **God’s sovereignty over life emboldens us that no matter what God calls us to, we walk confidently by faith that He will empower and work through us for His glory.**

OBJ Three Gospel Applications

Daniel declares that all of history, the events of life, and the identity of our life are in God’s hands, under the sovereign care of a God who is worthy. This is the God we worship and serve! Every follower of Jesus must learn this lesson; to trust God’s sovereignty for all of life. Paul declares that trusting God’s sovereignty is inherent to salvation in Jesus Christ when he states, “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*” (Romans 8:28) Verse twenty-nine begins, “*29For...*”, and describes salvation in Jesus Christ. “For” tells us that verse 29-30 are the foundation for verse 28; because God has saved us we know He works all things by His sovereign power for good!

APPL 1. What God did in and for Daniel’s life was not particular to Daniel, but is distinctive of our God!

Maybe you say, “God, I want to serve you, but I don’t want it to be hard. I don’t want it to hurt. I want to know I’ll be okay.” That’s like saying, “I don’t mind going into the fiery furnace, as long as it isn’t turned on.” “Lord, I’ll go in the Lion’s den, as long as the lions aren’t there.” If Daniel teaches us any lesson, it is this; “God is not safe! But He is sovereign and good” The Lord has His own thrown into fiery furnaces heated seven times hotter than ever before so those that are NOT His own will see the power of His might and believe! **Why?** Because the Lord of the flames doesn’t fear the heat or the smoke! **Who is ready to serve?** The King has His own thrown into the Lion’s Den of other kings. **Why?** Because our King is the Lamb who lays down with the Lion. Anybody can be an influencer for tourism or a zoo advocate. But Daniel asks, “**who is ready to stand up to serve the Sovereign Almighty for a greater glory?**” You will be mocked and scorned, wrongly accused, hated, condemned, and maybe even die because you are His. But you will never be in threat of ever being separated from God and His glory. And your life will never be less than eternally useful, meaningful, nor purposeful. Instead of asking, “**Why must this be so hard?**”, we should ask, “**Why does what is normal from the God in the Scriptures so often feel so foreign to us now?**”

APPL 2. Faith views God’s sovereignty to see His providential care over history, to trust His perfect plan through events, and to count our life for the purpose of His glory.

Beware lest you think that your life is not all that important to God by saying, “Well, I’m no Daniel.” That’s a first-order tactic of the enemy to deceive you into stealing God’s glory from your life by condoning you to live for self. Your life matters eternally to God! God saved you, Christian, for your whole life to declare the excellencies of His glory! No one else can surrender to glorify God with your life but you. And if you do not, the glory God would receive from your life will be forever

³ Tremper Longman III, [How to Read Daniel](#), How to Read Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 39. Longman writes, “The book of Daniel, however, was not written to remind the Jewish people of their sin but to provide encouragement to them in the midst of their oppression. The focus is on God’s control, not his punishment.”



stolen from Him. Only you can glorify God with your life. **Who will receive glory from your life?**

Daniel encourages us to look at our God who is worthy, sovereign and supreme above all, and to look at our lives and ask, “Am I standing for the King whose Kingdom, dominion, and rule is eternal? Or am I bowing down to the world’s demands and whims? Am I sold out to serve the One whom the Ancient of Days has ordained? Or, am I selling out to a world that promises more and better, only to disappoint at every turn? Christian, are you playing “secret follower with Jesus”; making little allowances or compromises that you justify as no big deal for now, to consume today’s indulgences to choose convenience over difficulty, or pleasure over hardship?

Parents – are you raising your children to honor God wholeheartedly in all of life with their whole life? Are you talking to them about how daddy and mommy are seeking His will and glory in every decision for life, and how you want them to grow up and serve Him the same way?

ILLUS After church, little Johnny climbed into the back seat of the family van with big tears streaming down his face while sobbing. His parents asked him what was wrong. Between sobs and sniffles he said, “The preacher said he wanted all of us kids to grow up in good Christian families, but I want to stay with you guys.”

If you are not training your children for this now, statistics say they will walk away in the world ahead. But if you do train them to follow Jesus, they will learn that God is sufficient at all times in all ways. But don’t bother talking about it if you are not living it, or you will train them to treat God as an accessory to life instead of Lord of life.

Testimony I am now completing my 35th year of vocational gospel ministry. Every decision that I have made over the last four decades to determine the course of the rest of my life was made by the time I was 19. And every one of those decisions was directly shaped by how I watched and was taught how my parents had followed the Lord.

APPL 3. With his whole life, that young man Daniel shows that we will either take a stand for God with our life, or we will bow down to the world and all of its demands.

God is sovereign and worthy of full surrender to live for the purpose He ordains for His glory.

