2005

Proclamation in Cross-Cultural Context: Missiological Implications of the Book of Daniel

Sung Ik Kim
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations
Part of the Biblical Studies Commons, Missions and World Christianity Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.
Thank you for your interest in the

Andrews University Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses.

Please honor the copyright of this document by not duplicating or distributing additional copies in any form without the author’s express written permission. Thanks for your cooperation.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

PROCLAMATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT:
MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE
BOOK OF DANIEL

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Sung Ik Kim
June 2005
PROCLAMATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT
MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE
BOOK OF DANIEL

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Sung Ik Kim

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Bruce L. Bauer
Faculty Adviser,
Bruce L. Bauer
Associate Professor of World Mission
Russell L. Staples
Professor of World Mission, Emeritus
Roy E. Gane
Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages
Erich W. Baumgartner
Professor of Leadership and Intercultural Communication
Scott Moreau
Professor of Intercultural Studies and Missions
Wheaton College

Roy E. Gane
Director, Ph.D./Th.D. Program
Roy E. Gane
Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
John K. McVay

Date approved
28 June 2005

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
ABSTRACT

PROCLAMATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

By

Sung Ik Kim

Adviser: Bruce L. Bauer
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: PROCLAMATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Name of researcher: Sung Ik Kim

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Bruce L. Bauer, D.Miss.

Date completed: June 2005

This study attempts to explore the biblical foundation of salvific mission as revealed in God’s purposes for the nations (missio Dei) in the book of Daniel and to investigate the means that Daniel employed in his ministry as an overt missionary who was sent to witness to God’s salvific purpose in the cross-cultural context of heathen kingdoms.

The main objective of this research is to validate the book of Daniel as a missionary document and show that its missiological implications are still relevant to present-day missions. Chapter 2 explores the salvific purpose of missio Dei in the book of Daniel including God’s initiative for salvation in human history, “God’s salvific purpose for all people.” The chapter demonstrates that Daniel was aware of the sovereignty of
God in the process of the exile as a means to achieve God's salvific purpose for all people through his human agents.

Chapter 3 researches the strategies of *missio Dei*, showing how God used committed individuals, dreams, visions, and spiritual conflict. The chapter shows that God's strategy involves not only calling people to serve for his salvific purpose but also demonstrates God's direct intervention in human history through dreams, visions, and spiritual conflict.

Chapter 4 focuses on the cultural perspective of Daniel's ministry by analyzing the process of cultural learning and symbolism within the book of Daniel. Furthermore, Daniel's witness to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius is examined and analyzed from a cross-cultural perspective. The chapter reveals that Daniel and his friends were sensitive to the local culture as they communicated God's truth in a cross-cultural context without sacrificing the content of that truth.

Chapter 5 suggests missiological implications from the book of Daniel for current cross-cultural missionary work. The elucidation of practical implications demonstrates that the book of Daniel should be treated as a missionary document to develop for the present-day cross-cultural mission practices as well as theology.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ........................................................................................................ viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................... x

Chapter
I. INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 1
   Background to the Problem ......................................................................................1
   Purpose of the Research ............................................................................................7
   Justification of the Research .....................................................................................8
   Methodology ............................................................................................................10
   Delimitations of the Study ......................................................................................11

II. MISSIO DEI IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL ............................................................. 13
   Introduction ..............................................................................................................13
   Definitions of Major Terminology ..........................................................................14
      Definitions of “God’s Salvific Purpose
          for All People” and Universalism .............................................................18
      God’s Salvific Purpose for All People ......................................................18
      Universalism ...............................................................................................25
   Missio Dei in the Old Testament ...........................................................................28
   Missio Dei in the Book of Daniel ...........................................................................29
       Daniel’s Awareness of the Purpose of the Exile ............................................30
       Daniel’s Awareness of the Fulfillment of
          the Prophecy of Jeremiah ........................................................................34
          Jeremiah and Daniel ..................................................................................34
          Prophecy Regarding the Exile ..................................................................36
          God’s Purpose for the Exile .....................................................................37
          Prophecy of the Destruction of Babylon ...................................................39
       Daniel’s Awareness of Fulfillment of
          the Prophecy of Isaiah ..........................................................................40
          Isaiah and Daniel .....................................................................................40
          Judgment on Idols .....................................................................................41
          Servant Motif ............................................................................................42
          Prophecy Regarding the Exile ..................................................................45
          God’s Universal Purpose ..........................................................................45
       God’s Salvific Purpose for All People
          in the Book of Daniel ...................................................................................48
### III. STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Major Terminologies</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Strategy</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Dreams and Visions</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Spiritual Warfare</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Power Encounter</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed Individuals</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction of God's Sovereign Call</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophecies</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of the Sovereignty of God</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Prayer</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Place for Prayer</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Regular Time for Prayer</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Visible Prayer Life</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Prayer</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner of Prayer</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis of Prayer</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer for Corporate Sin</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to a Holy Life</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision to Be Holy</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Issues</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiness and Physical Health</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence of God's Agents</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence as a Gift of God</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service in the Heathen Kingdom</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams and Visions in the Book of Daniel</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams and Visions of the Heathen Kings</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams of Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision of Belshazzar</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Interpreter</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams and Visions of Daniel</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere of Influence</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the Banquet ................................................................. 228
In the Course of Interpretation ........................................... 234
Witness to Darius ............................................................. 237
   In the Court of Darius the Mede ..................................... 237
   In the Den of Lions ......................................................... 238
Summary ........................................................................... 242

V. CONCLUSIONS: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ............... 246

Implications for Theology of Mission .................................. 246
   Missio Dei and Mission .................................................... 246
   God’s Salvific Purpose for All People ................................. 248
   God’s Universal Purpose versus Universalism ..................... 248
   Requirement of Justice .................................................... 249

Implications for Mission Strategy ....................................... 251
   Committed Individuals and Mission ................................. 251
   Conviction of God’s Call .................................................. 251
   Spirituality ....................................................................... 252
   Holiness ........................................................................... 254
   Excellence ........................................................................ 256

Vegetarianism and Mission ................................................. 257

Dreams, Visions, and Mission ............................................. 262

Spiritual Conflict and Mission .......................................... 264
   Issue of Territorial Spirits ............................................... 264
   Issue of Warfare Prayer .................................................. 267
   Issue of Power Encounter ............................................... 270

Implications for Cross-cultural Witness ............................. 273
   Cross-cultural Perspectives and Missions ......................... 273
   Cultural Learning ............................................................. 273
   Symbolism ....................................................................... 276
   Cross-cultural Witness ..................................................... 278
   Encounter with Other Religions ........................................ 278
   Using the Names of God .................................................. 280

Summary ........................................................................... 282
Conclusions ....................................................................... 284

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................................................... 286
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBA</td>
<td>Abundant Life Bible Amplifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANET</td>
<td>Ancient Near East Texts. Edited by J. B. Pritchard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSS</td>
<td>Andrews University Seminary Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDB</td>
<td>The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Cambridge Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EncJud</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMQ</td>
<td>Evangelical Missions Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERT</td>
<td>Evangelical Review of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HALOT</td>
<td>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her</td>
<td>Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMC</td>
<td>International Missionary Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRM</td>
<td>International Review of Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JATS</td>
<td>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIAC</td>
<td>NIV Application Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>New English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLSW</td>
<td>Strategic-level Spiritual Warfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SwJT</td>
<td>Southwestern Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEV</td>
<td>Today’s English Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In completing this study, I want to express my gratitude to those who have contributed greatly to my life and study.

I want to express my appreciation to my committee members: Dr. Bruce Bauer (Adviser), Dr. Russell Staples, and Dr. Roy Gane. My deep appreciation goes to Dr. Bauer. His passion and expertise in mission widened my cross-cultural perspective, and his endless hours of work on my manuscript contributed to the completion of this study. Dr. Staples also encouraged me and guided my study with his expertise in missiology. I am also indebted to Dr. Gane for his expertise in exegesis and analysis of biblical datum. His Old Testament seminar motivated me to see the book of Daniel from a missiological perspective.

I thank the administrators of Sahm Yook University, the Korean Union Conference, and the Northern Asia-Pacific Division for their support and encouragement in my Ph.D. studies at Andrews University. I am also indebted to the faculties of the Theology at Sahm Yook University. Without their support, I would not have been able to finish this dissertation while I was teaching.

I am greatly indebted to my friends and to my brothers and sisters in Christ for their support and encouragement. It is not easy to name all the friends who have impacted my life. There are, however, a few people whom I want to acknowledge specifically: Clifton Maberly, Yu Sung Yang, Kye Lim Lee, Yo Han Yoo, Chong Hyung Kang, Todd and Ah Ryung Park, Hee Man Park, and the Andrews Korean Church members.
My appreciation also goes to Mabel Bowen, Bonnie Proctor, and Kathy Ekkens for their constant help in spite of their busy schedules. I thank the James White Library at Andrews University and Terry Robertson, the seminary librarian, for providing an excellent academic research environment.

I want to express special thanks to my parents who dedicated their whole lives to the Lord in ministerial work and prayed every day for my family and me. I also owe a great debt of love to my brothers and sister.

My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Hye Jung Cha. Without her loving support and encouragement, I would never have completed this work. I also thank my son, Min Woo, and daughter, Min Hee, who overcame cross-cultural shock two times as our family moved to America and later back to Korea.

Finally, I praise and give thanks to the Lord, who gave me strength and wisdom to accomplish what often seemed impossible. To Him be glory, praise, and honor!
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

The Bible has been the blueprint throughout history for Christian missionary activity and has provided criteria for the establishment of Christian mission.1 At first glance, the missionary movement of Israel in the Old Testament appears to be only centripetal, or inward.2 Many scholars have questioned whether or not there is any centrifugal, outgoing witnessing missionary impact in the Old Testament where the people of Israel consciously went out to the nations from Jerusalem. Many see mission in the Old Testament as only centripetal, attracting the nations to the light of God’s presence among God’s people.3 Most of the missionary mandates cited by biblical scholars are from the New Testament.


2Ferdinand Hahn, commenting on the role of the Old Testament connection with mission, suggests that the witness in the Old Testament is rather passive in character and says, “There is an absence of a divine commission for the purpose and of any conscious outgoing to the Gentiles to win them for belief in Yahweh” (Ferdinand Hahn, Mission in the New Testament, trans. Frank Clark [Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1965], 20).

3Already in 1896 Max Löhr summarized his findings under three headings: (1) in the Old Testament the concept of mission is peripheral and not central; (2) the idea of mission results since it came into collision with the particularism of the law and contempt of the Jews for the heathen

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
However, in recent years more scholars are looking to the Old Testament for a basis of biblical mission and are finding centrifugal models.¹ It is obvious that there is little evidence of overt missionary activity such as going out to bear witness to other people in the Old Testament as seen in the Early Church and described in the New Testament. However, in God’s Old Testament dealing with his people, there is a clear theme of his purpose of blessing all nations through Israel.² The concept of “God’s salvific purpose for all people,”³ directly affirmed in several Old Testament passages, world (Max Löh, Der Missionsgedanke im Alten Testament [Freiburg im Breisagau: n.p., 1896], quoted in Robert Martin-Achard, A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel’s Mission to the World, trans. John Penny Smith [Great Britain: Oliver and Body, 1962], 5); (3) Löh argued that on the levels of thought and action alike, the role of mission within the framework of the Old Testament is extremely limited (ibid.). Many scholars still stress this view on the mission of Israel in the Old Testament.


³To describe this concept Donald R. Dunavant uses the term “universality of mission” to denote the mandate of mission that the gospel of salvation should be proclaimed to all peoples and nations as well as Israel (Donald R. Dunavant, “Universality of Mission,” Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission [EDWM], ed. A. Scott Moreau [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000], 989, 990). To avoid the general concept of “universalism,” which denotes that “salvation is not only available to
underlies the whole message of the Old Testament.¹ No missiologist doubts the underlying Heilsgeschichte (salvation history) of the Old Testament.² Regarding this Old Testament foundation of mission, Johannes Blauw says, “Where Heilsgeschichte stands out again in its own right, mission comes into the picture, too.”³

However, it is the specific command to “go out” that is the question here. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. introduces three basic texts that make it clear that God sent an Israelite or the whole nation to the Gentiles. These texts are: Gen 12:1-3; Exod 19:4-6; and Ps 67.⁴ He all, it is applicable to all and ultimately will be realized by all” (idem, “Universalism,” EDWM [2000], 988), Dunavant uses the term “universalism of mission.” However, because of the ambiguous connotation of the expression “universalism of mission,” I prefer to use the expression “God’s salvific purpose for all people,” or “God’s universal mission” to designate the same idea.


²The term Heilsgeschichte is a German word most often translated as “salvation history.” Originally coined by Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), the term referred to “the nature of the Bible as an account of God’s working out divine salvation in human history” (Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms [1999], s.v. “Heilsgeschichte”). In the twentieth century, the term was subjected to wide usage. For its usage by different authors, see R. W. Yarbrough, “Heilsgeschichte,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 2d ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 546, 547; Gerhard F. Hasel, Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 97-115. For a foundation of mission from the Old Testament in the sense that the biblical story shows a pattern of events in which God is active, stretching from creation to the consummation (Jesus’ Advent), see Oscar Cullmann, Salvation History, trans. Sidney G. Sowers (London: SCM, 1967); Robert K. Gnuse, Heilsgeschichte as a Model for Biblical Theology: The Debate concerning the Uniqueness and Significance of Israel’s Worldview (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989).


⁴Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, 3d ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 11. The outline form of the message is God’s call to us: (1) to proclaim his plan to bless the nations (Gen 12:3); (2) to participate in his priesthood as agents of that blessing (Exod 19:4-6); and (3) to prove his purpose to bless all the nations (Ps 67). Some missiologists may still doubt that the Old Testament explicitly enjoined messengers to go to the Gentiles. They insist that the Old Testament makes absolutely no mention of a missionary
describes these as mandates to mission. David Bosch also suggests that “stories of pagans like Ruth and Naaman who accepted the faith of Israel” indicate the missionary nature of the Old Testament. The term “missionary” carries the meaning of a cross-cultural worker who serves within or outside his/her national boundaries and crosses some kind of linguistic, cultural, or geographic barrier as authorized sent ones. In this sense, the ones who influenced Ruth and Naaman to be followers of Yahweh were missionaries. Bosch also lists Jonah as “a prophet of the God of Israel, who was sent as a missionary to Nineveh.”

They go to the Old Testament only for a basis of mission theology. Blauw says, “When one turns to the Old Testament to find a justification and basis for missions in the current meaning, that is, as ‘foreign mission,’ one is bound to be disappointed. It does not seem advisable to build a theology of missions on a few statements, especially those which are still exegetically in dispute” (Blauw, 42). He distinguishes the universal messages from the missionary character of the Old Testament and proposes that the universal redemption in the Old Testament belongs to “eschatological expectations” by the presence of God among his people, not by human activity (ibid., 42-43).

David J. Bosch, “Reflection on Biblical Models of Mission,” in Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission, ed. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 175, 176. Interestingly David J. Bosch also proposes that “there is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh” (idem, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991], 17). Then he goes on to add: “So, if there is a missionary in the Old Testament, it is God himself who will, as his eschatological deed par excellence, bring the nations to Jerusalem to worship him there together with his covenant” (ibid., 19).


There are different opinions on the missionary nature of Jonah (see Blauw, 33, 34). Blauw believes that “it cannot be denied that a real plea for mission to the heathen is lacking in the book of Jonah; at most it can only be deduced from the book” (ibid., 34). For a detailed discussion on the missionary nature of Jonah, see Verkuyl, 96-100. Verkuyl says, “The book of Jonah is so significant for understanding the biblical basis of mission because it treats God’s mandate to his
Other scholars recognize individuals such as Melchizedek, Jethro, Balaam, and Ruth as agents of God's mission in the Old Testament. Through these individuals who left their heathen origins and by a word-and-deed witness were won over to trust and serve the living God who had shown them mercy, Verkuyl says, we can hear "the faint strains of the missionary call to all people already sounding forth."

In a sense, the prophets of the Old Testament were also missionaries because God sent them not only to Israel but also to the nations abroad. Kaiser points out the importance of the role of prophets in the Old Testament as missionaries whom God sent to the nations. He suggests, "while the Lord sends a variety of agents to accomplish all sorts of purposes, the most frequent association with God's sending is the office of prophet." Robert Glover emphasizes the universalistic character of the prophets that "perhaps the people regarding the Gentile peoples and thus serves as the preparatory step to the missionary mandate of the New Testament" (ibid., 96).


2Verkuyl, 95.

3Kaiser, Mission, 12. For further discussions on God's sending, see Francis M. Dubose, God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1983); Ferris L. McDaniel, "Mission in the Old Testament," in Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach, ed. William J. Larkin, Jr., and Joel F. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 12, 13. Although Kaiser does not mention Daniel specifically, he points out the missionary role of prophets in the Old Testament: the whole prophecy of Obadiah was addressed to the nation of Edom; the prophet Isaiah proclaimed God's message to ten foreign nations in chaps. 13-23; Jeremiah addressed the nations in the long section of chaps. 46-52; Ezekiel discussed God's plan for the Gentile nations in chaps. 25-32, while Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonians; the prophet Amos began his prophecy in chaps. 1, 2 with a message to the nations (Kaiser, Mission, 11, 51-63).
richest missionary teachings of the Old Testament are to be found in the prophets, where a worldwide outlook is always clearly recognizable, even when the central message relates to Israel.”

Blauw explains Dan 7:1-14 as a message of “universalism” (God’s purpose for the whole world), but the book of Daniel as a whole is seldom mentioned in connection with “God’s salvific purpose for all people.” Daniel scholars have devoted much effort to the question of the date, historical context, the interpretation of its prophecies, and literary structure, whereas little attention has been given to the heilsgeschichtliche (the salvation-historical) foundation of mission, the salvific purpose of missio Dei, “God’s mission” or the cross-cultural context in the book of Daniel.

In like manner, the book of Daniel as a missionary document has not attracted

---


2Blauw, 65. Blauw uses the term “universalism” to denote the fact that the message of the Old Testament has the whole world in view and that it has validity for the whole world (ibid., 17). See more in ibid., 15-54.


4In Latin, *missio Dei* means “the sending of God.” Originally, it was used (from Augustine on) in Western discussions of the Trinity for the “sentness of God (the son)” by the Father. It is translated in English as “God’s Mission.” I support a comprehensive definition of *missio Dei* as everything God does for the communication of salvation (John A. McIntosh, “Missio Dei,” *EDWM* [2000], 631, 632).
much attention even from missiologists. Glover describes Daniel as a missionary, but he spends little time doing an analysis as to how sensitive Daniel was to the culture where he served. There is a lack of any explicit missiological study on the cross-cultural perspectives for witness in the book of Daniel, although John N. Oswalt suggests that we can find “a remarkable illustration of the nature and effect of that mission” in the book of Daniel.2

Thus, there is a need for scholarly investigation concerning the missiological importance of missio Dei and the cross-cultural implications of the book of Daniel in building a biblical foundation of mission.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study is to explore the biblical foundation of salvific mission as revealed in God’s purposes for the nations (missio Dei) in the book of Daniel and to investigate the means that Daniel employed in his ministry as an overt missionary who was sent3 to witness to God’s salvific purpose in the cross-cultural context of heathen

---

1He says, “Daniel was another great foreign missionary [together with Jonah] whose divinely given commission, like that of the apostle Paul, took him before kings and rulers. He witnessed for God in the courts of four successive heathen monarchs, and so effectively as to lead them to recognize and proclaim his God to be the most high God, whose kingdom was universal and everlasting” (Glover, 21).


3The idea that Daniel felt he was sent by God can be confirmed in his statement: “And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his [Nebuchadnezzar’s] hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God” (Dan 1:2, KJV). Through Daniel’s awareness of God’s initiative in causing the exile, Daniel understood that God sent him to Babylon just as Joseph realized that God sent him to

---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
kingdoms. From the result of this research, I will elucidate some practical implications for present day cross-cultural mission practices as well as mission theology.

**Justification of the Research**

Although Israel was to be a blessing to “all peoples on earth” (Gen 12:3; Ps 67), she largely failed to be a “kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:6). Israel was not successful in achieving her mission to the nations because of her compromise with the idolatrous religions of the very people she was to reach. So God judged Israel and Judah with exile in Assyria and Babylon. Kaiser explains one significant reason for the exile: “Yahweh must send his people into exile in order for them to act in accordance with his desire that the nation of Israel should be his agents whereby he could bless all the families of the earth.”

The exile forced the Jews into a situation where the godly remnant bore powerful witness to the true God. The book of Daniel gives an excellent example of witness in exile. Even in tragedy, God brought his servants, Daniel and his friends, into circumstances where they were able to witness in a way that extended far beyond their

---

1 The NIV has been used in this research unless indicated otherwise.

2 Oswalt, 13.

3 Hicks explains one reason for development of the synagogue during this period: “The temple was too far away (and they were in bondage), so these exiles began meeting in small groups (synagogues) to celebrate and cultivate their religious life. The community-centered institution was much more accessible to outsiders than the temple had been” (Hicks, 61, 62).

4 Olson, 29.
little family circle in Judah. They seemed to understand why they were in exile and what they needed to do there to achieve God’s plan.

Although some scholars feel that the development of a Jewish missionary consciousness is to be explained by the Jewish Diaspora and the consequences of being exposed to Hellenistic patterns of thought, Blauw points out that “one should not overlook the strong tendencies towards universalistic mission in the later parts of the Old Testament.” He proposes that the apocalyptic literature, particularly the book of Daniel, which gives insight into the secrets of a universal future, motivated not only Jewish missionary consciousness in the Diaspora, but also impacted the New Testament church. Glover suggests the same theme: “He [Daniel] and his fellow Jews of the captivity and later Dispersion were theistic missionaries among the peoples of the East, as well as of southern Europe and northern Africa, right to the time of Christ.”

---


3 Blauw, 60.

4 Glover, 21.
suggests that “it was during this period that Israel’s missionary role completely changed and became centrifugal.”¹

The impact of Daniel reveals this change, but a comprehensive approach to the book from a missiological perspective that investigates “God’s salvific purpose for all people” and the cross-cultural context of missio Dei has largely been neglected. Consequently, there is a need for a thorough missiological study of the entire book of Daniel.

**Methodology**

Since this study investigates the missiological perspective of the book of Daniel, I survey the content of the book of Daniel and compare it with other relevant passages of Scripture. Scripture passages together with secondary sources and findings of Daniel scholars from different perspectives are analyzed and evaluated in the light of modern mission theories. The cultural context of the book also is studied. I then attempt to extrapolate a theology of mission.²

From this research I seek to explore the salvific purpose of missio Dei in the book of Daniel and to elucidate the practical applications of the fulfillment of God’s purpose in cross-cultural context.

To achieve this goal:

---

¹J. Herbert Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976), 30. Blauw also indicates the exile as a turning point in the history of Israel second only to the Exodus (Blauw, 29).

²This methodology is suggested in Bosch, “Reflection,” 179, 180.
In chapter 2, the theology of missio Dei in the book of Daniel is studied, including God's initiative for salvation in human history, "God's salvific purpose for all people."

In chapter 3, I research the strategies of missio Dei showing how God used committed individuals, dreams, visions, prayer, spiritual formation, power encounters, and spiritual conflict.

In chapter 4, I focus on the cultural perspective of Daniel's ministry by analyzing the process of cultural learning and symbolism within the book of Daniel. Furthermore, I examine and analyze Daniel's process of witness to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius in the book of Daniel from a cross-cultural perspective.

Through this process I demonstrate that the book of Daniel is a missionary document, both theologically as well as from a cross-cultural perspective. In chapter 5, I then suggest some missiological implications from the book that speak to present-day cross-cultural missionary work.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This research focuses on the book of Daniel from a missiological perspective. Since the purpose of this study is to draw out the missiological implications from Daniel, especially "God's salvific purpose for all people" and cross-cultural perspectives of missio Dei, I do not deal with textual issues such as authorship, date, historicity, and detailed exegesis.

Regarding the historical context of Daniel, my analysis deals with the setting as it is presented in the book regarding a man named Daniel, whose career lasted from the time of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom to the early years of the Persian age in the sixth century.
B.C. I do not get involved in the discussion of critical theories concerning the historical framework or literary production of the book.

The missiological implications of eschatology as a motive for mission in the book of Daniel are very important. However, I deal with eschatology only insofar as it is relevant to the topic of missio Dei, therefore, this investigation does not contain a comprehensive study of the eschatological passages.

This study is quite broad, covering almost all the contents of the book of Daniel. However, I cannot claim to examine all aspects, or potential aspects, of the missiological perspectives found in the book of Daniel in my attempt to prove the validity of the book as a missionary document. I research some of the missiological perspectives of the book of Daniel and compare them with some present mission theories only to the extent of showing support for a biblical ground for some missiological implications regarding the theology of mission, mission strategy, and cross-cultural relevance in witness.
CHAPTER II

MISSIO DEI IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Introduction

The book of Daniel is a powerful document for cross-cultural missions. Daniel served God as a cross-cultural missionary in a heathen kingdom throughout his whole life. The subject of God’s sovereignty in saving the nations is especially dominant in the book. God’s sovereignty over human history is expressed as God’s will and providence. Missiologically, this initiative of God to save all people can be termed missio Dei, “God’s mission.” Many missiologists are currently paying more attention to the concept of missio Dei in the Old Testament record.1

The term “missio Dei” defines mission as “an activity of God himself, which he has begun in the sending of his son.”2 Johannes C. Hoekendijk widened the sphere of missio Dei by denoting “the totality of God’s activity” towards the establishing of the

---

1For more information on the term, see definition section. For linguistic considerations on missio Dei, see H. H. Rosin, “Missio Dei”: An Examination of the Origin, Contents, and Function of the Term in Protestant Missiological Discussion (Leiden, Nederland: Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research Department of Missiology, 1972), 3-5. H. H. Rosin translated the Latin “missio Dei” as “God’s mission” or “the mission of God” in English (ibid., 3).

kingdom.¹ In like manner, it is possible to trace the same concept in the book of Daniel because it shows that God is in control and the word “kingdom” (malkuth) is used several times more often than by other prophets.²

Thus, it is the purpose of this chapter to (1) explore missio Dei, God’s sovereignty and initiative in his plan for salvation; and (2) to reveal “God’s salvific purpose for all people” as an integral part of missio Dei from the study of the book of Daniel.

Definitions of Major Terminology

Definition of Missio Dei

The concept of missio Dei, “God’s mission,” was highly refined by Augustine, in connection with his discussion of the doctrine and confession of the Trinity: the “sentness of God (the Son and the Holy Spirit)” by the Father.³ Irenaeus, in the second century, mentioned the unfolding of God’s inner life in the history of salvation, and Tertullian referred to “God’s own self-distribution” within saving history.⁴

¹See Johannes C. Hoekendijk, “The Church in Missionary Thinking,” IRM 41, no. 3 (July 1952): 324-336; McIntosh, 632.


³For a detailed discussion on Augustine and missio Dei, see Edward W. Poitras, “St. Augustine and the Missio Dei: A Reflection on Mission at the Close of the Twentieth Century,” Mission Studies 16, no.2 (1999): 28-46. Although the main element in missio Dei for Augustine was “the Son of God and the Holy Spirit to be sent,” Augustine allowed that the Father, as well as the other Persons of the Trinity, could make himself known in certain limited ways in the Old Testament narratives through divine appearances (ibid., 31, 32).

Karl Barth became one of the modern theologians to articulate mission as an activity of God himself. In 1932, he presented an address to the Brandenburg Mission Conference in Berlin in which he listed more than fifty critical questions dealing with mission.¹ His new understanding of missions influenced, in various ways, the writings of Karl Hartenstein.² Barth’s influence reached its peak at the 1952 Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC).³ The report out of Willingen on the “Missionary Obligation of the Church” declared, “God sends forth the church to carry out his work to the ends of the earth, to all nations, and to the end of time.”⁴

¹Karl Barth, “Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart,” in Theologische Fragen und Antworten, vol. 3 (Zollikon-Zürich: Evanglicher Verlag, 1932), 100-126. This article was read at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932. See also Waldren Scott, Karl Barth’s Theology of Mission (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), 9.

²See Karl Hartenstein, Was Hat die Theologie Karl Barth der Mission zu Sagen? (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1928). McIntosh says that Karl Barth’s emphasis on the actio Dei (action of God) and mission that is related to the Trinity inspired Hartenstein to develop the concept of missio Dei in contrast to “the human-centered focus” of liberal theology at that time (McIntosh, 632; see also George F. Vicedom, Actio Dei: Mission und Reich Gottes [Verlag, Munich: Kaiser, 1975]).


⁴Willingen Conference of the IMC, The Missionary Obligation of the Church (London: Edinburgh, 1952), 1-5. Bosch summarizes what happened at Willingen: “Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world” (Bosch, Transforming Mission, 390).
A Lutheran theologian, George F. Vicedom, popularized the concept for
missiology by publishing a book by the title: *Missio Dei: Einführung in eine Theologie
der Mission I* (1958).¹ In the book, Vicedom suggested that he used the phrase in order to
underscore the fact that mission is above all God’s work, that is, God is the active subject
in mission. In that case, mission is actually an expansion of God’s salvific desire and
activity.² Thus, *missio Dei* came to encapsulate an important change in the development
of missiological thought from an emphasis on the “mission of the Church” at the
Tambararam meeting (1938) to an emphasis on the “mission of God” at Willingen (1952).³

Bosch describes how the concept of *missio Dei* was modified after Willingen:

“The *missio Dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in
which the church may be privileged to participate.”⁴ From this understanding, the socio-

¹This book was translated in 1965 (George F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An
Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, trans. Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf [St. Louis,
MO: Concordia, 1965]).

²Vicedom states that if our assumption that God desires mission because he is involved in
mission himself is correct, then the church can be God’s instrument and tool only as it allows itself
to be used by him (ibid., 13).

³Mcintosh, 632. By the time of the Tambararam-Madras Meeting of IMC (1938), it was
widely accepted that the local church, and not the foreign mission society, was the single most
important instrument in world evangelism. On the reasons for the rise and decline of church-
centered mission, see James A. Scherer, “Church, Kingdom, and *Missio Dei*: Lutheran and
Orthodox Correctives to Recent Eccumenical Mission Theology,” in *The Good News of the
Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium*, ed. Chares Van Engen, Dean Gilliand, and

political concept of the missio Dei was provided and opened the possibility for a modern theological assumption: universal salvation through the “cosmic Christ.”

Against this socio-political concept of the missio Dei, which seems to sacrifice the historic Christian belief and witness by emphasizing shalom—peace, integrity, community, harmony, and justice—or humanizing this earth, John A. McIntosh proposes that “the church is ‘sent’ for a faithful ministry of witness, summoning the disobedient to turn to God, looking for success only to the Spirit of God.”

Thus, it is notable that the missio Dei “foreshows the true shalom to be realized in full at the Lord’s return” and “God remains until the last day, the One who alone carries on the missionaries’ enterprise.”

---

1For the history of cosmic Christ terminology, see James J. Lyons, The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A Comparative Study (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 7-73. See also Allan D. Gallowy, The Cosmic Christ (London: Nisbet, 1951); George A. Maloney, The Cosmic Christ: From Paul to Teilhard (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968); Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and Birth of a Global Renaissance (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). Fox argues: “Those who indulge exclusively in their personal salvation and their personal savior do so in direct contradiction to the entire teaching of the Cosmic Christ crucified for all. Salvation must be universal in the sense of comprehensive, a healing of all the cosmos’ pain, or it is not salvation at all” (ibid., 151).

2McIntosh, 633. Although evangelical Christians tried to join in the common grace promotion of social justice, they never sacrificed the historic Christian beliefs such as the transcendence of God (his distinction from creation); substitutionary atonement to deal with the fundamental human problem, sin, and its forgiveness; the necessity of proclaiming Christ as the only one to whom one must turn for true shalom in this world and the world to come (ibid.). See also M. A. C. Warren, “The Missionary Obligation of the Church in the Present Historical Situation: With Consideration of the Radical New Relationships between East and West,” IRM 39, no. 4 (1950): 393-408. Warren mentions that “the missionary obligation of the church is the obligation of obedience to its commission of witness to a Gospel” (ibid., 399).

3McIntosh, 633.

4Stransky, 688.
Definitions of "God's Salvific Purpose for All People" and Universalism

God's Salvific Purpose for All People

"God's salvific purpose for all people" is the detailed content of missio Dei and expresses the scope of God's salvific purpose. Donald Dunavant defines "universality of mission" (God's salvific purpose for all people) as "the mandate of mission that the gospel should be proclaimed to all the peoples of the world."¹ This concept is clearly articulated in the Bible from the beginning to the end. The biblical concept of "God's salvific purpose for all people" in missionary circles has been mainly discussed in four areas: cultural mandate, Abrahamic covenant, election of Israel, and the uniqueness of the gospel.

Cultural mandate

The term "cultural mandate" refers to God's mandate to the first human beings in the beginning.² God commanded Adam and Eve to rule over creation (Gen 1:28),

¹Dunavant, "Universality of Mission," 989. Dunavant says, "It includes providing all peoples with the opportunity to hear with understanding the message of salvation found only in Jesus Christ, the opportunity to accept or reject him as Lord and Savior, and the opportunity to serve him in the fellowship of a church" (ibid.). W. A. Visser't Hooft uses the terms "Christian universalism" and "christocentric universalism" instead of "universality of mission" (W. A. Visser't Hooft, No Other Name: The Choice between Syncretism and Christian Universalism [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], 96-125). As mentioned earlier (p. 3), I prefer to use "God's salvific purpose for all people" or "God's universal purpose" instead of "universality of mission."

meaning “to share with God in the management of all that he has made.”

Exercising dominion means to be compassionate and not exploitative. It is also evident that God’s purpose for Adam and Eve was to “dress” the garden and to “keep” it (2:15, KJV). The first verb “dress” is ’abad meaning “to serve” and the second verb “keep” is šāmar, having the root meaning “to exercise great care over.” Thus, scholars like H. Herbert Kane use the verb “cultivate” instead of “rule over” (1:28) to emphasize the aspect of human activity that should “live in conformity to the law and work in harmony with the purpose of God.”

With the use of the verb “cultivate,” God’s commands began to be called a “cultural mandate.”

---

2 Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT), vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 138. Hamilton points out how the ecological understanding based on Gen 1:26 appeared. For some good exegetical contributions in this area, see his fn. 19.
3 According to Hamilton, the poetic synonym of šāmar, nāsar (3:24) meaning “to protect” denotes that “the garden is something to be protected more than it is something to be possessed” (ibid., 171). Gerhard von Rad also says, “That man was transferred to the garden to guard it indicates that he was called to a state of service and had to prove himself in a realm that was not his possession” (Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary, rev. ed., Old Testament Library (OTL) [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972], 80).
4 Kane, Understanding Christian Mission, 96, 97.
5 Greenway subdivides the cultural mandate: (1) the command to “Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth” (Gen 1:26); (2) the naming of the animals which implies humankind’s responsibility to study the universe and glorify God for the beauty and variety of creation; (3) the command to “subdue the earth and rule over” the living creatures which is applied to our responsibility for the natural environment; (4) reflection and celebration through the Sabbath system (Greenway, 251, 252). O. Palmer Robertson suggests three creational orderings as part of the covenant of creation: the Sabbath, marriage, and labor (O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenant [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980], 68-81).
Some refer to this mandate as “Christian social responsibility”\(^1\) because by this mandate “God called Adam and Eve to accept responsibility for this world as his vice-regents, to serve and control it under his direction and for his glory.”\(^2\) In a sense, the cultural mandate might be regarded as the first reference to mission in the Bible and a prelude to the “Great Commission” of Jesus Christ because the mandate can be widened as a mandate for family, community, and civilization as the “good news of the Kingdom” to the nations (Matt 24:14; 28:18-20).\(^3\)

**Abrahamic covenant**

Once sin caused separation, the cultural mandate was no longer carried out under God’s direct supervision, and after the fall, God revealed a redemptive plan for human beings (Gen 3:14-19).\(^4\) That plan became more obvious in the covenant with Noah where

---

\(^1\) C. Peter Wagner, “On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy,” in *Perspectives*, 531. Thus, care for the oppressed or the poor is part of the cultural mandate, too. The cultural mandate, as a concern for the oppressed will be discussed under the title, “requirement of justice.”


\(^3\) Ibid. Glasser says that although this cultural mandate was issued before the Fall occurred (Gen 3), and obviously predated the missionary mandate (Matt 28:18-20), it is extrapolated into the present life: “Serious reflection on the cultural mandate enlarges the Christian messages so that it addresses everything that God made, sin corrupted, and Christ made new. It propels Christian activity into every area of human life and every corner of the world to combat evil and falsehood and promote mercy, righteousness, and truth” (ibid.). See also Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977); Charles Edward van Engen, *The Growth of the True Church: An Analysis of the Ecclesiology of Church Growth Theory* (Amsterdam: Radopi, 1981).

\(^4\) For a redemptive understanding on these verses, see Robertson, 93-107.
God provided grace for his people. However, the direct revelatory command to achieve “God’s salvific purpose for all people” first appears in Gen 12, the story of Abram.

After the flood, God called Abram out of Ur within the complex of Babel and promised to bless him and his descendants in order that all peoples on earth would be blessed through his seed (Gen 12:1-3). God’s call and his covenant with Abraham and his descendents in Gen 12 came as a radical new element for the people of God. Although the focus of the Old Testament would be on Israel as the descendants of Abraham, the ultimate mission of God is to bless the nations of humanity. Throughout God’s interaction with Abraham this promise is reiterated (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-
27; 22:15-18) and repeated to Abraham’s descendants (Gen 21:12, 13, 18; 25:1-6; 28:3-4, 12-15). The covenant then becomes a central theme throughout the rest of the Bible.¹

On the surface, this covenant seems to guarantee the salvation of all, but the covenant promised that all people would be presented with the blessing, not that all people would be blessed.²

Election of Israel

The election of Israel stands as a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant that through Israel all the nations would be blessed (Gen 18:18-19). Israel’s election was for the salvation of the nations, not just for her own salvation.³ The nation of Israel was not physically sent out to the nations, but there are three missiological aspects of her identity and role.⁴ First, there was the uniqueness of Israel’s historical experience as the recipient

¹Thomas J. Finley, “Abrahamic Covenant,” EDWM (2000), 28. Finley shows how the Abrahamic covenant has a key role within God’s plan to get the gospel to all the world (ibid., 29). First, God’s dealings with Abraham have the seed of the gospel within it (cf. Gen 12:3 with Rom 4 and Gal 3). Second, the land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants became the central point from which the gospel would spread to the rest of the world (Acts 1:8). Third, when God promised to give Abraham countless descendants, he established him as the human source of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all humanity (Matt 1:1). Also Israel, the nation that came from Abraham, became the first nation that God purposed to reach with the gospel (Matt 28:18-20; Rom 1:16). Fourth, God’s promise to make Abraham’s name great becomes an evidence of the restored relationship between God and humanity (Matt 19:39; Rev 2:17). Fifth, God promised Abraham, “All people on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:3). This promise moves the focus of God’s plan from an individual to the entire world.

²Don Richardson, “A Man for All Peoples,” in Perspectives, 106, 107. This aspect of the Abrahamic covenant will be discussed in the section on the “Messiah.” For the aspect of conditionality of the covenant, see Walton, 108-121, 180. Walton concludes that “the expectation of obedience makes the enjoyment of the benefits of the covenant conditional, but does not make the covenant itself conditional” (ibid., 118).

³Walton, 118.

⁴Ibid.
of God's revelation and redemption (Deut 4:32-40), which was the basis of an understanding of the uniqueness of Yahweh as God (Deut 4:35, 39; 6:4; Isa 45:22-24). Second, Israel was called to ethical distinctiveness, "a light to the nations" through obedience to the law (Deut 4:6-8) to attract others to the light of God's presence among his people (Isa 58:6-10; 60:1-3; 62:1-2). Third, the nation of Israel was called to be a "kingdom of priests" to bring the knowledge of God to nations and to be the means of bringing the nations to God (Exod 19:3-6).

To achieve this purpose, the Israelites were required to be holy in order to attract the nations (Lev 18:3; 19). To be holy means to be different and visible in a social, economic, and political sense, not just in a religious one. Thus, it is evident that God chose Israel in preparation for the complete unwrapping and disclosure of his universal salvific purpose.

---

1 This dimension of Israel's redemptive monotheism underlies the missionary nature of the New Testament proclamation of the uniqueness of Christ as Lord and Savior (1 Cor 8:5-6; Phil 2:10, 11).

2 Both centrifugal and centripetal dynamics are present in prophetic visions of this role.

3 Verkuyl suggests that the requirement of separation from the other nations (Exod 19:3ff.; Deut 7:14ff.) was for God to pave the way toward achieving his world-embracing goals (Verkuyl, 91, 92).

4 The missiological connotation of holiness will be discussed more in the section of "commitment to a holy life" of chapter 3. Note that there is also a correspondence between the desired visibility of Israel's distinctive ethic as a means of drawing the nations (Deut 4:6-8) and the New Testament ethical exhortations that have the same missionary implications (Matt 5:14-16; John 13:34; 1 Pet 2:9-12).

5 Verkuyl, 92. The election-of-Israel concept in Daniel will be discussed under headings of "covenantal relationship," "the wise," and "for the sake of God's name."
Uniqueness of the gospel

The uniqueness of the gospel is the core of “God’s salvific purpose for all people” as well as missio Dei. God’s salvific initiative and the uniqueness of the Redeemer in the Old Testament are closely connected with the uniqueness of Christ (cf. Acts 4:12; Col 1:19-20).¹ In the Great Commission of Jesus, the universality of the gospel was documented in the expression of going to “all nations.” John 3:16 shows that the importance of every individual is related to “God’s salvific purpose for all people.” “God’s salvific purpose for all people” also has eschatological implications: The gospel will be preached to the entire world and Jesus will bring his people out of every tribe, language, people, and nation (Matt 24:14; Rev 5:9).²

“God’s salvific purpose for all people” is driven by God’s intention to redeem to himself a people who will love and praise him from among all the nations and people groups of the world.³ Wright adds this insight on the matter: “In Jesus, then, the uniqueness of Israel and the uniqueness of Yahweh flow together, for he embodied the one and incarnated the other, climactically fulfilling the mission of both.”⁴

¹Dunavant, “Universality of Mission,” 989.
²Ibid., 990.
³Ibid.
⁴Christopher J. H. Wright, “Uniqueness of Christ,” *EDWM* (2000), 983. This concept of the uniqueness of the gospel will also appear in the sections “Messiah” and “Son of Man.”
Universalism

The term “God’s salvific purpose for all people” (God’s universal mission) should be clearly differentiated from the concept of “universalism.” In missiological circles, “universalism” designates the view that “all intelligent, moral creatures (angels, humans, devils) will certainly be saved in the end.”

Universalism can be traced back to Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Although the universalism of Origen, the most influential proponent of it, was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 543, the proponents of universalism have continued to appear, appealing to God’s love, power, patience, and mercy. The nineteenth-century German theologian Schleiermacher asserted that all people are elected to salvation in Christ. About 1820-40, the beliefs in universalism motivated a strong anti-missionary movement in the United States.

---

1Geoffrey Wainwright, “Universalism,” DEM (1991), 1049. Some scholars such as Blauw define “universalism” as having the whole world in view and validity for the whole world (Blauw, 17). However, to denote God’s salvific purpose for all people, most of missiologists use the term “universality” of mission.


In the twentieth century, C. Harold Dodd constructed a more dogmatic universalism, based on his understanding of Pauline theology in Scripture. A. T. Robinson asserted that any final judgment would be a frustration of the purposes and love of God. A number of biblical texts have been used to support the claim of universalists (e.g., Ps 110:1; Matt 22:44; Acts 3:21; Rom 5:18-19; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 1:10; Phil 2:10-11; 1 Cor 15:25-28). Since the 1970s, the locus of universalism has been the plurality of religions advocated by theologians such as John Hick and Paul Knitter. The wide range of Christian theological responses to the existence of other faiths has been classified into three broad positions: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The exclusivist view

---


3See also John 12:32; 1 Cor 15:22; 1 John 2:2. For a reaction to the universalistic claims based on these texts, see Norman L. Geisler, “Universalism,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 748, 749.

believes that salvation is to be found in Christ alone or that salvation depends on an overt acknowledgment of Christ as Lord. The inclusivist view finds the possibility for salvation somewhere in each religion. The pluralist view believes that all religions have the common root precisely for salvation.¹

Norman L. Geisler argues that universalism is contrary to the free will given to beings created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) because forced freedom to love God is not true love.² Universalism is also contrary to God’s perfection and justice because God’s holiness cannot tolerate sin; universalism denies the biblical truth that God will punish sinners.³


³Geisler, 751.
Thus Dunavant criticizes universalism as a concept that is based on a kind of Freudian illusion; a mere wish without biblical foundation.1

Missio Dei in the Old Testament

Many Old Testament writers held the conviction that nothing “could happen apart from the will and working of God.”2 The Psalmist and Jeremiah each wrote of the “purposes” of God’s heart (Ps 33:11; Jer 23:20; 30:24; 32:19). Isaiah spoke of that which God did according to his plan (Isa 46:9-11). The purposes of God stand for eternity and no one can disturb his will (Isa 14:24, 27).

God’s purpose was revealed in the history of the world as well as in God’s interaction with the nation of Israel. Biblical history is more than a mere raw record of what happened, for it declares the purpose of God. William H. Shea points out that the meaning of history in the Scriptures, as illustrated in “the mighty acts of God,” shows that God has been active throughout all of that history to achieve his salvific purpose.3

---

1Dunavant, “Universalism,” 989.


3Shea, 34. Richard Rice also affirms, “we can describe the purpose of God’s reign in general and of revelation in particular, as ‘salvific’” (Richard Rice, Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective, 2d ed. [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997], 44). Simmons also proposes “salvation: guided by the purposes of God” (Simmons, 145). God’s purpose is connected with salvation in three categories: (1) his own pleasure (Matt 11:26; Luke 10:21; Eph 1:5, 9); (2) reconciliation (Eph 3:11; Rom 8:28; Phil 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9); (3) eternal praise (Eph 2:7) (ibid.). Simmons also mentions that “all that God has done through the salvation he offers humanity, has been within the boundaries of his purposes” (ibid.).
Knowing something of God’s purpose has tremendous implications for missions because the clearest mandate of all flows from this particular aspect of God’s nature. God will, therefore, accomplish and achieve his purpose to save humanity; this is what he pleases (Isa 46:10; 55:11). Although there are large areas of mystery surrounding God’s purpose, it is possible to trace God’s initiative through individuals such as David (Acts 13:36), Pharaoh (Rom 9:17), Cyrus (2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2; Isa 44:28), and the nation of Babylon (Jer 25:9), which God used to accomplish his purpose.

**Missio Dei in the Book of Daniel**

The concept of *missio Dei* is prominent in the book of Daniel. First and foremost, the book of Daniel wants the reader “to know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men” (Dan 4:17; cf. vss. 25, 32; 5:21). The book describes God as the One who was working out his salvific purpose behind the scenes in spite of all the disasters that fell on the Israelites. Even the tragedy of the conquest of Israel illustrates that God led Daniel and his friends to “witness in a way that extended far beyond their little family circle in Judah.” In that sense, the book of Daniel specifically expresses the concept of

---

1William Schweer, “The Missionary Mandate of God’s Nature,” in *Missiology*, 112. Schweer also describes the purpose of God’s connection with missions as an “all-encompassing purpose to unite all things in Christ” which includes “the salvation of the lost, the building of the church, the growth of believers, the final demise of Satan, the praise of God’s glory, and more” (ibid., 110, 111).

2Shea, 35. Shea suggests, “They became witnesses for the true God among all the courtiers of Babylon and before the most powerful monarch of the time” (ibid.). Joyce G. Baldwin also maintains a similar perspective on the book of Daniel: “On foreign soil, in a missionary situation, the God of gods revealed himself in ways meaningful to the new culture and background. Where dreams were revered as a vehicle of revelation, there dreams were used; where barbaric punishments were meted out, there this God miraculously delivered his servants; where pride defied the living God, there pride was abased” (Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and*
missio Dei from the perspective of God’s salvific initiative and his partnership with committed human partners.

Based on this understanding of the characteristic of God, I will discuss three aspects of missio Dei in the book of Daniel: (1) “Daniel’s awareness of the purpose of the exile”; (2) “Daniel’s awareness of God’s purpose in the book of Jeremiah”; and (3) “Daniel’s awareness of God’s fulfilled prophecy in the Book of Isaiah.”

Daniel’s Awareness of the Purpose of the Exile

Daniel begins his narrative with the fall of Jerusalem, the capture of the royal family, and Nebuchadnezzar’s booty of the temple vessels taken from the house of God (1:1, 2). Before all this happened, the people of Israel believed that God’s purpose for the nations would be fulfilled by the continuation of the royal line of David until the promised Messiah appeared on his throne in their homeland (e.g., Pss 2:7-9; 8:4-6; 18:43-45; 45:6-8; cf. Jer 21:2, 13; 26:9). Therefore, when the city and temple of God were destroyed, it was hard for them to see how God’s purpose could be achieved through their humiliation, exile, and shame rather than through glory, security, and prosperity.¹

However, “the ending of the old story provides the setting for the new”² by

---


²Danna N. Fewell, Circle of Sovereignty: A Story of Stories in Daniel 1-6 (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1988), 34.
showing very dramatically how God reversed the story. On the surface, it is a story of exile and defeat by Babylon, but it also shows supernatural intervention as God works to achieve his plan in a cross-cultural context through his missionaries.

In the narrative of Dan 1, a dramatic irony results from two different points of view. First, there is the perspective of Nebuchadnezzar. His perception that his conquest of Jerusalem was the result of his own action is represented in the use of the verbs; “he came,” “he besieged,” “he took,” and “he placed” (vss. 1, 2). After the victory, he also acknowledged the help of his god (vs. 2). From his perspective, it was a divine conflict. He viewed himself and the god of Babylon as victors over Jehoiakim and Yahweh of Jerusalem. However, according to Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar did not defeat Jehoiakim through his own skill or power. He was a recipient of God’s gift: “The Lord gave Jehoiakim into his hand” (vs. 2). By attributing the exile to the Lord, Daniel constructed

---

1This reversal is revealed continually in other parts of the book. Daniel Smith-Christopher suggests that the theme of vengeance and “reversal of fortune” in Jer 51:24 affected the punishment of the enemies of Daniel in Dan 6:24 (Daniel Smith-Christopher, “Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile [597/587-539 BCE],” in Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions, ed. James M. Scott [New York: Brill, 1997], 31). Zdravko Stefanovic introduces Daniel as a book of significant reversals in “Daniel: A Book of Significant Reversals,” AUSS 30, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 139-150. He summarizes the book of Daniel as: “In the historical section of the book, demonstration is given that—contrary to the view current both officially and popularly in the ancient Near East to the effect that the deities of captive peoples were inferior to deities of their captors—Yahweh was and remained the one true and all-powerful God of heaven and earth. The Babylonian captivity of the Hebrew people contained magnificent illustrations of Yahweh’s full control of history and destiny... In the visions of chapters 7 through 12, the historical developments from the prophet’s time onward are symbolically portrayed, and it is once again clearly demonstrated that Yahweh is in full control” (ibid., 149).

2Fewell, 35.

3Ibid.
a worldview in which the Lord is in control of world events and is capable of
manipulating foreign rulers even though they are not believers.¹

Interestingly, Daniel closes the narrative of chap. 1 by referring to Cyrus (vs. 21),
although he opened it with a description of events caused by Nebuchadnezzar.
Mentioning Cyrus at the end gives a hint regarding how Daniel felt about the situation.
John E. Goldingay proposes that the link with vs. 21 briefly answers the questions raised
in vss. 1, 2 by alluding to the time when it would be possible for people to return to
Jerusalem with temple articles by the decree of Cyrus (2 Chr 36:20-23; Ezra 1:7-11).²
Thus, the narrative in Dan 1 clearly shows that Daniel held a strong conviction concerning
God’s initiative in world events as well as in Israel’s history.³ It was this conviction that
allowed Daniel to be committed and live a consecrated life in a heathen kingdom (Dan
1:8).⁴

¹Ibid., 35, 36. Fewell also pays attention to the priority of divine sovereignty over human
sovereignty. However, she sees this as a slippery interaction, for “God’s sovereignty is undercut
by the way in which human sovereignty keeps pushing to the fore; God’s power and presence is
constantly being screened through human characters’ point of view; God’s identity is expressed in
terms of human identity; God’s wisdom is translated by a human mediator and so forth” (ibid., 16).
Goldingay opposes that assertion and says that the book of Daniel portrays how God honors the
stands that people take, God blesses and prospers people’s lives in exile, and brings them through
the experience of the exile to the point where God’s name and thus their faith are once again
honored (John E. Goldingay, “Story, Vision, Interpretation,” in The Book of Daniel in the Light of


³When Daniel stated, “the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand” (1:2), he
seemed to be aware of the curses in Lev 26, Deut 27, and the history of the books of Judges, Kings,
and Chronicles as well as the prophets.

⁴Peter R. Ackroyd proposes four responses to the exile: (1) return to older cults; (2)
acceptance of the religion of the conquerors; (3) the recognition of divine judgment; (4)
understanding the event as the “Day of Yahweh” (Peter R. Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration: A
Daniel's belief in the sovereignty of God was also expressed in his witness to King Nebuchadnezzar: "He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning" (2:21). In chap. 4, God's sovereignty was proclaimed through the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar (4:17; cf. vs. 32). In the prayer of Dan 9, God's sovereignty or initiative is acknowledged by pointing out the sins of the Israelites as the reasons for the exile: "in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you" (vs. 9); "You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster" (vs. 12; e.g., vs. 11); "The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us" (vs. 14).

This consciousness of God's sovereignty was also more fully revealed in the visions of Dan 7-12, which revealed the whole spectrum of future world history.

Although the stories in the book of Daniel portray a world in which the realities of sin and suffering can be faced, comprehended, and overcome, the stories also portray a God who is active and who works behind the scenes to give unexpected favor or remarkable insight. God accompanies his people in the fire and shuts the mouths of lions.\(^1\) These events demonstrating the sovereignty of God encouraged Daniel to commit his life to fulfill God's purposes, no matter what the circumstance.

Fewell suggests that it was easier for Daniel to perceive the overall historical perspective, in which God's eternal purpose was carried out, in the exile because he lived

[\(^{1}\)Goldingay, “Story,” 303.]

*Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1968], 40-49. He suggests that the recognizer of God's judgment could see the ultimate basis of assurance in the supremacy of Yahweh (ibid., 48).
through it in a foreign land. However, one should ask how Daniel arrived at the conviction that the exile was according to God’s purpose? In the next section, I will look at the process that led to Daniel’s awareness of the purpose of God by studying the relationships between Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.

Daniel’s Awareness of the Fulfillment of the Prophecy of Jeremiah

Jeremiah and Daniel

Dan 9 gives a clue as to how Daniel was aware of the purpose of God in the exile. Daniel mentioned the prophecy of Jeremiah: “the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet” (vs. 2). Daniel had the scroll of the prophet Jeremiah and knew the prophecy (Jer 25:8-14) that predicted seventy years of Israelite captivity in Babylon. It is possible that Daniel had read through the whole book of Jeremiah and knew all that Jeremiah had proclaimed.

The book of Jeremiah also offers hints regarding how Daniel was able to know about Jeremiah while Daniel was in Babylon. Jeremiah sent “the words of the letter from Jerusalem unto the elders, to the priests, to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon” (Jer 29:1). He gave them some advice for their lives in Babylon and cautioned about the false prophets among them (vss. 4-32).

Again, “Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon” (Jer 51:60). Jeremiah

---

1 Fewell, 36.
then instructed Seraiah, a brother of Baruch, the scribe and helper of Jeremiah (32:12),

"When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud" (51:61). Moreover,

Jeremiah called for Seraiah to tie a stone to a scroll, pitch it into the Euphrates, and cry out,

"Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and

they shall be weary" (vss. 63, 64).¹

Seraiah was given these instructions in the fourth year of King Zedekiah’s reign

(594/593 B.C.).² Shortly after receiving the instructions, Seraiah accompanied Zedekiah

on his trip to Babylon (vs. 59). At the river Euphrates, Seraiah would have unrolled the

scroll and read the message from Jeremiah. Tying a stone to the scroll, he then threw it

into the Euphrates. News of this event would likely spread to all the Jews in the country,

1Kelvin G. Friebel explains the purpose of the performance: “The Purpose of the nonverbal

action was to communicate forcefully to the audience the message that the Babylonian supremacy

would not last indefinitely. Through this message the Judahite exiles were to understand that it

was God, not the Babylonians, who orchestrated the flow of historical events” (Kelvin G. Friebel,

Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication [Sheffield: Sheffield

Academic Press, 1999], 166.

2C. Mervyn Maxwell, God Cares, vol. 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1981), 82. For the

purpose of the trip, Friebel introduces three opinions: (1) Zedekiah was instructed to renew his

loyalty to Babylon; (2) Zedekiah had been obliged to pay his tribute in person during Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign into the region in 594 B.C. because of Judah’s tendency to seek

Egyptian support; (3) it was a diplomatic mission unrelated to any of those incidents (Friebel, 155).

Although it is in the realm of speculation, this visit may have been for the purpose of attending the
dedication of Nebuchadnezzar’s great image on the plain of Dura in Dan 3 (“Jeremiah,” Seventh-
day Adventist Bible Commentary [SDA Bible Commentary], ed. F. D. Nichol [Washington, DC:
Review and Herald, 1953-57], 4:535; Maxwell, 56). Similarly William L. Holladay proposes a
connection of Daniel with Jeremiah: “The story of three young men, sent by Nebuchadnezzar into
the fiery furnace (Dan 3), was stimulated by the mention of Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king
of Babylon roasted in the fire” (William L. Holladay, Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of
the Prophet Jeremiah 26-52, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible
[Her] [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989], 90).
including Daniel.\footnote{Cf. Maxwell, 82, 83.} Therefore, it is reasonable that Daniel would be familiar with the message of Jeremiah.

**Prophecy Regarding the Exile**

One of the major messages of Jeremiah is that Israel would be exiled to Babylon. God said, “I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon” (Jer 20:4; cf. 20:5-6; 21:7, 10; 22:25). In Jer 27:22, the removal of the “vessels of the Lord’s house” was foretold: “They [sanctuary vessels] will be taken to Babylon and there they will remain until the day I come for them, declares the LORD.” This is parallel to Dan 1:2: “The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God” (KJV).

Although the vessels became a distinct sign for “God’s judgment” in the context of Jer 27 and 28,\footnote{Winfried Vogel, “Cultic Motifs and Themes in the Book of Daniel,” *JATS* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 30. For further theological significance of the temple vessels see ibid., 27-31.} they were also a sign for the “hope of restoration”\footnote{See Peter R. Ackroyd, *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), 54, 55.} of the sanctuary and, by the same token, “the reign of God”: “Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place” (Jer 27:22).\footnote{Ibid., 57.} Daniel had seen the fulfillment of the first part of the prophecy: The vessels were in Babylon. This was strong evidence that God was involved in the event of the exile, that he had a purpose for the nation of Israel and was sovereign over other nations as well.
God’s Purpose for the Exile

Jeremiah sent advice in his letter to the leaders of the exiled Israelites: “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jer 29:7). The life of Daniel in the heathen court exemplifies how he followed that counsel.1 With his consciousness of the sovereignty of God, Daniel participated in the life of a foreign nation,2 but with fidelity to his Jewish religion and with no compromise with idolatry.3

In Jer 25:9, God called the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar his “servant” (see also 27:6; 43:10).4 Ezekiel, who lived during the same period, suggested that Babylon’s many victories over the surrounding countries were according to God’s plan and sovereignty (Ezek 26:7, 8; 29:19; 30:10). With the consciousness of God’s sovereign use of Babylon, Daniel stood in front of Nebuchadnezzar and proclaimed: “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come” (2:28). The fact that God communicated with a heathen king to show his purpose in world history demonstrated to Daniel another aspect of God’s sovereignty.

Some scholars such as Robert P. Carroll have difficulty with the notion that

3Collins, 51.
4Compare with the usage for Cyrus (Isa 44:24 to 45:5).
Babylon is Yahweh’s instrument as well as the object of his wrath. However, we have to approach the matter of the judgment of God through the perspective of justice. The message of Jeremiah declares that God cares for the Babylonians as well as for the Israelites, although the major messages of the prophets were about God’s judgment on Babylon. This was clearly portrayed in God’s explanation of judgment on Babylon: “We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed” (Jer 51:9, emphasis supplied).

Through the captivity, God purposed not only to bring Israel to repentance but also to introduce true religion to the Babylonians and other nations who were under the influence of Babylon. Although the Babylonians were given the opportunity to be healed by Yahweh through their acquaintance with such men as Daniel and Ezekiel, “their failure to do this was a contributing factor in their downfall.” It is an historical paradox that Babylon was used for the repentance of Israel and that the people of God in exile were used for the salvation of the heathen kingdom.

The concept of God’s treatment of Babylon as his instrument as well as the object of his wrath in the book of Jeremiah would affect Daniel. This understanding was clearly expressed in Daniel’s speech to Belshazzar (Dan 5:18-28). In his explanation of the

---

1Robert P. Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986), 843. He proposes: “The inconsistency of the two motifs may be resolved by a sharp separation of the different strands which use them: Babylon as the servant of Yahweh and Babylon as the violator of Zion and the nations. But the theological problems of Yahweh using an idolatrous nation to do his biding against another idolatrous nation (Judah) remain” (ibid.).

2Even before the destruction of Judah by Babylon, prophets had already preached God’s purpose for other nations including Babylon (e.g., Zeph 2:10-11; 3:9).

3“Jeremiah,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:531.

4Ibid.
reason for the destruction of Babylon, Daniel bravely pointed out: "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this" (vs. 22). What did the king know? Belshazzar knew of God’s judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather, and how, because of that incident, Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes (5:21).

In vs. 23, Daniel told Belshazzar how he had sinned against the God of Heaven: “Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven... You did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.” The text clearly points out that even the Babylonian king was expected to serve and glorify the God of Heaven.

**Prophecy of the Destruction of Babylon**

After the prophecy of Babylon's destruction, Jeremiah compared God with the idols that the Babylonians worshiped (Jer 51:15-19). The events surrounding Babylon’s destruction were prophesied: “While they are aroused, I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout with laughter—then sleep forever and not awake” (51:39). The reason for their destruction was declared to be idol worship (vs. 47).

Because Daniel knew of and understood the prophecies in Jeremiah, he was aware of their fulfillment in the events of the drunken feast, the blasphemy of idol worship, and the use of the vessels of God’s sanctuary (Dan 4). Daniel’s solemn verdict of judgment on Belshazzar, who was in charge of the blasphemous party, was surely based in part on his understanding of Jeremiah’s messages.

To sum up, Daniel’s understanding of God’s sovereignty explains why Daniel served the heathen kingdom, which had destroyed his country and the sanctuary of his
God. Because Daniel had studied the book of Jeremiah, he was keenly aware, not only of the sovereignty of God in the events of the exile, the restoration of Jerusalem, and the destruction of Babylon, but he also understood God's purpose to heal the heathen kingdom through the exiled people of God.

Daniel's Awareness of Fulfillment of the Prophecy of Isaiah

Isaiah and Daniel

Although there is no mention of the name of the prophet Isaiah in the book of Daniel, Daniel alludes to Isaiah's message. First, the narratives of Daniel seem to draw on the distinctive vocabulary of the prophecies of Isaiah: (1) compare "I form the light and create darkness" (Isa 45:7a) with "he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him" (Dan 2:22b); (2) compare "Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing" (Isa 40:17) with "All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing" (Dan 4:35); (3) compare "'As surely as I live,' declares the LORD" (Isa 49:18) with "For he is the living God" (Dan 6:26; cf. vs. 20).

These similarities suggest that Daniel might have been aware of the book of Isaiah. Daniel's link with Isaiah will be discussed more in the next sections.

---


2 Gammie, 287, 288.

3 Cf. Job 12:22; Pss 104:2; 36:9.
Judgment on Idols

Isaiah declared the sovereignty of God in connection with his absolute almighty power, as compared with the “gods” of other nation (40:12-31). God upholds his sovereignty through his judgment on idols of all nations in the book of Isaiah (2:17-23; 19:1; 41:22-29; 42:8, 17; 44:9-10; 45:11-17; 46:1-7). In like manner, the theological judgment pertaining to foreign images and idols in Isaiah is also echoed in the narratives of Daniel.1

First, the fashioning of idols out of wood, overlaid with gold and silver (Isa 44:12-20), and the images of Bel and Nebo (Isa 46:1-7) are similar to the erection of the sixty-cubit image overlaid with gold by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3). The expression of the powerlessness of an image in Isa 46:7 also has a remarkably close counterpart in Dan 5:23, “You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand.”

Second, among the threefold veneration of the images, “bow down,” “worship,” and “pray” in Isaiah, the first two are found in Daniel three times (2:46; 3:5, 10). The verb ságad, “prostrate oneself in worship, pay homage,” is found only in Isaiah (44:15, 17, 19; 46:6) and in Daniel (2:46; 3:5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 28).

Third, there is the contrast between God and the Babylonian idols. In Isaiah, the idols are unable to make known what shall come to pass in the future (Isa 41:21-29), but Yahweh declares, “I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass” (48:3; cf. 55:10, 11). In

1Ibid., 288, 289.
like manner, there is the contrast between the Babylonian wisdom and the supernatural wisdom of Daniel. The Babylonians' admission of their failure to know the content of the king's dream in Dan 2:11 (cf. 4:7; 5:8) parallels the contempt for the Babylonian sages and idols in Isa 40-55 (cf. Isa 44:25).  

Fourth, Isaiah expressed how Yahweh, who is the creator of heavens and earth, is also one who "foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense" (44:25) and described God as one "who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers" (44:26). The soothsayers and enchanters in the book of Daniel demonstrated precisely the same incapacity, whereas Daniel as a servant of Yahweh is successful in giving counsel (Dan 2, 4, 5) and in giving the word that comes to pass (chaps. 4, 5).

Servant Motif

In the book of Isaiah, the servant motif is very distinctive (Isa 41:1-20; 41:21-42:17; 42:18-48:22; 49-50; 52:13-53:12), and in the book of Daniel, there is also an

---

1Goldingay sees that Daniel's witness to the God in heaven as the source of his interpretation scorned the Babylonian wisdom. He also suggests that the key assertion of this section is that Daniel's God reveals secrets (Goldingay, Daniel, 57).

2Goldingay divides the servant tests of Isaiah into five sections: "The chosen servant" (41:1-20); "the faithful servant" (41:21-42:17); "the blind servant" (42:18-48:22); "the persistent servant (chaps. 49, 50); the triumphant servant (52:13-53:12) (John E. Goldingay, God's Prophet, God's Servant: A Study in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55 [Exeter: Paternoster, 1984], 4). John Oswalt suggests only two divisions: "The vocation of servanthood" (40:1-55:13); "the mark of servanthood: divine character" (56:1-66:24) (John N. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66, NICOT [Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan, 1998], vii). J. Alec Motyer divides the Servant songs as: "the Servant’s task” (42:1-4); “the Servant’s task” (49:1-6); “the Servant’s commitment” (50:4-9); “the Servant’s completion of his task” (52:13-53:12) (J. Alec Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary [Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity, 1993], 15). He parallels these...
allusion to the servant motif. In Isaiah, the proud, rebellious, polluted, and ultimately desolate Israel (Isa 1; 2:6-4:1; 5) can still be a pure, submissive servant to carry the Word of God to the nations (2:1-5; 4:2-6) because of the Servant who suffers for his people, bears their sins, dies as a guilt offering, thereby enabling him to undertake a ministry of justification (53:2-10). All these themes reappear in Dan 9:24-27 in relation to the death of the Messiah prince and the termination of sin. Just as Isaiah describes the power of the Servant as a warrior—"I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong" (Isa 53:12)—the term "strong" appears in a definite form in the last prophecies of Daniel connected with the description of angelic battle (Dan 10:13, 21; 11:21).

with the Anointed motifs: "Conqueror's task" (59:12); "Conqueror's task" (61:1-3); "Conqueror's commitment" (61:10-62:7); "Conqueror's completion of his task" (63:1-6) (ibid.).

1Gammie., 289, 290. Perhaps the life of Daniel can be figured as a type of the Messiah as Jesus mentioned, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).

In Isaiah, Israel is also designated as servant of the Lord (41:8, 9; 42:19; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4). The book of Isaiah contains the theme that "the nation of Israel is saved for mission; it is a servant (41:8-9; 42:19; 44:1-2, 21) and a witness (43:10, 21; 44:8; 48:6, 20; 55:4)" (Wann M. Fanwar, "Creation in Isaiah" [Ph.D. dissertation, Andrew University, 2001], 182). The Old Testament uses "servant" to designate the relation of the Lord's people to the Lord (Ps 19:11, 12) (Moyer, 319). In Isaiah the Messianic Servant is introduced as a means of divine revelation to the Gentiles (42:1-4), performs the work by restoring Israel (49:1-6), and, he extends the benefits to both Zion (chap. 54) and the whole world (chap. 55) by accomplishing his saving work (52:13-53:12) (ibid., 14). Oswalt also suggests a similar pattern: "just as his [Isaiah] unclean lips could declare the word of God to the nation, so the nation's unclean lips could be cleansed so that it could declare God's word to the nations" (John Oswalt, Isaiah, NIV Application Bible [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003], 44).

Just as the book of Isaiah describes some individuals as a servant of the Lord, Daniel is also called “a servant of the living God” (6:21) and his three companions are called “servants of the God Most High” (3:26).

Just as the Servant in Isaiah played a Messianophoric role to achieve God’s purpose, Daniel played a similar role in the course of salvation history. First, the Spirit rests upon the Servant (Isa 42:1), and also rests upon Daniel (Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11). Second, just as the Servant exposed his life to death (Isa 53:12), so Daniel and his companions risked death (Dan 3, 6). Third, the appearance of the Servant was “marred on account of man, and his reputation on account of the sons of man” (Isa 52:14). The men

1Ibid., 65, 66. Alberto R. Treiyer says: “As a warrior prince the Messiah shares the spoils of battle with ‘the strong,’ a term that is used at times to describe princes/kings who prevail in battle. However, in this instance, these ‘strong’ or powerful princes may refer to heavenly beings (compare Joel 2:11 where the same term is employed to describe the angels who engage in the last battle at the end of the world)” (ibid., 65).

2Isaiah himself, Isa 20:3; Eliakim son of Hilkiah, 22:20; David, 37:35. In the Old Testament, individuals describe themselves as “servant” in the relation to the Lord (e.g., Moses, Exod 4:10; Joshua, Exod 5:14; David, 2 Sam 7:19) and are so described by others (e.g., Moses, Exod 4:10; Abraham, Exod 32:13; David, 1 Kgs 8:24) (Motyer, 319).

3In the book of Daniel the word “servant(s)” occurs 12 times. The plural form is used eight times: two times to designate Daniel and friends as they stood as a humble expression in front of the guard whom the chief officer had appointed over them (1:12, 13); two times as the wise men of the court stood in front of the king Nebuchadnezzar (2:4-7); two times by Nebuchadnezzar to designate Daniel’s three friends in the furnace as “servants of Most High God” (3:26) and “his servants” (vs. 28); by Daniel to designate the prophets whom God sent for his people (9:6, 10). In singular form it is used four times: Moses as “the servant of God” (9:11); by the king Darius to designate Daniel as “servant of the living God” (6:20); two times to designate Daniel himself in his prayer as “your servant” (9:17; 10:17).

4Ibid. Motyer seems to use the term “Messianophore” to designate one who plays a type of Messiah. “Phore” comes from the Greek pherein “to bear.”

5John D. Watts says: “MT may introduce the comparative ‘more than,’ ‘hardly’ or it may indicate instrumentality ‘by.’ Both of these are applications of the basic idea of separation” (John D. Watts, Isaiah 34-66, WBC, vol. 25 [Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 225).
in the court of Darius sought to find a “fault,” “blemish,” or “corruption” in Daniel’s character (Dan 6:5). Fourth, the Servant of Isaiah trusted in God (Isa 50:10), and so did Daniel and his companions (Dan 6:24; 3:28). Fifth, just as God made the Servant wise and caused him to be exalted and exceedingly high (Isa 53:13), so God granted Daniel wisdom (Dan 1:17) and caused him and his companions to prosper (2:48-49; 3:30; 5:29; 6:28). Sixth, just as the Servant in Isaiah, who gave his body to receive blows, was rescued and not put to shame, but his foes on the other hand were consumed by moth and fire (Isa 50:4-11), so were Daniel and his companions rescued and not put to shame, whereas their accusers died in the fire and among the lions in the pit (Dan 3, 6).

Prophecy Regarding the Exile

The prophecy of Isa 39:7; “Some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon,” most likely had a great influence on Daniel and his friends. If they compared the prophecy with their situation in the heathen court, they would have sensed that the prophecy was fulfilled.¹ This may help to explain why Daniel and his friends were cooperative with the heathen king, who had destroyed their kingdom, and why they never gave up their faith in God.

God’s Universal Purpose

Isaiah describes God’s universal purpose for all the nations (14:24-27; 19:12; 23:8-9; 25:1; 37:26; 45:9-11, 18; 46:10-11) and the expectation for a “redeemed and glorified

¹Gammie, 291.
Zion" (2:1-5; 11:9; 25:7-8; 60:1-22). The book of Daniel also shares some concepts from Isaiah. First, Cyrus, the heathen king, is called "the Lord’s anointed" who is to be an instrument of redemption" (Isa 45:1-7) and who is called a "shepherd" (45:1). Daniel mentioned the name Cyrus (Dan 1:21), alluding to the time when it would be possible for the Israelites to return to Jerusalem by his decree (Ezra 1:7-11). Second, the prediction that heathen kings would bow down to Israel (Isa 49:22-23) found its fulfillment when Nebuchadnezzar bowed down to Daniel (Dan 2:46).

Third, Daniel’s friends’ answer to the threat of the king; “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king” (Dan 3:17), alludes to the promise of Isa 43:2: “When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” It is notable that this promise to Israel, God’s corporate servant, appears immediately after the chapter...

---

1 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, NICO (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 35. Oswalt also says, “What Isaiah was able to do was to demonstrate that God’s purpose was much larger than short-term victory or defeat and that his control of human destiny extended even to those who would not acknowledge him” (ibid.). As Wann M. Fanwar points out, Isaiah subtly weaves God’s universal salvific purpose throughout the book: the intimidation of the universal scope of salvation (2:2-5); the songs of the Servant in 42:1-9, 45:14-25, 49:1-6; the climax of Isaiah’s universal concern in chaps. 56-66; the grand exaltation of Israel in chaps. 60-62 (Fanwar, 176-182).

speaking of the fulfilled prophecies of God (42:9, 23) and God’s judgment on Israel (vs. 25). The terms of extreme hardship in these verses could be understood as describing the “rigors and dangers imposed on captives enduring deportation.”¹ Daniel’s friends could have seen the fulfillment of these prophesies in their context.

Fourth, the concept that Israel could fulfill the role of the corporate servant of the Lord and offer forgiveness through the work of the Messianic Servant, who is a sacrifice for the corporate sins of Israel (Isa 53), parallels the prophecy of the Messiah, who would be “cut off” in Dan 9:26, a prophecy that was given after Daniel prayed for the corporate sins of his people.² After the concept of redemptive suffering, both Isaiah and Daniel mention the missiological task of the Servant.

Fifth, just as the righteous Servant, by his knowledge, “will justify many and he will bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11), the “wise” in the book of Daniel “will instruct many” during the tribulation period and “some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless” (Dan 11:33, 35; cf. 12:3). Sixth, the fact that the Servant motif includes the concept of a light to the nations (Isa 49:6; 42:6) and a vision for foreigners and nations (56:3, 7; 60:3; 66:18-20, 23) could have encouraged Daniel and his friends to feel God’s call to be servants in a foreign court in order to reveal to foreign monarchs Yahweh’s sovereignty and power to save the nations.³ The motif that the

¹Motyer, 331.

²The Messiah motif will be discussed further in the next section, “God’s salvific purpose for all people in the book of Daniel.”

³Gammie, 291. Blauw interprets the Servant as Messiah, then points out that “all the emphasis falls on the fact that the world of nations is a gift to the Messianic Servant; there is no
Servant will carry salvation to the ends of the earth and that the coastlands are awaiting his instruction (49:6) parallels the universal vision of the Son of Man in the book of Daniel (Dan 7:9-14).

To sum up, Daniel’s concepts show some parallels with the earlier prophet Isaiah. The overall idea of God’s sovereignty is similar. This can at least partly explain how Daniel came to have a universal vision of missio Dei. The fulfilled prophecies of Isaiah seemed to supply Daniel with a consciousness of the sovereignty of God over heathen kingdoms. Moreover, the Servant motif in Isaiah may have strengthened Daniel’s purpose to commit his life to fulfill that vision by identifying himself as God’s servant and partner in working for the salvation of the nations.

God’s Salvific Purpose for All People in the Book of Daniel

The concept of God’s universal purpose is the “basis for the missionary message reference here to the world of nations as a ‘mission territory’ of the Servant” (Blauw, 49). However, Johannes Verkuyl refers to the fact that the servant song is Israel’s mandate to become a light to the nations (Johannes Verkuyl, “The Biblical Foundation for the Worldwide Mission Mandate,” in Perspectives, 29). For further study on the missiological perspective on the role of the Servant, see Anna May Say Pa, “The Concept of Israel’s Role Regarding the Nations in Isaiah 40-55” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989). Note that Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel’s friends “servants of Most High God” (3:26, 28). King Darius also designated Daniel as “servant of the living God” (6:20). Moreover, Daniel designated himself in his prayer as “your servant” two times (9:17; 10:17). These references give a hint to the relationship between Daniel and Isaiah connecting with the “Servant” motif.

1The Son of Man motif will be discussed in the next section, “God’s salvific purpose for all people in the book of Daniel.”
of the Old Testament. Through Israel’s experience during the sixth to seventh centuries B.C., the motif of “God’s salvific purpose for all people” seems to break through more clearly. Johannes Verkuyl points this out:

As Israel passed through her catastrophic experience of being trounced by the Babylonians and carted off into exile, the prophets came to see how the career of Israel was tied in with the history of the nations. . . . Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah all saw the horizon expanding and bore witness that all nations now fall within the spotlight of God’s promises.

The book of Daniel also shows this theme of “God’s salvific purpose for all people.” This aspect will be discussed under the subtitles: “requirements of justice,” “Son of Man,” “covenant relationship,” “for the sake of God’s name,” “Messiah,” and “the wise.”

Requirement of Justice

When King Nebuchadnezzar required Daniel to interpret his big tree dream, Daniel gave him this advice: “Renounce your sins by doing what is right and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue” (4:27). Daniel was suggesting that the heathen king act with social justice.

Although the Aramic word “renounce” (peruq) is often translated as “atone” (NRS), the textual or contextual evidence supports the meaning, “tear away or break

---

1Blauw, 17.


3This rendering has contributed to the misconception that salvation could be obtained by good works. See Collins, 230; Stephen R. Miller, Daniel, New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 138. Goldingay rejects the meaning of “redeem,” because the objective cannot be redeemed or released (Goldingay, Daniel, 81). Miller also says, “With ‘sins’ as the object the meaning must be ‘break off’ (‘renounce’)” (Miller, 138).
off."³ By the request of "doing what is right," Daniel was telling the king to correct his sinful life by conducting himself righteousness.² In other words, it was a strong request for repentance³ and cessation of committing sins.⁴

What were the sins the king was committing? The narrative shows that Nebuchadnezzar's principal sin was his pride and that a continuing display of such pride, ignoring Daniel's counsel, was what particularly prompted the fulfillment of the dream's warning (4:28-32).⁵ The issue was spiritual and concerned Nebuchadnezzar's relationship with the God of heaven.⁶

Daniel, however, also pointed out an ethical aspect involving the king's treatment of his subjects.⁷ By suggesting that the king show kindness to the oppressed, Daniel exposed a specific sin of the king: injustice and unconcern. Daniel asked Nebuchadnezzar

---


³"Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 4:792. The writer of the commentary also says, "God's judgments against men may be averted by repentance and conversion (see Isa 38:1, 2, 5; Jer 18:7-10; Jonah 3:1-10)" (ibid.).

⁴Wood, 117.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 66.

⁷Ibid.
to be just and take action on behalf of the needy. The king needed to show greater mercy to the afflicted. In the Old Testament, “the oppressed” is frequently listed together with “the miserable” and “the poor” (Mic 6:8; Ps 72:3, 4; Isa 11:4; Jer 22:15-16).

Nebuchadnezzar was a noted builder. Often kings showed little consideration to those who did the work on building projects, with hundreds dying from extreme heat under difficult conditions. From the counsel of Jeremiah to King Jehoakim, it is also possible to connect the problem of injustice to the issue of not paying for the workers in the building process: “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. . . . He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well” (Jer 22:13-17, emphasis supplied).

Nebuchadnezzar’s sin was likely connected to injustice in the area of his building activities. According to Stephen R. Miller, “he [Nebuchadnezzar] may also have taken little notice of injustices meted out by judges and other officials as well as by the rich of

---

1Goldingay, Daniel, 94, 95.
3Wood, 117.
4Goldingay says, “Perhaps the attention he gave to building projects should have been given to a concern for the needy or perhaps the sense of achievement at these has usurped the place of a desire for a sense of his achievements in the area of justice” (Goldingay, Daniel, 94, 95).
his kingdom."¹ Although the king might not have been personally treating others cruelly, he probably practiced an indulgent lifestyle and simply ignored the misfortunes of others.² At least in this case, sin consisted of injustice and unconcern.³

Collins introduces Rashi’s suggestion that “Daniel was urging the king to take better care of his Jewish captives.”⁴ However, in the process of rebuilding Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar not only used prisoners of war, but also local labor brought in from outside the city of Babylon.⁵ The oppressed were not all Jews; Gentiles were included.

God is concerned for injustice carried out against people from any nation for “it is a basic conviction of the Old Testament that God created heaven and earth and particularly human beings, Israel and all other peoples (Gen 1-11).”⁶ This universal relationship of compassion is revealed in the eternal, unchanging character, will, and acts of God who treats all human beings the same as he does Israel.⁷ Daniel might have known

¹Ibid.
²Miller, 139.
³Goldingay, Daniel, 95.
⁴Collins, 230.
⁵Donald. J. Wiseman, “Babylonia 605-539 B.C.,” in The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C., The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. 3, pt. 2, 2d ed., ed. John Boardman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 239. According to T. C. Michell, Jewish captives were obliged to settle on inferior sites and were mainly engaged in agriculture but were involved in commerce one century after the exile (T. C. Michell, “Babylonian Exile and Jewish Restoration,” in Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, 422).
⁷Ibid., 96. Yieh also points out that “Israel in the Old Testament is not merely Israel in her history, but rather serves as a representative of all creatures in the world. . . . Through Israel, the
that God would bring justice to the nations through his suffering Servant (Isa 42:2), judge the people to maintain justice (Ps 7:8-11),\(^1\) and save the despised and the outcast, but punish unjust oppressors (Judg 5:11; Ps 7:9, 10).\(^2\) Thus, it can be concluded that Daniel seemed to be aware of the fact that God cares for aliens as well as Israelites (Deut 10:17-19; see also Jer 7:5-7; Isa 1:17; Mic 6:8).

Here we can ask another question: Why does Daniel assume, at the risk of his life, that a regime that emphasizes justice for the oppressed prospers? First, it is because God cares for the oppressed even among the Gentiles.\(^3\) Second, it is because the realm of salvation in God’s justice will reach to the “wicked neighbors of Israel.” God will judge the wicked neighboring leaders, but he will give them a second chance and by their reaction they will receive final judgment, as Jeremiah warned:

This is what the LORD says: “As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will uproot the house of Judah from among them. But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to his own inheritance and his own country. And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, ‘As surely as the LORD lives’—even as they once taught my people to swear by

existential reality of human beings in every time and place is illustrated” (ibid.). For the relationship between creation and God’s salvific work, see Fanwar, 162-167. Doukhan also concludes that redemption depends on creation (Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrew University Press, 1978], 228-233).

\(^1\)Yieh, 97. In Psalms, it is noteworthy that “peoples” very often refers to the enemies of Israel, the nations (ibid.). Remember also that the literal meaning of Daniel is “God is judge.”

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Compare Daniel’s advice with Prov 14:21: “He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.”
Baal—then they will be established among my people.” (Jer 12:14-16)

With this universal perspective, Daniel asked the king to be just to the oppressed of Babylon.

In conclusion, the main message of Daniel’s advice is that God has a universal interest and concern for the oppressed, even in a foreign land. Daniel, with his understanding of God, strongly urged the king to reflect on his critical position before God and to seriously consider the warning message God was sending.

Son of Man

The “Son of Man” in the book of Daniel is an “individual, eschatological, and celestial figure with messianic characteristics” (7:13, 14). “God’s salvific purpose for all people” is dominant in the vision of the Son of Man. This apocalyptic vision predicts the

1 These verses also denote that Daniel’s requirement of justice to the king implies the manner of his conquest as well as his treatment of the captives in his empire.

2 The “oppressed” motif was also important in the ancient Near East. In the code of Hammurabi which was written by Hammurabi, King of Babylon in 19th century B.C., the king showed the same concern in the purpose of the code: “to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong might not oppress the weak” (James B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near East in Texts relating to the Old Testament, 2d ed. [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955], 164). Hereafter this work will be referred as ANET. See also M. E. J. Richardson, Hammurabi’s Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 123. According to Babylonian texts collected in the northern palace of Nebuchadnezzar, the king claimed to “have taken the side of the weak, poor, crippled, and widowed against oppressors, enabling them to win a just hearing their cases” (Wiseman, 239). The matter of request of justice will be discussed more in chapter 4.

3 Wallace, 81.

coming of the Son of Man, whose kingdom shall put an end to the kingdoms of the world and whose domain shall include all people, nations, and languages (7:1-29).

From this motif, however, Blauw sees only the eschatological-universal expectation of the salvation of Israel, not a missionary movement in a sense of “going” out to the nations. Although Blauw connects Dan 7:13, 14 with Matt 28:18, he thinks that the Son of God in Daniel was a passive missionary type who was to find eschatological fulfillment.

The context of the coming of the Son of Man, however, should be understood in a context of judgment (Dan 7:8-12). It is notable that there are two different characteristics

1Blauw, 52.

2Blauw says that just as “the service of the nations is a portion of the enthronement of the Son of Man,” “the proclamation of the Gospel is thus the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ among the nations” (ibid., 83, 84). He explains that after Jesus’ resurrection, he ascended, was enthroned, and then came back to disclose himself to his disciples empowering them with his authority to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus over the nations (ibid.). For other scholars holding the same theory, see ibid., 161; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 64, 77.

3Blauw persists that although “the Son of Man title is certainly intended to reflect the universal claims and the eschatological character of Jesus’ Messianic commission” (Blauw, 63), the universal-eschatological-Messianic salvation in the vision of the Son of Man is not a consequence of witness, but is a gift which is granted by God (ibid., 52).

4The scene of the ancient of Days and the judgment has much in common with other OT delineations of judgment (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Pss 50; 82; Joel 3). For further discussions on the matter of judgment in Dan 7, see Arthur J. Ferch, “The Judgment Scene in Daniel 7,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Lesher (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1981), 157-176. Ferch says, “A plethora of publications by students of both OT and NT has wrestled with ‘one like a son of man’ (Dan 7:13), but the judgment scene of the same chapter has remained a stepchild of OT scholarship” (ibid., 157). Basically, three events result from this judgment: (1) the wicked are destroyed (7:11, 26); (2) the kingship of the Son of Man is reaffirmed (vss. 13, 14); (3) the saints of the Most High inherit the kingdom (vs. 27) (Daegeuk Nam, “The Throne of God” Motif in the Hebrew Bible, Korean Sahm Yook University Monographs Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 1 [Seoul, Korea: Institute for Theological Research of Korean Sahm Yook University, 1994], 426.)
of judgment in Dan 7: favorable judgment for the saints in the context of suffering (vss. 21, 22) and an unfavorable judgment against the little horn that persecutes the saints (vss. 11, 26). Through the parallelism between the coming of the Son of Man (vss. 13, 14), with the result that all "peoples, nations, and languages" might offer him their service of reverence and the saints will possess the kingdom of God (vss. 22, 27), it can be concluded that the saints include all "peoples, nations, and languages" because they are worshipers and partakers of the kingdom. Interestingly, Daniel said that he "saw" and "beheld" the scene that "all people, nations, and languages, should serve him" (vss. 13, 14). He was an eyewitness to "God's salvific purpose for all people" through the "Son of Man."¹

We need to note "God's universal perspective" in the vision of the Son of Man. The title "Son of Man" refers to his humanity, while the description of clouds accompanying him represents his divinity.² Accordingly, the language of the vision gives evidence that the "Son of Man" is a divine-human being.³ The Son of Man as a link between "the judgment and the kingdom" suggests that to pass from the judgment to the

¹Shea also sees a universal salvific scene here: "Everyone who lives on the surface of the earth in those days will worship and serve him" (William Shea, Daniel 7-12: Prophecies of the End Time, ALBA [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996], 149).

²Ibid. In the Bible, clouds are an attribute of divinity (e.g., Ps 97:2). Miller suggests, "'One like a son of man' means that this person was in human form" (Miller, 207). Lacocque observes that clouds were commonly associated with deity. See André Lacocque, The Book of Daniel, trans. David Pelauer (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1979), 126, 146. For further discussion on the identity of the "Son of Man," see Ferch, "Apocalyptic Son of Man," 154-174; Miller, 208-210.

³Shea, Daniel 7-12, 149.
kingdom, we must go through him.¹ Using the language of Daniel, Jesus himself confirmed the identity of the “Son of Man”: “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Son of Man was his most commonly used title (cf. Matt 8:20; 9:6; Luke 5:24; 6:22; John 1:51; 3:13, 14).

In Rev 5:9, Jesus appears as a Lamb in the judgment context. The content is parallel with the judgment scene of Dan 7. The same books are located at the throne of God and are in the context of judgment. The same praise is ascribed to the enthroned Lord Jesus because with his blood he bought people “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Here again the saved saints include “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” as a result of the gospel witness to all nations (cf. Matt 24:14).

Shea compares the “Son of Man” in Dan 7 and Rev 14:14 to the reference of the Second Coming of Jesus and concludes that “at the heart of the prophecy of Dan 7, therefore, is the picture of Jesus as king.”² Doukhan suggests that Dan 7 parallels Rev 13 and 14, with a common theme of judgment.³ This parallelism shows the same perspective: “I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue,

¹Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 118. Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Saadia Gaon, etc., are unanimous in recognizing such a personage as the Messiah-King (ibid., 117).

²Shea, Daniel 7-12, 159, 160. The people of Jesus’ day already had come to identify the Danielic “Son of Man” as the Messiah (see John 12:34). Jesus also ascribed deity to himself (see Mark 14:61-64).

³See Jacques Doukhan, Daniel: The Vision of the End, 2d ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 56-72. He says, “The sequence of motifs in Rev 13-14 parallels the sequence of motifs in Dan 7 putting the earthly proclamation of this message at the same place as the heavenly Day of Judgment (Day of Atonement)” (ibid., 72).
and people” (Rev 14:6, emphasis supplied). Thus, in the sense of the continuity of salvation history, the vision of the “Son of Man” is connected with Matt 28:18 as well as Rev 5:9 and 14:6.

The vision of “all people, nations, and languages” suggests that Daniel understood the universal purpose of God for the nations through the “Son of Man.” Daniel presented an apocalypse in which the flow of history, culminating in the triumph of God’s salvific purpose for nations, is unraveled. This universal consciousness could have also encouraged Daniel to commit his life to achieve God’s salvific purpose for the heathen kingdoms.

In conclusion, Daniel took a more comprehensive and universal view of history than earlier prophets. In fact, biblical writers prior to Daniel had already delineated God’s activity in history as an outworking of his salvation. Non-Israelite people still figure somewhat peripherally in oracles or visions of eschatological battle through the other prophets of the exile.1 Daniel’s perspective, however, is wider and includes the eschatological fulfillment of God’s purpose for the world through his covenant, in which all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham (Gen 12:3).2

---

1 After giving examples of Joseph, Daniel, Esther, Jonah, Jeremiah, and Naaman to propose a stronger view with an active, expansive force, which operated to send God’s message beyond the borders of Israel in the Old Testament, Jonathan Lewis says, “God used captivity and exile both to judge Israel’s disobedience and to extend her witness beyond her borders” (Jonathan Lewis, “Two Forces,” in Perspectives, 60, 61).

2 Arthur J. Ferch, “Authorship, Theology, and the Purpose of Daniel,” in Symposium on Daniel, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 62. Arthur J. Ferch points out that although emphases are placed upon Israel and its return as a fulfillment of the divine promises to the nation, Daniel assumes a broader stance and applies the truths to all the nations (ibid.).
Covenantal Relationship

Dan 9 begins with one of the longest prayers in the Bible. Daniel offered the intercessory prayer for the remnant of Judah in exile in Babylon, keeping in mind the message from the scroll of the prophet Jeremiah, which said that the exile in Babylon would last seventy years (Jer 25:10-14; Dan 9:1-3). 1 Daniel’s prayer took place in the first year of Darius, which means Babylon had fallen to the Persians by that time. 2 As Shea observes, “his prayers took on a note of urgency as he saw the predicted time period drawing rapidly to a close.” 3 Daniel’s first concern was for the destiny of his people.

Daniel began his prayer by saying “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love [covenant and mercy] with all who love him and obey his commands” (vs. 4). 4 He then confessed how God’s people had sinned against the covenant. What covenant was he referring to here? Dan 9 is filled with covenant

---

1 Edwin R. Thiele proposed that the reason for Daniel’s prayer was his misunderstanding of his recent vision (Dan 8): (1) according to Jeremiah’s prophecy the time for the return to Jerusalem and the restoration of its sanctuary was at hand; (2) according to his own vision it will be a long time before the sanctuary will be cleansed; (3) Daniel, no doubt feared that because of Israel’s sin God intended to prolong the period of captivity (Edwin R. Thiele, Outline Studies in Daniel [Berrien Springs, MI: Emmanuel Missionary College, 1947], 94). This aspect of Daniel’s consciousness is expressed in 9:19.

2 Three different times Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had besieged Jerusalem—first in 605 B.C., then again in 597, and finally in 589-586. Daniel was brought to Babylon in 605 B.C. The date of his prayer was 538/537 B.C. For the chronology in Daniel, see Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Book of Daniel: Evidences Relating to Persons and Chronology,” AUSS 19, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 37-49.

3 Shea, Daniel 7-12, 47.

4 The NIV’s “covenant of love” is literally “the covenant and the love.” The hesed means goodness, kindness, lovingkindness, in redemption from enemies and troubles and in keeping covenants (Brown, BDB, s.v. “Hesed”). It is “the loyal love of God by which he faithfully keeps his promises to his people” (Miller, 244).
terminology and is the only chapter in the book of Daniel where the covenant name Yahweh appears (vss. 2, 4, 10, 13, 14, 20). There are other covenant terms, such as "love," "one who loves," "keeps" (vs. 4), "commands" (vss. 4, 5), "turn" (vss. 13, 16), "sinned" (vss. 5, 8, 11, 15). The term, "covenant of love" (vs. 4), also appears in Deut 7:9, 12; 1 Kgs 8:23; Isa 54:10; 55:3; Pss 89:28; 106:45; Neh 1:5; 9:32; 2 Chr 6:14, and generally "it expresses the trust in God as the One who keeps his covenant, that is, his promise to be a God to Israel, and his faithfulness." Thus the passages remind the readers of the covenantal event of the Exodus.

Daniel was intensely aware of the historical background of the Exodus story and how God had brought his people out of the land of Egypt (vs. 15). Commenting on the reason Daniel mentioned the Exodus story, Shea recalls that "covenant making in the ancient world always began with an introduction that recounted the story of past relations that brought the people to the present place." Thus the passages remind the readers of the covenantal event of the Exodus.

---


4 Miller suggests that "since the point of Daniel’s prayer is that the Jews might return to their land and continue as a nation, the 'Abrahamic covenant' must be in view, for it was in this covenant that God specifically promised Abraham a land and national existence for his descendants, Israel (cf. Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21)" (Miller, 244). In its origin it is right. The Sinaitic covenant, which is directly connected with the redemptive act of God, has a direct connection with that of Abraham in a sense of the redemptive acts of God (Exod 2:24; 3:31; 6:2-5, 7, 8; Deut 29:12-15; Ps 105:8-12, 42-45). This direct relationship points to the view that the Sinaitic covenant may be considered as a continuation and enlargement of the Abrahamic covenant (Owusu-Antwi, 180, 181). See also Robertson, 166-199; Walton, 48-61.
between the covenant parties.”

Here Daniel is reaffirming the relationship between God and his nation.

The terms, “the law of Moses” in vs. 11 and “Your people” in vs. 15, show that Daniel also understood the purpose of God for the Exodus. By the time of the Exodus, God had selected the Israelites to be “his people” (Deut 32:9). For this, there was one condition: “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant,” then “out of all nations you will be my treasured possession” (Exod 19:5). This conditionality of the covenant rules out the theory of universalism that insists that everyone will be saved. The covenantal relationship in the Bible was conditional on the obedience of God’s people.

Exod 19:6 explains why God wanted Israel to be his treasured people. God wanted to provide salvation to all people by having Israel be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” and living under the conditions of the covenant relationship. John I. Durham explains the meaning of being chosen:

Israel as the “special treasure” becomes uniquely Yahweh’s prized possession by their commitment to him in covenant. Israel as a “kingdom of priests” is committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh’s presence. . . . Israel as a “holy people” then represents a third dimension of what it means to be committed in faith to Yahweh: they are to be a people set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming—a displayed-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people.  

Thus, the reason why God called the nation is very clear. Israel was to be a witness to the neighboring nations, located as she was at the crossroads of the ancient world.

---

1Shea, Daniel 7-12, 52.

2John I. Durham, Exodus, WBC, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 263. Durham suggests that these three terms are closely connected. They are not synonymous, although they each refer to the whole of the people who will pay attention to and follow the covenant (ibid.).
In the narrative of the Exodus, it is also evident that the nations took notice and watched the revelation of God through the continual manifestations of God, especially the pillar of fire and cloud (Exod 14:19, 24). Moses told pharaoh to “Let my people go, so that they may worship me” (10:3). Steven C. Hawthorne suggests a missiological interpretation: “While the whole world was watching, he [God] drew the people to himself to establish a way of worship that all other nations could enter.”

In summary, the designation of “God as One who keeps the covenant” hints that Daniel was aware of the universal perspective of the covenantal relationship between God and his nation. Daniel’s prayer for mercy and the restoration of Israel is also closely connected with the fulfillment of the covenantal relationship, that is, the salvation of the nations. Because Daniel had this expectation for the future fulfillment of the covenant, it was easier to dedicate his life to the salvific purposes of God for the heathen kingdom as well as for Israel.

For the Sake of God

Daniel also prayed for God’s people and the city, which is called by God’s name (Dan 9:18) and the holy mountain of God (9:16, 18, 20). It is very interesting that Daniel

---

1 At Israel’s miraculous deliverance from Egypt, “the nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia” and “the chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away” (Exod 15:14-16; cf. 18:11; 32:1-14; Num 14:15-16).

2 Steven C. Hawthorne, “The Story of His Glory,” in Perspectives, 39. David also expressed this concept in 1 Chr 16:28.

3 This covenant motif will be discussed more in the section entitled “Messiah.”
connected both the people and the city with God. He prayed that God would restore the people, the temple, and the city, so that the glory of God’s name would be honored.

Daniel’s prayer alludes to Solomon’s prayer (1 Kgs 8). Solomon’s prayer was based on the covenantal relationship with God: “you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way” (vs. 23, emphasis supplied). Daniel used the same expression, “covenant of love” (Dan 9:4). No doubt Daniel was aware of the universal implications in Solomon’s prayer:

As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name—for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name. (vss. 41-43, emphasis supplied)

Solomon’s prayer clearly shows that God’s purpose for the temple is to welcome all nations to worship.1 The phrases “Because of your name” (vs. 41) and “all the peoples of the earth may know your name” (vs. 43) are similar with the phrases “For your sake . . . because your city and your people bear your Name” in Dan 9:19 (cf. vss. 17, 18). Daniel was quite likely aware of Solomon’s prayer and understood the universal aspects of the covenantal relationship.2

Old Testament worship by the Israelites included summoning the nations to praise Yahweh (Pss 46, 47, 96, 98). The place for this universal worship was connected with the

---

1Ibid., 41.
2Maxwell, 203.
city of God (Isa 56:6, 7). In some contexts, the nations are summoned to celebrate what God had done in Israel, even in the case of Israel’s victory over them (Ps 47:1-4). The nations would benefit from Israel’s salvation history (Pss 22:27-28, 67; 96:1-3; 98:1-3). In the future, the nations would stream to the mountain of God to learn of Yahweh and enjoy his bountiful provision (Isa 2:2-4; 25:6-9; 66:17-24).

Unfortunately, the sins of Israel distorted God’s purpose for the world. Because of their sins, God allowed the city to be destroyed according to God’s words (cf. Lev 26:14-41; Deut 28:15-68; 29:21-27; 2 Kgs 23:27). Doukhan points out the cosmic consequences of the catastrophe that came upon Jerusalem by suggesting that the expression “under the whole heaven” (Dan 9:12) indicates that the destruction of Jerusalem was not a regional issue, but a universal one, because it impacted God’s purpose in seeking the salvation of all the nations.2

The universal nature of the catastrophe is revealed more clearly in Daniel’s confession. “Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us” (vs. 16). The tragedy is universal because Israel’s fate involves not only the fate of all the people of Israel but also the neighboring countries. Daniel acknowledged that although Jerusalem was God’s special

---

1 Paul regarded the ingathering of the Gentiles as the climax of his own missionary vision quoting these texts (e.g., Rom 15:7-12).

2 Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 139.
city, its desolation was due to Israel’s sin, not to any flaw in God’s character or a lack of power on his part.¹

It is notable that Daniel did not base his request on the supposed greatness of Israel, but on God’s character and his name (vss. 16-19).² Ezekiel, a near contemporary to Daniel, expressed the same thought that God had restrained his wrath from destroying Israel for the sake of his name (Ezek 20:5-22; 36:22-23). This shows that the dealings of God with Israel were not because of favoritism, but for his glory among the nations.³

In conclusion, Daniel’s prayer seems to imply that if the city and temple of God remained in a desolate state and the people of God continuously remained in exile, the neighboring people could not be drawn to the temple to meet the God of Heaven. To achieve God’s salvific purpose for the nations, it would be necessary for God to bless and restore Israel in order to attract the nations. By mentioning the expression, “for the sake of God,” Daniel tied the restoration of Jerusalem with the fulfillment of God’s universal salvific purpose for the nations.

Messiah

In response to the prayer of Daniel, Gabriel was sent to announce the restoration of Jerusalem and the coming of the Anointed One, the Messiah (Dan 9:25). Although the tone of some prophets in the Old Testament is overwhelmingly negative in proclaiming

¹Miller, 248.
²Hawthorne, 43.
³Ibid.
impending and unavoidable judgment, the Messianic visions envision future hope that centers on the Messiah.1

The Hebrew word  מָשִּיחַ  literally designates an anointed individual who went through a ceremony of anointing with oil that initiated his role as priest, prophet, or king.2 Scripture calls Aaron an “anointed one,” a “messiah” (Exod 28:41; Lev 16:32), and likewise, Saul (2 Sam 1:14), David (1 Sam 16:6, 13), and even the foreign monarch, Cyrus (Isa 45:1). Thus the hope of the eschatological Messiah maintained itself through this continual appearance of individual messiahs.3 The word “messiah” in Dan 9:24-27, however, was used in a universal sense, for the only time in the Hebrew Bible.4 Messiah in this passage is “the Messiah,” culminating all other messiahs—the Messiah of messiahs, the universal Messiah.5

The prophecy, “After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One [the Messiah] will be cut off and will have nothing” (9:26) and “he will put an end to sacrifice and offering”

---


2Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 140. In later Jewish history the term was applied to the expected Deliverer who was to come (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:853).

3Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 140.

4Ibid., 141.

The mission of the Messiah is clearly declared in vs. 24: “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.”

In response to Daniel’s request for the forgiveness of his people, God showed him the true purpose of the sanctuary system through the death of the Messiah, which is God’s

---

1 By showing the chiastic parallelism, some scholars have shown that “he” in vs. 27 is the Messiah, which is mentioned in the previous verses (Maxwell, 216-218, 255-257; Jacques Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study,” AUSS 17, no. 1 [Spring 1979]: 1-22; William H. Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27,” in 70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3, ed. Frank B. Holbrook [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1986], 75-118). Shea proposes: “Looking at the events predicted in Daniel [in chap. 9] through the eyes of the NT, we see their fulfillments in the career, death, resurrection, ascension, and present ministration of Jesus Christ” (ibid., 116). See an example of the use of Maxwell’s extended alternating parallels, which show how these texts are connected (Maxwell, 216, 217):

A. Messiah Prince to come
[1] So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a degree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah Prince
[2] there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;

B. The city to be
[1] it will be built again, with plaza and moat,

A' Messiah to cut off
[2] then after sixty-two weeks
[1] The Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,

B' Desolate prince to destroy the city
[1] and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city
[2] and its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

A" Messiah to terminate sacrifices
[1] And he will make a firm covenant with the many
[2] for one week,
[2'] but in the middle of the week
[1'] he will put a stop and grain offering;

B" The desolater prince to be destroyed
[2] and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate,
[1] even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.
way to cleanse sins. From his prayer in chap. 9, Daniel seemed to expect that the forgiveness of his people and nation would cause the restoration of the sanctuary and Jerusalem. However, the vision states things beyond his perspective: the Messianic appearance would precede "the end of sin" and "atonement for wickedness" (vs. 24). Although the earthly sanctuary would be restored (vs. 25), it was destroyed after the death ("cut off") of the Messiah. The Messiah (Jesus) then would set aside the first sanctuary rituals to establish the second, the heavenly sanctuary service (Dan 8:13, 14; Heb 10:9; cf. Mark 15:38; Heb 4:14; 6:20; 9:12). It was only in the Messiah's death that Daniel's vision would begin to be fulfilled in the ultimate sense.

Daniel did not seem to understand the full picture of the Messiah motif. The phrases "cut off" and "desolation of the sanctuary" were beyond his comprehension and would have been shocking because he prayed for restoration. Several years later, God's revelation was again given to Daniel in chap. 10. Although Daniel did not understand the complete vision (12:8), he grasped that the vision of the "great war" in 10:1 was in the spiritual realm (vss. 13, 20).

1Maxwell, 173-181, 203-208; Shea, Daniel 7-12, 47-60, 105-118. See also Sanctuary Review Committee, "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Consensus Document)," in Doctrine of Sanctuary: A Historical Survey, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 225-233.

2The date of Daniel's prayer was the third year of Cyrus, 535 B.C., May 11 (William H. Shea, "Wrestling with the Prince of Persia: A Study on Daniel 10," AUSS 21, no. 3 [Autumn 1983]: 234-246). By that time, the Jewish captives had returned to Palestine, but reconstruction of the temple was halted by opposition from the Samaritans (Miller, 278). Moreover, the angel said that the vision for Daniel's people would be fulfilled in the future, for the vision concerns "a time yet to come" (10:14). So this vision is not connected with the current political situation involving Daniel.
From the term "great war," which Daniel could understand, a connection between chaps. 9, 10, and 11 can be proposed (cf. 9:24-27; 10:13, 14; 11:31).\(^1\) It is notable that the Messiah appears in the context of wars (9:24-27). Although Daniel was concerned for the restoration of the temple, the vision concluded with a conflict that culminates in a victory of the saints led by the great prince, Michael, during the time of the end (12:1).\(^2\) The focus was not simply on the restoration of the earthly sanctuary, but on the revelation of God’s salvific plan, whereby the Messiah would be “cut off” and would appear as a Warrior for his people.

The universal Messiah also affects the “many” (rabim) of 9:27: “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’”\(^3\) In 12:2, the “many” is divided into two different groups: “Multitudes [many] who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” In 9:27, the “many” is more definitive to denote those with whom the Messiah confirms the covenant. The parallel to this usage is found in 12:10: “Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked; none of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.” The same meaning is found in Isa 53:11: “After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous

---

\(^1\)Maxwell observes that Dan 10 is the introduction of a new unit of Dan 10-12 (Maxwell, 267).

\(^2\)The identity of Michael will be discussed in chapter 3.

\(^3\)In the book of Daniel, “many” occurs thirteen times (8:25; 9:18, 27; 11:10, 14, 18, 26, 33, 39; 12:2, 3, 4, 10). It refers to people, except for 9:18, where it refers to the mercy of God. The discussion on “many” in the book of Daniel is taken from to Owusu-Antwi, 184, 185.
servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”¹ Just as in Isa 53:11 “many” specifies those who are “justified” through the ministry and death of the suffering Servant, so also in Dan 9:27, the Messianic being would “confirm a covenant” with “many.” Thus, the “many” in Dan 9:27 can be widened to include the Gentiles who hold fast to God’s covenant (Isa 56:6).²

In fact, the word “many” in the whole Bible carries a strong universal connotation (cf. Ezra 3:12) and is often used to designate the peoples and the nations involved in the universal adoration of God (Mic 4:2).³ Thus, the Messiah in Dan 9:27 is “the Messiah of all peoples, the Messiah who will save the world.”⁴

In conclusion, as discussed earlier, many of the terms in Daniel’s prayer for the people, city, temple, and the mountain show God’s universal purpose for God’s temple where all nations will gather. The Messiah motif in the book of Daniel shows that this universal gathering is made possible by the Messiah. Although Daniel did not understand the Messiah motif fully, he expected a universal redemption at the end of time and his wider perspective could have included universal salvation through the Messiah.

¹For the connections between Dan 9 and Isa 53, see ibid., 166.
²Owusu-Antwi concludes, “The ‘many’ in Dan 9:27 refers to the faithful ones of Israel for whom ‘the Messiah’ fulfilled the covenant” (ibid.).
³Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 150, 151.
⁴Ibid., 141.
The Wise

The wise (maskilim) who will instruct many (11:33) gives a hint of Christ's commission, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19, 20, emphasis supplied). The expressions "those who lead to righteousness" and "those who are wise" in 12:3 illustrate the fact that "believers generally who are spiritually wise themselves make others wise through their life and witness." Thus, the wise are the ones who will be teachers of wisdom on the things of God to others under the guidance of God's wisdom.

The wise will also "be purified, made spotless and refined" (12:10; cf. 11:35). The purification of "the wise" parallels the purification by the "suffering Servant" who will act wisely, be raised, lifted up, and highly exalted" (Isa 52:13; 53:11).

In the book of Daniel, this "washing" is closely connected with the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan 8:14). The restoration of the sanctuary in Dan 8 and the divine judgment in Dan 7 are "functionally equivalent in that they both resulted in the horn's

---

1"Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:874. The term maskilim means literally those who understand or teach (see Brown, BDB, s.v. "Sākāl").

2Miller, 319. He also points out that "this is not a special class of saints" (ibid.). Baldwin also comments: "Those who lead others to righteousness, then, are those who demonstrate their faith and encourage others to faith" (Baldwin, 206).

3"Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:879.

4Collins, 385. Rev 7:14 shows that the core of the concept, "purification" is connected with washing "their [saints'] robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
condemnation and deliverance of God's true people from its oppression."¹ In the judgment scene of Dan 7, the result of the judgment affects two different parties—the little horn and the saints. Roy Gane explains an aspect of the favorable judgment of the saints: “the fact that the ‘holy ones’ can be . . . judged worthy to receive the dominion suggests that their works are relevant in the judgment.”² Here the issue is not whether the holy ones had ever sinned, but whether “they have accepted the provision for forgiveness which God offered them through sacrifice and whether they continued to be rehabilitated in their loyalty to him.”³

Here the basis for being a witness is laid out. In the book of Daniel, the wise are ones who understand and experience forgiveness through the righteousness of the Messiah. It is by means of the study of the prophecies in the book of Daniel that they are qualified or purified to teach others of the righteousness that the Messiah will reveal (9:24; 11:33; 12:10).⁴

There is one more question: who teaches whom? Although the context of Dan 11:33 seems to be connected with an historical era⁵ and that of Dan 12:3 is

---

²Ibid., 188.
³Ibid., 189.
⁴Maxwell, 306. Cf. Lev 8 and Num 8, where ritual purification was required of the priests and Levites before they were qualified to serve at God's sanctuary.
⁵Ibid., 278-280. For discussions on the development of the interpretation of Dan 11 against its application as Antiochus Ephiphanes, see William H. Shea, “Early Development of the Antiochus Ephiphanes Interpretation,” in *Symposium*, 256-328; idem, “Unity of Daniel,” in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
eschatological, the promise of reward with eternal glory seems to be commonly given for those who have been persecuted for their faithful endeavors to lead many to righteousness. As already discussed, it is natural to connect “many” (11:33; 12:3) with “all people, nations, and languages” that will serve the “Son of Man” (7:14) and the universal “many” in Dan 9. The “many” in Dan 12:4 especially denotes all people or the nations to whom the salvific Word of God should be proclaimed in the eschatological context by the wise. Thus the texts dealing with the wise reveal and strongly support a universal purpose of God in saving the world. The eschatological wise will help others to understand and lead them to righteousness. All who read and understand this book are also required to teach many (cf. Rev 1:3).

In conclusion, Daniel and his three friends were called wise (cf. Dan 1:4, 17, 20; 2:20-24). They reached out to the king’s steward to justify their position on diet and even tried to convince him with the argument of a test (1:8-16). They witnessed to the God of Heaven before heathen kings and urged them to repent, based on an understanding of the future that God had revealed to them (chaps. 2-6). Just as exemplified by Daniel and his friends, the “sharing” by the eschatological wise goes beyond simple testimony. The wise will not only stand firm on the side of God, with an understanding of the prophecies of the end, but they are also concerned with the salvation of others.


1Ferch, Daniel, 79.

2Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 108.
Summary

In this chapter, I surveyed some aspects of missio Dei and God’s sovereign will to save the nations in the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel shows that Daniel was aware of supernatural intervention (1:2, 8, 17) and the sovereignty of God (2:21; 4:17; 9:9, 12, 14; visions of 7-12) in the process of the exile to achieve God’s salvific plan in a cross-cultural context through his servants. Daniel arrived at this perspective partly because he was familiar with Jeremiah’s prophecies regarding the exile of Judah and the destruction of Babylon (Jer 20:4; 25:8-14; 29:7) and also with Isaiah’s fulfilled prophecies, and the vision of “the Servant of light” to the nations (Isa 39:7).

The following concepts supporting the concept of God’s universal purpose to save the world were found in Daniel. First, Daniel urged Nebuchadnezzar to promote justice (Dan 4:27), to repent, and to cease committing sins. Although the story shows that Nebuchadnezzar’s principal area of sin was his pride, Daniel also pointed out ethical aspects that involved his fellow human beings.

Second, the vision of the “Son of Man” (7:13, 14) shows God’s universal purpose that his kingdom shall put an end to the brutish kingdoms of the world and his domain shall include all peoples, all nations, and all languages. From the vision of “all people, nations, and languages,” Daniel predicted the eschatological fulfillment of the universal purpose of God for the nations through the “Son of Man,” which is also a fulfillment of God’s covenant in which all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham (Gen 12:3).

Third, the concept of covenant in the prayer of Dan 9 also speaks of a universal aspect. The covenant in Daniel’s prayer alludes to the foundation of the covenantal event.
of the Exodus (9:11, 15). At the time of the Exodus, God had selected the Israelites to bring salvation to all people by appointing them as "his people" (Deut 32:9) and designating them "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" under the condition of covenant relationship (Exod 19:5, 6). In Isa 42:6, the covenant relationship is also connected with the concept of being "a light for the Gentiles." Thus, the designation of God as One who keeps the covenant suggests that Daniel was likely aware of this covenant identity and also could have understood God's purpose for the salvation of the nations through the election of Israel based on the covenantal relationship.

Fourth, the fact that Daniel prayed for God's people and the city, which is called by God's name (9:18) and God's holy mountain (vss. 16, 18, 20), also implies a universal perspective. Daniel's prayer alludes to Solomon's dedication prayer. Daniel used the same expression, "covenant of love" (vs. 4), as found in Solomon's prayer that was based on the covenantal relationship with God (1 Kgs 8:23). Solomon knew that God's purpose for the temple was to welcome all nations to worship because he mentions, "all the peoples of the earth may know your name" (vs. 43). By mentioning the expression, "for the sake of God" (Dan 9), Daniel implies that the restoration of Jerusalem is intimately connected with the fulfillment of God's universal salvific purpose for the nations.

Fifth, the Messiah motif in Dan 9 also implies a focal point for God's universal purpose. In response to Daniel's prayer, Gabriel was sent to announce the restoration of Jerusalem and the coming of the Anointed One, the Messiah (9:25). The Messiah is to "confirm" God's covenant with the "many" (vs. 27; cf. Isa 53:7), which connotes the concept of God's universal purpose. The Messiah in this passage is the Messiah of all peoples, the Messiah who will save the world, indicating that the universal gathering on
God’s Mountain for the salvation of all nations can only be made possible by the universal Messiah.

Sixth, the wise, *maškilîm* (Dan 11:33), reminds us of Christ’s commission (Matt 28:19). In parallel with Dan 12:3b, “those who lead to righteousness,” “those who are wise,” in 12:3a are believers who are spiritually wise themselves and who make others wise through their life and witness. It is natural to connect “many” (11:33; 12:3) with “all people, nations, and languages” who will serve the “Son of Man” (7:14) and the universal “many” in Dan 9. Especially the “many” in Dan 12:4 clearly denotes all people and nations to whom the Word of God should be preached in an eschatological context. The eschatological wise will impact the universal “many,” helping them understand and leading them to righteousness. All who read and understand the book are required to teach the “many.”
CHAPTER III

STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Introduction

Mission strategy has received attention from the modern church since the 1960s, but scholars trace the history of strategy back to the New Testament and the ministry of Paul.1 From the perspective of missio Dei, “God’s mission,” however, God is the originator of mission strategy. Thus we need to look at God’s strategies in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament before working to develop an effective mission strategy today.

From a strategic perspective, the book of Daniel is dominant since it shows clearly that God not only calls human workers through different means to participate in missio Dei, but the book also shows how God directly intervenes in human history to fulfill his salvific purpose. God’s intervention is also closely connected with a description of spiritual conflict in the book of Daniel that illustrates how the church today should deal with the issue of supernatural evil forces.2

---


2 Peter Wagner says that spiritual warfare is a crucial factor in missions today because Satan works to thwart missio Dei (Wagner, “On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy,” 531). In this study, “spiritual conflict” and “spiritual warfare” will be used interchangeably.
In this chapter, in order to highlight some of the concepts of God's strategies in the book of Daniel I will look at: (1) the qualifications of those whom God chooses; (2) dreams and visions as means of God's communication; and (3) God's direct intervention in human affairs and how that intervention interacts with spiritual conflict.

Definitions of Major Terminologies

Definition of Strategy

The word “strategy” is connected with a military term, meaning “the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions.” Donald A. McGavran popularized the word for Christian missions with his article “Wrong Strategy: The Real Crisis in Missions” in 1965. In that article McGavran challenged the church to move from its “strategies of the fifties” to a new pattern of evangelizing lost people and planting new churches. In a missiological sense, Wagner defines “strategy” as “the chosen means to accomplish a predetermined goal.”

1Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged (1993), s.v. “Strategy.” In modern usage, it is defined as “the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war” (ibid.).


Distinguishing the term “strategy” from “method,” Crawley, Dayton, and Fraser insist that the terms express different concepts. According to them “strategy” means the overall plan, principles, or ways by which resources and opportunities will be utilized in the task. According to these distinctions, *missio Dei* can be referred to as God’s strategy to save the world. The means and agencies to achieve God’s strategy can be described as God’s methods.  

Definitions of Dreams and Visions

“‘Dreams’ stress something seen while a person sleeps, whereas ‘visions’ stress ‘an appearance,’ ‘sight,’ ‘something seen.’” There are different kinds of dreams in the

---

1Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 13. Dayton and Fraser define strategy as “a way to reach an objective, a time and place when things will be different than they are now” (ibid., 14). They discuss four kinds of strategies: (1) the standard solution strategy; (2) the being-in-the-way strategy; (3) the plan-so-far strategy; (4) and the unique solution strategy (ibid., 17-19). Dayton and Fraser favor the last approach, which assumes that “every situation we face is different, that each one requires its own special strategy” (ibid., 18). See also Winston Crawley, *Global Mission: A Story to Tell* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1985), 26. In 1943, Soper had already distinguished between these terms, with “strategy” relating to the rationale upon which an enterprise rests and “methodology” relating to the instrumentalities, agencies, and means for carrying out the mission (Edmund D. Soper, *The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission* [New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943], 235). Crawley defines method as “a comprehensive and flexible body of tactics or actions, the detailed means by which God’s people implement the mission imperative” (Crawley, 26).

2Ebbie Smith, “Introduction to the Strategy and Methods of Missions,” in *Missiology*, 434. However, as Smith points out, “strategy and method are securely tied together.” Thus many scholars use these two terms interchangeably.

Bible. There are dreams that are meaningless (cf. Job 22:15-16; Ps 73:20; Eccl 5:3, 7; Isa 29:7, 8; 56:10) and dreams that God condemns because of their satanic origin (Deut 13:1, 3, 5; Jer 27:9; 29:8; Zech 10:2; Jude 1:8).

A vision may come in waking moments (Dan 10:7; Acts 9:3, 7), by day (Acts 10:3) or night (Gen 46:2), or a vision may come in a dream (Num 12:6). Except in Nebuchadnezzar's case (Dan 4:5), visions from God are only mentioned in connection with the experiences of the prophets and workers of God (Gen 15:1; 46:2; Num 24:4, 16; 1 Sam 3:15; Ps 89:19; Isa 1:1; 22:1, 5; Ezek 1:1; 8:3, 4; 11:24; 22:28; 40:2; 43:3; Hos 12:10; Joel 2:28; Mic 3:6; Zech 13:4).

In the Old Testament, God signified dreams and visions as one means of communicating with the gentiles as well as his people (Gen 20:6; 40:5; 41:1-7; Num 12:6; cf. Gen 28:12; 31:10-11; 37:5, 9; Judg 7:5; 1 Kgs 3:5, 15; Joel 2:28). Dreams and visions play an important role in salvation history: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams" (Num 12:6; cf. 1 Sam 3:1; 28:6, 15; Isa 1:1; Ezek 1:1; Hos 12:10).

In the New Testament, dreams and visions are not clearly distinguished from one another (Matt 17:9; Mark 9:9; Luke 9:36; Matt 27:19; Luke 24:23). The New Testament emphasizes the revelatory nature of dreams and vision, not the dreams and visions

---


It is unusual to find Christians who pay attention to dreams and visions in the Western Christian world today. The subject is not even treated seriously in academic theological circles. It is evident in Scripture that God uses supernatural dreams and visions to reach and save unreached people. Dreams and visions are important in modern missionary circles because they have become a major means for conversion in Islamic and animistic areas.

1Ibid. In Revelation, the terms “revelation of Jesus” and “prophecy” are used instead of visions or dreams (Rev 1:1, 2). Everts explains that “the revelations received in dreams and visions are understood in relationship to the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ” (ibid., 232).

2Ibid., 231.

3The term “unreached people” is “any group that did not contain a contextualized church demonstrably capable of completing the evangelization of the group” (Samuel Wilson, “Peoples, People Groups,” EDWM [2000], 745). I use “unreached people” to designate those who have never heard the gospel.

4For the relationship between dreams and religious conversion, see Kelly Bulkely, Visions of the Night: Dreams, Religion, and Psychology (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 15-22; Jon Dybdahl, “Dreams and Muslim Mission,” TMs, Andrews University, Heritage Center, 1992 (photocopied). God also uses miracles and signs, but these aspects will be discussed later in the section dealing with spiritual conflict. Interestingly, in the book of Daniel, the term “signs and miracles” is used as a synonym for the dreams and visions, especially in Nebuchadnezzar’s understanding (4:2). For further references on dreams, see the “Bibliographical Essays” in Bulkely’s book. She shares basic information about the current status of dream research literature through an annotated survey of dream literature.
Definition of Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is “the Christian encounter with evil supernatural powers led by Satan and his army of fallen angels.”¹ From the fall of human beings to the end of this present evil age, the Scriptures make it clear that spiritual conflict between Christ and Satan will exist (Gen 3:15; Rev 13).

In the Old Testament, idols are treated with contempt as utterly devoid of spiritual power (Ps 114:4-8; Isa 40:18-20; 44:9-20; Jer 10:3ff.), but the gods or spirits behind them are treated as real (cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:18-20) and Yahweh is often compared to the gods (1 Kgs 8:23; 1 Chr 16:25; Pss 86:8; 96:4; 135:5). In the Septuagint translation of Ps 96:5, the various gods of the nations are identified and contrasted with Yahweh: “For all the gods of the heathen are devils: but the Lord made the heavens.”²

¹Timothy Warner, “Spiritual Warfare,” EDWM (2000), 902. In Seventh-day Adventist circles, the term “the Great Controversy” is more favored. In 1858, Ellen G. White presented a brief survey of Bible and church history, written from this perspective, under the title The Spirit of Prophecy: The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1858). For further information concerning an Adventist perspective on this subject, see Frank B. Holbrook, “The Great Controversy,” in Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 969-1009. John M. Fowler uses the term “the cosmic conflict” in his book The Cosmic Conflict between Christ and Satan (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2001). Compared with the expression “Yahweh war” in the Bible (Exod 17:16; Num 21:14; 1 Sam 17:47; 18:17; 25:28), Gerhard von Rad introduces the term “holy war.” For von Rad “holy war” was carried out by “an amphictyonic and cultic institution” that, in theory and practice, belonged to a relatively short period of Israelite history (Gerhard von Rad, Holy War in Ancient Israel, trans. Marva J. Dawn [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], 51). For the difference between “holy war” and “Yahweh war,” see Gwilym H. Jones, “‘Holy War’ or ‘Yahweh War,’” VT 25, no. 4 (1975): 642-658. Jones renames two terms: “Yahweh war” as peculiarly for the Israelite experience and “holy war” as beliefs and practices that were common among neighboring peoples” (ibid.). Missiologists seem to use the term “spiritual conflict” and “spiritual warfare” interchangeably. In this study, “controversy between God and the powers of evil,” “spiritual conflict,” and “spiritual battle” will be used to denote the term “spiritual warfare.”

the New Testament, Satan is called “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), a leader of the fallen angels (Matt 25:41), and the “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,” seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8). Thus, the Bible shows clearly that devils and evil spirits work behind the gods and spirits to invest the objects or gods of the nations with power.

However, the influence of the enlightenment, the theory of evolution, and the secularization of the Western world has resulted in ignorance of the realm of spiritual beings. Many missionaries, after experiencing serious flaws in their approach to animistic belief systems, have become much more sensitive to the spiritual realm.¹ Recently a renewed emphasis on the unseen world of supernatural beings is impacting strategies for world missions and evangelization.²

Wagner suggests that there are six major facets to the spiritual warfare issue:³

¹Warner, 903.


"supernatural signs and wonders",1 "prophecy",2 "strategic-level spiritual warfare",3 "spiritual mapping",4 "identificational repentance",5 and "prayer evangelism."6 Although a wide range of relatively new terms and new ideas has been developed in the area of spiritual warfare, it is important for practitioners and scholars to recognize fuzziness in the

1For “supernatural signs and wonders,” see the definition of “power encounters.”


3Some contemporary missionaries consider the “binding” of the “territorial spirits” as a major method in evangelistic activities (Ebbie C. Smith, “Miracles in Mission,” EDWM [2000], 630, 631). Clinton E. Arnold defines “territorial spirits” as “evil angels or spirits that exercise significant influence and control over people groups, empires, countries, and cities” (Clinton E. Arnold, “Territorial Spirits,” EDWM [2000], 940). Wagner calls the confrontation with these enemies, “strategic-level spiritual warfare” (SLSW) or “cosmic-level spiritual warfare” (C. Peter Wagner, Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare [Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1996], 22).


5Since the mid-1990s, a strong emphasis in SLSW has also been placed on the practice of “identificational repentance.” In the process of spiritual mapping, sins of a nation or city, which have been committed in the past, sometimes a generation ago, must be dealt with through a corporate identification with the sins and then through confession and repentance of these sins as a means of effecting reconciliation that will break Satan’s grip on the city (Wagner, Confronting the Power, 260; Richard A. Webster, Tearing Down Strongholds [Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1990], 10, 11).

6The final aspect of battling territorial spirits, which is the most controversial, involves direct engagement with “territorial spirits.” This has been called “prayer evangelism” or “warfare prayer” (C. Peter Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare, ed. C. Peter Wagner and F. Douglas Pennoyer [Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990], 77).
definition of the terms. A continual, exegetical, biblical study of this subject, together with experience-based theology, should be emphasized. It should also be recognized that the most profound contribution that present-day spiritual warfare theology can make to the missionary circle is its emphasis on the salvation of lost souls.

Definition of Power Encounter

Power encounters are another manifestation of spiritual warfare. Wagner defines a power encounter as: “a visible, practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the spirits, powers or false gods worshipped or feared by the members of a given people group.” He also affirms that a power encounter can be an important key to effective evangelism today around the world.

The term “power encounter” was coined by missionary anthropologist Alan Tippett, who observed that in the South Pacific where early acceptance of the gospel occurred there was usually an encounter with the old religious system demonstrating that the power of God was greater than that of the local deity.

---


2 Wagner, Confronting the Powers, 255, 256.

3 C. Peter Wagner, How to Have a Healing Ministry in Any Church (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1988), 150.

4 Wagner, Confronting the Powers, 102.

5 People of Oceania believed that “the only real and effective way of proving the power of their new faith was to demonstrate that the old religion had lost its powers and fears” (Allan R. Tippett, People Movement in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga, and Samoa [Chicago, IL: Moody, 1972], 164). For more
would involve a priest or chief, speaking on behalf of his people. On the opposite side would be a Christian missionary, publicly denouncing the people's allegiance to their god(s) in the name of Jesus and challenging the god(s) to do something about it. When their god(s) could not respond, large numbers of the people usually converted. Power-oriented people require a power encounter as proof and not just a truth encounter, if they are to be convinced.1

Because the scientific, rational, and Western worldview, influenced by the enlightenment and the theory of evolution, emphasized verbal proclamation without any distinctive manifestation of God's supernatural power in mission work, references, and reports of miracles largely ceased and, as a result, supernatural phenomena came to be explained in non-supernatural terms.2

However, many missionaries have recently felt a need to combine the preaching of the gospel with some form of power manifestation to reach people who live within a supernatural worldview.3 The value and validity of power encounter in evangelism are

---

1Charles H. Kraft, “Power Encounter,” EDWM (2000), 775. Power encounters are qualified as genuine encounters only in those situations where the power of God to bring freedom is pitted against the power of Satan to keep people in bondage (ibid.).

2Mark Wagner, “Signs and Wonders,” EDWM (2000), 875. Warner describes the result: “Biblical references to the role of spirit beings in the realm of the created world are often misinterpreted or ignored in dealing with the text, and many missionaries have gone to the field with a defective worldview, resulting in serious flaws in their approach to animistic belief systems” (Warner, 904).

3Mark Wagner, 875.
widely accepted today in missiological thinking and practice, since it is recognized that most of the people in the world are power oriented.¹

**Committed Individuals**

Although most theories of mission strategy focus on means, principles, or ways to accomplish a predetermined goal,² the book of Daniel shows that God's strategy, *missio Dei*, focuses more on human partners who commit their lives to him and his purpose. In the context of the exile, God chose Daniel and his companions to fulfill his salvific purpose for the nations as well as Israel. In their less than ideal situation they realized that God had a salvific purpose for both the nations and Israel. God's sovereignty and purpose encouraged Daniel and his friends in their cross-cultural witness to the true God of heaven, and their commitment and witness proved that God's strategy in choosing them was productive.

In the section below, I will point out qualifications of successful cross-cultural missionaries by looking at Daniel's awareness of God's call, his spiritual development, his commitment to a consecrated life, and his excellence in his service to the heathen kings.

¹Kraft, “Power Encounter,” 775. F. Douglas Fennoyer describes the influence of power orientation even in modern society: “Turn on the television set almost any day, anytime, and you will discover talk show hosts interviewing New Agers who channel communications from spirit guides, or Satanists who sacrifice animals and even babies. In the 1990s the world is obsessed with power: supernatural power” (F. Douglas Fennoyer, “Trends and Topics in Teaching Power Evangelism,” in *Wrestling*, 340).

²See the definition of strategy of this chapter.
Conviction of God’s Sovereign Call

As discussed earlier, Daniel came to a realization of God’s purpose in the exile and God’s initiative in seeking the salvation of the nations. He also understood that the reason why the people of Israel were forced to move out of their home culture was to be witnesses for God in a heathen kingdom. How did Daniel come to know that God was calling him to be a witness in the heathen kingdom of Babylon? How could he be sure of God’s call in the middle of the calamity and crisis of his nation and personal life?

Prophecies

Through his study of Scripture, Daniel was aware of the reason and the purpose of the destruction of his country. Through reading Jeremiah (Dan 9:2), Daniel could have become aware of God’s purpose for the “healing” (salvation) of Babylon, foretold by Jeremiah (Jer 51:9). He most likely knew of the predictions of Isaiah, nearly one hundred years earlier, that the descendants of Hezekiah would be taken to Babylon and forced to serve in its court (Isa 39:6, 7; 2 Kgs 20:17, 18). Daniel and his companions were fulfilling that prediction (cf. Isa 43:14-21).

With this understanding of prophecy, it is not surprising that Daniel and his friends willingly applied themselves in preparation for their responsibilities in Babylon. In spite

---

1 For the relationship between Daniel and Jeremiah and Isaiah, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.

2 As discussed earlier, Gammie claims that linguistic, thematic, and theological parallels exist between Dan 1-6 and Isa 40ff. This, according to Gammie, suggests that the writer of the Danielic stories believed that a number of Isaiah’s sayings, predicting that Israel’s sons would serve in foreign courts, had been fulfilled (Gammie, 282-292).
of the collapse of their own country, which took place while they were being educated in
the heathen court, their commitment prepared them to help rule a much greater kingdom.¹

Further, with a conviction of God’s initiative through his salvific promise (Isa
43:1-2), Daniel and his friends could even face death unafraid (Dan 3, 6).² Daniel boldly
declared which kingdom he was dedicated to: “In the days of these kings shall the God of
heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be
left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it
shall stand for ever” (2:44; cf. 7:27).

Recognition of the Sovereignty of God

Even before the captivity, it is easy to imagine that Daniel and his friends were
faithful in the midst of general apostasy in their homeland. That faithfulness becomes
evident through their experiences in Babylon.³ It is notable that their faithfulness did not
prevent them from being taken into exile, but they were willing to turn their national and
personal disaster into an opportunity to witness for their faith during their exile.⁴ What
casted Daniel and his friends to be faithful to God even in such trying circumstances?

If Daniel had not sensed a call from the sovereign God, he could not have
proclaimed God’s message or testified of God’s vision in the land of his exile. I would

¹Maxwell, 25.

²The missiological implications of these events will be discussed in the section entitled
“power encounters.”

³Shea, Daniel 1–7, 56.

⁴Ibid. Thus Shea says, “The faithfulness of these servants of God in even the most trying
times is one of the bright spots in the book of Daniel” (ibid.).
like to suggest that before a person comes to a personal awareness of God's call, one must, first of all, understand the sovereignty of God. Goff also emphasizes this point: "A key to understanding this [missionary] call is to understand the necessity of our sensitivity to His [God's] sovereign work in our lives."¹ It is also true that to be God's missionary, a "recognition of God's authority as the guiding principle for individual and collective living is sorely needed."² In like manner, Daniel and his companions could be faithful in their witness because they realized the sovereignty of God through the events of the exile in Babylon.

The human response to God's call is emphasized many times, but Scripture puts more emphasis on the sovereign God who does the calling.³ God allowed Daniel to be exiled, but it was in God's providence that Daniel would be a witness that would result in the salvation of nations. Daniel, at least partially, accepted God's call to work in a foreign court because he realized God's sovereign purposes were being fulfilled through the exile as predicted in prophecy.

¹William E. Goff, "Missionary Call and Service," in Missiology, 334.
³Goff, 337. Alan Neely says, "Though an emphasis on the sovereignty of God is frequently associated with Calvinism, which has shown ecclesiastical authoritarianism, double-edged predestination, and the repudiation of all human efforts to engage in mission and evangelism, but it is a mistake that any emphasis on God's sovereignty inevitably undermines missionary and evangelistic passion" (Neely, 899). Francis M. Dubose says that God sent a special word to the prophet addressing a specific situation regarding the salvation of the nations as well as Israel. In like manner, Daniel, as a prophet, could be aware of God's calling in just the same way that the other prophets experienced (Dubose, 46). Cf. Amos 3:17; Isa 6:8; Jer 1:7; Hag 1:12; Zech 2:9; 4:9; 6:15.
Spirituality

Another reason why God was able to use Daniel to achieve his salvific purpose was that Daniel took time to develop his spirituality. He was a spiritual man even in a difficult cross-cultural context. Daniel was designated as one who had “the spirit of the holy gods in him” by two heathen kings and one queen (4:8, 9, 18; 5:11). Daniel also possessed “an excellent spirit” (5:12; 6:3, KJV). Although “spirit” in the expression “an excellent spirit” in 5:12 is translated as “mind” (NAB, NIV), or “ability” (TEV), it seems to reiterate vs. 11 because it is connected with “the ability to interpret dreams.” Without spirituality, Daniel would not have been aware of God’s calling in his life or have been able to interpret the king’s dreams and visions.

Geoffrey Wainwright suggests that to improve spirituality one must have a “combination of praying and living.” In like manner, Daniel’s whole life was a process


2In the Theodotion version, it is rendered as “the spirit of God.” Compare this with Pharaoh’s designation of Joseph as “one in whom is the spirit of God” (Gen 41:38), suggesting that the spirit of God was the source of all the skills Joseph possessed (Robert Davidson, Genesis 12-50, Cambridge Bible Commentary [CBC] [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 247). In the Old Testament “to this Spirit is attributed all that surpasses the ordinary ability of man; for example Joseph’s gift of interpreting dreams (Gen 41:38), the outstanding craftsmanship of Bezalel (Exod 31:3), Samson’s prodigious strength (Judg 15:14)” (idem, Genesis 1-11, CBC [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 16). In Dan 4:9 Nebuchadnezzar used the same expression to designate the ability of Daniel to interpret his dream as having a supernatural origin. The usage of the plural “gods” in Dan 4:8 will be discussed in chapter 4.

3See Collins, Daniel, 249.

4Geoffrey Wainwright, Principles of Christian Theology, 2d ed. (New York: Scribners, 1977), 592. Edward Yarnold also defines the term in a similar way: “It is this embodiment of prayer in life that the NT writers describe in such phrases as ‘a living sacrifice,’ ‘spiritual worship’
of "spiritual formation" and reveals the importance of prayer in the life of a missionary. In the section below, I will discuss the prayer life of the missionary Daniel and will point out essential aspects of prayer for the spiritual formation of modern missionaries.

Purpose of Prayer

Daniel's prayer of praise in chap. 2 shows a missiologial perspective. As a missionary, Daniel looked beyond the concerns of his private life to include God's concern for the whole world. When Daniel and his friends were faced with the king's wrath and a decree that threatened to cut up their bodies and burn their houses, they prayed to "the God of heaven concerning this secret," because they did not wish to perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon (vs. 12).

---

1 Jim Plueddmann defines "spiritual formation" as "a process that takes place inside a person, and is not something that can be easily measured, controlled, or predicted," that is, "a lifelong process" (Jim Plueddmann, "Spiritual Formation," _EDWM_ [2000], 901-902). Derek J. Morris uses the term "spiritual discipline" instead of "spiritual formation" and defined it as a "practice, which places ourselves before God so that He can transform us" (Derek J. Morris, "Nurturing the Pastor's Spiritual Discipline of Prayer Through the Dynamic of Spiritual Direction," [D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987], 41). For further information on the historical development of the concept of spiritual direction in the Christian church, see ibid., 37-83; David Parker, "Evangelical Spirituality Reviewed," _The Evangelical Quarterly_ 63, no. 2 (Apr. 1991): 123-148; Adriaan Stringer, "Spiritual Formation," _Evangelical Review of Theology (ERT)_ 25, no. 2 (Apr. 2001): 107-112. For an Adventist perspective on spirituality, see Gorden R. Doss, "An Analytical Review of Christian Spirituality with Special Reference to the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987).

2 David Wells, "Prayer: Rebelling Against the Status Quo," in _Perspectives_, 144.

3 G. Arthur Keough says of the importance of group prayer: "Prayer—group prayer—is Heaven's ordained means of finding solutions to our problem" (G. Arthur Keough, _Let Daniel Speak_ [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986], 43).
When God sent his answer during the night, Daniel sang a song of joy to the God of Heaven. This praise to God not only comes in the form of a brief psalm, but also expresses some of the key theological concepts of history and prophecy.\(^1\) In the poem, Daniel expressed his understanding that God takes an active role in the nations because he can set up kings or he can depose them (vs. 21). God also makes known at times what will occur in the future in world events. He gives this knowledge and wisdom to his servants (vs. 21).

Although Daniel and his friends prayed during their personal crisis, the content of their praise indicates how they understood God and what kind of faith they had. In the song of praise, Daniel praised the divine attributes rather than thanking God for saving his life.\(^2\) As God revealed the content of the king’s dream, Daniel seemed to realize that God’s answer encompassed much more than just his fate (vss. 28, 30).\(^3\) Thus, it is evident that although Daniel began with a prayer on his own behalf because his life was in danger (vs. 18), the purpose of his prayer grew to include realization of God’s sovereignty over the history of the world (vs. 21).\(^4\)

---

\(^1\)Shea, *Daniel 1-7*, 136.

\(^2\)In Daniel’s prayer (vss. 20-21), God is honored for his “wisdom,” demonstrated by his knowledge of the dream, and for his great “power,” manifested by Yahweh’s sovereignty over the events of human history (Miller, 86).


\(^4\)Goldingay, *Daniel*, 131.
A Place for Prayer

When the presidents, governors, counselors, captains, and princes set a religious plot for Daniel by prohibiting prayer to any god except to King Darius (6:4-9), Daniel prayed in his chamber. Daniel most likely had set apart an “upstairs room” for his daily prayer in his house, a luxury only a few very high-ranking officials had (e.g., 2 Kgs 1:2; 4:10, 11). 1 Daniel was serious about prayer and his upstairs room provided an ideal place of “seclusion” 2 and “the quiet and privacy conducive to undistracted prayer.” 3 He could pray everywhere, but he took time to develop a deeper spirituality through his personal encounter with God in his personal chamber.

The expression “before his God” (qōdom ‘ēloheh, Dan 6:10, 11) also suggests that Daniel felt the “actuality of standing” in the presence of God while he prayed in his chamber. 4 The fact that the windows opened toward Jerusalem also indicates Daniel’s consciousness of “standing in front of God.” 5 Even though the temple had been destroyed, Daniel prayed with his face toward the place where God had dwelt.

---

1Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 92; Goldingay, Daniel, 129. Slotki explains the upper room: “This was not an attic but a room on the flat roof of the house. These rooms were, and still are, common in the East, being used as private apartments to which one retired when wishing to be undisturbed. They usually had latticed windows, which allowed free circulation of air” (J. J. Slotki, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with Introductions and Commentary [London: Soncino, 1978], 49).


4Goldingay, Daniel, 128.

5Praying towards Jerusalem came from the injunction in Solomon’s prayer, which was delivered at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:35, 38, 44, 48) (Miller, 182). Doukhan also...
Daniel's prayer chamber symbolizes Daniel's seriousness in prayer and his consciousness of standing in front of God. To Daniel, prayer was an expression of an abiding relationship and of a life of communion with God, undergirded by faith.

**A Regular Time for Prayer**

Daniel also had a lifelong habit of praying three times a day (6:10). Vogel argues that it was a clear "reference to the sanctuary service," not merely an instance of non-cultic, private religious activity, or custom. However, as Lacocque mentions, although the morning and evening times coincide with the two daily sacrifices in the Temple (Exod 29:39; 1 Chr 23:30), the time of sacrifice had no connection with the noon prayer.

Rogerson and McKay comment on the expression of praying three times a day in Ps 55:17 not as a reference to set hours of prayer, but as a comprehensive expression meaning "continually, at every moment of the day." However, praying three times a day points out that the direction of prayer to Jerusalem signified a gesture of hope, the hope of the exiled to return (Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 92-93).

1Vogel, 27.

2Lacocque, 114.

3Another ternary prayer is found only in Ps 55:17. For the origin of this custom, R. Samuel said in *Midrash Tehillim* that it was instituted by the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respectively (Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2004], 400, 401). The *Midrash* explains that King David said [in composing Ps 55:17], "I also shall pray evening, and morning, and at noon" (ibid.). Evening stands first because a day begins at sunset in the Bible (John W. Rogerson and John W. McKay, *Psalms*, CBC [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977], 35). In the New Testament, the apostles also observed the ninth hour [evening] as an hour of prayer (Acts 3:1; cf. 10:3, 30) and Peter went up to the housetop, about the sixth hour [noon] (Acts 10:9). Praying three times a day was a custom of early Christianity (see *Didache* 8, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray [LCL], 321).

4Rogerson and McKay, 35.
in Dan 6 should be interpreted literally because Daniel could not pray at every moment while serving in a heathen court.

The example of Daniel teaches us that we must integrate prayer into the rhythm of life itself.1 The expression “as he did previously” conveys the impression that it was a regular custom for Daniel to pray three times a day.2 Daniel’s prayer life demonstrates that this basic relationship with God had already been established in the habits of his life. Long before the plot was formed against Daniel, he had found prayer to be the vital ingredient in his busy life as a high-ranking official in Babylon.3 The narrative indicates that Daniel placed a priority on faithful contact with God in his cross-cultural missionary life.

A Visible Prayer Life

Some might ask why Daniel prayed openly even at the risk of his life (vs. 10). Daniel could have prayed in secret for a while, but when the king decreed the prohibition of prayer, to pray in hiding would imply that the king was greater than God.4 Leon Wood proposes a missiological reason from this scene:

1Ibid.


3Shea, Daniel 1-7, 121. Goldingay compares the three-times-a-day prayer life of Daniel with the prayer life of the psalmist in Ps 55:17 and suggests that the psalmist prayed three times a day because of the urgency of his personal situation (Goldingay, Daniel, 131).

If he should pray elsewhere, those knowing him and his habits, including especially his hostile colleagues, would think that he had ceased, and this would spoil his testimony before them. He had been an open witness before, both in word and life practice; he must continue now lest all that he had done before to influence others to faith in the true God should be for naught. The existence of a continued testimony was more important than the existence of his life.

Daniel’s habit of praying at the open window caused a crisis, but eventually the very same openness provided an opportunity that caused the heathen king to acknowledge and praise the living God (vss. 26, 27).

**Content of Prayer**

Daniel’s prayer in Dan 6 employs two verbs, “give thanks” and “pray (or ask),” which are two aspects of praying. The first verb expresses the gratitude of someone who has received something and the second one is the supplication of a person who has not received. In his predicament, why was Daniel giving thanks? Daniel’s thankfulness may have indicated his confidence that God would preserve him through this difficult situation. For Daniel, prayer was confident expectancy in God’s ability to accomplish his purpose (cf. Mark 11:24; John 11:41).

Another aspect of Daniel’s prayers appears in Dan 9. After the vision and its explanation in Dan 8, there was a conversation between the heavenly beings regarding the time period mentioned (vss. 13, 14) that was not explained by the angelic interpreter (vss. 15, 16). Gabriel’s interpretation concerning the kings, especially the king of the fourth
kingdom, caused Daniel to worry that the fulfillment of the prophecy in the book of Jeremiah might be delayed (vs. 27). In the center of that crisis, Daniel prayed and identified himself with the guilt of Israel (9:5).¹ Lament or confession is a prerequisite for missionaries, because it is hard to pray and be dedicated to the salvation of the lost without a bitter consciousness of their lostness and a sense of identification with them.

The content of Daniel’s prayer suggests that genuine praise also leads to a realization of God’s presence in this world and genuine confession leads the believer to praise the God who has promised restoration and new life.²

Manner of Prayer

In the book of Daniel, the first posture of prayer mentioned is kneeling (6:10). Kneeling was for private prayer,³ especially in circumstances of particular solemnity or need.⁴ Kneeling is a gesture of a slave or of a vanquished soldier, whose destiny now

¹Paul B. Peterson sees this “lament” as another common part of prayer from “exilic and postexilic confession of sin” (cf. Neh 9; Ezra 9) (Paul B. Petersen, “The Prayer of Daniel,” JATS 7, no. 1 [Spring 1996]: 58). He also proposes that Daniel’s two prayers illustrate basic themes in the book of Daniel: “The prayer of thanksgiving answers the question ‘Who’—Who is in charge, Who is able to reveal etc.—relevant to the first part of the book. The prayer of confession or lament fits into the question ‘How long’ of the second part (8:13; 12:6)” (ibid.).

²Ibid., 63.

³Hartman and Di Lella, 199. Cf. 1 Chr 23:30; Neh 9; Matt 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13.

⁴Goldingay, Daniel, 128. Cf. 1 Kgs 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60, 9:40, 20:36, 21:5. There are several modes of prayer in the Bible: Abraham prayed while falling facedown (Gen 17:3); Eliezer while bowing (Gen 24:26); David prayed while sitting (2 Sam 7:18).
rested in the hands of the master. As a sign of humility, the posture of kneeling shows how Daniel felt about his God.

In Dan 9:3, three additional activities are connecting with his prayer: fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. Gane sees these as symbols of “self denial,” which means outward expression accompanying application to God at a time of inner distress (cf. Ps 35:13; Isa 58:3, 5; Ezra 8:21; Dan 10:2-3, 12). Fasting is the preparatory stage for the central moment of appeal to God, and the other gestures express the prophet’s concern to God and his acknowledgment of dependence on God’s power. Consequently, this temporary suspension of normal activities functions as “a physical manifestation of anguish and affliction.”

---

1 Shea, Daniel 1-7, 94.
2 Roy Gane, Leviticus, Numbers, NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 405. Doukhan explains these as symbols of death and says, “The Israelite assumes the appearance of death when praying, for before God one is as naked and vulnerable as in death. As dust the person calls upon his Creator, the source of his life” (Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 137).
3 David Lambert, “Fasting as a Penitential Rite: A Biblical Phenomenon?” Harvard Theological Review 96, no. 4 (Oct. 2003): 482. David Lambert also says, “Fasting is an extreme, stark expression of one’s affliction that tends towards overstatement or exaggeration of the desperation of the situation in order to arouse attention and elicit sympathy” (ibid.). However, Tim Crosby suggests that “it wasn’t a total fast from all food, but from all ‘bread of pleasantness’ (literal translation), which might imply fats and sweets, as well as wine and meats” (Tim Crosby, “Wind in the Sails,” in Adventist Mission in the 21st Century: The Joy and Challenges of Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World, ed. Jon L. Dybdahl [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 199], 123). Thus it is possible that during the period of fasting Daniel took the “simplest of food, sufficient only to maintain his strength” (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:858).
4 Gane, Leviticus, Numbers, 405.
5 Lambert, 479. Together with the symbolic gestures, the language with which Daniel closed his prayer also indicates the earnestness and the intensity of his feelings: “O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay” (vs. 19) (Shea, Daniel, 7-12, 53).
According to the interpreting angel, Daniel’s humility (afflicting himself) before his God was valued (10:12), suggesting that Daniel’s fasting as a gesture of “self denial” was a genuine expression of his total dependence on God’s power. This same spirit should be an integral part of Christians’ prayer and appeal to the mercy of God.¹

**Basis of Prayer**

Daniel’s prayer was based on Scripture. In Dan 9, Daniel’s prayer was based on his understanding of Jeremiah’s seventy years prophecy. In vs. 2, the expression “by books” is a reference to the book of the Covenant (Exod 24:7) and the books of the Prophets including the book of Jeremiah.² Daniel’s awareness of the covenant of God in “the books” encouraged an intimate relationship and continuous prayer life with God from his youth to the end of his life. The conviction in his prayer was definitely based on the promises of God.

Goldingay catches this interplay between the words of Scripture and the words of prayer: “Scripture stimulates prayer. Prayer constitutes the appropriate response to Scripture”³ because prayer unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand and obey everything God commanded in the Bible.⁴ Thus, the best way to

¹Lambert, 491.

²Collins, 348. Many translators also think that it is a technical term for the holy books known to Daniel (Péter-Contesse, 231). Some versions interpret it as “the Scriptures” (NEB and NIV).

³Goldingay, Daniel, 264. Plueddmann also states that “prayer naturally reflects Scripture” (Plueddmann, 902).

⁴Plueddmann, 902.
facilitate spiritual formation is to make available the means of grace that God uses to promote the process of maturity. The primary means of grace is the Word of God.¹

Prayer for Corporate Sin

As discussed earlier, Daniel knew that the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 25:10-14) predicted that Israel’s exile would soon be finished. Through the study of Jeremiah’s prophecy, he could see God’s initiative in the process of salvation for his people. Based on recognition of a “great and awesome” and “covenant-keeping” God (Dan 9:4), Daniel recalled his people’s unrighteousness (vs. 7), identified himself with his ancestors (vs. 8), and then listed the sins of Israel one more time (vss. 10, 11).

The reason why Daniel mentioned the corporate sins is that he felt the need for forgiveness to cover these collective sins for himself and his countrymen, thus wiping out the shame of the past and restoring his people to God’s favor.² Miller notes the importance of the following order of prayer in Dan 9: “For only after the Lord is praised and sin confessed is the believer qualified to offer requests to the holy God.”³ Missiologically, this procedure is very important because it provides a lesson that as

¹Ibid.

²Shea, Daniel, 7-12, 50. The matter of corporate sins will be discussed again in the section dealing with “controversy between God and the powers of the evils” in this chapter. It is notable that although Daniel acknowledged the sins of Israel, he did not depend upon his ability to abolish the past sins of his nation (vss. 11, 12) and recited God’s mighty acts as the ground for his appeal (vss. 15, 16) with purpose to honor God’s name (vss. 17-19). It shows that “the purpose of prayer is not ultimately to achieve our agenda but the accomplishment of God’s purposes in a way that honors his name” (William D. Thrasher, “Prayer,” EDWM [2000], 782).

³Miller, 243.
missionaries pray to the Lord of harvest, they open themselves to any attitudinal or behavioral adjustment that God wants them to make.¹

In summary, the life of Daniel reveals essential aspects of prayer for spiritual formation and shows the relationship between prayer and the Word of God in spiritual formation. The prayer life of Daniel indicates that God used Daniel to achieve missio Dei because Daniel was committed to spiritual formation through prayer, based on Scripture, from even before the exile to the end of his life.

Commitment to a Holy Life

The expression “Daniel resolved not to defile himself” in Dan 1:8 is a prominent text that indicates Daniel’s conscious purposefulness to be holy in his cross-cultural context. Daniel’s commitment to holiness shows that he was a man of deep convictions and consciousness with the courage of a martyr.² Daniel decided to live undefiled in a way that included a deep realization of God’s call on his life even in the area of diet. From a missiological perspective, Daniel’s commitment to holiness allowed God to work through his consecrated life to save nations. I will discuss issues of holiness in cross-cultural contexts below under the subtitles: “Daniel’s decision to be holy”; “food issues”; and “relationship between holiness and physical health.”

¹Thrasher, 782.

²Pêter-Contesse, 15.
Decision to Be Holy

The main Hebrew root denoting holiness, qds, meaning “withheld from ordinary use,” “treated with special care,” “belonging to the sanctuary,” is an antonym of “defile,” g’l. The expression “to defile” carries the idea of making someone unclean or unworthy of being in God’s presence. The issue of holiness versus impurity must begin with understanding the holiness of God, who determines the standard for holiness (cf. Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:16).

Daniel does not clearly say why he thinks the king’s food and drink would defile him (1:8). The expression, “Daniel resolved not to defile himself,” however, offers a clue to Daniel’s motivation. The verb “defile” is used most often in connection with unclean food (Lev 11; Deut 14), blood ( Isa 59:3; 63:3; Lam 4:14), impure offerings (Mal 1:7, 12), and disqualification from the priesthood (Ezra 2:62; Neh 7:64). Since the term “defile” in Hebrew is normally used to refer to cultic pollution, its use here could designate Daniel’s aversion to the king’s food as being motivated by religious piety.

---


2Wright, “Holiness [OT],” 3:237. “Defile,” g ’l means “became (cultically) impure” or “make (cultically) impure” (Holladay, HALOT, s.v. “G’l.”).

3Peter-Contesse, 18.


5“Defile,” g ’l means “became impure” or “make impure” (Holladay, HALOT, s.v. “G’l”).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
It is interesting that defilement in Lev 11, caused by eating unclean meats, is opposed to holiness.¹ The distinction between clean and unclean meats reflects the perspective that human holiness reflects divine holiness: “be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:44). The holiness motif widens to the area of the preparation of meats, so that the Israelites or any alien among them must drain out the blood (Lev 17:10-14).² Furthermore, priests were required to abstain from “wine” and “strong drink” when they entered the sanctuary, so that they could distinguish that which was sacred from that which was not (Lev 10:8-11).³ From the discussion above, we see that Daniel’s rejection of the king’s food was an act of deciding to be holy as his God was holy.


²The laws of kashrut are literally laws of pots and pans, which designate Jewish dietary law. The word kosher actually means “fit” or “proper” according to Jewish law. The term treif, commonly used to indicate a food that is not permitted, actually refers to any meat that has not been killed according to the laws of kashrut (George Robinson, Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals [New York: Pocket Books, 2000], 247, 248). George Robinson proposes the following spiritual application of the Jewish dietary laws: “A kashrut-observing Jew is brought face-to-face with his belief in the Almighty every time he lifts a fork to his mouth or puts a box of cereal in his shopping cart. . . . Ultimately this consciousness of the presence of the ineffable is achieved by separating the world into the pure and impure, the sacred and the ordinary” (ibid., 253).

³Eyal Regev, “Priestly Dynamic Holiness and Deuteronomistic Static Holiness,” VT 51, no. 2 (2001): 248-250. See the causes of impurity concerning sacred space, sacred people, and sacred objects (Num 19:13); incest (Lev 18:22; 20:13); idolatry (Deut 7:25; 12:15; 17:4; 20:18; 25:16); Molech worship and sorcery (18:9-12; cf. Lev 20:2); animals which are unworthy for eating (Deut 14:3), or sacrificing (17:1); restoration of marriage in case the wife was already married (24:4); a male’s garment on a female, a prohibition that perhaps refers to pagan cults (22:5); and the use of dishonest measurement (25:15). In Ezekiel, the occurrences of abomination relate to: idolatry (5:11; 6:9; 7:20; 8:6, 12, 15; 21:18; 14:6) which desolates the heavenly holiness (43:8); incest (22:11; 33:26); moral sins of incest and injustice (18:13, 24); gentiles’ entry to the temple, which pollutes the sanctuary (44:6-8); the combination of idolatry and fornication (chap. 14); a combination of idolatry and immorality (22:2-3); and the tie between adultery, pollution of the sanctuary, and offering children as sacrifices to other gods (23:36-39).
However, in spite of pursuing a consecrated life, Daniel did not isolate himself in the heathen kingdom. He did not seek an easy escape from the conflict. Daniel shows that although “holiness is a growing and continuous experience” in God, growth in holiness does not necessarily entail a retreat into oneself, a search for one’s own salvation apart from others. Although God asks his mission agents to live consecrated lives in Scripture (2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 Cor 1:2), it is evident that the notion of holiness includes reaching out to a world in rebellion as well as being set apart from the world (2 Tim 1:9; John 17:6, 11, 14).

Daniel and his friends illustrate how missio Dei could be successfully accomplished through those who remained steadfast against being defiled even in a heathen court. Daniel and his friends worked hard to persuade the official, who was in charge of the food for foreign students, to give vegetables and water to them. Through this request for different food, they obtained a chance to express their faithfulness even in matters of diet (Dan 1:15).

Food Issues
Ritual pollution versus political allegiance

There are some basic issues concerning the use of the king’s assigned food and wine in Dan 1:8, 12. Ginsberg proposes that the assigned food and drink were not in

3 Dederen, 562, 563.
4 This topic will be discussed more in chapter 4.
according to Israel’s dietary laws and would consequently cause ritual pollution.\(^1\)

Fewell, however, points out some problems with this understanding of defilement as specifically cultic. She suggests that an aversion to the food on ritual grounds might be feasible in terms of meat, because of its kind (Lev 3:17; 11:1-47), or method of preparation (Lev 17:10-14), but the refusal of the wine makes no sense at all if the Levitical law is the assumed dietary guide.\(^2\) Thus, she suggests that Daniel’s rejection of the diet had more to do with the source of the food and states that the rejection was connected with the “political allegiance” imposed by Nebuchadnezzar.\(^3\) She concludes

\(^1\)For more discussion on this argument, see H. L. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1948), 256; Maxwell, 28, 29; “Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:760; Miller, 66, 67; Shea, *Daniel 1-7*, 60, 61; Henry Feyerabend, *Daniel Verse by Verse* (Ontario, Canada: Destiny/Arts International, 1990), 27.

\(^2\)Fewell, 18-21. She also points out that Dan 10:3 implies either that Daniel did not view meat and wine (also labeled desirable or delightful food) per se to be a problem of cultic defilement or that Daniel, in his later years, drastically relaxed his religious principles concerning diet (ibid.). Collins also makes a similar suggestion that “Daniel 10:3 clearly presupposes that Daniel normally partook of meat and wine when these are no longer furnished from the table of the king” (Collins, 143). In Dan 10:3, Daniel ate “no pleasant bread” and “no meat” and drank no wine. In Dan 1:12, the expression “vegetables to eat and water to drink” is quite similar with the food which Daniel took while he fasted in 10:3. Usually in a situation of deep sorrow or intense concern about a special matter, people in the Bible fasted (cf. Matt 9:15). It seems that there is a possibility of a connection between these two verses. The defiling nature of food eaten in exile could be unavoidable (cf. Ezek 4:13; Hos 9:3, 4). Baldwin also points out that choosing not to be ritually defiled by food is not an option for captives: “Daniel rejected this symbol of dependence on the king because he wished to be free to fulfill his primary obligations to the God he served” (Baldwin, 83).

\(^3\)Fewell, 17; W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1984), 25, 26. Phillip Davis voices the same concern: “The food and wine are the symbols of political patronage; to consume them would be tantamount to declaring complete political allegiance” (Phillip Davis, *Daniel* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985], 90-91). By comparing between “the Lord” in 1:2 and “my lord” in 1:10, Fewell concludes that the use of Adonai reflects the crux of Daniel’s dilemma—the acknowledgment of sovereignty (ibid., 20). To support her position, Fewell lists other examples from the Old Testament which show that eating from the king’s table symbolizes political covenant and compromise: when David stopped eating at Saul’s table, Saul surmised that David had rebelled against him (1 Sam 20:30-34); on the other hand, David demanded that the last
that “Daniel and his friends could confess allegiance to a higher authority and so preserve themselves from being completely consumed into Babylonian life.”

Against this reading, Donald E. Gowan raises the following question: “Is there any indication in chapters 1-6 that Daniel did not give the king political allegiance?” In fact, Daniel and his friends served in high positions in the heathen kingdom (3:48, 49; 6:1-3). Goldingay suggests that receiving their provisions from the palace, their service in the court, and by being given local names put them under pressure to assimilate. To Goldingay, Daniel’s abstinence symbolizes his avoidance of assimilation.

It is possible that the pressure of assimilation was religious as well as political. However, the theorists of assimilation as well as of political allegiance do not mention why Daniel and his friends asked for vegetables and water. I will discuss the reason in detail in the next section.

removing member of Saul’s family, Mephibosheth, had to eat at the king’s table (2 Sam 9:9-13) to prevent his rebellion; Jehoiachin, after the fall of Judah, spent his last days in captivity, eating from the Babylonian king’s table (2 Kgs 25:27-29) (Fewell, 16).

1Fewell, 20.
3Goldingay, Daniel, 8.
4Ibid., 19. Collins also put an emphasis on the tension between assimilation and separatism in the narratives in the book of Daniel. According to him, Daniel and his friends insisted on a limit to assimilation, although they were devoted subjects of the gentile kings and embrace much of the gentile culture. Thus, he sees Daniel’s decision as “a declaration of identity and an affirmation of the unconquered dignity of the exile” (Collins, Daniel, 146-147).
Idol worship versus true worship

The meat-wine association reminds one of the ritual meals taken in the context of a worship service in the Bible and also in ancient Middle Eastern cultures. Traditionally, Jews view wine consecrated by gentiles for idol worship as absolutely forbidden. Even wine processed or bottled by gentiles for regular use is equally forbidden in order to avoid the suspicion that it may be wine used in idol worship. Thus Leon Wood points out that partaking of such food would have been an indirect act of worshiping the Babylonian deities.

If the above rationale is correct, then why did Daniel request vegetables and water instead of clean meat or other drink? Doukhan draws a theological connection with creation from Daniel’s requirement of vegetables: “vegetables,” “given,” “to be eaten” (cf. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 17. Doukhan also proposes, “Their decision not to eat had to do with their faithfulness to God and their identity” (Doukhan, *Daniel*, 74). For an example of the meat-wine association in the ancient Near East, see *ANET*, 347.

---

1Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 17. Doukhan also proposes, “Their decision not to eat had to do with their faithfulness to God and their identity” (Doukhan, *Daniel*, 74). For an example of the meat-wine association in the ancient Near East, see *ANET*, 347.

2*Encyclopedia of Judaism* (EncJud), rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey Wigoder (London: Macmillan, 1989), s.v. “Wine.” George Robinson also says, “Wine is unique among fruit products, no doubt because of its ritual importance in Jewish practice. Because ancient pagans used wine in their rituals as well, it was necessary for Jews to supervise every aspect of the winemaking process, from the growing of the grapes through the bottling and shipping” (Robinson, 252).


4Wood, 37. Wood explains the reason as: “Food first dedicated to gods was thought to insure to the eaters the favor of those gods. Nebuchadnezzar, like other kings, would have insisted that all food coming from the royal kitchen should be so dedicated, that his government might be benefited. Everyone eating it, then, would have been considered as also desiring favor and thus giving recognition and obeisance to the Babylonian deities. In fact, the main reason for Nebuchadnezzar’s ordering that the imported youths eat this prescribed food may have been thus to elicit this recognition and obeisance. They were first given Babylonian names in the overall desire to make them good Babylonians, and now they were to give this degree of acquiescence to the Babylonian religion. Daniel and his friends clearly saw through these implications and recognized that they had a decision” (ibid.). Shea also explains the reason for Daniel’s decision with a connection to idol worship (Shea, *Daniel 1-7*, 61).
Gen 1:29). When Daniel asked for vegetables, it was a way for him to know that he would receive kosher food in the circumstance where he could not control his food sources. It seems evident from the fact that the vegetable diet (1:12, 16) to which he restricted himself in the beginning was not applied to the whole of his time at court when he could control the situation (10:3). However, it is notable that his choice to be vegetarian not only guaranteed the safest way to keep kosher, but also provided an opportunity to share an implicit testimony of his faith in the God of creation.

In summary, Daniel’s decision, in matters of food, to preserve holiness by eating vegetables and drinking water reinforced not only his religious loyalty to God and his opposition to idol worship, but also allowed him to witness to his Creator God under circumstances that he could not control.

---

1 Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 19. Doukhan portrays the king’s intention from the expression “the king determined them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank”: “The verb used here in the form wayeman (determined) has in the Bible no other subject but God Himself and appears otherwise only in a creation context (Jonah 1:17; 4:6-8). The unexpected use of that verb in relation to Nebuchadnezzar suggests that the king in ‘determining’ the menu takes the place of the Creator” (ibid., 17).

2 Baldwin, 179.

3 Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 19. For Jewish vegetarianism, see Jo Ann Davidson, “World Religions and the Vegetarian Diet,” *JATS* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 114-130; Milgrom, 208. Jewish vegetarians also recognize that the Hebrew Bible in Genesis indicated that the first human diet was vegetarian (Jo Ann Davidson, 119).
Holiness and Physical Health

Some scholars do not see Daniel’s request for vegetables as advocating natural foods, or as suggesting that a vegetarian diet provides superior nutrition. Instead, they just call it “a miracle story,” a view that is generally accepted in Christian circles. However, it is necessary to discuss the question: “Does the story also have a moral lesson about the matter of Christian identity?”

In response to Daniel’s request, the prince of the eunuchs was afraid that the result of the simple diet would cause Daniel and his friends to look worse than the other young men of their age (1:10). Daniel approached the guard whom the chief official had appointed over them and suggested a test for ten days (vs. 11). Some would suggest that the ten-day period would seem to be too short to bring about remarkable change. However, the focus should be on vs. 9: “God had caused the official to show favor and

1 Gowan, 46. Gowan says, “It was in spite of, not because of, what they ate that they proved to be healthier and wiser than any of the rest of the candidates for royal service” (ibid., 46-47). The term “vegetable” (zera’) means “seed of the field” or “seed for sowing” (Holladay, HALOT, s.v. “Zera’”). Wood interprets the word “vegetables” as “one which grows from sown seed” (Wood, 41). See also Edward J. Young, The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 46; James A. Montgomery, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel (New York: Scribner, 1927), 132.

2 Gowan, 47. For Gowan, keeping identity and accepting something definitive in different contexts seems to be a major concern (ibid., 47-49). Concerning this view, see Goldingay, Daniel, 25; Collins, 147. Gowan suggests that “diet has been a major issue in Christian history, but there has been and continues to be great disagreement over which points of doctrine are essential, and how much freedom one should have in making ethical decisions. Roman Catholics and Seventh-day Adventists are two examples of Christians for whom questions of diet have been important” (Gowan, 49).

3 Goldingay says, “Ten days simply suggests a period short enough not to arouse suspicion yet long enough for effects to be seen” (Goldingay, Daniel, 20). Shea believes that it is a reasonable period to show difference in health (Shea, Daniel 1-7, 61, 62). Among Adventist
sympathy to Daniel," reminding us that "the possibility of Daniel's remaining undefiled is based on God's grace as well as on Daniel's determination."1 The story affirms that when divine power is united with human effort, the result of such a test can be truly remarkable.2

After the ten-day test, the guard checked and found Daniel and his friends to be healthier and better nourished, so he continued to give them vegetables (vs. 16). If this test took place at the beginning of their royal education, the vegetarian diet would have been supplied for three years.3 By the end of the three years of education, the young captives go on to prove their intellectual superiority. Is there any connection between three years of vegetarianism and the excellence they demonstrated at the end of the three years of education? Although Harry Bultema suggests that moderation is not an issue in the context,4 Goldingay sees a relationship between holiness and health and their excellence: "Daniel and his friends in exile gained success in a way that avoided losing

health institutes in Korea, there are several that have ten-day health reform programs for their patients. Even ten days are enough to show results in healing.

1Goldingay, Daniel, 9. Carl F. Keil also speculates that the reason why Daniel held such a strong attitude and suggested a ten-day test was that "Daniel had received by secret revelation the assurance that such would be the result if he and his companions were permitted to live on vegetables" (Keil, 82). Originally this speculation came from John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:105. Walvoord also believes this theory (John F. Walvoord, Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation [Chicago: Moody, 1971], 40).

2"Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:760.

3According to Maxwell, Daniel's three years of education may have been, by modern calculation, less than two years (Maxwell, 46-47).

4Harry C. Bultema, Commentary on Daniel (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1988), 51.
holiness; they proved that holiness was the source of health, and that God was the source of wisdom and the power behind history."

Another question is, "How did Daniel know of the validity of a vegetable diet? Did he know that a meatless diet would be one of the conditions resulting from the Messiah’s coming (Isa 11:6-7; cf. Deut 8:7-10; 11:14; Amos 9:14-15; Jer 29:5)?" Did he know God’s concern for the health of the Israelites within the context of the divine-human covenant (Exod 15:26; Deut 7:11-15; cf. Lev 18:5; Deut 30:15-20; cf. 28:27, 35, 60, 61)? Although there is no clear explanation, it is possible that the “radical obedience” of Daniel and his friends caused the “rich reward” of physical health, divinely enhanced clarity of mind, and Daniel’s special access to the holy sphere of divine knowledge to enhance their witness in the foreign court (1:17; 4:8; cf. 4:9, 18).

In summary, although one of the primary claims in Dan 1 is the “general affirmation of the trustworthiness of God even in the remote and difficult circumstances of the exile,” an important aspect was the decision by Daniel and his friends not to be defiled in order to keep their religious identity as a special and divinely elected people.

---


2For more on Jewish vegetarianism, see Jo Ann Davidson, 119-124.

3Gane says that all of God’s commands are health-related in the extended sense because everything God’s people do impacts their health one way or another (Gane, Leviticus, Numbers, 210).

4Ibid., 209. For this radical obedience, Gane explains that “Leviticus 11 reminds us that he does not always provide detailed explanations for his commands” (ibid., 208).

5Towner, 27.
Further, even though the relationship between the requested food and their superior appearances is not clearly mentioned in the text, the results of their healthier appearance seem to indicate some merit for vegetarianism (1:15). It is also possible that God provided the better appearance and healthier bodies for Daniel and his friends so that they could witness through their superior physical health. Superior health could also affect the results of three years of intellectual training by giving additional opportunities for witness to Daniel and his friends. Daniel's radical obedience in terms of holiness, even in the area of diet, allowed him to be a healthy witness in a foreign nation.

Excellence of God's Agents

Excellence as a Gift of God

Daniel and his friends were "some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility" (1:3). They were "young men, without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace" (vs. 4). The list of their qualifications suggests that they had already received a considerable amount of education back in their home country. "In ancient times the sons of wealthy and noble families were usually educated in various disciplines." In addition to this former education, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his officials "to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians" (vs. 4).

---

1 Bultema, 51.

2 Maxwell, 23.
In this matter of education, we face a serious question. Did Daniel and his friends receive training in exorcism and soothsaying? Daniel and his companions were regarded as part of the wise men in the heathen kingdom (2:12, 13, 18). Further, Daniel was regarded as a chief of the wise (2:48; 5:11). The magicians, the enchanter (astrologers), the sorcerers, and astrologers (the Chaldeans) are listed in the category of the wise men.

1The terms “magicians,” “astrologers,” “sorcerers,” “Chaldeans” (2:2, KJV), and “soothsayers” (vs. 27) largely overlap in their function, although there are some differences. The term “magician” (hartom) means an “engraver,” “one possessed of occult knowledge” (Brown, BDB, s.v. “Hartom”). Strong translates it as a “horoscopist” in a sense of “drawing magical lines or circles” (James Strong, Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary [Strong], s.v. “Hartom”). The English term “magician” came from the Greek name magos, given to a member of a Median tribe called Magi or Magians who exercised priestly functions and practiced magic among the Iranian people (SDA Bible Dictionary, rev. ed. [1979], s.v. “Magicians”). For a wide range of vocabulary used with magic in the Old Testament, see Janne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Magic (OT),” ABD (1992), 4:468-471. Magic and divination use the movement of the heavenly bodies in order to gain religious wisdom and were widely practiced in connection with Babylonian religious activities (Miller, 72). Magic also employed rites and spells intended to heal or exorcise. Omens such as astrological phenomena were studied in order to understand the future and techniques, such as examining a sheep’s liver, were employed in decision making. Dream interpretation was another function wise men were to give help with (ibid.).

2The term “enchanter,” “aššāp,” is a lone word from the Assyrian “ašipu” which means “conjuror” and “necromancer” (Brown, BDB, s.v. “aššāp”). With their magic spells and incantations, enchanters were believed to be able to communicate with the spirit world (Miller, 73).

3The term “sorcerer” comes from “kišēp” meaning “practice sorcery” (Brown, BDB, s.v. “Kišēp”). Sorcerers usually practiced “sorcery” or “witchcraft” for the benefit of the king and the kingdom (Miller, 73). They professed to be able to produce magic spells (cf. Exod 7:11) (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:767).

4The term “astrologers” (“Chaldeans,” KJV) designates the members of an Aramaean tribe whose early settlement was in Lower Mesopotamia and who took over rule of Babylon when Nabopolassar founded the Neo-Babylonian dynasty (cf. 1:4; 5:30; 9:1) (Baldwin, 79). This term applies also to a class of scholars in the Babylonian court who were the foremost astronomers of their day (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:758) and to sorcerers, astrologers and magicians (2:2, 4, 5, 10; 3:8; 4:7; 5:7, 11) (SDA Bible Dictionary, rev. ed. [1979], s.v. “Chaldeans”). This name seemed to also designate a priestly work and office. As discussed, the name is connected with “astronomer” in Greek (Miller, 79). From the latter part of the eighth century B.C., the words Chaldean and Babylonian were becoming synonymous in biblical and part of the other texts (Richards S. Hess, “Chaldea. Chaldean,” ABD [1992], 1:886).
together with "diviner" (soothsayers)\(^1\) (2:12, 27, 48; 4:15; 5:7, 8; cf. 5:11). Although
divination, magic, and exorcism were widespread among the people of the ancient Near
East, it is a mistake to believe that the wise men of Babylon were only diviners and
magicians. It is important to understand what was involved in "the learning [sēpar] of the
Chaldeans" (1:4, KJV).\(^2\)

In Chaldean culture, learning was the privilege of the scribes because only they
were literate.\(^3\) Babylonian learning included vast areas of knowledge under the headings
of astrology and astronomy, extispicy (reading omens from entrails of animals, a form of
divination) and anatomy, medicine, mathematics, lexicography, theology, historiography,
and commentaries.\(^4\) Thus, it seems evident that any of these areas of scientific knowledge
could be involved in the course of learning undertaken by Daniel and his friends.

---

\(^1\)The term "diviner" (2:27) is rooted from "gāzār," meaning, "to cut," "to divide" (Brown,
*BDB*, s.v. "Gazar"). By recourse to various occult arts they made their computations, divinations,
means of divination of Babylonians were "extispicy"—the examination of the entrails of sacrificial
animals for ominous signs—and astrology (A. Kirk Grayson, "Mesopotamia: History and Culture
of Babylonia," *ABD* [1992], 4:775).

\(^2\)Sēpar," literally meaning "missive, document, and book," designates "writing and
speech" (Brown, *BDB*, s.v. "Sēpar").

\(^3\)Grayson, 4:772.

\(^4\)Ibid., 4:773. For an example, the Chaldeans were well known as "astronomers" in the
ancient world. The word "Chaldean" means "astronomer" in Greek (see footnote on the
Chaldeans above). King Nabonassar (747-734 B.C.) developed an accurate recording of
astronomical observations, which was recognized as a pivotal development in science by the
Greeks. About 700 B.C. Chaldean systematic stellar observations generated data that were
calculated accurately enough to predict solstices, equinoxes, eclipses, and other planetary
phenomena. By the seventh century B.C. even more accurate astronomical observations led to the
development of a fairly precise calendar (A. Bernard Knapp, "Mesopotamia, History of
[Chronology]," *ABD* [1992], 4:719).
From the fact that Daniel and his friends were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in all matters of wisdom and understanding and there is no mention of magical or supernatural activity in the passage (1:20), it is possible to speculate that the test in front of Nebuchadnezzar was scientific rather than religious.\textsuperscript{1} Because Daniel and his friends demonstrated excellence in the area of science, they were appointed and considered as members of the wise men in the Babylonian court.\textsuperscript{2} It is notable that they were placed in high positions of administration rather than in the religious system (2:48; 3:30).\textsuperscript{3}

At the same time, there is another possibility that Daniel and his friends studied the Babylonian polytheistic literature because the religion of Mesopotamia was closely bound up with its culture as a whole, thus even the scientific literature found application in the ritual needs of court, priesthood, and laity.\textsuperscript{4} Baldwin explains this in a missiological perspective: “In order to witness to their God in Babylonian court they had to understand the cultural presuppositions of those around them, just as the Christian today must work hard at the religions and cultures amongst which he lives, if different thought-worlds are

\textsuperscript{1}“Daniel,” \textit{SDA Bible Commentary}, 4:763.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 169, 170.
ever to meet." However, based on Daniel’s handling of the food issue (1:8), it is not necessary to suppose that they allowed their study to undermine their faith.

A most impressive thing is that “what the Babylonians think to be the result of their own effort is, in actuality, the result of God’s intervention.” Daniel knew that it was God who was the provider of grace, wisdom, and protection, so he continually witnessed to the superiority of his God in the heathen court (1:9, 17; 2:28-30, 45; 6:22). Excellence in service was a gift of God as part of his strategy to reach the people in the heathen court to achieve *missio Dei.*

**Service in the Heathen Kingdom**

Ironically, the four Hebrew youths, who refused to religiously align themselves with the king by their decision on the food issue, were chosen for royal service because of their excellence (1:19). After the interpretation of the king’s dream in Dan 2, Nebuchadnezzar placed Daniel in a high position as ruler over the entire province of Babylon and of all its wise men. The king also appointed Daniel’s friends as administrators over the province of Babylon (vss. 48, 49; 4:9). Belshazzar appointed Daniel as the third ruler in the kingdom (5:29). Darius appointed Daniel as one of the

---

1Baldwin, 80, 81.

2Ibid.

3Fewell, 22.

4It is also notable that the Babylonian king and queen compared his wisdom to that of the gods (4:9, 18; 5:11).

5Before Belshazzar appointed Daniel, there is a hint that Daniel had received another government position. In 8:27, Daniel was exhausted and lay ill for several days because he was
three highest administrators of the kingdom (6:2).¹ These appointments show Daniel’s
excellence in service that then provided opportunity to witness to the superiority of his
religion. Daniel’s moral excellence, honesty, and the protecting power and care of his
God were further illustrations of the superiority of the living God.

Even after the failure of Israel to be part of God’s purposes, God transformed
Daniel and his friends into competent government administrators and counselors who
allowed God to work through them to achieve his purpose for Babylon as well as for his
own people.² Their excellence was God’s means of demonstrating what “the other
prophets have in mind when they speak of Israel and nations.”³ Perhaps that is why
Daniel was highly esteemed by God (9:23; 10:11).

appalled by the vision that was beyond his understanding. Then he got up and went about “the
king’s business.” What was “the king’s business”? Daniel received his second vision in the third
year of King Belshazzar (8:1). From the conversation between the queen and Belshazzar, it is
clear that Daniel did not serve the king directly in the court (5:10-12). Daniel must have been
engaged in some kind of work on the government’s behalf during the time of Belshazzar. Miller
suggests that “his assignments evidently were made not by Belshazzar but by his father,
Nabonidus, who had served with Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s administration” (Miller, 237). See
also Collins, 342.

¹Perhaps Darius had heard of the honor that Belshazzar had bestowed on Daniel the night
before the fall of Babylon or perhaps he recognized Daniel’s prominent capability. Further, from
the expression, “so that the king might not suffer loss,” it hints that another reason for the
appointment of Daniel was because the king trusted Daniel’s honesty. It also is interesting that
Darius chose Daniel in spite of the fact that he already recognized the religious background of
Daniel: “The king said to Daniel, ‘May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!’” (vs.
16).

²Bultema, 16. Bultema points out this aspect clearly: “Before Nebuchadnezzar he stood as
a supplicant, before Belshazzar as a fearless and relentless judge, before his God he cast himself
down as being deeply guilty together with all his guilty people, but before Darius he declared his
innocence and dared with boldness to testify from out of the lion’s den that even God had found
no guilt in him” (ibid.).

³Oswalt, “Mission of Israel,” 94.
In summary, according to the book of Daniel, excellence in the lives of the four young men was a gift given by God rather than by the fine Babylonian education or the former training in Israel. God shares the gift of excellence with those who dedicate their lives to achieve his salvific purpose for the nations. Through their excellent service in foreign courts, Daniel and his friends showed what God wanted to achieve through the excellence the whole nation of Israel for the nations.

**Dreams and Visions in the Book of Daniel**

There are twenty-six occurrences of dreams and thirty occurrences of visions in the book of Daniel, indicating that the book of Daniel is a major resource for the study of dreams and visions in the Bible. Dreams and visions functioned as an important means to convey the messages of God to heathen kings as well as to Daniel. The book of Daniel also contains guidelines for interpreting dreams and visions, and confirms that dreams and visions have validity as effective means of fulfilling God's strategy.

To understand these aspects of dreams and visions missiologically, I will look at two areas in the book of Daniel: (1) the dreams and visions of the heathen kings; and (2) the dreams and visions of Daniel.

---


2In the book of Daniel dreams and visions are used as synonyms. See Dan 1:17; 2:28; 4:9; 7:1. Compare the dream of the heathen king and its interpretation by the servant of God with Joseph's case (Gen 41).
Dreams and Visions of the Heathen Kings

Dreams of Nebuchadnezzar

Dream giver

To achieve missio Dei, God revealed his will to the heathen kings, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, through dreams and visions (chaps. 2, 4, 5). Dreams and visions were prevalent throughout antiquity. In the Ancient Near East, the dreams experienced by kings were considered a royal privilege. People often slept near a temple or holy place in the hope of receiving dreams from their gods. Thus, Gerhard Pfandl says, "Possibly, because of the Babylonian preoccupation with dreams, God chose this means to communicate with Nebuchadnezzar."4


3 Gerhard Pfandl, Daniel: The Seer of Babylon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 22.

4 Ibid., 22. However, the elements of dreams that dominated in antiquity—the riotous superstition, perversion, curiosity, and obsession with one's fate—are lacking in the Bible. The biblical description of dreams and visions is restrained and sober (Richard D. Love, "Dreams and Visions," EDWM [2000], 292).
After dreaming, Nebuchadnezzar’s mind was troubled and he could not sleep because he remembered the fact that he had dreamed, but could not remember the content.\(^1\) Walvoord explains this as part of God’s intervention just as in the case of Ahasuerus’ sleeplessness (Esth 6).\(^2\) The use of plural “dreams” also parallels Pharaoh’s dreams.\(^3\) Just as Pharaoh’s two dreams were given to stress that “the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon” (Gen 41:32), so God impressed Nebuchadnezzar with the dreams to show his sovereignty.

In Dan 2:29, Daniel also pointed out that the reason why God gave the king dreams was because the king’s mind had turned to things to come before he dreamed. This suggests that God had revealed the dream to Daniel to satisfy Nebuchadnezzar’s desire to know the future.\(^4\) It shows that God gives dreams even to heathen kings if they will contribute to his purpose.

Purpose of dreams

When Nebuchadnezzar asked the wise men to tell him the content of the dream and its interpretation (2:2, 3), they answered that no one could do such a thing except the gods, who do not live among men (vs. 11). Daniel agreed with the honest confession of the wise men by pointing out that there was “a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (vss. 45, 46).

---

\(^1\) Baldwin, 85, 87.

\(^2\) Walvoord, 47.

\(^3\) Some scholars believe that the use of plural “dreams” (2:1) indicates a state of dreaming rather than several dreams (Stephen R. Miller, 77; Montgomery, 142; Young, 56). However, that argument does not answer the question as to why the king used the singular form in chapter 4.

\(^4\) Stephen R. Miller, 90.
Daniel's answer clearly indicates that the purpose of the dreams was to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar God's sovereign plan for the world.

In chap. 4, after giving the interpretation of another dream, Daniel again revealed that the purpose of the dream was to bring Nebuchadnezzar to the point where he would "acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (vs. 25).

The verdict of the watcher also declares another purpose: "The holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men" (vs. 17, emphasis supplied). In other words, the verdict in the king's dream was for "the living," which means that "God's dealings with Babylon and its king were to be an illustration to other nations and their kings of the results of accepting or rejecting the divine plan."¹

The verdict was also for the king himself. Although the verdict predicted a calamity because of the king's pride, a second chance was offered if he might repent. After the seven years of calamity, when the king repented and acknowledged the sovereignty of God (4:34), God's purpose was achieved.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar were salvific means used by God to bring him and the people of his nation to recognize and praise the sovereign God.

¹"Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:790.
Vision of Belshazzar

The vision of the letters on the wall for Belshazzar illustrates the same purpose God had in sending the dreams to Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar's wise men failed to interpret the meaning of the writing (5:8). Daniel, who was invited to interpret the writing, recalled the case of Nebuchadnezzar in chap. 4 and condemned the king (vss. 18-23). Although the great Nebuchadnezzar had repented and submitted to Yahweh's sovereignty, Belshazzar, who was hardly worthy to be compared with the earlier king, did not. Then Belshazzar's Babylon was numbered, weighed, and divided (vss. 25-28). That very night he was slain (vs. 30).

Although the vision on the wall predicted the final verdict for the destiny of Belshazzar, it was also for all the participants of the banquet. Thousand of nobles witnessed the content of the vision and listened as Daniel interpreted it and clearly pointed out its divine source: "the Most High God" (vss. 23, 24). Although the king was slain that very night, some of survivors among the participants of the banquet would witness to the message of God's judgment and sovereignty.

Role of the Interpreter

God gave dreams to Nebuchadnezzar, but the next morning he could not even remember the content of the dreams in Dan 2. The wise men of the Babylonian court

---

1Larry Richards regards this narrative as a miracle (Larry Richards, Every Miracle and Wonder in the Bible [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998], 147; see also Montgomery, 264. However, in a sense of "something seen" or "appearance," I consider the handwriting on the wall as a vision (cf. Lacocque, 95; see also definition part).

2Stephen R. Miller, 162.
acknowledged their limitation, but God prepared an interpreter for the king. In the heathen court, Daniel acknowledged that the interpretation came from God (vs. 28).

In chap. 4, the king remembered the content of the dream but the wise men again failed to reveal its meaning. The failure of the other wise men once again heightened the challenge to Daniel, who already had a reputation because of his special divine gift (vs. 8). Daniel received another opportunity to witness to the fact that his ability to explain the meaning of dreams came from divine revelation.

Before God gives a dream, he prepares an interpreter. Without Daniel, no one in the court could have understood God’s message contained in the dream. The book of Daniel shows clearly that the role of the interpreter is just as important as the content of a dream.

In summary, through the dreams and the interpretations, God revealed his sovereignty over world history, and caused Nebuchadnezzar to worship and acknowledge him (Dan 2, 4). In Dan 5, God used a vision to declare his judgment on Belshazzar and to reveal his sovereignty in the world. It is notable that God uses dreams and visions to reveal his salvific purpose and his sovereignty even over heathen kings. However, the role of the interpreter is often just as important as the content of the dream or vision. The nations need God’s interpreters to help them understand his message for the world.

1Goldingay, Daniel, 91.

2In some cases in the Bible, dreams have been used by God to give information to Gentile rulers such as Pharaoh (Gen 41:1-8). The order is also notable: after he prepares his agent as an interpreter, he reveals his purpose to the heathen king through dreams and visions. In the case of Abimelech, he realized the meaning right after the dream.
Dreams and Visions of Daniel

Origin

Just as Nebuchadnezzar received dreams in Dan 2 and 4, Daniel also received a dream. In his dream, "visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed" and "he wrote down the substance of his dream" (7:1), showing a link between the content of the dream (what has been revealed) and its communication (what has been recorded). The word, "substance" (reas) literally means "the head [chief]" of the words (or matters), which denotes the "essence" or "foremost details" of what Daniel had seen. From this expression, it is possible to ascertain that Daniel was declaring the authority of the content of his dream, which came from God.

The parallelism of the expression, "consider the message and understand the vision" (9:23), suggests that the "vision" was used synonymously with the "message." The word "consider" means that "the prophet was admonished to give careful attention to

1Daniel used the term "vision" again in vs. 2, which implies that he used the two terms, dream and vision, interchangeably (Hartman and Di Lella, 221). In 10:1, Daniel used the term "revelation" and in 10:21 and 11:2, "truth." Chap. 9 seems to be a further explanation of the vision of chap. 8. Chaps. 10-12 are revelations through angels.


3Brown, BDB, s.v. "Rō's.

4Ibid.

5Stephen R. Miller, 194.

6Ibid., 252.
the revelation” because “Gabriel had come from God’s presence with an answer to Daniel’s prayer.”¹ This shows that through God’s use of a heavenly interpreter, Daniel was confirming the authority of the message in the vision.²

**Sphere of Influence**

The scope of Daniel’s vision is universal. In the opening scene, “there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea” (7:2). The four winds personify the four corners of the world (Jer 49:36; Zech 6:5, 6), which specifically designate “political activity in various parts of the world.”³ The sea is symbolic of the nations of the world—the “great sea of humanity” (see Rev 17:15; cf. Isa 17:12; Jer 46:7).⁴

The vision ends with a description of an everlasting kingdom of the Most High where “all rulers will worship and obey him” (Dan 7:27). The expression “all rulers” gives a hint of the universal purpose of mission, because it presupposes the proclamation of the gospel to the nations and the repentance of some rulers. It is evident that Daniel’s vision was universal rather than merely local.

¹Ibid. In the vision of chap. 10, a supernatural being told Daniel in similar words, “Consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you” (vs. 11).

²A literary device like the conversation between Daniel and his interpreter within the vision had already been used by Ezekiel (Ezek 40:4, 45; etc.) and Zechariah (Zech 1:9f; 2:2f; etc.). See Hartman and Di Lella, 220.


⁴“Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:820. Goldingay explains that “four winds and four creatures suggest the world-encompassing totality of divine power and disorderly energy” (Goldingay, *Daniel*, 160).
Limitation of Understanding

After the vision of the four beasts and a little horn, Daniel kept the vision to himself, although he was shocked by the contents (7:28). The expression “keep the vision to himself” (see also Gen 37:11) indicates that Daniel was concerned about discovering its meaning (cf. Luke 2:51).1 Although God allowed Daniel to understand visions and dreams of all kinds (1:17) and a heavenly interpreter gave a detailed explanation of the visions (2:23-27; 9:23-27), there were some aspects of the vision Daniel could not understand. Daniel had to pray to seek wisdom from God to understand and then wait until the answer came. For the vision of Dan 8, although the answer was given to Daniel (9:23), he still could not figure out all the aspects of the vision (12:8), indicating that the human interpreter must humbly recognize that there is a limitation to understanding God’s revelation given through dreams and visions, even those contained in the Word of God (cf. 2 Pet 3:16).

In summary, dreams and visions should be validated in a way to prove that the content and the origin are from God. It should also be remembered that Daniel could not understand all the details of his dream and visions, although he interpreted dreams and visions for others. Every interpreter of dreams and visions, and those who interpret the Word of God, should humbly acknowledge that only the God of Heaven can reveal the secret things of God.

1Goldingay, Daniel, 182.
Guiding Principles

From the above discussion, there are four principles that can guide us when dreams and visions are used as an instrument to convey God's purpose. First, in the book of Daniel, either the person receiving the dream or the interpreter prepared by God to explain the dream emphasized the importance of the content of the dreams or visions. "The content of the message received from God" should be the "real object of attention."\(^1\)

Second, Daniel's dreams and visions usually involved an encounter with a supernatural being when communication took place. This aspect of personal encounter with a supernatural being can distinguish such dreams from common, or self reflective dreams.

Third, those who receive dreams or visions never interpret them by themselves. God provided an interpreter after every vision, although sometimes there was a delay until God sent his interpreter. The role of an interpreter is as essential as the content of the dreams and visions.

Finally, those who received dreams and visions often could not understand what they saw. Thus an attitude of humility and a realization that only God can give the interpretation of dreams and visions should be top priority for those who are engaged in cross-cultural ministry in areas of the world where dreams and visions are important (2:28).

\(^1\)George E. Rice, "Spiritual Gift," in *Handbook*, 622. The recommendation of Deut 18:22 is a safeguard whenever physical symptoms occur: "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him."
Spiritual Conflict in the Book of Daniel

In the book of Daniel, the concept of spiritual conflict between God and the powers of evil is a very distinctive theme. In the vision of the four beasts and the Son of Man, a description is given of the persecution of the saints by the little horn (7:25) who will also speak against the Most High. In the vision of chap. 8, the little horn casts down the sanctuary and its system and truth to the ground (vss. 11, 12). The vision of chap. 9 prophesies an attack by one who causes desolation of the sanctuary (9:26, 27). The vision of chaps. 10-12 deals with a great war (10:1). Some significant aspects of spiritual conflict between God and the powers of evil appear in chap. 10 (vss. 13, 20-21). The prophecies of Daniel are the divine portrayal of the "the age-old conflict between good and evil."¹

Because of its common occurrence in many parts of the world, the issue of spiritual conflict is of great concern to missiologists as well as missionaries. In an effort to build a biblical foundation and understanding, such missiologists as Wagner and Gimenez quote Dan 10:13, 20, 21 as supporting references for regional or territorial spirits. However, there have not been sufficient or detailed exegetical studies on this issue.²


Thus, it is the purpose of this section to survey the concept of spiritual conflict in the book of Daniel to gain a biblical understanding of this topic. In this section, I will discuss: (1) spiritual conflict in the experience of the exile; (2) the role of supernatural beings in spiritual conflict; (3) and the contents of spiritual conflict such as the battlefield, major issues, and weapons.

**Spiritual Conflict in the Experience of the Exile**

**Nebuchadnezzar’s Awareness**

**Military encounter**

The concept of spiritual conflict is traced from the beginning of the book of Daniel. The book begins with a military encounter: Babylon against Jerusalem, but it is possible to trace another conflict—a universal one where Babylon is contrasted with Jerusalem in a spiritual dimension. Shinar (Dan 1:2) is related to the biblical episode of Babel (Gen 11:2; cf. Isa 11:11; Zech 5:11). In the narrative of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), human beings decided to build a tower to reach to heaven’s gate to make a name for themselves. Babel thus became a biblical symbol for the world below usurping power that belongs exclusively to the One above. Later the prophets used the same theme as the Babylonian threat became more precise. For example, Isaiah pointed out specifically the symbolic

\[\text{It is the area known to the Mesopotamians as “the land of Summer and Akkad.” In it were found the cities Babel (Babylon), Accad (Agade), Erech (Uruk), and possibly Calneh (James R. Davila, “Shinar,” } ABD [1992], 5:1220). \text{ See also Doukhan, } Secrets of Daniel, 13.\]

\[\text{2Doukhan, } Secrets of Daniel, 13.\]

\[\text{3Ibid.}\]
aspects of Babylon as a satanic representative who is against God (Isa 14:4, 12-15; cf. Jer 50:17-40; Ezek 31).

The same dimension is pictured throughout the book of Daniel. After Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, he took the vessels from the house of God to the land of Shinar to the house of his god (Dan 1:2) as a gesture of his god's victory over the Lord God of the Jews.¹ Hiebert categorizes this perspective as a tribal religious worldview: "When a community is defeated, the people are expected to change their allegiance to the stronger god and serve him."² Compare the way that the Arameans viewed their battles with the Israelites (1 Kgs 20:23-30) as a conflict between each nation's gods: "Their [the Israelites'] gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us" (vs. 23).

¹Maxwell, 15.

²Paul Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare and Worldview," ERT 24, no. 3 (July 2000): 247. In his article Hiebert introduces three worldview perspectives underlying the debate in the West regarding the nature of spiritual warfare: (1) modern supernatural/natural dualism which denies the supernatural world as secularism spread; (2) tribal religions which see the earth and sky as full of beings (gods, earthly divinities, ancestors, ghosts, evil shades, humans, animals and natural spirits) that relate, deceive, bully and battle one another for power and personal gain; (3) cosmic dualism which was shaped in culture by an Indo-European worldview. See more for the Indo-European myth in idem, Anthropological Reflections on the Missiological Issues (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 203-215. According to Hiebert, "many current Christian interpretations of spiritual warfare are based on an Indo-European worldview which sees life as a cosmic battle between God and his angels, and Satan and his demons for the control of people and lands" (Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare," 249). The battle ranges over sky and earth. Intense prayer, however, is necessary to enable God and his angels to gain victory over the demonic powers, because evil always rises again and attacks good now and in the future. The result is in doubt because Satan is considered to have equal opportunity and means (ibid.).
Deportation

King Nebuchadnezzar’s deportation to “bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility” to stand in the king’s palace was based on the same perspective (1:3).¹ In fact, deportation had been also employed earlier during the era of Sargon II, the king of Assyria, who forcibly transferred Israelites to the eastern regions of Assyria and replaced them with Assyrian settlers of Babylonian origin.² The reason for the Assyrian deportation was to put down rebellious elements and to provide labor for major building projects or development of uncultivated land to provide enough food for the increased population within the empire.³ Unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians did not repopulate the land with other tribes of the empire, since the Babylonian deportation policy was mainly directed towards those who were skilled and who could prove their usefulness to the Babylonians.⁴

Although the major purpose for the deportation in the book of Daniel was a practical one (training the young men to be leaders who would be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar), there are other aspects that hint at a religious reason for the deportation

¹In fact, Nebuchadnezzar made two further trips to Jerusalem and carried many Israelites away to Babylon where they became servants to him and his sons (2 Chr 36:20; cf. 2 Kgs 25:21; Jer 41:10).

²Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 15.


of Israelites: Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple of God (2 Kgs 36:18, 19); he carried all the articles of the temple of God to Babylon and put them in the treasure house of his god (Dan 1:2). Thus, it is possible to argue that Nebuchadnezzar intended to make the influence of the Hebrews’ tribal gods powerless and wanted to prove his superiority in religion as well as politics through the process of deportation (cf. 2 Kgs 18:32, 33-35).¹

In conclusion, Nebuchadnezzar seemed to consider his military encounters with other nations as religious affairs. In his way of thinking, he believed that his god proved to be higher than the God of Israel through the process of deporting the Israelites and by the fact that he was able to take the articles of God’s temple. Thus, the Bible symbolizes Babylon as having a spiritual dimension beyond its physical locality (Isa 14: Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 14, 15, 21).

**Daniel’s Awareness**

**Military encounter**

Superficially, in the first narrative of the book of Daniel, it appears that the victory belonged to Nebuchadnezzar, but that was not the end of the story.² The exile must be

---

¹Hiebert’s explanation on the tribal view of spiritual conflict gives another insight into the reason for carrying captives to a different place: “Gods, spirits and ancestors reside in specific territories or objects and protect their people who reside on their lands. Their powers do not extend to other areas. When people go on distant trips, they are no longer under the protection of their gods” (Hiebert, “Spiritual Warfare,” 247).

²As mentioned already, every battle Israel fought in the conquest of Canaan was won or lost on the basis of spiritual considerations (Warner, “Spiritual Warfare,” 902, 903). During the theocratic period of Israel’s history, wars were called the Lord’s wars (Exod 17:16; Num 21:14; 1 Sam 18:17; 25:28) and Israel’s enemies were God’s enemies (Judg 5:23, 31). In like manner, Israel’s victories are also attributed to God and are due to their faithfulness to God and his laws (Deut 20:1-4; Josh 10:10, 11, 15; 23:3, 5-13) (see Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections, 208).
considered in the light of God's sovereignty (1:2). It is notable that the original word "Lord" in vs. 2 is not *Yahweh* but 'adōnay, which means "owner, master, or sovereign." By using this expression, Daniel emphasized "the sovereignty of Yahweh," which is a dominant theme in the book of Daniel, even though he was in exile and lived under the influence of the dominant religion of Babylon. The rest of the story in the book of Daniel thus shows that Daniel was aware that the exile was not a failure on God's side but was caused by Israel's unfaithfulness. Daniel grasped this view in contrast to the widespread worldview that battlefield victories indicated superior gods.

The prayer in chap. 9 also indicates that Daniel knew that the reason for the exile was Israel's sinfulness and not because his God was inferior to the Babylonian gods (9:5-13). Daniel thus confessed his sin and the sin of his people as he prayed for restoration (vs. 20). In Daniel's worldview, God could allow his people to be defeated if it would turn them from their sinfulness. As noted above, Daniel prayed for the corporate sins of his people when he asked God for the restoration of his city and temple because he understood the reason for the exile (cf. Lev 26:40-46). For him, the issue was not a matter of defective divine power, but the restoration of the broken relationship between God and the Israelites.

---

1 *Strong*, s.v. "'adôn."

2 Stephen R. Miller, 58.

3 Although, in the Old Testament the surrounding nations saw Israel's defeat as evidence that their gods were more powerful, the Old Testament writers are clear—Israel's defeats are not at the hand of pagan gods, but are the judgment of Yahweh for their sins (Judg 4:1-2; 6:1; 10:7; 1 Sam 28:17-19; 1 Kgs 16:2-3; 2 Kgs 17:7-23) (Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare," 250).
Final victory

Daniel not only understood that the reason for the exile was the failure of his people, but he also recognized that there was a spiritual realm beyond earthly circumstances. During political and religious upheavals, innocent individuals, such as Daniel and his friends, faced much suffering and encountered various pressures that were intended to force them to give up their faith by forcing them to eat the king’s food, by changing their names, by bowing to the golden image, and by Darius’ decree against worship.¹ Further, in Daniel’s vision about the future, the suffering and defeat of the saints (7:21, 25; 8:12; 12:1) and the temporary victory of the little horn over the saints (7:21; 8:12) are prophesied.

Because of the visions Daniel had received, he knew that final victory would be given to the saints after the end of the eschatological judgment of God (7:22, 26-27). Even in the desperate situation of the exile, Daniel and his friends could remain faithful to their God because they understood the universal dimensions of the exile, in which the sovereign God was in full control of human history, and because they looked forward to God’s final victory for the saints in the end of time.

¹The issue of using changed names will be discussed more in the next chapter in the section of “identification.”
Supernatural Beings in the Spiritual Conflict

Angelic Beings

Daniel saw that behind the struggle on earth was a vital conflict taking place at the cosmic level “in the heavenlies,” in which angelic beings also had their part. The book of Daniel introduces angelic beings and lists several of their functions such as interpreter (chaps. 7-12), deliverer (3:25, 28), watcher (4:17), protector (6:22), and assistant of God in his heavenly council (7:10). The word “angel” (mal’ak) commonly means “messenger,” one who is sent with a message. Sometimes the word refers to prophets (Isa 44:26) and others fulfilling the function of a “messenger” (see Num 20:14; 21:21; Deut 2:26; Josh 6:17, 25; 7:22; Judg 11:12-14, 17, 19; 1 Kgs 20:2, 5, 9; 2 Kgs 19:14; Isa 30:4; 33:7; Nah 2:14). An angel is defined as “a supernatural being sent by God to men, to counsel, warn, comfort, direct, and assist them.”

---

1Baldwin, 165. Ferch also points out the relationship between heaven and earth in the book of Daniel: “There is a definite link between the two planes of heaven and earth. Activities and events on either plane relate to and affect the other. The connection between heaven and earth is close; God is in full control” (Ferch, “Authorship,” 51).


The references to angels in the book of Daniel are quite consistent with the whole biblical picture of angels. Not only are angels identified with a personal name, but they also play important roles in the ongoing spiritual battle.

The fourth being

The appearance of supernatural beings in the book of Daniel is notable in the case where Nebuchadnezzar identified the fourth person in the furnace as a celestial being (3:28). When the king saw the fourth being in the furnace, he described him as one who “looks like a son of the gods” (3:25). The king designated the being as an “angel” who was sent by God to deliver his servants (vs. 28). It is not clear why Nebuchadnezzar was able to perceive that this supernatural being was a divine being. However, the king clearly understood that “the son of gods” was not his god, but a supernatural being connected with the God of the three Jewish youths. Although Nebuchadnezzar had a polytheistic background, the context reveals that the king acknowledged the superiority of the God of Israel by witnessing the presence of a divine being in the furnace.

The story of protection of Daniel’s three friends in the furnace seems to indicate that the fourth being was God or his representative who came as promised to protect the

---

1Alomia, 440.

2The “son of gods” [Son of God, KJV] has received various interpretations. For the various translations and interpretations, see Ferch, “The Apocalyptic Son of Man in Daniel 7”; “Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:785; Stephen R. Miller, 123; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 71. See also chapter 2 of this dissertation.

3Based on this text, Alomia proposes that “angels were familiar not only to Hebrews but also to the Babylonians, who were not only astonished as they witnessed the angelic intervention but also described it with specific terminology” (Alomia, 441). In West Semitic diction, the term “angel” can denote “an appearance-form of Deity” (Montgomery, 214, 215).
three young men from the fire and to even walk with them in their persecution (cf. Isa 43:2). The appearance of the fourth being in the furnace represents not only God’s protective presence in the context of persecution on God’s people but also God’s direct intervention in earthly affairs.

The watchers

In the narrative of the second dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the angelic characters, “the watchers,”¹ are mentioned three times (4:13, 17, 23). They are angelic characters from heavenly spheres since they are also clearly called “holy ones” (vs. 13) who are under the direct control of the Most Holy One (vss. 25, 32).

The watchers also function in the heavenly judgment, since it explicitly states that they dictate sentences (4:14), although the sentence in vs. 24 is clearly attested as being decided by the Most High. This function of “holy watchmen” reminds us of the angelic scribe in Ezek 9:3: “Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side.” In the context of judgment, the role of the angelic scribe is to mark for preservation all those who sigh and groan over all the abominations committed in Jerusalem before the destruction by the six supernatural beings (vs. 4).² In the same way

¹The term “watcher” (‘îr) is rooted from “‘ār” meaning “to wake,” “stir up” (Strong, s.v. “‘ār”). The Jewish translators, Aquila and Symmachus, render it “egrégorogos” in Greek, “the watchful one,” a term found in the book of Enoch and other Apocryphal Jewish writings to designate the higher angels, good or bad (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:790).

²William H. Brownlee sees the seven beings as “angel-warriors” (William H. Brownlee, Ezekiel 1-19, WBC, vol. 28 [Waco, TX: Word, 1986], 143-144). These divine scribes also featured in the ancient Near East religions. Nabû was the son of the chief Babylonian god, Marduk, and the god of scribes and learning (Grayson, “Babylonia,” 4:774). Libraries in temples were called “the shrines of Nabû” (ibid.). The celestial scribe’s work was connected with the work of judgment, especially investigation. In the hymns to Nanshe, the goddess inspected the records.
the function of the watchmen in the book of Daniel is connected with investigation and sentencing in the process of judgment (cf. vss. 14-16 with vss. 28-33, 37).

In Aramic, the term 'yr (watchmen) also hints at conflict. Since the usage of 'yr within the Old Testament is usually connected with military endeavors, it may also be suggested that the watchmen may be a type of celestial warrior here in Daniel. The use of “watchmen” to describe the heavenly being who sentenced Nebuchadnezzar also shows God’s direct intervention in the affairs of world history and hints at the possibility that there was a spiritual conflict between two different heavenly powers taking place during the judgment scene dealing with Nebuchadnezzar (cf. chap. 10; Exod 12:7, 13, 22-23, 27).

prepared by her chief scribe, Nishada, to bless or punish (Wolfgang Heimpe, “Hymns to Nanshe [1.162],” in Context of Scripture, 1:526-531). Thus, there is a possibility that Nebuchadnezzar recognized the messenger of judgment as divine scribes by his religious background (vss. 13, 17), but Daniel pointed out that the watchmen were sent by the Most High (vss. 25, 32) (Goldingay, Daniel, 88). Cf. Ps 121:3-4, where “watchman” is a description of God himself.

1 Note the process of watching (recording) (vss. 28-30) and sentencing (vss. 31-33) from the judgment scene right after the words of pride from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar.

2 Alomia, 443. Goldingay proposes that the heavenly king governs his realm by using members of the council of Yahweh (1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1-2; Ps 89:5-7; Jer 23:18) who act as his eyes (2 Chr 16:9; Zech 4:10; cf. 1:9), keeping him informed of the affairs of his realm and seeing that his will is put into effect throughout it (Goldingay, Daniel, 88).

3 Alomia, 444. See the different words of “watchman” connecting with military endeavor: sāpā (2 Sam 18:24-27; 2 Kgs 9:17-20; Isa 21:6; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:2-7; Hos 9:8); sāmar (Ps 127:1; Isa 21:11, 12); nāsār (2 Kgs 17:9; 18:8; Jer 31:6).

4 See more on this in the section “battle field” of this chapter.
Angel in the den of lions

The third angelic episode in the book of Daniel shows that angels were involved in acts of deliverance. In response to the question of King Darius, Daniel plainly spoke of an angel as a celestial servant who is sent on missions of deliverance (cf. Gen 16:11-14; 22:15-16; Exod 3:2-4; Judg 6:11-26; 13:13-23; 1 Chr 21:16-18). The deliverance from lions was because of trust in God (6:22).¹

The function of angels in the book of Daniel as protectors of the people of God alludes to an aspect of spiritual conflict (cf. Pss 34:7; 91:11; Matt 18:10; Heb 1:14). Daniel’s situation in the den of lions was not just a physical confrontation between Daniel and the lions. Daniel ended up in the lion’s den over the issue of allegiance, and then the angel in the den of lions shut the mouths of the lions in order to protect Daniel. A spiritual battle was raging where the angel of God battled the lions that were used by Daniel’s accusers who represented evil forces or powers.² Thus, in some degree, the protecting angel in the lions’ den hints at the role of a protecting angelic warrior for the saints in the spiritual conflict.

¹Daniel’s testimony that the angel from God shut the mouth of the lion hints that “the angel was visible to Daniel” in the same way that the supernatural being was visible to his three friends in the furnace (Stephen R. Miller, 187).

²It is easy to imagine Satan using lions to hurt Daniel in the same way he worked through a serpent to tempt the first woman in Eden. The threat of the lions could symbolize Satanic power used to discourage Daniel’s faith much as Peter identified Satan as a lion: “the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8).
Interpreting Angel

In the scene of the heavenly court, Daniel wrote that angels are attendants of the Most High in his court (7:10). Daniel described God in this scene as presiding at the judgment in an environment of fire, while “thousands of thousands” serve him and “millions of millions” stand before him as his multitudinous court. In this scene Daniel approached one of the angels that stood nearby and asked him the truth concerning what he was witnessing (7:16). Although Daniel did not mention the identity of his interpreter, it is clear that it was one of the attendants of the Most High at the judgment scene, an angel.

On another occasion, an interpreting angelic character was commanded to make Daniel understand the vision (8:16). He is directly named Gabriel. Later this same angel came to Daniel in answer to his petition for understanding of an eschatological vision previously given to him (9:21). As for the interpreting angel referred to in Dan 10-12, all

---

1 Alomia, 446.

2 Ibid., 447. In 1 Enoch and the War Scroll from the Qumran, mention is made of four archangels including Gabriel who are positioned around the throne of God (Carol A. Newsom, “Gabriel,” ABD [1992], 2:862). The names of the four angels are Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, and Phanuel. Goldingay states the possibility of the angel’s identity in 7:16 as Gabriel from the expression of “one of the attendants of the Most High” (Goldingay, Daniel, 173).

3 The name Gabriel is formed from geber “strong man” and ‘el “god,” meaning the “strong man of God” (Alomia, 450) or “God is my warrior” (Newsom, 2:862).
of these occurrences seem to indicate that the being is the same Gabriel (10:10, 18). Thus in the book of Daniel, Gabriel is preeminently an angel of eschatological revelation.\(^1\)

Gabriel also is presented as closely cooperating in the task with another angelic personage who named Michael (10:13, 20; 11:1). This cooperation hints that a function of an interpreting angel is very important in issues involved in spiritual conflict. Gabriel commanded Daniel to understand the vision (8:17). This shows that understanding the Word of God is a key aspect for the saints to follow before engaging in spiritual conflict (cf. Rev 12:17; 14:12). Without acknowledging the sovereignty of God in the course of human history through an understanding of the prophecies of God, God’s people will not be able to pass through the tribulation of the saints that is prophesied in chap. 8.

Man dressed in linen

In Dan 10:5, a man “dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist,” is a heavenly being who appears in human form. The linen garments are connected with the garments of priests (Exod 28:42; Lev 6:10; 16:4; Heb 6:3), angels (Ezek 9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6-7; cf. Rev 15:6), and saints in heaven (cf. Rev 3:5; 6:11; 7:9, 13). From an earlier usage of the term in Dan 7:9, which describes God as being clothed in

\(^1\)Alomia, 448.

\(^2\)In 1 Enoch, he was listed as “one of the holy angels who is in charge of paradise and the dragons and the cherubim” (20:2). He was commissioned to destroy the offspring of the rebellious angels and human women (10:9-10). In the New Testament, Gabriel announced the birth of John (Luke 1:11-20) and the birth of the Messiah to Mary (1:26-33). He declared of himself, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news” (1:19). From the expression “the angel of the Lord,” with whom the Gospel of Luke identifies Gabriel, the angel mentioned in Luke 2:9; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7 also seems to designate Gabriel. In these passages, Gabriel was also designated as one who stood in the presence of God and brought God’s messages to the people of God.
white garments, it is suggested that this being is also a holy personage.\textsuperscript{1} The belt of finest gold and the expression of 10:6, "His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude," remind us of the "Son of Man" in Rev 1:13-15.

A man dressed in linen also appears in Dan 12:6 as standing in midair in the context of the vision of the great tribulation. It is meaningful that this figure appears in a human form in the context of spiritual controversy (10:5; 12:6). The human form seems to designate direct intervention in human history, especially on the spiritual battlefield.

Michael

In the Old Testament, Michael, which means "who is like God?" is mentioned only three times, and all of them occur in Daniel (10:13; 10:21; 12:1).\textsuperscript{2} Alomia points out that "notable in these occurrences is the fact that on every occasion the context in which he appears [for the saints] is that of fight, contention, and liberation."\textsuperscript{3} Michael is referred to as "one of the chief princes" assisting another angel in the course of spiritual conflict.

\textsuperscript{1}Stephen R. Miller, 281. Compare the description in Daniel with the description given by John when Christ was revealed to him (Rev 1:13).

\textsuperscript{2}Strong, s.v. "Mikā'ēl." In Jude 9, Michael is portrayed as contending with the Devil over the body of Moses. Rev 12 describes a heavenly war in which Michael leads His victorious angelic hosts in battle against the Devil and his angels.

\textsuperscript{3}Alomia, 454. Alomia lists ten biblical men named Michael (ibid.): the father of the spy who represented the tribe of Asher (Num 13:13); two other Gadites, father and son who were also named Michael (1 Chr 5:11, 13, 14); an ancestor of the psalmist Ashaph (1 Chr 6:40); an Issacharite who was a chief man (1 Chr 7:3); a Benjamite (1 Chr 8:1, 16); a warrior of David (1 Chr 12:20); the father of one of David's chiefs (1 Chr 27:18); a son of King Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 21:2); and a leader of the exiles who returned from Babylon with Ezra (Ezra 8:8). Thus Alomia suggests that "this might be an indication that the angelic character known as Michael was familiar to Hebrews long before Daniel wrote his name" (ibid., 455).
In vs. 21, Gabriel emphasized the surpassing power of Michael and called him "your prince." Then in 12:1, Michael is described as "the great prince who protects your people." Sometimes the word is closely related to military commanders either of earthly (Judg 4:2; 1 Sam 17:55) or heavenly hosts (Josh 5:14-15).

The fact that Michael was designated by Gabriel as being "one of the chief princes" may indicate an actual hierarchy among the angelic beings (Dan 10:13). Doukhan proposes the possibility of a superlative "first [one] of the first [chief] princes" designating Michael as the "Prince of princes" of 8:25 and refers, therefore, to the same supernatural figure.

Michael’s supreme position in the angelic hierarchy was also clearly portrayed in his defense on behalf of Israel. Defense was performed only in a military sense during "a

1The word prince (αὐτός) occurs 421 times in the Old Testament and is used to express a wide scope of high-ranking persons in their political, private, cultic, and religious life (ibid., 456).

2Ibid., 456, 457.

3Ibid.

4Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 163. Shea also suggests that Michael is Christ, based on the "great prince" who rules over the entire heavenly host and who cares for God’s earthly people as depicted in Jude 9 and Rev 12:7 (Shea, Daniel 7-12, 215). This explicit role of Michael led some scholars to identify him as the Messiah. Jude 9 terms him "the archangel." According to Paul, "the voice of the archangel" is associated with the resurrection of the saints at the coming of Jesus (1 Thess 4:16). In John 5:28 it is in response to the voice of the son of Man that the dead come forth from their graves ("Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:860). Alomia points out that when used with explicit messianic meaning, it also indicates God from the messianic connotation of "prince of peace" (Isa 9:6) (Alomia, 457).
great war” (10:1). At the time of the Exodus, the literal meaning of Michael, “who is like God,” is used to express “the intensity of human awe towards God’s unexpected victory” in the context of a war (Exod 15:11-12). In Dan 11, Michael is described as a final victor over the North and the South. In chap. 12, Michael’s defense was also performed in a judicial way (12:1-3). He is fighting not only for punishment on the evil nations but also for vindication of his saints (12:1).

The above research on Michael suggests that the role of Michael is pivotal in spiritual conflict especially in connection with the saints who are under persecution. The saints can stand firm in the afflictions caused by spiritual conflict through the conviction that Michael will arise and protect his people (vs. 1).

To summarize, in the book of Daniel, the functions of angelic beings are varied and include protectors of the saints, revealers of God’s will, assistants of God in the heavenly council, and interpreters. Supernatural beings mentioned include the Man clothed in linen, Gabriel, the holy watchers, and Michael. All spiritual beings in the book of Daniel are mentioned in the context of spiritual conflict.

1 Shea mentions that the name Michael is used particularly in situations where there is conflict over the people of God for protection and deliverance (Shea, Daniel 7-12, 215).

2 Doukhan, Daniel, 100.

3 The word “‘amad” (to stand up, arise, Dan 12:1), in mention of Michael, appears twelve times in chap. 11, all of them in relation to the victory of a king who rules. This same word is used here with Michael, the last king to achieve his victory and take his rule (ibid.).

4 Alomia, 458.
The Princes of Persia and Greece

The interpreting angel, Gabriel, informed Daniel of the impending "great war between kingdoms" (10:1, 20), revealed his conflict with the prince of Persia (vs. 13) and the prince of Greece (vs. 20), and explained the role of Michael (vs. 21). Some scholars interpret the prince of Persia as a natural human prince, Cambyses, the son and crown prince of Cyrus\(^1\) and distinguish him from Cyrus as "the king of Persia."\(^2\)

However, if we follow this interpretation, a question can be raised concerning the identity of the prince of Greece (vs. 20). Gabriel said, "Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come." If the prince of Greece is also an earthly being just as the prince of Persia, it seems odd that he would come while the Persian Empire still existed.\(^3\)

---

\(^1\)Shea, "Wrestling," 234-246. See also Shea, Daniel 7-12, 175, 176. Shea suggests two reasons for mentioning Cambyses as the prince referred to in Dan 10: (1) because of his political influence and power as prince; and (2) because he was very much in opposition to all foreign religious cults (ibid.). Shea also gives three linguistic reasons: (1) in the book of Daniel the word "prince" was used for human beings as well as for angelic figures; (2) even when "prince" is used to refer to an angelic being, elsewhere in Daniel, prince is used only in reference to angelic beings on God's side, never for fallen angels; (3) the term "kings" in this verse must include reference to Cyrus, as it explicitly does in vs. 1 (Shea, "Wrestling," 234). Shea lists two commentators who supported this argument. Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with a Commentary and Critical Notes (London: Warwick, 1881), 606; Calvin, 2:252. Tim Meadowcroft also suggests that "in their immediate context the 'princes' of Persia and Greece in Daniel 10 are as likely to be human figures as to be participants in some celestial battle" (Tim Meadowcroft, "Who Are the Princes of Persia and Greece [Daniel 10]? Pointers toward the Danielic Vision of Earth and Heaven," JSOT 29, no. 1 [2004]: 109). He also mentions, "In this context, it is entirely reasonable to envisage that Michael and his colleague encounter in some material way the current temporal rulers of Greece and Persia, without excluding the possibility that there is a heavenly significance to the encounter" (ibid.).

\(^2\)Shea, Daniel 7-12, 175.

\(^3\)The "mighty king" applies usually to Alexander the Great who would come over one hundreds years later after the reigns of at least "three more kings" of Persia (11:2, 3). The commentator of the SDA Bible Commentary not only applies the prince of Greece to Alexander,
From a historical perspective, another problem can also be pointed out. The vision was given in the third year of Cyrus, 535 B.C., May 11.  

1 King Cyrus would die soon after (530 B.C.).  

2 Cambyses would be inaugurated as the official king and revoke his father’s edict on the reconstruction of the temple.  

3 Accordingly, Cambyses would draw the attention of Daniel, who prayed for the restoration of the sanctuary.  

4 If the key opponent was Cambyses, the person with whom Gabriel and then Michael were struggling should also be Cambyses. If this is right, why did Gabriel need to be detained there with “the king of Persia,” which designates Cyrus?  

5 For what reason did Gabriel seek to influence Cyrus who had already issued a decree permitting the Jews of Babylon to return to their native land and giving them permission to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4)?

but also points out the spiritual dimension behind the scene (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:861). For the interpretation of the “mighty king” as Alexander, see Tremper Longman III, Daniel, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 274.

---


4Gabriel seemed to describe this as he had to be “detained there with the king(s) of Persia” and then Michael came to help (10:3).

5Péter-Contesse suggests the traditional Hebrew meaning as “Michael came after the guardian angel had been detained there for a while” (Péter-Contesse, 270). The commentator of the SDA Bible Commentary says, “It could mean that with the coming of Michael, the evil angel was forced to leave and God’s angel “was left remaining there beside the kings of Persia” (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:860). Maxwell also suggests that “the verse says nothing at all about Gabriel’s leaving Michael alone but instead that Gabriel had been working alone until Michael came to help him” (Maxwell, 264).
Further, it is also difficult to again apply “the prince of Persia” to one of the kings, if the usage of two words (king and prince) is different.¹

In the book of Daniel, the term “prince(s)” points to a person of hierarchical authority in: the kingdom of Judah (9:6, 8); Babylonian dignitaries (3:2, 3, 27; 5:2, 3; 6:1, 2, 4, 6, 7); the Persian and Greek empires (10:13, 20; 10:20); and the South and the North (11:5, 18, 28).² In the examples that Daniel used, however, the term also refers to Michael. Should not the term convey the same meaning of high position and authoritative hierarchy when it applies to the opponents, the princes of Persia and Greece? Just as Michael is a prince, so also the princes of Persia and Greece should have a parallel position.³

¹Shea seems to use the singular and plural form interchangeably. He applies the co-regency of Cyrus and Cambyses to “kings of Persia” (Shea, “Wrestling,” 242). However, in his book, Daniel 7-12, Shea asserts that only Cyrus is referred to, by the singular, “king of Persia” (Shea, Daniel 7-12, 175). Keil prefers the plural form “kings” and says, “The plural denotes, that by the subjugation of the demon of the Persian kingdom, his influence not merely over Cyrus, but over all the following kings of Persia, was brought to an end, so that the whole of the Persian kings became accessible to the influence of the spirit proceeding from God and in advancing the welfare of Israel” (Keil, 419).

²Alomia, 457.

³For the scholars who agree that the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece are references, not to human rulers, but to angelic forces, see Arnold, “Territorial Spirits,” 940, 941; Ferch, “Authorship,” 58; Collins, 374, 375; Towner, 153; Maxwell, 269, 270. Goldwurm translates “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” into “the heavenly prince of the Persian kingdom” (Hersh Goldwurm, Daniel: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources, 2d ed. [New York: Mesorah, 1983], 276). Miller points out three aspects on the identity of “the prince of the Persian kingdom.” (1) He must have been an angel since no human prince could have withstood Gabriel. Furthermore, Israel’s prince was the angelic being Michael (10:21) and it is reasonable to suppose that in the same context the “prince” of Persia was also an angel. (2) Since this prince opposed God’s angel, it may safely be assumed to have been an evil angel. (3) The being is called the “prince of the Persian kingdom,” so Persia must have been his special area of activity (Stephen R. Miller, 285). Note that Marduk was sometimes referred to as “the prince” (ANET, 311), although he was also referred to as “the king of gods” (ANET, 68, 309).
princes of Persia and Greece are angelic-princes who identified themselves with the Persian or Greece Empire¹ and worked to influence the kings of Persia and Greece.²

This is evident in the case of the prince of Tyre. In Ezek 28:1-19, the prince of Tyre is understood as a heavenly figure who is identified with the earthly king of Tyre (cf. Isa 14:12-14). Here the dual application of the prince of Tyre clearly shows the perspective that the conflict between good and evil is closely connected with the earthly battle through human agents.³ A few scholars hold that the king of Tyre (Ezek 28) and the king of Babylon (Isa 14) are both types of Satan.⁴ Thus, the earthly kings of Persia and Greece can be designated as being representatives of Satan while they put themselves under the influence of Satan. Satan also can be designated as the prince of the kingdoms as long as he can control them.⁵

To sum up, the princes of Persia and Greece seem to designate territorial satanic agents who exist in the spiritual realm. Consequently, the king of Persia is the king who was under the influence of the prince of Persia.⁶

¹Maxwell, 260.
²The issue of influence will be discussed more in the next section.
³For the contribution of Isa 14 and Ezek 28 to the worldview of cosmic controversy, see Charles L. Feinberg, The Prophecy of Ezekiel (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 161-163; Gulley, 421-430.
⁴Ibid., 430.
⁵Shea also acknowledges the existence of the celestial war behind the scene of the two historical Persian kings (Shea, Daniel 1-7, 176).
⁶If the word “king” is plural, King Cyrus may be included.
Dimensions of Spiritual Conflict

Spiritual conflict is a reality to be taken seriously in our world. There is a great need that the dimensions or contents of the conflict should be studied to avoid dangers, such as "reverting to pagan worldview" and "the tendency to shift the emphasis to power and away from truth." Thus, I will discuss some aspects of the spiritual conflict in the book of Daniel with the purpose of suggesting an antidote to dangers of spiritual warfare theology under the subtitles: "battle field," "major issues," and "weapons of conflict."

Battle Field

In 11:1, Gabriel said: "in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect [strengthen] him." Bultema explains this as: "The angel was ascribing Darius' favor for the Jews in a causal sense to his and Michael's intervention." However, some scholars suggest that the word "him" refers to Michael, because Michael was referred to in 10:21 and because the expression "in the first year of Darius the Mede" is adverbial in the sentence. If this is right, this would point out a possibility of another

---

1 For the reflections on trends and issues of spiritual conflict, see Charles H. Kraft, "Contemporary Trends in the Treatment of Spiritual Conflict," in Deliver Us from Evil, 177-202; A. Scott Moreau, "Gaining Perspective on Territorial Spirits," in Deliver Us from Evil, 259-275.


3 Bultema, 314.

4 Péter-Contesse, 277. Taken together with the previous verse (10:21), Péter-Contesse renders it as: "no one helps me to combat these enemies except for Michael, the guardian angel of Israel, whom I myself helped and supported during the first year of Darius, the Mede" (ibid.). Walvoord also explains the reason: "His stand is usually taken as being in support of Darius the Mede, 'to confirm and strengthen him,' but it is possible that 'him' refers not to Darius the
spiritual battle that Michael fought with the help of Gabriel to influence the new
leadership of the Median court in the first year of Darius the Mede.

In the story of chap. 6, there is no mention of the direct confrontation between
Darius and Michael the prince or other angelic beings, but the effort by the Median
officials created hostility toward the Jews in the same “first year of Darius’ reign (vs. 1).
It is notable that the angel’s miraculous deliverance of Daniel from the den of lions caused
Darius the Mede to reverse his policies to favor Israel (vss. 24-27).\(^1\) In this situation, the
angel’s work was not in conflict with Darius, but to influence the king,\(^2\) showing that
behind the events in world history, angelic beings are working to influence people’s
decisions.\(^3\)

In like manner, the spiritual conflict was in the heart of “the king of Persia,”
Cambyses, who was opposed to all foreign religious cults (10:13),\(^4\) indicating again that

\(^1\)Walvoord, 255.

\(^2\)There is an aspect of power encounter in this story that will be discussed in the section on
“power encounter.”

\(^3\)In the Bible, there are other direct encounters between good and evil supernatural beings
(Jude 9; Rev 12:7-9; see also Jesus’ direct encounter with the Devil in the four Gospels).
Sometimes the celestial forces directly engaged in war. Yahweh and his heavenly armies aided
and enabled the Israelites to win against overwhelming earthly forces (cf. Num 10:35-36; 2 Kgs 6,
7; Hab 3; Ps 68). In the Exodus, God’s help was evident (Exod 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2).
The conquest of Canaan included the involvement of the “commander of the army of the LORD
(Josh 5:14-15). On the opposite side, Satan is described as attacking the saints (cf. 1 Pet 5:8; Rev
12:13-17). However, Satan’s attack is not a direct attack, but persecution through his human
agents. In the case of Job, Satan seems to manipulate nature to bring disaster on Job.

\(^4\)For the historical background of Cambyses and foreign cults, see Shea, “Wrestling.” 236-
239. Shea suggests that the delay in the rebuilding of Jerusalem took place because of the
Satan is always active behind the scenes of history, working on his earthly human agents.\(^1\) Satan’s human representatives often fall under his control and influence.

Cambyses’ refusal to bow to the influence of celestial powers, Michael and Gabriel, does not mean that those two supernatural beings were less powerful than their spiritual opponents or that Cambyses was a helpless victim when faced by satanic power. His refusal to follow Michael and Gabriel proves that “the choice still resides with man” and that it was a matter of his willful decision.\(^2\)

To sum up, the battlefield of spiritual conflict, in which both sides are engaged, is in people’s hearts. The book of Daniel also suggests that the satanic-angelic force works to influence the people of the earth much as do the angels of God. In spite of the influence by two different supernatural beings, the decision is made by each person’s will.

**Major Issues**

To understand and provide a biblical basis for some of the issues in the present debate regarding spiritual warfare, the major issues of spiritual conflict in the book of

---

\(^1\)White also sees this in the perspective of a human-supernatural partnership on both sides: “While Satan was striving to influence the highest powers in the kingdom of Medo-Persia to show disfavor to God’s people, angels worked in behalf of the exiles... Through the prophet Daniel we are given a glimpse of this mighty struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus... The highest agencies of heaven were working on the hearts of kings, and it was for the people of God to labor with the utmost activity to carry out the decree of Cyrus” (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1917], 571-2).

\(^2\)Shea, *Daniel 7-12*, 176.
Daniel need to be discussed. Thus, I will examine two issues in the book under the headings of “worship” and “the sanctuary.”

Worship

Daniel and his friends faced the pressure of being given names of Babylonian deities and of being offered food that had been offered in pagan worship (chap. 1). In chaps. 3 and 6, the issue was over whom should be worshiped. The same issue is addressed in chaps. 4 and 5, where two kings lifted themselves up against the Lord of heaven.

In chap. 10, the heavenly figure, called Michael (10:13, 21), appeared and was involved in the “great war” (vs. 1). The tension pervading the entire book, revealing the nature of the war and the issues at stake, comes to a climax in chap. 11. This chapter reveals two particular features, namely the constant reference to North and South. In the battle, the power of the North seeks to “exalt and magnify himself above every God” (vs. 36), and “replace the God of the fathers by a foreign God” (vss. 37, 38), and gather all the powers against the “glorious Holy Mountain” (vs. 45). Again it is evident that the issue is connected with the matter of true worship.

In chap. 12, the end of the war comes by means of eschatological salvation through Michael. The great prince will rise to protect his people during “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” (12:1). A time of distress for the saints also presupposes their true worship to God.

1Doukhan, Daniel, 75.
These references show that conflict in the book of Daniel revolves around the true worship of God. The content of true worship is well described in the issues dealing with the sanctuary in the book of Daniel.

Sanctuary

Throughout the whole scene of conflict in the book of Daniel, satanic forces work hard to destroy the sanctuary and its system. In chap. 7, the little horn and the nations claim the place of God while they persecute the saints of God (vs. 25). In chap. 8, the little horn seeks to destroy the sanctuary (vs. 11). In chap. 9, while Daniel prayed for the restoration of the temple, he saw that the conflict assumed cosmic proportions involving two supernatural princes. In the seventy-week prophecy, an aggressive prince (vs. 26) came against the Messiah Prince (vs. 25) by destroying the sanctuary and its system (vss. 26, 27).

Through destroying the sanctuary and its system, satanic forces attempt to weaken or destroy the saints' true worship because, as a type, the sanctuary and its service...

---


foreshadowed Jesus' heavenly ministry as well as his earthly one (Heb 7-10). Just as the sanctuary is located in the center of conflict in the book of Daniel, the issue of spiritual conflict also involves the cross that is at the very center of the sanctuary and its system. Just as the saints would be persecuted by the little horn, the message of the cross will lead to opposition and cause offense (1 Cor 1:18-29). Just as the little horn would destroy the sanctuary and its system, Satan will distort the work of Jesus on the cross (cf. Eph 6:12; 1 Tim 4:1; Rev 12:9-11). Thus, the saints' faith in Jesus' redemptive power is a crucial fact in any spiritual controversy because faith in the cross is the deciding factor in giving true worship to God (cf. Rev 12:9-10, 17; 13:10, 14; 14:12).

In summary, the issue of spiritual conflict in the Bible is not primarily one of power, but of true worship and allegiance to God. At the center of the issue are the sanctuary and its system that symbolizes that Jesus has the authority to give the saints salvation through the cross. Thus, faith in the salvific work on the cross is a crucial fact in spiritual conflict because such faith is a deciding factor in giving true worship to God (cf. Rev 12:9-10, 17; 13:10, 14; 14:12).


2The judicial-redemptive activity described in Dan 7:9-14 and 8:13-14 also shows how the focus of God's cosmic activity is always for his people. The judicial-redemptive scenes become evident through the final victory over the sin problem when the resurrection of the saints to everlasting life (12:1-4) as well as judgment on the persecutor reveals God's final solution (Hasel, "The Little Horn, the Saints, and the Sanctuary in Daniel 8," 207, 208).
Weapons of Spiritual Conflict

Paul counseled the Ephesians to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” and asks them to put on the “full armor of God” against the “devil’s schemes” (Eph 6:10-17). These verses suggest that Christians need spiritual weapons in a spiritual conflict against the evil spiritual powers. Charles H. Kraft presents three kinds of encounters in spiritual conflict: (1) truth encounters; (2) allegiance encounters; (3) and power encounters. Understanding the major aspects of the three encounters is a good way to come to know the weapon needed to win in spiritual conflict. In the book of Daniel, these three types of encounters are present.

Truth encounters

Daniel and his friends proved in many ways that they understood the Word of God including the laws of diet. As discussed earlier, Daniel seemed to be familiar with the messages of the earlier prophets and the history of Israel. Furthermore, the interpreting angel continually requested Daniel to understand (8:17; 9:23, 25) and much of that understanding required general background information from the Word of God.2

---

1Charles H. Kraft, “Three Encounters in Christian Witness,” in Perspectives, 410-412. Kraft defines three encounters: truth encounters in which the mind is exercised and the will is challenged seem to provide the context within which the other encounters take place; allegiance encounters, involving the exercise of the will in commitment and obedience to the Lord, are the most important of the encounters because there is spiritual life without commitment and obedience; power encounters focus on freedom from the captivity of Satan who attempts to keep people from allegiance to God and from knowing the truth (ibid.).

2Jesus also used the term “understand” connected with the prophecies of Daniel (Matt 24:15).
The reason why Daniel and his three companions were not thrown into despair over the exile was because they understood the spiritual purpose of the exile, which had been revealed in Scripture. When they faced heathen cultural, religious, or political pressure, they stood firm because they held convictions based on the promises and prophecies of the Word of God.

Thus it can be concluded that Daniel's victory in spiritual conflict came from "a right view of God and with a right view of what it means to be a child of God," which can only come from knowing the truth in the Word of God.\(^1\) Daniel shaped his life by the Word of God, illustrating that in the course of spiritual conflict, God uses the weapon of truth to enlighten the mind and thwart the temptations of Satan who blinds the minds of humans to the truth through lies and deception (cf. Eph 6:14, 17).\(^2\)

Allegiance encounters

Allegiance encounters are found in the book of Daniel in those situations dealing with changed names, food, the fiery furnace, and the first decree by Darius (1:8; chap. 3; 6:11). Although allegiance to God threatened Daniel and his friends with death, they stood firm in their commitment to God.

Through his prayers, Daniel also acknowledged the sovereignty of God and testified of God's ability to reveal secrets and save his people (chaps. 2, 9). This shows that prayer has no value by itself and no magical power to force God into action. Prayer is

\(^1\) Warner, 904.

\(^2\) Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare," 248.
an act of continual dependence on God’s action.¹ To Daniel, prayer was not only an act of acknowledging God’s sovereignty and power but also was the reason why his allegiance remained strong. Daniel’s spiritual formation through constant prayer shows that God uses the weapon of prayer to strengthen the faith of his servants to defeat Satan (cf. Eph 6:18-19).

Power encounters

Power encounters are dominant in the book of Daniel. In Dan 2, when Daniel revealed and interpreted the king’s dream, God’s actions and ability was contrasted with the failure of the Babylonian wise men (2:2, 27). The God-given explanation not only caused the king to acknowledge the superiority of the true God but God’s act also saved the lives of Daniel, his three friends, and the wisemen from the king’s death decree. God’s superiority over the Babylonian deities (by being able to reveal the content and meaning of the king’s dream) can be regarded as a type of power encounter.

In chap. 3, when God saved Daniel’s three friends from the furnace on the plain of Dura, the king could not avoid exclaiming excitedly, “there is no other God that can deliver after this sort” (vs. 29). The story of Daniel in the lion’s den (chap. 6) also can be placed in the same category as the events of chap. 3. Through these power encounters, God revealed a power and authority that led Nebuchadnezzar and others to acknowledge the true God. These spiritual victories came as a result of their conviction of “God’s power” (2:20).

¹Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 139.
There are other aspects to consider. Nebuchadnezzar’s decree partially distorted the character of God. The king praised and acknowledged the power of the God of heaven (3:28). He then decreed that “the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way” (vs. 29: cf. 2:5; 6:7; Ezra 6:11, 12). Nebuchadnezzar gave many people in many nations a chance to hear about the true God, but he exceeded his rights when he sought to use force to compel people to honor the God of the Hebrews. This shows that Nebuchadnezzar did not escape the influence of his culture and failed to show God’s true character. An improper presentation of God’s power can lead people to feel threatened, which can lead to enmity against the power of the true God.

In response to Nebuchadnezzar’s command to worship his golden image, Daniel’s three friends testified not only of their trust in the power of God (3:17) but also demonstrated another crucial aspect of faith and religion: “But even if he does not, we

---

1The Assyrians and Babylonians were cruel; “cutting up the bodies of enemies and burning their houses was common practice in ancient Mesopotamia” (Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 26; see also “Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:768). Grayson introduces an Assyrian’s tactic for the battle: “One or more groups or cities were singled out for a major onslaught, be it pitched battle or siege, and once they were defeated the people were horribly mutilated and slaughtered while their houses and towns were burnt to the ground. Victims were selected, their skins were flayed, and the mutilated corpses were hung on stakes surrounding the city” (Grayson, “Assyria,” 4:748).


3Incidents such as this remind us, “since one’s belief about God is foundational to all other beliefs, Satan always tries to pervert one’s belief about the character of God” (Warner, 904). Doukhan also suggests that any missionary zeal that points a threatening finger and calls upon the “wrath of God” results in diverting attention from God’s character (Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 57).
want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (vs. 18). In the course of spiritual conflict, God does not always deliver his saints, although the three friends of Daniel were delivered. The prophecies that Daniel received also imply that the saints will face future suffering before the establishment of the kingdom of God (7:25; 8:13, 24; 9:26; 12:1; cf. Heb 11).

Thus, the book of Daniel provides an example to those who suffer and question the sovereignty of God in the context of suffering.\(^1\) There is no promise of continual victory for the saints before "the end." Although they may go through times of persecution, the predominant message of the book of Daniel is that the faithful who suffer will be vindicated and saved by God.\(^2\) In the end and at a cosmic level, God will prevail and establish his kingdom.\(^3\)

In summary, some of the examples of power encounter found in Daniel show that although God can demonstrate his superiority, the presentation of power is not always a goal in the course of salvation history. It reminds us that too much emphasis on power can cause a distorted view of the character of God and can lead people to feel threatened and to have fear instead of seeing a God of love and mercy. The prophecies concerning

---


\(^2\) Baldwin, 66, 67. Ferch says, “Suffering, persecution, and decimation will be the lot of the faithful as much as deliverance and vindication” (Ferch, “Authorship,” 82).

\(^3\) Baldwin summarizes the vision of the ultimate victory of the saints: “The stone ‘cut out by no human hand’ (2:34) was a kingdom set by the God of heaven (2:44); in 7:21, 22 the fourth kingdom ‘prevailed over the saints’ and they were overcome until God intervened and a man was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that would not be destroyed (7:13, 14). Only after defeat would victory be achieved and the kingdom be given to the saints of the Most High (7:18)” (Baldwin, 67).
the suffering of the saints suggest that the power of God does not guarantee a present life of continual victory. The saints should live a life of total allegiance to God based on biblical faith (cf. Rev 12:17; 14:12). Thus, it is concluded that power encounters must go together with truth and allegiance encounters. Balance is always important.

Spiritual weapons

One of the reasons why Daniel was a successful witness in his cross-cultural situation was that his missionary work encompassed all three aspects of encounter: truth, allegiance, and power. His experience with truth encounters emphasizes the importance of understanding the Word of God. His allegiance encounters emphasize his consciousness of the sovereignty of God through a life of prayer. For Daniel, prayer was not just an exercise of piety performed to meet a person’s psychological needs, but a cry of supplication, often in the face of imminent death or great need, which acknowledged the sovereignty of God (Dan 2).¹ The power encounters in Daniel demonstrate faith in the power of God while at the same time revealing an understanding of the sovereignty of God.

In the prayer of chap. 9, it is notable that Daniel never tried to discover the identity of the spiritual forces or to confront them directly. Daniel’s role was largely defined as that of observer of how God accomplishes his purpose on the broad screen of history.² In fact, Gabriel informed Daniel how he had been working to fulfill Daniel’s request. Daniel

¹Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 26.

²John C. Thomas, “Spiritual Conflict in Illness and Affliction,” in Deliver Us from Evil, 59.
prayed only for the restoration of the sanctuary and the city of Jerusalem. It was Gabriel and Michael who fought with the prince of Persia, thus showing that our greatest weapon in spiritual conflict is God himself.\footnote{For the armor of God, Tokunbo Adeyemo suggests that God's weapon is singular (Eph 6:11-13), that is his Spirit (Zech 4:6). He also says that God's weapons are singular in form but plural in function (John 18:3; Rom 6:13; 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 2 Cor 10:4) (Tokunbo Adeyemo, "Our Weapons of Warfare," in \textit{Deliver Us from Evil}, 62).}

Thus, it is concluded that in spiritual conflict, there are two prominent spiritual weapons: faith in the power of God and persistent prayer based on the Word of God (cf. Eph 6:13-18).

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed some aspects of the strategic perspective of missio Dei revealed in the book of Daniel. God’s strategy involves calling people to serve for his salvific purpose. The life of Daniel suggests some qualifications of those whom God chooses to use. First, God chose Daniel because Daniel could see God’s sovereign acts even in the context of the exile. Second, Daniel’s spirituality and prayer-guided life based on the Word of God allowed him to become aware of God’s call and prepared him to be used by God in interpreting the king’s dreams and visions. Third, Daniel’s request for different food in pursuit of a consecrated life provided Daniel with an opportunity to witness to the sovereignty of his Creator. Fourth, the excellence of Daniel and his friends provided additional opportunities for God to reach people in a heathen court (1:9, 17; 2:28-30, 45; 6:22).
God also used dreams and visions to convey his messages and fulfill his purpose to save nations. The stories of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar show that God uses dreams and visions to reveal his sovereignty, his judgment, and his control of world history even to heathen kings.

Daniel’s dreams and visions show five characteristics in conveying God’s purpose. First, Daniel remembered the content of his dreams. Second, the content of the message received from God should be the “real object of attention” in contrast to ecstatic experiences or other physical phenomena. Third, Daniel’s encounter and communication with the supernatural distinguishes common or self-reflective dreams from those which originate from God. Fourth, the role of an interpreter is just as essential as the content of the dream or vision. Finally, Daniel could not understand everything he saw. Thus, an attitude of humility is important for those who engage in cross-cultural ministry among peoples for whom the dreams and visions are important.

In the book of Daniel the concept of spiritual conflict is a distinctive theme and is a part of God’s strategy to save the world and his saints. Daniel remained firmly committed to the God of Heaven because he perceived that the experience of the exile was not simply an earthly matter, but had eternal dimensions.

The book of Daniel shows that God intervenes in the history of this world through his angelic beings. They appeared in the scenes connected with God’s judgment and in the context of spiritual conflict (Dan 3:25, 28; 4:17; 6:22; 7:10, etc.). The archangel Michael appears in the context of fighting, contention, and liberation. That Michael is also referred to as a “prince” is evidence that the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece,
in these passages, refer not to human rulers, but to “satanic angelic forces” who work to influence the kings of Persia and Greece.

I have also discussed the place and manner of spiritual conflict. Dan 6, 10, and 11:1 indicate that an angel worked to influence the kings’ heart. Behind world history, angelic groups are working to influence people’s decisions. The earthly kings of Persia and Greece can be thought of as representatives of Satan if they are under his influence. Satan also can be designated as the prince of the kingdoms as long as he controls them.

Satanic forces work hard through the scenes of conflict in Daniel to destroy the sanctuary and its system, and distort the allegiance of the saints to God. In seeking to destroy the sanctuary and its system, Satan attacks the cross, God’s means of providing salvation. The ultimate issue in the conflict is not one of power in the present context, but of the authority of Jesus to give salvation through the cross.

In spiritual conflict, it is important to understand three types of spiritual encounter: (1) truth encounter; (2) allegiance encounter; (3) and power encounter. Daniel was a successful witness in his cross-cultural context because he experienced victory in all three areas of encounter. Daniel maintained a balance among the three encounters. He had faith in the power of God, was totally committed in his allegiance to God, and lived his prayer life based on the truth of God’s Word (cf. Eph 6:13-18). The fact that Daniel prayed only for the restoration of the sanctuary and that it was Gabriel and Michael who fought with the Prince of Persia to answer Daniel’s prayer indicates that the foremost spiritual weapon is God himself.
CHAPTER IV

CROSS-CULTURAL WITNESS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Introduction

Culture is the framework within which God works out his purposes. Although culture is not explicitly discussed in the Scriptures, it is clear that human cultures have played a significant role in biblical history. The content and context of the Scriptures are not free from the influence of culture. In fact, culture forms an inseparable part of the context and the content of the Word.¹

In the same way, the book of Daniel is full of cultural aspects that illustrate how God uses culture to efficiently communicate his salvific purpose in a cross-cultural setting. The book also shows how Daniel witnessed to his faith in the God of Heaven in front of heathen kings using their language and cultural forms. Although the book of Daniel shows that both God and Daniel were sensitive to the local culture as they communicated God's message to the target people, only a few scholars have paid any attention to the book of Daniel as a missionary document with cross-cultural perspectives and insights.

Thus, it is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the cultural perspectives and the process of Daniel's cross-cultural witness in the book of Daniel.

**Definitions of Major Terminologies**

**Definition of Culture**

Mission anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert defines “culture” as “the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.” Harvie M. Conn adds one more aspect to the definition. Culture is “about God, the world, and humanity.”

---

1Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 30. Louis J. Luzbetak defines culture as “a dynamic system of socially acquired and socially shared ideas according to which an interacting group of human beings is to adapt itself to its physical, social, and ideational environment” (Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Culture: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988], 74). For the early anthropological definitions of cultures, see ibid., 134, 135.

In mission history, long discussions have preceded the present perspective on culture. From the collapse of Rome and the Western Empires until the sixteenth century, the Western church’s perception of culture was largely borrowed from the Roman imperial view of the world, which saw culture as a single, normative universal, a monocultural ideal to be stamped on the barbarian world outside the empire.\(^1\) Although there had been some early encounters with cultures and some cultural accommodation by early Catholic missionaries during the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries,\(^2\) in the 1740s the efforts of cultural accommodation were swept away by papal bulls.\(^3\) Not until 1938 was that ban lifted and not until the years following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) did

---


\(^3\)Hunsberger, 32.
Roman Catholic missiology seek to reclaim and correct features of the accommodation model in what is now called inculturation.¹

Protestant mission theology affirmed the radical and extensive impact of sin on human society. Non-Western cultures were viewed as inferior and often uncivilized. These views had a paralyzing influence on “missionary involvement.”² However, after World War II, which led to the collapse of the colonial empires, increased awareness and intentional interaction produced a reaction in the West against the arrogance and cultural oppression of colonialism.³ This development reinforced a growing worldwide awareness that culture was plural, not singular.⁴ With this awareness, sociology and anthropology began to be used as tools for missions.⁵

Though Gordon Hedderly published The Missionary and Anthropology in 1945, it was Eugene Nida who sparked a movement to make anthropology a major component in

---

²Bosch, Transforming Mission, 261.
³Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections, 58. He calls this area as “the anticolonial era: taking the other seriously” (ibid.).
⁴Conn, “Christ and Culture,” 184.
missionary thinking. The establishment of Wycliffe Bible Translators, the International and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and the leadership of such linguists as Kenneth Pike and Eugene Nida impacted missions thinking and forced many to realize that culture was not an abstract concept. These early linguists stimulated many to see the need to take culture seriously and to recognize that since the Bible is a book for all cultures, those who would understand and interpret the Bible correctly needed cultural insight.

Definition of Contextualization

Prominent evangelical missiologist Alan Tippet and Catholic scholar Louis Luzbetak have wrestled with the anthropological implication for Christian missions. Other scholars such as Robert Schreiter have joined them in the dialogue concerning the

---


4 Ibid., 67.

Christian faith, cultures, and the shaping of theology. Protestants label this process "contextualization" and Catholics call it "inculturation." The term "contextualization" first appeared in 1972 in a publication of the Theological Education Fund (TEF) entitled *Ministry in Context* by Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsezian. An early document about contextualization formulated by the World Council of Churches made the concept difficult to accept in non-conciliar circles because the

---


2Conn, "Christ and Culture," 184. Inculturation is modeled on the anthropological term "enculturation." It has been used regularly in Catholic discussion since the 1970s as a parallel to contextualization. Inculturation goes beyond accommodation just as contextualization went beyond adaptation (A. Scott Moreau, "Inculturation," *EDWM* [2000], 476). See also Olivia A. Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation* (Enugu, Nigeria: Bigard Memorial Seminary, 1992). Moreau defines "enculturation" as "learning of a culture through growing up in it" (A. Scott Moreau, "Enculturation," *EDWM* [2000], 309). Adaptation and accommodation are often used interchangeably. Adaptation has typically been used more in Catholic circles than in Protestant, especially before the term contextualization was popularized in the early 1970s. The basic idea is to change the form of Christian theological ideas and practices in order to be understood in a cultural context different from that of the communicator (idem, "Adaptation," *EDWM* [2000], 34). For more detailed discussion on these terminologies, see Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 420-432, 447-457; Carlos G. Martin, *Theology of Mission: An Adventist Perspective* (Silang Cavite, Philippines: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1998), 351-368.


3Bruce J. Nicholls, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 21. The TEF report for that year, *Ministry and Context*, suggested that contextualization seeks to press beyond indigenization to take into account "the process of secularity, technology and the struggle for human justice which characterized the historical moment of nations in the Third World" (TEF staff, *Ministry in Context* [London: Theological Education Fund, 1972], 20). In fact, the term "contextual theology" had already been used in the 1971 consultation on "Dogmatic or Contextual Theology?" held by the Ecumenical Institute of the WCC at Bossey, Switzerland. For a discussion on contextual theology, see Bruce C. E. Fleming, *Contextualization of Theology: An Evangelical Assessment* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1980), 5-12.
heavy emphasis on justice and social development left little room for evangelism and conversion.\(^1\) At the Willowbank Conference in 1978, the theme of "Gospel and Culture" was adopted. The conference took seriously the role of the cultural context of the believer while remaining committed to the biblical text in defining evangelization and church development.\(^2\)

During the 1970s, different models of contextualization were suggested.\(^3\) While each model has different features, they also share many things in common.\(^4\) It is also notable that each model is a valuable tool with which to work out the meanings of

\(^1\)Dean Gilliland, "Contextualization," *EDWM* (2000), 226. There has often been confusion as to the difference between contextualization and indigenization. Bosch sees indigenization as a part of contextualization (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 421). Before the use of the term "indigenization," Henry Venn (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) used the term "indigenous church" in the mid-nineteenth century (John Mark Terry, "Indigenous Churches," *EDWM* (2000), 483; see also Mervin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* [Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1976]; John L. Nevius, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* [Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958]; Henry Venn, *To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971]). Gilliland also says, "Indigenization always implied a comparison with the West, where as contextualization focuses on the resources available from within the context itself" (Gilliland, 226).

\(^2\)Gilliland, 226.


\(^4\)Gilliland, "Contextualization," 226.
Scripture adequately within certain sets of circumstances.\textsuperscript{1} However, as Gilliland points out, there is also danger in the process of contextualization: "A built-in risk of contextualization is that the human situation and the culture of peoples so dominate the inquiry that God’s revelation through the Bible will be diminished."\textsuperscript{2}

To avoid this danger, Hiebert proposes a four-step process for critical contextualization: (1) study the local culture phenomenologically; (2) study the texts of the Scriptures related to the question at hand; (3) evaluate critically the past customs in the light of the new biblical understandings and make decisions according to the new-found truths; (4) create new practices that express the Christian meaning of the event.\textsuperscript{3}

When cultural and biblical information are critically reviewed with the objective of making a new response, the process of contextualization has a good probability of being culturally authentic and biblically appropriate.\textsuperscript{4} Through this process, “the goal of the

\textsuperscript{1}Bevans, 139.

\textsuperscript{2}Gilliland, “Contextualization,” 227. Hiebert also points out the danger of uncritical contextualization: (1) the denial of absolutes and truth itself runs counter to the core Christian claims of the truth of the gospel and the uniqueness of Christ; (2) the separation between form and meaning implicitly blinds us to the general nature of tribal and peasant societies, in which form and meaning are inextricably linked; (3) the emphasis on the accurate communication of meaning often can lead to the point of ignoring the emotive and volitional dimensions of the gospel; (4) the ahistorical nature of contextualization can ignore the historical context of the universal church; (5) uncritical contextualization, in its more extreme forms, provides no basis for unity among churches in different cultures; (6) it has a weak view of sin; (7) a call for contextualization without a simultaneous call for preserving the gospel without compromise opens the door to syncretism (Hiebert, \textit{Anthropological Reflections}, 84-86).

\textsuperscript{3}Hiebert, \textit{Anthropological Reflections}, 88-91.

\textsuperscript{4}Gilliland, “Appendix,” 317.
critical method is to arrive at contextualized practices which have the consensus of the
redeemed community.”

Definition of Cultural Learning

Cultural learning must be an intentional activity for cross-cultural workers if they
are to become competent in ministry. Sherwood Lingenfelter points out the importance
of cultural learning at the very beginning of one’s cross-cultural ministry: “The best time
to engage in intentional cultural learning is during the first two years of ministry.”

When missionaries cross a cultural barrier, they often experience culture shock.
Culture shock, as the first stage of cultural learning, is “the disorientation we experience
when all the cultural maps and guidelines we learned as children no longer work.” In the

---

1Ibid.

2Sherwood Lingenfelter, “Cultural Learning,” EDWM (2000), 255. For more insights
concerning cultural learning, see Duane Elmer, Cross-cultural Connections: Stepping out and
Fitting in around the World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); Sherwood Lingenfelter,
Agents of Transformation: A Guide for Effective Cross-cultural Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI:
Baker, 1996). Lingenfelter says, “Missionaries and Christian leaders who are unaware of their
cultural biases and the biases of others will inevitably be ineffective as agents of transformation”
(ibid., 10).

3Lingenfelter, Agents of Transformation, 10.

4Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 66. The concept of culture shock was introduced by
Kalervo Oberg’s article entitled, “Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments,”
stress” rather than “culture shock” because the latter seems to be an overstatement in the medical
sense, as if every case is crippling (Charles H. Kraft, “Cultural Shock,” EDWM [2000], 256). See
more in Adrian Furnaham and Stephen Bochner, Culture Shock: Psychological Reactions to
Unfamiliar Environments (London; New York: Methuen, 1986); Margaret Jank, Culture Shock
(Chicago: Moody, 1977). Cultural shock also can be referred to as “culture confrontation,”
“culture clash,” and “culture conflict.” Anita Jacobson-Widding explains “culture confrontation”
as the strongest reactions about what kind of act is acceptable or not in a particular custom (Anita
Jacobson-Widding, “The Cultural Confrontation of Self-images,” in Culture Confrontation and
second stage, cross-cultural workers are under stress as they struggle through the process of adapting to a new culture.\(^1\) In the third stage, cross-cultural workers begin the bonding\(^2\) or adjustment or identification phase.\(^3\) Adjustment comes as the missionary learns to cope with culture shock.\(^4\)

When cross-cultural missionaries enter into a different culture to communicate the gospel, they face many cultural barriers and stresses. In order to increase the possibility for success, missionaries should be accepting of the new culture, willing to learn and grow in their new setting to be effective functionaries in their new cultural world. Yet all this must be done without losing their commitment to the core of God’s truth.

---


\(^2\)The term “bonding” was coined by Thomas Brewster and Elizabeth Brewster in 1979 to refer to a missionary’s deep sense of belonging in relationships in a second culture and the community’s acceptance of the newcomer as an accepted outsider (Elizabeth S. Brewster, “Bonding,” *EDWM* [2000], 138). See also E. Thomas Brewster and Elizabeth S. Brewster, *Bonding and the Missionary Task* (Pasadena, CA: Lingua House, 1982).

\(^3\)Historically rooted in anthropological research techniques, identification was recognized as a means of increasing insights, sympathy, and influence among the people under study (Roberta R. King, “Extent of Missionary Identification,” *EDWM* [2000], 249). Bonding and identification can be used interchangeably.

\(^4\)Justice C. Anderson, “Adjustment to the Field,” *EDWM* (2000), 34, 35. To cope with cultural shock and to encourage successful cross-cultural adjustment, Lingenfelter suggests seven distinctive areas that cross-cultural workers should work on: (1) language fluency; (2) understanding the rules of labor and exchange; (3) understanding authority relations in family and community; (4) mastering the basics of conflict resolution; (5) understanding basic values and personality; (6) understanding beliefs and worldview; (7) establishing effective communication and contextualization in work and ministry (Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, “Intercultural Competency,” *EDWM* [2000], 494).
Definition of Symbol

A symbol is “something used to stand for something, such as an olive branch representing peace.”¹ Aylward Shorter explains the function of a symbol in a society: “The symbols of a cultural system are the components of mental patterns and pictures through which a society understands and orients itself to life in the world.”² The reason why we need a symbol in our life is that we use the imagery of symbols to express more abstract concepts.³

However, the linkages between symbols (forms) and meanings (or emotions or values) are very complicated and diverse. Symbols acquire a number of different but related meanings in varied settings that are shared by a human community.⁴ It is this shared nature of cultural symbols that makes human communication possible,⁵ with most cultural symbols having to be understood within their historical and cultural contexts.

For a missionary to be a successful communicator, the borrowing of images, symbols, conceptions, and forms from the target culture is necessary. Such borrowing causes a transformation of the existing configuration of images and conceptions and

¹Kenneth A. McElhanon, “Symbol, Symbolism,” EDWM (2000), 923. Hiebert defines a symbol as “the association of a specific meaning, emotion, or value with a certain behavior or cultural product” (Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 37).

²Aylward Shorter, Toward a Theology of Inculturation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 35.

³McElhanon, 923.

⁴Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 37.

⁵Ibid.
creates a new relationship between them, a new symbiosis, and a new interpretation. However, this process must be approached very carefully, because the meanings of the symbols assigned by a given society can militate against the casual use of symbols for cross-cultural communication. Christian missionaries should also remember that the use of symbols could provide an opening for idolatry because human beings have a propensity to visualize the object of their worship, to create images of gods so that the improper use of forms or the introduction of new symbols could cause a misunderstanding of truth and lead to syncretism.

Definition of Witness

A witness is one who bears testimony about a person, place, or event. Some scholars see a difference between evangelism and missionary witness: evangelism takes

1Shorter, 57.

2McElhanon, 923. Kraft also proposes five cautions concerning form and meaning: (1) meanings are transmitted from human being to human being only through cultural forms; (2) the same form in different societies will have at least some different meanings; (3) any form borrowed by one society from another will have at least some different meanings in the receiving society; (4) what is essentially the same meaning is often represented in two cultures by quite different forms; (5) we must, in moving from society to society, choose and use the appropriate cultural forms, or the meanings will be wrong (Kraft, *Anthropology*, 140-145).


4Syncretism is the blending of one idea, practice, or attitude with another. Traditionally Christians have used 'syncretism' to refer to the replacement or dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements (A. Scott Moreau, “Syncretism,” *EDWM* [2000], 924). See more on syncretism in Jerald D. Gort et al., eds., *Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

place within the same culture, while missionary witness takes place in a different one.\(^1\) However, evangelism is essential to witness\(^2\) and involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do.\(^3\) The relationship between verbal proclamation and the importance of lifestyle is a critical issue in the process of witness. A witness or evangelist should be aware of two dangerous extremes: “all lifestyle and no witness”\(^4\) and “presence

---

Guthrie, “Cross-cultural Evangelism,” 244. See also James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications: Its Theory and Practice* [Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1979]). At the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism (1974), Ralph Winter also delineated three kinds of evangelism: same culture (E-1), culture closely related to one’s own (E-2), and great cultural difference from one’s own (E-3) (Ralph D. Winter, “The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins,” in Perspectives, 339-353). However, his emphasis on crossing cultural boundaries to reach another cultural group leads him to distinguish between evangelism (presenting the gospel to one’s own people) and missions (crossing cultural boundaries) (ibid.).

\(^1\)Guthrie, “Cross-cultural Evangelism,” 244.

\(^2\)Bryan W. Ball, “Jesus and the Great Commission,” in *The Essential Jesus: The Man, His Message, His Mission*, ed. Bryan W. Ball and William G. Johnson (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 276. Bryan W. Ball defines the difference and the relationships between mission, evangelism, and witness: “Mission and witness are used frequently, and often synonymously, although strictly speaking mission is broader than witness. Mission is the task of the church. Witness is what the church and Christians do in order to accomplish mission. Witness can take many forms, one of them being evangelism in both its broad and narrow senses. We shall argue that as witness is essential to mission, so evangelism, both broadly and narrowly understood, is essential to witness” (ibid.).

\(^3\)Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 411-420. The literal meaning of evangelism means “bearing good news.” In the noun form, it is translated as “gospel” or “evangel.” During his earthly ministry, Jesus interpreted his mission as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promises for sending good news (Luke 4:18, 19; cf. Isa 52:7; 61:1, 2) (Robert E. Coleman, “Evangelism,” *EDWM* [2000], 342). It is not easy to determine precisely what “evangelism” means because each missiologist defines it differently. Barrett listed seventy-nine definitions of evangelism (David B. Barrett and James W. Reapsome, *Seven Hundreds Plans to Evangelize the World: The Rise of a Global Evangelization Movement* [Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1988], 42-45). According to Bosch, “evangelism” refers to the activities involved in spreading the gospel or theological reflections on these activities; “evangelization” refers to the process of spreading the gospel or the extent to which it has been spread (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 409).

\(^4\)Timothy K. Beougher, “Lifestyle Evangelism,” *EDWM* (2000), 578. As a reaction to the extreme emphasis on the verbal proclamation, great emphasis is placed on the role of the witness’ life, which is called lifestyle witness or evangelism. The focus of lifestyle evangelism or witness’
apart from proclamation.¹ Mission must include both dimensions. Approaches that fail to integrate presence and proclamation in evangelism or witness fall short of the biblical model. Therefore, it is essential to include not only verbal witness but also deeds in the process of witness or evangelism. Furthermore, this holistic approach cannot be divorced from a proclamation that is sensitive to both the context of justice as well as culture in a society, if the message is to be perceived as relevant to the recipient.

Definition of Dialogue

In the process of cross-cultural witness, dialogue includes face-to-face conversations involving persons who have fundamentally different religious convictions for the purpose of understanding and growth. There are three positions in the theological debate on dialogue. First, the pluralists reject the traditional views of biblical revelation, proclaiming inter-religious dialogue as a new epistemology, which views relativism as a

involves using the channels of relationships to share the gospel through both words and deeds (ibid.). Steve Sjorgren emphasizes utilizing acts of service to give an opportunity for a verbal witness of salvation in Jesus Christ (Steve Sjorgren, Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus Christ with Others [Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1985], 15). See also Allison Trites, The New Testament Concept of Witness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). While not the first book to appear on the topic, Joseph Aldrich has popularized the concept of lifestyle evangelism in American evangelicalism in his book, Life-Style Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1981). See more in Jim Peterson, Evangelism as a Lifestyle (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1980); Crawford, EvangeLife: A Guide to Life-Style Evangelism. While affirming the benefits of a “lifestyle” approach, Timothy K. Beougher cautions against letting the pendulum swing too far away from an emphasis on verbal witness (Beougher, 578).

¹Raymond P. Prigodich, “Presence Evangelism,” EDWM (2000), 786. Prigodich criticizes this tendency in Christianity that “many in conciliar circles today similarly advocate humanization without proclamation” (ibid.).
universally accepted paradigm. Second, the anti-dialogue position assumes an absolute, complete, and accurate comprehension of biblical truths. Any dialogue that contains the possibility for theological change is often perceived as a threat. Third, the last position seeks to affirm both the understanding and communication aspects of dialogue without surrendering biblical absolutes.

Biblical evidences seem to support the last position. The examples of the Bible suggest that through interpersonal dialogue, one should listen and learn as well as share scriptural truth. Without dialogue, there will be few opportunities to share the gospel

---


2Pierson, 274. As John Stott pointed out, proclamation commands the central element of this position (John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* [Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975], 58-60). D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is a representative of this position. He says, “God is not to be discussed or debated. God is not a subject for debate, because He is Who He is and What He is” (D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971], 46, 47). See also John G. Davies, *Dialogue with the World* (London: SCM, 1967).

3Pierson, 274. This position, combining critical realism with theological conservatism, is held by E. Stanley Jones (*Christ at the Round Table* [New York: Abingdon, 1928]; idem, *The Christ of Every Road: A Study in Pentecost* [New York: Abingdon, 1930]).

4Cf. examples from the ministry of Christ (John 3, 4; Luke 18:18-29), the ministry of Peter (Acts 10:27-48), Paul (Acts 13:8-18; 17:16-18; 19:8-10; 20:6, 7), and Prov 18:13: “He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.”

with believers of other religions. Bosch proposes a meeting of hearts rather than of minds in the course of dialogue without losing the conviction to witness to the gospel.¹

However, the last position also has some weaknesses such as the difficulty of maintaining a balance between interpersonal relationships, biblical truth, and psychological equilibrium. The danger of losing biblical perspective may lead toward syncretism.² In the process of witness to other religious believers, cross-cultural workers need to be aware of the above dangers.

Thus it is evident that dialogue without the authenticity of the gospel becomes a pleasant conversation. Without a concern for others, dialogue becomes irrelevant, unconvincing, or arrogant.³

**Cultural Perspectives in the Book of Daniel**

The prophets in the Old Testament were masters at using local cultural processes and their messages were communicated orally or by symbolic actions devoid of all ambiguity.⁴ They spoke directly to the people in unmistakable terms. For example, when Ezekiel said, “I sat where they sat” (3:15, KJV; cf. 4:4-8; 5:1-4), it indicates that his

¹Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 483. Stott also explains dialogue as “a token of genuine Christian love” because it indicates struggle to listen to what prevents them from hearing the gospel and seeing Christ (Stott, 81).

²Pierson, 275.

³Stott, 72.

ministry was a vivid demonstration of sensitivity to the context in which his hearers found themselves.¹

In like manner, Daniel was also very sensitive to the culture in which he worked. He was forced to move within a foreign cultural context, but he decided to serve and witness to his God even in those difficult circumstances. He learned foreign languages and had encounters with Babylonian religion and culture. He worked hard, not only to keep his religious identity in a difficult and new cultural setting but also to witness to the God of Heaven with cultural relevancy to heathen kings. It is evident that he was a cross-cultural missionary who accepted God’s call and served him effectively in a cross-cultural context.

In the section below I will discuss how Daniel was successful in his cultural learning process and how he used a contextual approach in sharing the claims of God’s sovereignty with heathen kings in a foreign court.

Cultural Learning

Using Foreign Names

Daniel experienced a national disaster, the destruction of his country, and the trauma of being taken into exile. As a young hostage, he could have gone into a deep depression without ever having experienced a “honeymoon stage” after his arrival in Babylon. Daniel faced both culture shock and religious pressure. First of all, the master of eunuchs gave Babylonian names to Daniel and his friends (1:6, 7): to Daniel, the name

¹Ibid.
of Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.¹
These names all conveyed meanings connected with Babylonian gods.² It was an ancient
custom that names contain an appellation or reference to pagan deities in the same way
that many Hebrew names refer to the true God.³

Although Daniel and his friends resisted eating defiled foods, there is no record of
resistance to the use of Babylonian names in the book of Daniel. Why did Daniel and his
friends not refuse the names that designated a tie to heathen gods? Was it because the

¹In the Old Testament, Joseph and Esther passed through a similar situation. Joseph was
given the Egyptian name, “Zaphnath-paaneah,” meaning “the god speaks that he may live” (Gen
41:45) (“Genesis,” SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol [Washington, DC: Review and
Herald, 1953-57], 1:448). Joseph’s new name could refer to “contemporary events, signifying that
God had spoken Pharaoh’s dream and Joseph’s interpretation and counsel, to preserve the lives of
the king, of Joseph, and of all others as well” (ibid.). Esther is a Persian loan word meaning “star”
together with her Hebrew name Hadassah (Esth 2:7) (“Esther,” SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D.
have no connection with names of foreign gods.

²Daniel, meaning “God is my judge,” was changed into Belteshazzar, “Bel! Protect his
life”: Hananiah meaning “grace of God” became Shadrach, “command of Aku.” Mishael meaning
“who is like God” became Meshach, “who is like Aku.” Azariah meaning “YAWH will help”
became Abenego, “servant of Nego” (Stephen R. Miller, 64, 65; Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 18).
Doukhan insists that Daniel “deformed” the meaning of their Babylonian names, but from the fact
that the chief official gave the names (1:8) and Nebuchadnezzar called Belteshazzar after the name
of his god (4:8), it is difficult to accept the possibility that Daniel had systematically “deformed”
the divine element of their Babylonian names (ibid.).

³Stephen R. Miller, 65. Nebuchadnezzar remarked that Daniel’s Babylonian name had
been given according to the name of his god (4:8). In ancient times, “to give a new name to
someone was a way of showing that the person giving the name had authority over the other
person” (Péter-Contesse, 17). Ernest Lucas also says, “the giving of a new name as a sign of new
ownership and so, by implication, new allegiance, was a common court practice (Gen 41:45; 2
[Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002], 53). Giving a new name was also a sign of new
ownership or new destiny and was a common court custom (Goldingay, Daniel, 17). To name
belongs to the ordering to creation in the Babylonian epic of creation (ANET, 60) as well as Gen
2:19. Martin Rose says, “This association of the act of naming with creation underlines the fact
that the name represents something wholesome and salutary; the knowledge of the name opens up
names were external to them unlike the food issue? In any way, it seems evident that the fact that the new names referred to Babylonian deities suggests not only the pressure to convert to the worship of Babylonian gods (1:7) but also additional pressure to assimilate into Babylonian culture. Babylonian names were another intentional pressure put on the Hebrew youths to get them to change and move away from their cultural and religious roots.

On the other hand, Shea sees a more pragmatic goal: “The Babylonians simply wanted to give these captives names which would be easy to recognize by the Babylonians with whom they would be working.” From the perspective of the captives, it must be noted that they received their new names from their captors and not by personal choice. However, Daniel and his friends had to put up with the indignity, mockery, and verbal attack against their own religious heritage whenever they were called by their given heathen names.

specific human dimensions for communication and for fellowship (Martin Rose, “Names of God in the OT,” *ABD* [1992], 4:1002).

1 In the ancient world, “a byname may be adopted to signify a shift in a religious adherence” (G. H. R. Horsley, “Names, Double,” *ABD* [1992], 4:1015).

2 Shea, *Daniel 1-7*, 60. Montgomery also suggests that Ashpenaz had no intention to degrade or humiliate these captives by this name change (Montgomery, 123).

3 Lacocque, 29. Lacocque says, “The invocation of foreign gods in their new names did not seem to bother the young men” (ibid.).

4 Bultema, 44. There are indications that Jews took names from other local languages and cultures without finding the names problematic. For example, Zerubbabel meant “seed of Babylon” (Ezra 3:2) and Mordecai was perhaps taken from the name of the god Marduk (Gowan, 45). Many Greek names were also used by Jews during the Hellenistic period (Avigdor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum [Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959]).
It is also notable that Daniel always referred to himself by his Hebrew name in the narrative parts in the book of Daniel. Even Belshazzar called him Daniel (5:13). There seemed to be familiarity with Daniel’s Hebrew name as well as his new given name Belteshazzar from the queen’s expression: “This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar.” The queen mentioned Daniel’s Hebrew name first and then mentioned his Babylonian name. Thus, it can be concluded that Daniel used his Hebrew name intentionally in an effort to maintain his identity with the people of God (7:1; 8:1, 15, 27; 9:2, 22; 10:11; 12:9), although Daniel and his friends seemed to have accepted the situations where Babylonians called them by their Babylonian names.

It is true that a “name” is a “distinguishing mark” which makes it possible to differentiate, to structure, and to order. Knowledge of a name can give power because it has to do with ontological identity. Therefore, having a native name as a foreigner is often a first step leading to acceptance as an insider in a foreign culture. When the

---

1 Edward J. Young, 123.

2 Compare this attitude with Christians in the fourth century: “A number of Christians on trial at Caesarea in 308 bewilder the magistrate because they have renounced their birth-names, which were pagan theo-phonics. In the place of them they chose names to identify with their new faith, such as Elijah and Samuel” (Horsley, 4:1016). The reason why the Babylonian names of Daniel’s friends are used in the chapter 3 is not clear. From a literary perspective, we can draw out a hint for it. The accusers used their Babylonian names (vs. 12) and the king used the names 7 times (vss. 13, 14, 19, 26, 28, 29). In the narrative part, their Babylonian names are mentioned again in vss. 16, 22, 23, 26, 30. The usage of the Babylonian names seems to be natural in the plot of the narration, because the narration will be confused in the case that the narrator uses their Hebrew names. When Nebuchadnezzar mentioned the name “Daniel,” he used Daniel’s Babylonian name “Belteshazzar” as additional (4:8, 9, 19). The queen repeated the same pattern in front of Belshazzar (5:12).

3 Rose, 4:1002.

4 Ibid.
Babylonians began to call the four captives by their familiar Babylonian names, it might have been an indication that the outsiders were in the process of building personal relationships with the insiders. The new names made it easier for Daniel and his friends to be accepted into the new culture, whether the four captives intended that to happen or not.

**Conflict Resolution**

Daniel expressed his rejection of the king's appointed food by offering a religious reason: the avoidance of defilement in Dan 1. The food issue could have caused a cultural conflict between two very different cultures and religions.¹ To solve this problem, Daniel did not come with a protest, but with a request.² The gentleness, courtesy, and fidelity displayed by these men led them to win the favor of their superiors.³ Even so, the sympathetic officer nevertheless hesitated to help the captives because he was afraid of his king's reaction if the health condition of those under his care worsened (vs. 10). His major concern was not a religious one, but his personal welfare.

Daniel changed his strategy in trying to solve the problem. Daniel approached the guardian, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over him and his friends, to solicit help from him personally (vs. 11).⁴ Daniel humbly called himself and his friends "your

¹Ibid. Compare the experience of Joseph (Gen 39:4, 21), of Ezra (7:28), and of Nehemiah (Neh 2:8). These men attributed their success to the blessing of God ("Daniel," *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:760).

²Bultema, 48.

³Ibid. This is supported by the fact that Ashpenaz did not show any anger or threats towards Daniel.

⁴Although the KJV rendered the term as if it were a proper name, the presence of an article in the Hebrew is indication that it was not a proper name. The term seems to be deprived from the
servants” in speaking to the guardian. Although Daniel was from a royal family, he showed a humble attitude to the lower Babylonian official who was in charge of the food for the four captives.

After showing respect, Daniel suggested a conditional plan: “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see” (vss. 12-13). He said nothing about the issue of defilement or other reasons for a change of menu. Instead, he proposed a test, stipulated a limited period of time, and so minimized any risk on the guardian’s part. Ten days was “a period short enough not to arouse suspicion yet long enough for effects to be seen.” Daniel passed the initiative of the situation over to the guardian by suggesting that the guardian should compare their appearance with other young men and then decide whether he would permit the change in diet to continue.

Ashpenaz indicated that he was willing to grant Daniel’s request, as long as it would not put him in danger. The guardian, who would face less pressure than Ashpenaz, was convinced that Daniel’s suggestion was not dangerous. Thus, he accepted Daniel’s suggestion without hesitation. The tactic was accepted and the results proved successful.

Akkadian maṣṣaru, which means “guardian,” or “warden” (“Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:760).

1Fewell, 21.

2Goldingay, *Daniel*, 20. For Jerome, the setting of time was regarded as a sign of faith (Collins, 144). Lacocque also sees this period as symbolic (Lacocque, 31).

3Buhlma, 49.
Daniel’s handling of this crisis illustrates the importance of understanding the social context before determining which approach is appropriate to solve a cross-cultural conflict. First, Daniel did not make the food problem an ongoing issue. Instead he suggested a ten-day test. Second, the reason why Daniel was in “favor and sympathy” with the prince of the eunuchs (1:9) was most likely because he had showed respect to his guardian and maintained good relationships with him. Third, Daniel used a win-win approach. When the results of the test were in, Daniel and his friends were able to maintain their allegiance to God and so preserved themselves from being consumed by Babylonian life. Daniel’s suggestion for a ten-day trial made the guardian feel that there was little risk. Further, the guardian was most likely quite content to take the food and wine that Daniel and his friends rejected, for “king’s food” was much better fare than the guardian was accustomed to.

---

1According to Duane Elmer’s “general rules for dealing with conflict” to resolve cross-cultural conflict, first of all, we need to “ask whether this is worthy of attention or should be let go” (Duane Elmer, Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry [Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 180).

2Elmer emphasizes the importance of building relationships in cross-cultural contexts. He said, “Make your approach one of concern for the person and for the preservation of the relationship (ibid.). This type of conflict resolution is referred to as a “collaborating style” in Norman Shawchuck, How to Manage Conflict in the Church (Schaumburg, IL: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1983), quoted in Erich W. Baumgartner, “Deal with Conflicts,” in Passport to Mission, 2d ed., ed. Erich W. Baumgartner et al. (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of World Mission of Andrews University, 1999), 82.

3Elmer also suggests, “Believe a win-win resolution’ is possible if both parties can remain calm, understand each other’s interests, and negotiate with integrity and fairness” (Elmer, 181).

4Fewell, 21.

5Fewell proposes that “the proposal is sweetened also by what is unspoken—the guardian is left to dispose of the king’s food and wine (surely much better fare than that to which the guardian is accustomed) as he sees fit!” (ibid.).
However, in the narrative of chap. 3, Daniel's three friends were unable to solve the conflict with Nebuchadnezzar. Their refusal to bow down to the image, which the king had built,\(^1\) shows that there is a limit to what can be done towards conflict resolution and that no one should sacrifice fundamental truths of Scripture in order to avoid or solve conflicts.

**Identification**

While Daniel maintained his identity with the people of God by keeping the ritual food laws and by praying for his people and Jerusalem, he identified with the wise men of Babylon. When the king gave the command to kill all the wise men, the very fact that the king's guard came to Daniel and his friends indicates that they were regarded as part of the group of wise men, even though they had not been called by the king to help interpret the dream (vs. 13).\(^2\)

In the middle of that crisis, Daniel and his friends prayed that they would not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon (vs. 18). After the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision, Daniel went to Arioch and said, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon" (vss. 19, 24). Daniel, in seeking to protect the wise men, seemed to go against God's commandments in the Law of Moses to destroy such individuals (Exod 7:11,

\(^1\) A more detailed discussion of the issues of Dan 3 will be discussed in the section on "cross-cultural proclamation."

\(^2\) The reason why they were not capable in the court to interpret the king's dream seems to be that they had but only recently graduated and the monarch only summoned the high-ranking wise men ("Daniel," *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:769).
22; 22:18; Deut 18:10). But these laws could be enforced only in the land of Israel, where people consciously lived under Israelite law.¹

Daniel’s attitude seemed to be tied to the Old Testament concept of showing an attitude of tolerance towards foreigners. For example, Naaman requested forgiveness when he had to bow down in the temple of Rimmon. Elisha answered Naaman, “Go in peace” (2 Kgs 5:19). Elisha’s answer was not an expression of approval or disapproval of Naaman’s request, but does indicate that “God leads new converts on step by step and knows the appropriate moment in which to call for a reform in a certain matter.”²

In like manner, Daniel never condemned or tried to destroy the wise men in the heathen court after he became involved in interpreting the king’s dream. Instead, he agreed with the powerlessness of human beings, including himself, by saying, “no one but the God of heaven could reveal the secret that the king demanded” (Dan 2:27).³ Through this close identification with the wise men Daniel was able to share God’s concern for them as well as a heathen king.

The admission of inability by the Chaldeans also gives a hint as to why Daniel worked to save them: “There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter. . . .

¹Obviously Daniel was acquainted with the many statements in the Pentateuch against the use of magic (Exod 22:18; Lev 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:9-12). It is possible that he was also acquainted with the warnings of those prophets whom he could have been familiar with (Isa 8:19; Isa 47:9, 12; Jer 27:9; Mal 3:5; Ezek 13:18, 20). In fact, Isaiah pointed out astrology as a Babylonian sin (Isa 47:13; cf. Jer 10:2).


³The same concept is emphasized again in vs. 30: “As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men.”
There is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh” (Dan 2:10, 11, KJV, emphasis supplied).1 Was it because of their honesty concerning their limitation that God used to provide an opportunity for Daniel to reveal the power of the Living God to them?

On the whole, these instances demonstrate that God wants to save even heathen religious leaders.2 In the New Testament, there is a story of the conversion of the magician Simon in Samaria (Acts 8:9-12) and many followers of magic were converted in Ephesus (19:18). Both cases show that the apostle Paul worked hard to convert even magicians. In like manner, Daniel did not see the wise men of Babylon as his religious enemies. Through his identification with them, he created a situation that allowed him to witness to them concerning the true God of Heaven. However, Daniel’s identification with the wise men of Babylon never caused him to sacrifice any of his religious identity, showing that identification with people for the purpose of cross-cultural witness is never an excuse for compromise.

Language Learning

The book of Daniel shows that the ability to understand language is vital to the successful communication of the gospel. Daniel and his friends were chosen by Ashpenaz, the chief officer who served the king, because they were “skilful in all wisdom and

1 Collins says, “The admission of defeat by the Chaldeans is hyperbolic but sets the scene for Daniel’s accomplishment of an impossible task” (Collins, 157).

2 The subtitle for this section in Maxwell’s book is “God’s Love for Astrologers” (Maxwell, 42).
cunning in knowledge, and understanding science” (1:4). ¹ They were taught the languages and literatures of the Chaldeans. The word “languages” could indicate the three languages which were used at that time: (1) Akkadian, the national language, (2) Sumerian, the language of traditional religion, and (3) Aramaic, the language of international commerce and diplomacy.²

The majority of the Israelites could not speak and understand Aramaic during the attack of Sennacherib on Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (cf. Kgs 18:26; Isa 36:11). Only the leaders could speak that language at the time. However, Aramaic became the primary international language of literature and communication throughout the Near East from 700 B.C.³ During the period of the Persian Empire (6th-4th centuries B.C.), Aramaic was a widely used official language⁴ and continued to be used during the formative periods of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism.⁵ This suggests that “as a child in Judah, Daniel had already learned to write Aramaic and also Hebrew, which was related to it” so that when

---

¹Their good educational background, natural ability to learn, and a gift for picking up a new language readily would have been desirable prerequisites for those being accepted for training as future courtiers because proficiency in learning languages was not easy to acquire (“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:758).

²Maxwell, 27.

³Stephen A. Kaufman, “Languages (Aramaic),” ABD (1992), 4:173. Kaufman points out that “the dispersal of Aramaic-speaking peoples from Egypt to Lower Mesopotamia was a result of the Assyrian policies of deportation” (ibid.). Except Dan 2:4-7:28, Ezra 4:8-68; 7:12-26; Jer 10:11; Gen 31:47 (two words) were also written in Aramaic.


⁵Kaufman, 4:173.
Daniel was brought to Babylon (605 B.C.), he already knew the diplomatic language of his day.1

Akkadian2 and Sumerian,3 to which Daniel was introduced in Babylon, employed around 625 cuneiform characters and were usually written on clay tablets.4 It would have been quite a bit difficult for Daniel to learn these languages than Aramaic. The letters, sounds, and words of the Chaldean languages were quite different from Hebrew. However, after three years of education,5 Daniel stood in front of the king as a fluent practitioner of all three languages (1:5, 18). If Daniel's language skill were "ten times

---

1Maxwell, 27. The fact that Daniel could communicate freely with the prince of the eunuchs and the steward whom the chief had appointed over Daniel and his friends also supports that Daniel and his friends could already speak the Aramaic.

2Akkadian was a Semitic language spoken and written in ancient Mesopotamia more than 2,600 years prior to the Christian period (Richard I. Caplice, “Language [Akkadian],” *ABD* (1992), 4:170). It was written from left to right in logogramsyllabic cuneiform script borrowed from the unrelated Sumerian language (Huehnergard, 4:156). After the 7th century B.C., it began to fade as a widely used language because of the influence of Aramaic and then Greek in the third centuries B.C. Akkadian has been found in royal inscriptions, letters, economic documents, and many other kinds of writings, including especially omen literature (Caplice, 172).

3Sumerian was used in early written records as early as the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C. and became extinct in everyday use by the early second millennium B.C. (Jerrold S. Cooper, “Sumer, Sumerians,” *ABD* [1992], 6:231), but was preserved as a language of scholarship and cult usage until the end of the pre-Christian era. During the post-Sumerian phase (ca. 1600-100 B.C.), it was used primarily in the religious sphere (William W. Hallo, “Sumerian Literature,” *ABD* [1992], 6:236). Akkadian speakers learned Sumerian as a dead, literary language (Huehnergard, 4:164). Cuneiform means “wedge-shaped,” and was a writing system in which signs were rapidly impressed with a reed stylus on a soft writing surface (Jerrold S. Cooper, “Cuneiform,” *ABD* [1992], 1:1212).

4Maxwell, 27. The relationship between Sumerians and Akkadians has been compared to that between the ancient Romans and the peoples of medieval Europe. The cuneiform writing system, which had originally been used to write Sumerian, was adapted to write Akkadian (Caplice, 170).

5According to Maxwell, Daniel's three years of education may have been, by our modern calculations, actually less than two years (Maxwell, 45-47).
better than the other magicians and enchanters,” his language skills were indeed remarkable (vs. 20).

Perhaps the reason why Daniel and his friends were proficient at language learning was because of God’s gifts of “knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning” (vs. 17). Daniel and his friends were also young and had lived in a Babylonian court surrounded by the Chaldeans, who could use three languages. As mentioned already, the Hebrew captives likely could at least speak more than one foreign language before they were taken captive. Daniel was able not only to interact with the Babylonian officials without needing a translator, but he was also able to explain Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams and witness to his God in front of the heathen king after three years of education. These witnessing opportunities were possible because of his language proficiency.

Daniel’s experiences suggest that language learning is a major component of success in cross-cultural ministry. Learning the local language is crucial if one is to understand the people in a different culture. For Daniel, overcoming the language barrier was the first step in being able to communicate and reach Babylonians with a message of the true God. For missionaries to truly identify with people in a mission field, cross-cultural workers must make every effort to reach them in their mother tongue.

---

1 The expression “all kinds of literature” stresses the wide extent of their attainments from the Babylonian books (Wood, 43).

2 Lingenfelter, “Cultural Learning,” 255.

3 Pat Gustin, “Learning the Language,” in Passport, 95. Dan 7:13-14 also shows that “God’s eternal plan that people from all languages will worship and serve Him” (cf. Rev 5:9-10) (Elizabeth S. Brewster, “Second Language Acquisition,” EDWM [2000], 861). This also suggests that to reach people of all languages and be able to communicate clearly with them in a language they understand, language learning is a critical component of the missionary mandate (ibid.).
Usage of Languages

Another aspect that we should consider is the way different languages are used in the book of Daniel. Most of the historical parts were written in Aramaic (2:4b-7:28), which was a language used for official correspondence during the Neo-Babylonian era, while most of the prophetic chapters, as well as chap. 1, were written in Hebrew (1:1-2:4a; chaps. 8-12).¹ In addition to these two main languages, Daniel employed some words from the ancient Babylonian, Persian, and even Greek languages. Why did Daniel use these different languages?

Hasel points out that the Aramaic begins at the point where the wise men made their speech to the king and it stops when the focus moves away from politico-religious interests of 2:4b-7:28 to give way to primarily religious concerns (chaps. 8-12).² It is notable that the introductory part of the book of Daniel (1:1-2:4a) reports on the sovereignty of God and the fate of several Jewish youth when the kingdom of Judah was destroyed. Likewise, chaps. 8-12 speak of the fate of the Jews under tyrannical rulers. Both passages would not have been relevant to the gentile world of Daniel’s time, so perhaps this is the reason why Daniel wrote these sections in Hebrew.³

By contrast, the accounts of chaps. 2-7 that concerned gentile kings and whose activities would have been of interest to a broader audience were written in Aramaic. For

¹Shea, Daniel 1-7, 21.
³Stephen R. Miller, 48.
the passages that had a wider audience, Daniel wrote in Aramaic that was the lingua franca of his time (cf. 7:14). Did Daniel have Aramaic-speaking readers in mind? The use of Aramaic in the book of Daniel parallels Jer 10:11, the only verse in the prophets written in Aramaic and dealing with the universally relevant message of God's creationship. The presence of this Aramaic verse in the midst of the Hebrew confirms that this passage was addressed to the exiles, especially for those who spoke Aramaic, the lingua franca.2

Miller sees a missiological implication from the use of Aramaic in the book of Daniel: “Aramaic was reserved for the parts of the book that had universal appeal or special relevance to the Gentile nations.”3 This bit of information supports the idea that Aramaic in the book of Daniel was used in a missiological purpose.

Symbolism

In the Bible, symbols are often given in “the divine-human encounter in which divine revelation takes place.”4 In the majority of cases, “symbolism emerges as a shared

1Ibid.

2Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelly, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., Jeremiah 1-25, WBC, vol. 26 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 160. This verse is equivalent in a sense to the first Angel’s Message of Rev 14:6, 7.

3Ibid., 48. See also Keil, 19; Baldwin, 30. Doukhan proposes that “this multiplicity of tongues in the book of Daniel is a unique example of a message that pushes through the borders of Israel and offers itself to the intelligence of the nations” (Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 11).

Symbols in the Bible were assigned different meanings in different contexts. In the book of Daniel, many symbols were also used to declare the purpose of God. To understand the meaning of those symbols, one must understand how those symbols were understood by Daniel and the reader of his age. The symbols of the book of Daniel suggest that God is very sensitive to culture in order to communicate effectively with the people in that culture.

**Great Image**

When Daniel was able to interpret the king’s dream, opportunity was then provided to talk about the true God of heaven who reveals secrets and also to contrast the inability of the Babylonian wise men to know those secrets. Further, in the content of the dream, God used a well-known cultural ingredient: a great image. Maxwell explains that God chose to reveal coming events to the heathen monarch by means of an immense and dazzling statue because in ancient times, people performed public worship at the feet of the images of their gods and some of these images were very large.

---


2. Ibid. Cf. the meaning of circumcision between the Old Testament and the New Testament; the meaning of the cross between Christians and unbelievers.

3. I will discuss only the great image and huge mountain in chap. 2, the big tree in chap. 4, and images of beasts in chap. 7.

4. Maxwell, 35. Baldwin also says that statues were familiar to the inhabitants of Babylon (Baldwin, 96, 97). The statues of the Near East were typically life-size, but varied in size (Edward M. Curtis, "Idol, Idolatry," *ABD* [1992], 3:376). According to Herodotus, in the temple of Babylon there was "a second shrine lower down, in which is a great sitting figure of Bel, all of gold on a golden throne, supported on a base of gold, with golden table standing beside it" (Herodotus *Histories* 1.183 [trans. Slincourt, Penguin Classics, 82]).
Near Eastern cultures often connected a statue of a human being with the world’s destiny.¹ This suggests that God used appropriate cultural symbols to communicate effectively with the people in the target culture.

The scheme of the four world empires also reflects a process of contextualization. The use of the metals assigned to the four kingdoms in the book of Daniel is similar to the order of metals referred to in the Great Triumphal Inscription of Sargon II.² Boutflower explains, “Those different metals were assigned by Babylonians to different gods.”³ Dan 5:4, 23 also relate the metals to idolatry: “the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.”

Roy Gane suggests that there is some parallelism between Daniel’s prophecies and some of the Akkadian historical prophecies: Daniel’s prophecies shared with the Uruk prophecy and the Dynastic prophecy not only the feature of a historical outline but also the motif of an ideal era for Babylon within such an outline.⁴ Hasel also recognizes a

¹Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 29.

²Charles Boutflower, In and Around the Book of Daniel (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977), 24. Baldwin also introduces the idea that the Greek poet Hesiod (c. 800 B.C.) in his book Works and Days, 106-201, employed gold, silver, bronze, and iron to represent eras in world history (Baldwin, 97). Since the metals were listed in descending order: “After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours” (2:39), Hartman and Di Lella say, “In the ancient symbolism of the four metals as representing four ages of mankind the descending scale in the value of the metals portrays a constant deterioration of mankind from an ideal golden age to the debased state of the contemporary world” (Hartman, 147).

³Boutflower, 34.

point of contact between the "Akkadian prophecies"\footnote{See A. Kirk Grayson, \textit{Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 24-37.} and the book of Daniel in the concept of the rise and fall of empires.\footnote{Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Four World Empires of Daniel 2 against Its Near Eastern Environment," \textit{JSOT} 12, no. 1 (May 1979): 21.} The various traditions in the ancient Near East shared a common prototype or scheme of successive kingdoms that was embedded in their respective cultures and contexts.\footnote{Ibid., 23.} Thus, it is possible that "at least some of the Akkadian prophecies may have been known to Daniel and the early audience of the book which bears his name."\footnote{Gane, "Genre Awareness," 145.}

Although there are some differences between the prophecies of Daniel and the prophecies of the ancient Near East,\footnote{These differences will be discussed in the section of "proper use of symbols."} the use of a human statue to communicate with a heathen king shows how God was sensitive to culture. God shared a message of his sovereignty through a symbol that was familiar to the king and the people in the Babylonian culture.

\textbf{Huge Mountain}

When Daniel interpreted the king's dream, he explained that the rock that was cut out of a mountain without human hands became a huge mountain that filled the whole prophecy, see A. Kirk Grayson, \textit{Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 24-37.
earth (2:34, 35, 45). The “huge mountain” (2:35) was originally a title of Enlil, the patron
god of Nippur, to whom the most ancient Babylonian temple was dedicated. Later Enlil
was replaced by Marduk, the patron god of Babylon.\(^1\) In Babylonian mythology, the gods
were supposed to dwell in a sacred mountain called “the Mountain of the Lands” and Enlil,
as chief of the gods, became identified with the mountain itself.\(^2\)

For the Babylonian, a dream in which the kingdom of the God of Heaven whom
Daniel worshiped would become “a huge mountain” would convey a peculiar
significance.\(^3\) At the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (ca. 1125-1104 B.C.), Babylonians also
believed that the supremacy of the god of Nippur, Enlil, had been taken away and
bestowed on the god of Babylon, Marduk.\(^4\) So, for Daniel to state that the Babylonian’s
supremacy would be taken from them and bestowed on a second, third, and fourth
kingdom in succession, and eventually be given to the kingdom of the God of Heaven,
would have some cultural relevance.\(^5\) The audiences could grasp at once the main outline

\(^{1}\)Boutflower, 45. See also William J. Fulco, “Enlil,” \textit{ABD} (1992), 2:507, 508; Raphael K.

\(^{2}\)Boutflower, 45. In Sumerian Hymns to Enlil, it says, “In Nippur, the beloved shrine of
the father, the Great Mountain” (\textit{ANET}, 574; see also ibid., 390).

\(^{3}\)Boutflower, 46.

\(^{4}\)Although Enlil played the chief role in Sumerian times and was one of the chief gods in
Babylonian gods at Nippur, Marduk, chief god at Babylon, gradually moved into the position of
the king of the gods during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I because the city of Babylon became the
political and cultural center of the land (Grayson, “Babylonian,” 4:774).

\(^{5}\)Boutflower, 46.
of the kingdom of the God of Heaven as revealed to them in their king's dream because they were aware of the peculiar significance of the huge mountain.¹

For the Hebrew hearers, the mountain symbolized Zion and Jerusalem (Dan 9:16, 20:11:45). The mountain of Zion is a technical expression designating the heavenly place of God (Isa 14:13). The stone also symbolizes God himself in the Bible (Isa 8:14). If the Jews in Babylon were familiar with these biblical concepts and if they knew the Babylonian mythologies, the message of Dan 2 would have been very impressive for them.

The use of the mountain symbol shows how careful God is to speak in culturally relevant terms when he communicates his message to the peoples of the world. When God used a familiar symbol, such as a huge mountain, the king and the Babylonian wise men could easily understand the meaning of the message without much specific explanation.

**Big Tree**

In the dream of Dan 4, Nebuchadnezzar saw a big tree. The symbolic meaning of a tree was also well known in the ancient Near East.² The tree represented the divine world order maintained by the king as the representative of his god.³ Sometimes the king took the place of the tree as the "human personification of the Tree."⁴ Herodotus told of

---

¹Ibid., 48.

²Pfandl says, "Sacred or cosmic trees were a major element of the iconography of ancient Mesopotamia" (Pfandl, 40).


⁴Pfandl, 40.
the case of the Median Astyages who dreamed of a vine growing out of the womb of his daughter Mandane until it extended over all of Asia. That vine was the future Cyrus.¹

Landon also points out that “Nebuchadnezzar himself, in an inscription, compares Babylon to a great tree sheltering the nations of the world.”²

In the Old Testament, proud and lofty trees were symbolic of human self-exaltation and arrogance.³ Ezekiel, who was a contemporary prophet of Daniel, used the allegory of the cypress of Lebanon to describe Assyria in Ezek 31:10-14.⁴ Isaiah had already used the same motif to describe judgment on Assyria in 10:33, 34: “The lofty trees will be felled; the tall ones will be brought low. He will cut down the forest thickets with an ax.”

These various examples suggest that the Hebrew readers as well as the Babylonians were familiar with the tree motif and most likely understood its symbolic meaning.⁵ The imagery of the big tree was a vehicle God used to enable the recipient of

¹Herodotus *Histories* 1.108 (Penguin Classics, 57, 58).

²S. Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire* (Paris: Leroux, 1905), 34.


⁴Cf. the purpose of the judgment in Ezek 17:24 with Dan 4:14.

⁵With this type of background and symbolism, why could not the wise men and even the king himself interpret the meaning of the dream? Was it that the dream was so explicit the king himself sensed that it contained some evil message? (“Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:788).
the message to retain the meaning and importance of the message longer than if the
message had been communicated in any other way.¹

Images of Beasts

In Dan 7, Daniel saw in his vision that “there before me were the four winds of
heaven churning up the great sea” (vs. 2). This scene is similar to the Babylonian myth,
Enuma Elish, which tells that rebellious monsters were born from the primordial ocean
(Tiamat) and they were destroyed by the winds, which Marduck stationed to defeat Tiamat
and her monsters.²

In Babylonian tradition, animals often symbolized upcoming historical events.³
The first beast, “a winged lion,” is depicted in Babylonian sculptures, again suggesting
that the symbolism would have been easily recognized. The combination of a lion and an
eagle was a common object of art—most often a lion with eagles’ wings.⁴

¹Ibid., 4:789.
²ANET, 60-72, 501-503. In ANET, 66, the four winds are divided into the south wind, the
north wind, the east wind, and the west wind. For the biblical and cultural influences on the vision
of Dan 7, see Jüng Eggler, Influences and Traditions Underlying the Vision of Daniel 7:2-14: The
Research History from the End of the 19th Century to the Present (Göttingen, Switzerland:
Vendehoeck und Ruprecht, 2000).
⁴Montgomery, 287; “Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:820. See also the picture 534 in
(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 180. Hereafter this work will be referred to as
ANEP. Pfandl says, “Representations of lions appear on the walls of the great processional way to
the Ishtar Gate as well as the gate itself. They occur also on the outer wall of the throne room in
Babylon” (Pfandl, 62).
The other beasts have often been likened to Babylonian engravings, sculptures, reliefs, and sphinxes, but they are not exact images. Babylonian readers, however, would have understood the meaning of the beasts used for the various kingdoms because they had already been familiar with mythical animal motifs. In Mesopotamia, there was a custom of describing a king as having characteristics of various animals. Just the use of beasts would have been enough to let most Babylonians understand the meaning of the animals in Daniel's vision. Furthermore, Daniel witnessed four beasts arising out of the sea successively (vss. 4-8) and the angel explained that the four beasts symbolize "four kingdoms" that will rise from the earth (vs. 17). Babylonians would not have needed much further explanation.

Although there is a mythological element in the picture of the four monstrous beasts that emerge from the sea, there is no need to look for any direct borrowing from the mythological literature of Babylon. The symbolic representation of heathen powers with rapacious beasts or with mythological monsters is also common in the Old Testament (e.g., Ezek 29:3; Isa 27:1; Pss 68:31; 74:13; 80:14).

1Goldingay, Daniel, 151; cf. ANEP, 212-217. See also Eggler, 45-54, for the efforts by scholars to see any iconographic influences of the Near East in the animal vision of Dan 7.

2ANET, 585, 586.

3Hartman and Di Lella, 212.

The sequence of animals in Dan 7 parallels Hos 13:7-8 and Jer 5:6. Hos 13:7-8 described Yahweh as a lion, a leopard, a bear, a lion, and a wild animal. Jer 5:6 warns Judah of an attack by a lion, a wolf (same Aramaic word as “bear” in Dan 7:5), and a leopard. The lion-eagle image of Babylon is similar to a description of God who will judge Edom in Jer 49:19-22. Other animal allegories appear in Ezek 17, 19, 29, and 32. For Jewish readers, these symbols would not be strange at all.

The uses of imaginary and symbolic animals again suggest that God uses cultural symbols and culturally relevant forms to proclaim his purpose in understandable ways. The cultural forms and symbols of animals were very effective visible means in carrying and communicating deeper spiritual truths.

**Proper Use of Symbols**

Symbols can function like similes. Symbols are not a random allegorical code speaking of realities that could just as adequately be referred to directly; symbols contribute to the meaning of the text in a way that ordinary language cannot. Thus images or symbols in the book of Daniel would have evoked powerful feelings in the original readers because, at least to a certain extent, they would have grasped concepts associated with them.

---


2Ibid., 149.

3Ibid., 148.

4Longman, 178. Goldingay says, “The entity described possesses qualities belonging to the symbol (e.g., a horn suggests strength); they call to mind a body of ideas, images, and values.
There are some similarities between the book of Daniel, other books of the Old Testament, and Near Eastern literature, but the detailed descriptions of the symbols employed in the book of Daniel are used creatively to make each one different from the other in symbolizing future history.\(^1\) It is also notable that symbols have a God-given interpretation (7:17-27) for a God-given revelation (vss. 2-14).\(^2\) God added something more to a symbol than its literal meaning. It is more important to figure out the God-given meanings than to discover the literal meaning of the symbol.

In the narrative of the golden image in Dan 3, Daniel’s three friends were very sensitive to the misuse of that symbol by King Nebuchadnezzar. God used the culturally recognized symbol of an image to communicate with both Babylonian and Jewish readers of that time. However, the book of Daniel also shows that cultural symbols used in Christian witness do not supersede God’s injunction against idolatry.

\(^1\)Hartman and Di Lella, 212. Longman says, “Much of the stuff of the imagery comes from previous biblical revelation or from common motifs found in broader ancient Near Eastern literature. Observing these connections certainly makes the imagery more understandable, but does not erase the intentional ambiguity and sense of mystery” (Longman, 178). Gane explains the difference between the prophecies of Daniel and the Akkadian prophesies: “Whereas the ultimate ideal for the Akkadian texts is part of the present age, Daniel does not value the ideal for Babylon in the same way. Unlike the Akkadian texts, Daniel’s hope is transcendent” (Gane, “Genre Awareness,” 144). Hasel also suggests several major differences between Dan 2 and the Dynastic Prophecy: (1) in one instance we have a sequence of but four empires, in the other four world empires followed by a fifth of eternal duration; (2) in one we have the alternation of “good” and “bad” times, in the other continuing deterioration; (3) in one we have the mention of different lengths of reign of various kings, in the other no such description; (4) in one the predictions do not lead to an eschatological climax, in the other everything leads to an eschatology; and in one we have a political tract, in the other an apocalyptic dream-vision (Hasel, “Four World Empires,” 23).

\(^2\)Goldingay, Daniel, 148.
In conclusion, the book of Daniel used cultural symbolism to communicate effectively with its readers. The symbols used were well known and included mythical symbols that God used to refer to transcendent realities. God and his cross-cultural missionary Daniel were sensitive to the local culture in order to proclaim and communicate effectively. However, God’s communication, by using local forms and symbols, never gives permission for syncretism that sacrifices the truth in an effort to be culturally sensitive.

Cross-Cultural Witness

The prophecies of Daniel are fulfilled when “the God of heaven” sets up a “kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (2:44), when the “son of man” receives “everlasting dominion” (7:13, 14), when opposition to the “prince of princes” is “broken without hand” (8:25), and when God’s people are delivered forever from their oppressors (12:1). A major message of the book of Daniel deals with God’s salvific messages for the nations. The book also shows how Daniel and his three friends gave witness in the land of their captivity to fulfill God’s purpose in giving to heathen nations the blessings that come through an acknowledgment of the God of Heaven. As a missionary document, the book of Daniel shows several aspects of cross-cultural witness.

1Ibid.
2“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:750.
3White, Prophets and Kings, 479.
In the next section I will illustrate some missiological perspectives of cross-cultural witness by looking at the witness to (1) Nebuchadnezzar; (2) Belshazzar; and (3) Darius.

Witness to Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar was not only the monarch of the greatest nation of his time but also eminently wise and one who had an innate sense of justice and right.\footnote{1} As "the ruler of the nations" (Ezek 31:11), he was raised to power for a specific role in God's plan.\footnote{2} Jeremiah calls him God's servant (Jer 27:6). Daniel's mission in the court of Nebuchadnezzar was to secure the submission of the king's will to God in order that God's divine purpose might be realized through him.\footnote{3} "Daniel was God's ambassador to the court of Nebuchadnezzar to make known to him the divine will and to secure his cooperation."\footnote{4} The narratives in the book of Daniel show that Daniel and his friends witnessed to Nebuchadnezzar concerning the sovereignty of God with cultural sensitivity.

The First Dream of Nebuchadnezzar

Content of Daniel's prayer

Although the king's dream threatened the lives of Daniel and his friends, God intervened and changed the crisis into an opportunity for witness. Daniel could do

\footnote{1}{"Daniel," \textit{SDA Bible Commentary}, 4:751. For the matter of justice in description of the king's character, see Wiseman, 239.}
\footnote{2}{"Daniel," \textit{SDA Bible Commentary}, 4:751.}
\footnote{3}{Ibid.}
\footnote{4}{"Ezekiel," \textit{SDA Bible Commentary}, 4:569.}
nothing by himself to reveal the content of the dream, but he was convinced that God
could reveal the mysteries in the dream. Daniel and his friends prayed for mercy from the
“God of heaven” concerning this mystery.” Sinclair B. Ferguson points out a crucial
point: “It was because their lives were so intimately intertwined with God’s glory that they
sought His mercy in order that His glory might be displayed in Babylon.”1

As a response to the revelation of God, Daniel praised the “God of Heaven,” “God
of my [his] fathers” in the form of a brief song that expressed several key theological
concepts concerning history (vss. 19-23).2 God’s sovereignty included the message that:
(1) God changes times and seasons; (2) God sets up kings and deposes them; (3) God
gives wisdom; and (4) God reveals deep and hidden things (2:20-23).3 The reason why
this song is important is because it shows that Daniel’s understanding of God gives insight
concerning the message he would share with the king.

Message: God in Heaven and God of my fathers

When Daniel went to Nebuchadnezzar, he began to explain how he came to know
the dream and declared the significance of the king having such a dream. After he pointed
out the failure of the other wise men of Babylon (2:27; cf. 2:10-11), he went on to talk
about “a God in heaven” who reveals mysteries of the future through a dream (vss. 28,

1Sinclair B. Ferguson, Daniel, Communicator’s Commentary, vol. 18 (Waco, TX: Word,
1988), 58.

2Daniel’s use of God’s name will be discussed in the next section.

3Shea, Daniel 1-7, 136.
Goldingay suggests that "a God in Heaven" parallels "the Most High" (3:26; 4:2, 25; 5:1, 21; 7:25, 27) both in general meaning and in resembling gentile titles for God of the kind that Jews sometimes could feel appropriate for Yahweh. Frederick W. Schmidt also explains that this term elyôn, "meaning 'the Exalted One,'" as a title given to the highest of the gods in Canaanite pantheon and as appropriated by the Hebrews as a title for Yahweh. By using general titles of deities, Daniel seemed to begin to talk about his God in a way of building common ground with other religious groups. In this process, Daniel never sacrificed the absoluteness of his God.

In reply to the king, the wise men tried to temper their failure by asserting the difficulty of the king's request: (1) "there is not a man upon the earth who can do what the king asks"; (2) "no great and mighty king has ever asked such a thing to the wise men except the gods" (vs. 11). This was a striking confession on the part of the wise men.

---

1The expression, "a God in heaven," which Daniel already used in his prayer in vs. 18 appears only in Dan 2:18, 28, 44; Ezra 1:2; 6:10; 7:12, 21; Neh 1:5; 2:4. It seems that the phrase was a common designation for God from the time of the exile (Wood, 59).

2Goldingay, Daniel, 47; Rose, 1004. For other cases that "Most High," Elyôn parallels Yahweh, see 2 Sam 22:14; Pss 18:14; 21:8. Ps 47:2 clearly identifies the two phrases: "How awesome is the LORD [Yahweh] Most High, the great King over all the earth!" For the further usage of God in Heaven in the Old Testament, see Gen 2:3; 24:7; Neh 1:5; Jonah 1:9; Pss 47:2; 83:18; 91:9; 92:1; 97:9. "The name of God" (2:20) is another reverential substitute for Yahweh just as "heaven" is later used as a reverential substitute for "God." The phrase "God in Heaven" is also reminiscent of the Canaanite title "lord of heaven," which was apparently an epithet of the high god El (Goldingay, Daniel, 47). In fact, in the ancient Near East and in Greece and Persia, worship of "the lord of heaven" was widespread (ibid.).

because they admitted that they could not—as they persisted they could—contact with the
divine realm and could not know such information.1

Besides, they mentioned “gods who do not live among men,” meaning, “gods
[who] lived above men, not with them,”2 saying, “their home is not among mere human
beings.”3 By adding this expression, they seemed to acknowledge that they were not in
communion with this type of deity.4 Moreover, it hints that their gods who live among
men cannot reveal the content of the king’s dream.5

However, Daniel insisted that his God is the true God, because his God reveals
things on earth (vs. 28).6 Through this comparison, Daniel sought to turn the king’s eyes
to the true God in heaven, the God of the Hebrews, whose people had been conquered by
the king.7

---

1Wood, 54.
2Ibid., 55.
3Goldingay, Daniel, 30.
4Bultema, 71.
5Wood says, “Pagan concepts of the day did not view gods as infinite, but merely more
capable than men” (Wood, 55). Miller explains vs. 11 as the wise men confessed, “the gods knew,
but they were not there” (Stephen R. Miller, 83). See Hallo’s explanation on the Mesopotamian
view on deity: “If there were no one supreme, all-powerful god, if every deity’s powers were
circumscribed chronologically, locally, or typologically, and then safety demanded that the
greatest possible number of gods be appeased. Thus kings vied with one another in constructing
new temples to additional deities, and worship typically involved successive offerings at all the
separate chapels of a single given city” (Hallo, “Mesopotamia,” 171).

6Schmidt, 4:922. Daniel’s concept is in harmony with Melchizedek’s usage of “God Most
High” as “Creator of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:19; cf. 14:22).

7“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:770.
After building common ground, Daniel gave further details concerning the identity of the God in heaven by using another title, "God of my fathers" (vs. 23). Daniel’s use of the personal pronoun “my” signified Daniel’s intimacy with God.1 “God of the fathers” was also a title for God used by Israel’s ancestors before the revelation to Moses (Exod 3:13-16), but it came into increased usage after the exile, especially in Chronicles (1 Chr 5:25; 12:17; 2 Chr 33:12).2 Thus this title in Dan 2:23, “God of my fathers,” may suggest a recognition that God is acting in this present situation just as faithfully as he did in Israel’s past3 and could also indicate that God of his fathers is the true God in Heaven, in contrast to the Babylonian gods.4

By using the phrase “God in Heaven,” which is similar with the “lord of heaven,” a popular ancient Near Eastern appellation of deity, Daniel showed how he was involved in religious dialogue. Although he began his dialogue with building common ground by using similar gentile titles, he went on to stress that God in heaven reveals things on earth and that the God of his fathers was still acting in the present situation.

Message: Great God

In the process of interpreting the king’s dream, Daniel continued to emphasize the sovereignty of God in the course of history (2:37, 44, 45, 47). The purpose of the dream was that the God of heaven wanted Nebuchadnezzar to recognize the supremacy of divine

---

1Montgomery designates “God of my fathers” as an “intimate phrase” (Montgomery, 158).
2Goldingay, Daniel, 48.
3Ibid.
4The phrase also functioned as another reverential substitute for Yahweh (ibid.).
power. This is also clearly shown in Daniel’s designation of God as “the Great God” (vs. 45). In the Old Testament, the phrase “Great God” is used in an absolute sense as a paralleled expression of “God of gods” and “Lord of lords” (Deut 10:17; cf. Neh 8:6; Ps 95:3).]

The ancient Near Eastern gods were also designated as the great gods. Although there were disputes as to the supremacy between different gods, Marduk was most certainly at the head of the Babylonian pantheon during Daniel’s time. Thus, by using the phrase “Great God,” Daniel put his God in the place of Marduk.

Again, Daniel explained the identity of his true great God in detail. The adjective “great” parallels “the rock that struck the statue became a huge [great] mountain and filled the whole earth” (2:35). Both adjectives are the word rab. Daniel was witnessing that the God in Heaven who reveals secrets and had shown the king what would take place in the future rules a great Kingdom and his dominion is universal, not regional. Daniel is saying that his true “great God” is far beyond the regional gods of Babylon.

Result of witness

After Daniel finished interpreting the dream and told the king that “the great God has shown the king what will take place in the future” (2:45), the king “fell prostrate

---

1Fewell, 33.

2The use of “God of gods” and “Lord of lords” will be discussed in a later section.

3E.g., Marduk (ANET, 66); Ashuramazda (ibid., 316).

4Boutflower, 93.

5Ibid., 98.
before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him” (2:46). The fact that the king immediately gave glory to Daniel and not to Daniel’s God (vs. 47) seems to indicate that the heathen ruler ordered gifts given to Daniel because the king regarded him as Yahweh’s representative and indicates that the king had come to know “the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh” through Daniel (vs. 11).1

Nebuchadnezzar then testified about Daniel’s God: “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery” (2:47). The response of Nebuchadnezzar shows the results of Daniel’s witness. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged Daniel’s God as “the God of gods.” In fact, the phrase “God of gods” had already been used prior to Daniel’s time (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2). Daniel also used the phrase in a later vision (Dan 11:36). Duane L. Christensen suggests that this phrase is a “superlative construction” meaning “the kingship of God in an absolute sense.”2 Montgomery confirms this: “In Sem[itic] such a combination as ‘god of gods’ is notoriously superlative.”3 Thus Montgomery considers that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the supremacy of Israel’s God.4

On the other hand, some scholars, such as Driver and Baldwin, think that Nebuchadnezzar’s designation of Daniel’s God as the “God of gods” is ambiguous, as is

1Stephen R. Miller, 103. Compare this attitude with Josephus’ record of why Alexander the Great bowed before the Jewish high priest. According to Alexander, it was to adore God who honored him with his high priest (Josephus Antiquities 11.8.5 [The New Complete Works of Josephus], 384).

2Duane L. Christensen, Deuteronomy 1-11, WBC, vol. 6a (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 206.

3Montgomery, 182.

4Ibid., 181; Wood, 75.
his next expression, "the Lord of kings" (vs. 47). Driver suggests that the similar titles 
"Lord of lords" and "Lord of gods" were "often given by the Babylonian kings to Marduk, 
the supreme god of Babylon."¹ Baldwin says that "as a polytheist he can always add 
another to the deities he worships."² If this line of reasoning is correct, the king, knowing 
that this was a title applied to Marduk in the Babylonian creation story,³ only meant to say 
that "your God, Daniel, is mine; your power you owe to my god."⁴ 

To discern whether or not the king was acknowledging God as the supreme God 
and indicating any movement towards conversion, several aspects of his response need to 
be discussed. First, the king was amazed at Daniel's ability to interpret dreams and was 
not initially concerned about the content.⁵ He did not take any action in the light of his 
predicted future.⁶ He offered a very plausible response, an acknowledgment of the God 

¹Samuel R. Driver, The Book of Daniel: With Introduction and Notes, Cambridge Bible for 
used for Marduk in the ancient Near East documents: "the wisest of gods" (ANET, 65); "the most 
honored of the great gods" (ANET, 66); "the king of gods" (ANET, 68, 309); "the lord of lords" 
(ANET, 309); "the lord of gods" (ANET, 315).

²Baldwin, 95. Doukhan also considers that "Lord of kings" is another name for Marduk 
and for Nabu, "son of Marduk" (Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 40). Boutflower suggests that the 
king acknowledged the God of Israel as one out of many manifestations of the Most High God 
(Boutflower, 99).

³Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:777.

⁴Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 40.

⁵John J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 
1977), 34.

⁶Goldingay, Daniel, 61.
who revealed the future.¹ Later, in chap. 3 the narrative shows that the king did not want to accept the content of the vision.

Second, although Daniel introduced the phrase the “God in Heaven,” the king referred to God as “your God” (vs. 46).² Although the expression “the God of gods” had been used by the Israelites as a “superlative construction” meaning “the kingship of God in an absolute sense,” Nebuchadnezzar seemed to use the phase in a comparative sense only in the area of God’s ability to reveal secrets. Although the king had irrefutable proof that Daniel’s God was infinitely wiser than the gods of Babylon, he still believed in his gods, not Daniel’s God.

However, it is notable that the king acknowledged a captive’s God just a few years after destroying the temple of that God in Jerusalem. Through his encounter with Daniel, the king came to know the God in Heaven who reveals secrets, but he was not set free instantaneously from his native polytheistic presuppositions.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Nebuchadnezzar was doing his best at the time to honor the one whose wisdom and power had been so impressively demonstrated, although he showed theological confusion, with his limited knowledge of the true God.³ Thus, at that point, Nebuchadnezzar could still be classified as a polytheist who

¹Ibid.

²Fewell, 37.

³“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:777.
recognized the existence of the gods of Babylon, but he was moving toward monotheism by acknowledging the superiority of Daniel’s God, Yahweh.\(^1\)

**On the Plain of Dura**

Hidden meaning of the golden image

**Political motive.** Because of dissatisfaction with Daniel’s interpretation of the dream where Nebuchadnezzar is only the head of gold, the king set up an image made of gold from head to toe to “symbolize the perpetual and universal glory of his empire.”\(^2\)

Although the king had seen and experienced the power of the true God through Daniel’s interpretation of his dream, by building an image of only gold, he showed that he had not yet converted to the true God.

Why did the king ask the “peoples, nations, and men of every language” to fall down and worship the image of gold? From the frequent recurrence of the expression “King Nebuchadnezzar has set up” (vss. 2, 3 [twice], 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18), it seems quite clear that Nebuchadnezzar used the image to stress his greatness and his accomplishments.\(^3\) By forcing “men of every nation” to worship the image and to swear

---

\(^1\)Shea, *Daniel 1-7*, 147-149.

\(^2\)“Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:780; Baldwin, 99; Driver, 36. According to Herodotus, Babylonians used more than twenty-two tons of gold to decorate the temple of Bel (Herodotus *Histories* 1.183 [Penguin Classics, 82]. It was the custom for oriental monarchs to be proud of their stockpiles of precious metals.

\(^3\)Wood introduces the ancient custom of erecting statues: “Many ancient rulers made statues, often of themselves; as symbols of their dominion. Frequently such statues were inscribed with stories of the ruler’s own conquests and other accomplishments” (Wood, 79).
allegiance to him, Nebuchadnezzar indicated pride in self and unwillingness to accept God’s view of the future.¹

**Religious motive.** Some scholars suggest the possibility that the image resembled King Nebuchadnezzar: “Even if this were Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, falling prostrate before would imply acknowledgment of his god, as Nebuchadnezzar’s falling prostrate before Daniel [2:46—same words used, the emphasis supplied] implied acknowledgement of Daniel’s God.”²

This religious aspect of the king’s motive is more clearly revealed in the accusation by the astrologers. When Sadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the golden image, certain astrologers (Chaldeans) attempted to discredit them further by stressing their national and religious difference: “There are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon” (3:12a).³ It is interesting that the Chaldeans

---


²Golingay, *Daniel*, 70. Shea also suggests, “the image could have been one of Nebuchadnezzar himself, but it seems more likely that it would have been an image of Marduk, the god of Babylon.” Thus, “by bowing down to the image and worshipping it, a person would also pledge allegiance and loyalty to it and what it represented” (Shea, “Daniel 3,” 30). Hersh Goldwurm introduces a very interesting interpretation concerning the religious motive of the king: “He [Nebuchadnezzar] reasoned that if he could coerce the Jews into rejecting their beliefs, the covenant between God and His people would be broken and the status of the Jewish people would be reduced to that of other nations. Having robbed God’s plan of its ultimate purpose—i.e., the establishment of the fifth kingdom, which shall never be destroyed (2:44), —he aspired to prevent God’s involvement in the downfall of Babylon and hoped for the perpetuation of his empire” (Goldwurm, 112).

³Goldingay, *Daniel*, 70.
charged the Jews with not paying attention to the king. Miller explains that the
Chaldean’s statement was aimed at blaming the king that “Nebuchadnezzar had made a
mistake in assigning these foreigners position over native Babylonians.” On the surface,
the accusation seems to be political.

However, the astrologers detailed the guilt of Daniel’s three friends: “They neither
serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up” (vs. 12b). This
accusation suggests that the Chaldeans saw “the Jews’ stance as involving both
disloyalties (as if it were the king’s statue) and impiety (as if it were a god’s).” The
Chaldeans’ use of the expressions of the second-person singular form “to you,” “your
gods,” “the image you have set up,” also hint that the king was not yet a convert of the
Hebrews’ God. Notice also the king’s question: “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and
Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?” (vs.
14, emphasis supplied). This shows that Nebuchadnezzar was still a believer in
Babylonian gods and the motive behind the golden image was religious.

Although Daniel’s three friends served a heathen king in a foreign court, they did
not show allegiance in any way to any god except the true God. Daniel’s friends clearly
realized that even though the issue seemed political on the surface and there is a

1Stephen R. Miller, 117. Some scholars see the reason of the astrologers’ unfriendliness
because of their professional jealousy (Montgomery, 204; Hartman and Di Lella, 157, 161;
Goldingay, Daniel, 70).

2Goldingay, Daniel, 73.
possibility that Nebuchadnezzar was using religion for political means, they were sensible to the religious purposes hidden in the request to bow down during the dedication of the image.

Message: Power and sovereignty of God

In the middle of their crisis, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were unafraid to declare their strong faith in the power of God to rescue them from the king’s hand (3:17). It is notable that they made clear whom they serve by using the phrase “the God we serve” (vs. 17). They show the limitation of religious dialogue. They made clear whom they would serve and worship (vss. 17, 18).

Although they believed in the power of God, they also indicated their trust in God’s sovereignty even if they should perish (vs. 18). This unconditional service of Daniel’s three friends shows the true nature of religion. Through the dramatic rescue from the furnace, God made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar, who believed his gods were stronger than Israel’s God, who challenged Yahweh’s power by erecting the golden image, and

---

1Hallo introduces a distinctive characteristic of the Mesopotamian government: “The executive power of Mesopotamian government was vested securely in three well-entrenched institutions that owed their ultimate allegiance to the king: the army, the bureaucracy, and the priesthood. . . . In both Assyria and Babylonia, it was generally conceded that kings held office by the grace of the god of their city or land, which they administered on his behalf” (Hallo, “Mesopotamia,” 177). For imperial theology of Nebuchadnezzar, see Deryck C. T. Sheriffs, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Theology and Ours,” in Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterill, ed. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995), 12-30.

2Stephen R. Miller, 120. Doukhan, commenting on this passage, compares the “if” of the king’s immediate threat (vs. 15) with the “if” of a future hope (vs. 18): “Looking beyond the immediate, they maintain hope in a future. In the face of failure, they answer by unconditional service” (Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 51, 52).
who equated Yahweh with his gods, that Judah's defeat was not because their God did not exist or was anemic.\textsuperscript{1} However, Daniel's friends proclaimed that they would be faithful to their sovereign God under any circumstance.\textsuperscript{2} A demonstration of God's power often seems to be pivotal in a power-oriented mission field, but the testimony of Daniel's friends shows that Christian faith should be based on a loving relationship rather than on power.

Result of witness

In reaction to the Chaldeans' accusation, the king commanded that Daniel's three friends be brought to him so he could persuade them (vss. 13-15). In the last part of his speech (vs. 15b), the king threw out a challenge: "Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" This question reflects the king's previous experience with Daniel's God who revealed the content of his dream in chap. 2. He was saying that even such a great God would not be able to protect the men in the furnace.\textsuperscript{3} The king also included his gods in the same category.\textsuperscript{4} With this expression of arrogance and challenge addressed to Yahweh, the king indirectly likened the God of the Jews to his own gods, who were impotent in such matters.\textsuperscript{5}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Stephen R. Miller, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Lacocque proposes that Daniel hinted at his faith in the resurrection here (Lacocque, 70).
\item \textsuperscript{3}Stephen R. Miller, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Wood explains the king's words as "his determination to make them realize that no god existed who could deliver from his hand" (Wood, 88).
\item \textsuperscript{5}"Daniel," \textit{SDA Bible Commentary}, 4:783.
\end{itemize}
In the narrative of chap. 2, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged only that Daniel’s God could reveal mysteries.¹ Nebuchadnezzar believed in God’s existence, but he did not yet worship him. In chap. 3, by erecting the golden image, the king perhaps was retreating from his confession in 2:47.

In front of the furnace, however, Nebuchadnezzar gave witness that “the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (vs. 25). What did “a son of the gods” mean to Nebuchadnezzar? In biblical Aramaic, the plural noun ‘elahin is used to refer not only to pagan gods (2:11, 47; 5:4, 23), but also to the true God (4:8, 9; 5:11; 14).² In this context, it is doubtful that Nebuchadnezzar viewed the fourth being as a Babylonian deity based on his polytheistic view of gods. From the confession of the king (3:26, 28), it seems to be more reasonable that he recognized the fourth being as a divine person of Daniel’s religion.³

At last, the king invited the accusers to witness to the power of God through a question (vs. 24): “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” To Nebuchadnezzar, this proved to be one of the most challenging experiences concerning the power of God.

²Goldingay, *Daniel*, 71.
³For further discussion on the identity of “a son of gods,” see Montgomery, 214-216; Stephen R. Miller, 123. White comments on the reason for the king’s recognition of “The Son of God”: “They [the Hebrew captives] had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God” (White, *Prophets and Kings*, 509).
Nebuchadnezzar then called Daniel’s friends “servants of the Most High God” (3:26). “The Most High God” alludes to the king’s confession of “the Most High” in the previous chapter (2:47). The title “Most High God” was used by the gentiles such as Nebuchadnezzar (3:26; 4:2, 17, 34), Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20), and Balaam (Num 24:16). The term was also used by Daniel (Dan 4:24, 25), Abram (Gen 14:22), Moses (Deut 32:8), Isaiah ( Isa 14:14), and the voice that spoke to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:32). Goldingay comments on these usages: “It suggests a God of universal authority, but of otherwise undefined personal qualities. For a pagan, it would denote only the highest among many gods, but as an epithet of El it was accepted in early OT times and applied to Yahweh, so that for a Jew it has monotheistic (or mono-Yahweistic) implications.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s comment, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego” (3:28) and the same expression in his first decree (vs. 29) also supports the idea that the king used the title “the Most High God” in a polytheistic way. For Nebuchadnezzar, the Most High God was only for the Jews because the “God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego” rescued only “his servants.” Though he recognized the power of God, he did not inquire about the name or nature of that God. For him, the God of Israel was still a national deity. Although the spectacular power to save pushed the king not only to acknowledge the Hebrews’ God, but also to place the Jewish God on a list

---

1Goldingay, Daniel, 72.

2“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:785.

3Fewell, 56, 57.

4Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 55.
worthy of toleration and respect, the king never admitted that his own power should be subject to this divine power, nor did he require people to worship the God of Daniel’s friends.¹

However, it is notable that the king seemed to begin to acknowledge the existence of Daniel’s God by designating him as the “Most High God.”² Note also the reason for the king’s decree: “No other god can save in this way” (vs. 29). In this category, the king included his Babylonian gods. Consequently, not only did Nebuchadnezzar’s decree ensure that the miraculous event, demonstrating God’s power to deliver his servants, would be known throughout his empire (3:29), but he, himself, moved further along in his understanding of the true God.³

The Second Dream of Nebuchadnezzar

The king’s testimony concerning the Most High God

The narrative in Dan 4 is mainly a type of personal testimony given by Nebuchadnezzar himself. In chaps. 2 and 3, Nebuchadnezzar was impressed and acknowledged the existence of God, but the king still thought of him as only the God of the Jews and believed that their God was not the only true God, but simply the highest

¹Goldingay, Daniel, 75. Miller suggests that the king’s decree may also have been an attempt to appease the God of Israel in fear of divine retaliation, for the king had mistreated his servants and actually challenged his power (Stephen R. Miller, 125).

²Cf. Nebuchadnezzar’s use of “Lord of kings” (2:47), which was discussed above.

³Shea, Daniel 1-7, 114. White also comments on the missiological impact throughout the whole empire: “The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth” (White, Prophets and Kings, 512).
God, the chief of all gods.\(^1\) Even in chap. 4, Nebuchadnezzar designated Daniel as “Belteshazzar, after the name of my god” (vs. 8a).\(^2\) However, the phrase may be taken to describe the king’s identity as a Marduk worshipper at the time of the dream.\(^3\) The expression “the spirit of the holy gods is in him” (4:8) also should be interpreted from a polytheistic perspective based on the context of vss. 8, 9, and 18, since these texts are located in the narrative before the king was converted.

However, after Nebuchadnezzar’s encounter with God at the end of chap. 4, he shows a radical change in his attitude towards God. It appears that the king used the phase “the Most High God” (4:1, 2) in an absolute sense, as a deity superior to other gods, and even as a personal God, as indicated when he said, “the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.”\(^4\) Nebuchadnezzar praised Yahweh not only for his greatness and power but also for his sovereignty (vs. 3). In his praise, by using the terms “eternal” and “from generation to generation” for God’s kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar was comparing God’s rule with a long and brilliant reign of his own, so recently taken from him because of illness.\(^5\) This suggests that the king became a convert to the worship of the Most High.\(^6\)

\(^1\)“Daniel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:785.

\(^2\)Originally, the prince of the eunuchs gave Daniel a Babylonian name (1:7).

\(^3\)Stephen R. Miller, 131.

\(^4\)Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 60.

\(^5\)Wood, 102.

\(^6\)Fewell, 63.
God had demonstrated his sovereignty over the kingdoms of this world through the king’s dream and Daniel had courageously interpreted it straightforwardly in a cultural setting where it was customary to flatter the sovereign and avoid telling him anything disagreeable or that he did not want to hear. In his interpretation, Daniel proclaimed the message of judgment and the sovereignty of God (4:25). In vs. 17, the purpose of the dream was for the living, meaning all living humans to let them know that the Most High is sovereign. In vs. 25, the same purpose is specified for Nebuchadnezzar. God’s sovereignty was then confirmed by the voice from heaven (vs. 32).

However, Daniel introduced the topic of God’s mercy immediately after his message of God’s justice (vs. 26). Daniel then appealed to the king: “Renounce your sins by doing what is right and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed” (vs. 27). The appeal was for the king to repent, confess, and restore because the sovereign God would bring judgment. As discussed earlier, Daniel’s concern for the oppressed was based on his understanding of God’s justice. Daniel was aware of the context of the oppressed in Babylon and bravely advised the heathen king to take care of them.

1“Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:788.


3Shea, Daniel 1-7, 75. Shea also says, “Daniel did not appeal for the king to repent merely with words; he called for actions that were commensurate with the depth and sincerity of his repentance” (ibid.).

4See the section of “requirement of justice” in chapter 2.
Traditionally, the centrality of the cross of Jesus has been stressed as payment for the penalty for sin to satisfy the requirement of the justice of God for eternal life.\(^1\) However, the book of Daniel shows that the justice of God encompasses more than the spiritual dimension and extends into the concrete realities of human social context. Daniel’s example suggests that God cares about the present context of justice in today’s mission fields. This also suggests that sharing God’s care for the people who are in the context of injustice in a society is a part of a contextualized message.

Result of witness

When, the king continued in his pride for another year and then boasted in what he had done to build Babylon, the dream of the tree being cut off for seven years was literally fulfilled. At the end of the seven years, God restored Nebuchadnezzar as predicted, for he humbly recognized the true God (vs. 34). Nebuchadnezzar’s acknowledgment of the eternal rulership and sovereignty of God was based on his personal experience. When he said, “All people of the earth are regarded as nothing” (vs. 35), he apparently included himself, showing the humility that at last characterized him.\(^2\) The phrase “he does as he pleases” (vs. 35) also reflects his experience of the imposed insanity.\(^3\) By praising,

\(^2\)Wood, 125.
\(^3\)Ibid.
honoring, and glorifying the Most High God, Nebuchadnezzar showed that he came to realize that the Most High God of Daniel, not the gods of Babylon, was sovereign.¹

In his concluding remarks, Nebuchadnezzar designated God as “the King of heaven” (vs. 37), a phrase that is unique in the Old Testament. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar’s reverence to his newly found God forced him to acknowledge the kingship of God instead of having pride in his own kingship.² By using the three words “praise,” “exalt,” and “glorify” in his remarks, the king indicated again that God is worthy of such praise because God’s judgment of his pride had been proper (vs. 37a). These three verbs are all participles, indicating the king’s continual praise of the Lord.³ He also stated the reason for his praise: He was doing it because everything God does is “right” and “just” (vs. 37b). By this expression, the king admitted that God’s judgment of his pride had been proper.⁴

Furthermore, it is notable that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that God restored his kingdom, greater than before, not by political maneuvering or actual fighting, when he repented (vs. 36). Consequently, it can be concluded that Nebuchadnezzar was rejoicing

¹Stephen R. Miller, 129. Wood also points out that these three verbs indicate that Nebuchadnezzar engaged in praising God and showing his sense of awe and respect, recognized God’s greatness, had a feeling of thankfulness, expressed an admission of personal dependency, and indicated a spirit of humble admiration (Wood, 124).

²Goldingay, Daniel, 90. This expression is also found in 1 Esd 4:46, 58: Tob 13:7, 11. For similar expressions, see Dan 5:23, “Lord of heaven”; Jer 7:18 and 44:17-19, “Queen of heaven.”

³Stephen R. Miller, 144.

⁴Ibid.
in salvation that had come to him and had come to know, through personal encounter, the living God (vs. 37).¹

The knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion, which became widely known to "all people, nations, and languages" through the royal witness, was even more important than the king's conversion.² God's concern for the oppressed in the king's decree would be a relevant message for the governing class as well as for the lower class that included the captives from Judah.

Witness to Belshazzar

At the Banquet

Hidden meaning of the banquet

Belshazzar's story begins with a banquet that was held just before the destruction of Babylon (5:1, 30, 31).³ It was "a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles" (vs. 1). To know the purpose of the feast, we need to understand the historical background.

¹Ibid. Some scholars such as Calvin, Keil, Pusey, and Archer deny the genuineness of the king's conversion, while others such as Wood, Young, Luck, Rushdoony, and Walvoord believed that the king had a genuine conversion experience (ibid.). For a further list of arguments to support the position for a genuine conversion, see Young, 114. White also acknowledges that the king was converted (White, Prophets and Kings, 521).

²Wiseman introduces the content of royal inscriptions of Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar "ceaselessly worked to please the great lord god Marduk and for the betterment of all peoples and the settling of the land of Babylonia" (Wiseman, 239, 240). He also points out a possibility of a spiritual revival in the Babylonian empire: "The citation of samples of the cases he judged was a traditional way, as in the laws of Hammurabi, of enhancing his position as 'wise' in response to his divine calling to office. The document gives a true glimpse of 'the spiritual revival which accompanied the final burst of Babylonian glory'" (ibid., 240).

³Concerning the historicity of this feast, see Herodotus Histories 1.191 [Penguin Classics, 90]; ANET, 315, 316. For the identity of Belshazzar, see additional note on chap. 5 of "Daniel," SDA Bible Commentary, 4:806-808.
According to the “Verse Account of Nabonidus,” Nabonidus was a worshipper of the moon god, Sin, instead of the Babylonian patron god, Marduk.\(^1\) He was influenced by his mother or grandmother, a high priestess of that deity. Because Nabonidus spent ten consecutive years in Tema, building the Sin temple in Haran, the New Year’s festival had not been celebrated during that time.

However, with the impending approach of the Persians, he had returned from Tema to Babylon in 540 B.C. In order to regain his popularity with the major religious groups, who were sun worshippers, he celebrated the New Year’s Festival of Marduk. Although Nabonidus did not feel that Marduk and the other gods supported him,\(^2\) he stripped the cities of Babylon of their gods and brought them to Babylon in a desperate effort to ensure their protection.\(^3\) Then, on October 10, 539 B.C., Nabonidus’s efforts turned to failure and he surrendered to Cyrus at Sippar without a fight.\(^4\) The Babylonian defeat had occurred only days before the banquet, and Nabonidus, father of Belshazzar, had fled the battlefield.\(^5\)

\(^1\)ANET, 312, 313.

\(^2\)Nabonidus had complained to Marduk about the Medes and the Persians in a dream (Oppenheim, 250).

\(^3\)ANET, 313.

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Ibid., 306. For the relationship between Nabonidus and Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar, see Zdravko Stefanovic, “Like Father, Like Son: Belshazzar’s Relationship to King Nebuchadnezzar,” Asia Adventist Seminary Studies 1 (1998): 27-31. He suggests that Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson and Nabonidus married one of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughters (ibid., 28, 29). According to the cuneiform texts, Belshazzar was quite devoted to the Babylonian gods when compared with Nabonidus, who did not seem to reverence other gods as much as his
In view of these realities, what was the purpose of Belshazzar’s feast? A number of explanations have been proposed. Herodotus seemed to indicate that the feast was for an annual festival. Walvoord suggests that the celebration was held to build morale and encourage the people to be confident in the strong walls of Babylon. Shea suggests that the feast took place at Belshazzar’s accession to the throne: “In order to insure the greatest cooperation possible from his troops and the population of Babylon in general, it was incumbent upon Belshazzar to command them from as great a position of strength and authority as possible.”

Whatever the reason, there is a hint that the feast was held by Belshazzar, for an intentional purpose: “King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them” (vs. 1, emphasis supplied). The normal meaning of the preferred moon god (R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929], 87-92).

Herodotus *Histories* 1.191 (Penguin Classics, 90). Goldingay seems to think that the feast was the New Year Festival which Belshazzar did not observe (Goldingay, *Daniel*, 107). The date that Belshazzar lost his life at the time of Babylon’s fall is on the 16th day of Tishri [Oct. 12] in 539 B.C. (Gerhard F. Hasel “The First and Third Years of Belshazzar,” *AUSS* 15, no. 2 [Autumn 1977]: 168; R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—45 A.D.*, 2d ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946], 29). Although the Babylonian months were lunar and the year began in the spring (James C. Vanderkam, “Calendars: Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish,” *ABD* [1992], 1:816), the cultic New Year was celebrated on Tishri, month 7 [autumn] in the Babylonian calendar (Francesca Rocheberg-Schatten, “Calendars: Ancient Near East,” *ABD* [1992], 1:811).

Walvoord, 117.

William H. Shea, “Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and The Book of Daniel: An Update,” *AUSS* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 142. See also Maxwell, 92; Hasel, “Book of Daniel,” 42-44. Goldingay criticizes Shea’s suggestion as bizarre and proposed that the feast was an ordinary one, which was held without knowing of the imminent fall of the city (Goldingay, *Daniel*, 108). However, the end part of the narrative itself suggests that the city faced a great crisis and the historical context of chap. 5 supports Shea’s idea.
Aramaic preposition qābēl is “before.” It seems that the king deliberately sat in full view of his subjects and took the lead in the banquet, contrary to the ancient custom that the king was hidden from the sight of the guests.

The fact that Daniel pointed out two sins of Belshazzar, “pride and idolatry” (vss. 22, 23), suggests that Belshazzar was attempting to demonstrate that he and the gods of Babylon were superior to the enemies outside the walls. His public presence, his drinking before his nobles, the presence of his wives and his concubines (vs. 3), and details of the exact vessels he wanted and what he wanted to do with them (vs. 4) argue strongly that “Belshazzar’s act is premeditated.”

Through drinking wine from the vessels of God’s temple in public, Belshazzar intended to remake history. Fewell points out that the opening phrases of chaps. 3 and 5 duplicate grammar as well as vocabulary: “Belshazzar the king made [‘ābad] a great feast” (5:1, KJV) parallels “Nebuchadnezzar the king made [‘ābad] an image of gold” (3:1, KJV). This parallel suggests that the feast had a hidden purpose much like the golden image: “Both pagan kings refuse the oracle predicting the end of Babylon.”

---


2 Stephen R. Miller, 151. On the occasion of a public holiday, the kings and invited guests would dine in a single room with the king, in the great hall (ibid.).

3 Shea, “Nabonidus,” 143.

4 Fewell, 86.

5 Ibid., 81.

After drinking (vs. 3), the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines began to “praise the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone” (vs. 4). The king’s actions were a direct challenge to the God who had humbled Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar was denying the sovereignty of the God who predicted the future. Belshazzar intended to show himself to be more courageous than his father by doing something his father would have never done—drinking from the vessels dedicated to God. Through this blasphemous gesture, the king was commemorating the victory of Babylon over Jerusalem, the triumph of the god of Babylon over the God of Israel, and the king wanted to demonstrate that Babylon was superior and could not be conquered.

Handwriting on the wall

In Dan 5, the mysterious handwriting that appeared on the wall during Belshazzar’s feast is a clear example of God’s direct, miraculous intervention in human affairs. Everyone attending the banquet knew that the writing had a supernatural origin (vs. 16). The physical reaction of the king (vs. 6) indicates the extent of his guilty.

---

1 Compared with the limited numbers of vessels and the one thousand participants at the feast, it seems logical that drinking wine from the vessels was a kind of religious ceremony that every participant was forced to join. Goldingay connects drinking wine with libation (Goldingay, Daniel, 113).

2 Miller suggests a possibility that Belshazzar may have heard the prophecy of Dan 8, which was given in the third year of Belshazzar’s reign (Stephen R. Miller, 151). However, that does not seem likely because chap. 8 is written in Hebrew. Whereas, he might have been acquainted with chap. 7 because it was written in Aramaic.

3 Fewell, 85.

4 Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 78.

5 Shea, Daniel 1-7, 91.
conscience caused by his sacrilegious use of the vessels of God.¹ When the queen appeared,² Belshazzar was forced to remember what he tried so hard to deny.³ Three times the queen reminded Belshazzar of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion by using the same phrase "your father" (vs. 11).⁴ By quoting Nebuchadnezzar's own words concerning "the spirit of the holy gods" being in Daniel (cf. 4:8, 9, 18), the queen indicated Nebuchadnezzar's attitude toward Daniel. She was the voice of the dead king.⁵

When Daniel was brought before the king, Belshazzar pretended not to know him. The queen had not mentioned Daniel's background, but the king referred to Daniel as one of the exiles. The king considered him only as "one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah" (vs. 13) in contrast to Nebuchadnezzar, who referred to Daniel's friends as "servants of the Most High God" (3:26). Although Belshazzar remembered Daniel, he categorized him in the same way he categorized the temple vessels.⁶ Belshazzar wanted to show that what was important to his father was not important to

---

¹Stephen R. Miller, Daniel, 156.

²The queen was not Belshazzar's wife because the text explicitly states that the wives of the king were already present. Most of commentators have identified her as the queen mother, either the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus (ibid.).

³Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, 80.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Fewell, 89.

⁶Ibid., 91. The reason for ignoring Daniel's Babylonian name by Belshazzar is not clear. Perhaps the king wanted to intimidate Daniel by emphasizing his identity or perhaps the king felt his Babylonian name was so similar to his own that he did not want to use it.
him. Until this moment, the king did not want to give up his view concerning the superiority of the Babylonian gods over the God of Israel. The issue was the same as in the narrative in chap. 1.

**In the Course of Interpretation**

**Message: Lord of Heaven and God of judgment**

In Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting on the wall he first of all used the same term, “the Most High God,” which was used by Nebuchadnezzar in chaps. 3 and 4. It was the Most High God (Yahweh of Judah, not the idols of Babylon) who had given Nebuchadnezzar a great kingdom, power, and honor among the world’s peoples (5:18).²

Daniel also used the term “the Lord of Heaven” (vs. 23). Although the word, “Lord” (marē’) can also be used in reference to humans (cf. 4:19, 24) and in reference to the gods of the ancient Near East, Daniel used it to emphasize that his God is the true Lord of Heaven. God’s true identity is: “Lord of Heaven,” “the God who holds in his hand your life [breath] and all your ways” (5:23).³ The words “hand” and “breath” [life] are also associated with the creation narrative (Gen 2:7; cf. Ps 119:73; Isa 41:20; Job 12:9, 10; 34:14).⁴ Daniel contrasted this Creator God with “the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand” (Dan 5:23). It is notable in that this is the first time that Daniel directly pointed out the impotence of the Babylonian

---

¹Ibid.

²Stephen R. Miller, 162.

³Wood, 148.

gods. Is this because he felt that he had already revealed the truth of God enough (cf. vs 22) or is it because he knew of the impending destruction of Babylon? In any case, by using these two names of God, “the Most High God” and “Lord of Heaven,” Daniel witnessed to the truth concerning the God who has sovereign power and who created the whole world as well as the heavens.

Then Daniel reminded Belshazzar of the consequences of pride in the life of Nebuchadnezzar (vss. 20, 21). By drawing attention to the derivative nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s quasi-divine authority, Daniel contrasted Nebuchadnezzar’s great power and his great fall.1 After reminding Belshazzar about Nebuchadnezzar’s experience, Daniel pointed out his sins (vs. 22) as a prophet with the same tone he had used with Nebuchadnezzar in chap. 4.2

However, unlike his encounter with Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel issued no demand for repentance and offered no prospect for averting the disaster.3 Because Belshazzar had shown that he was unwilling to learn from Nebuchadnezzar’s experience, there was no offer of mercy.4 God’s verdict against Belshazzar shows that the truth about God was sufficiently known to Belshazzar as it had been to Nebuchadnezzar, so that God could judge him on the basis of his knowledge.5

---

1Goldingay, Daniel, 115.
2Ibid., 114, 115.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5There is a possibility that Belshazzar may have seen the events of chap. 4 firsthand (Stephen R. Miller, 163). Belshazzar served as chief officer during the administration of King...
After Daniel pointed out the king’s blasphemous sin, he interpreted the writing on the wall, which prophesized the fall of Babylon (5:23-28). The central message of Dan 5 is that Babylon’s defeat was a result of God’s judgment, indicating the importance of the judgment message as a content of cross-cultural witness. Judgment is part of the message that should be proclaimed to “every nation, tribe, language, and people” (cf. Rev 14:6-8).

Result of witness

The result of Daniel’s witness is revealed in Belshazzar’s reaction to Daniel’s interpretation of the writings on the wall. After Daniel’s interpretation of the writings on the wall, the king offered Daniel a gold chain and a high position. Some scholars think that the king tried to distort the divine oracle and sought the clemency of God. Others suggest that Belshazzar’s conferring the promised gifts upon Daniel indicated indirect recognition of God’s reality and power. It is not clear just what the King meant by his final reaction and the gesture of giving Daniel gifts and position. Although the king

Neriglissar in 560 B.C. according to Babylonian historical records (Dougherty, 60). It means that Belshazzar was old enough to have known Nebuchadnezzar personally because Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. This made Belshazzar’s blasphemy against Israel’s God even more inexcusable (Stephen R. Miller, 63).

1The fall of Babylon is associated with the fall of the symbolic Babylon in Revelation. In Rev 14, the fall of Babylon is part of the everlasting gospel. Thus it is meaningful to study Daniel’s message to Belshazzar with the judgment message in the three angels’ message of Rev 14, although this is not a major concern of this study.

2See Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 80. Bultema gives the similar explanation: “Most likely he silently hoped that in this way he might satisfy the angry god and obtain Daniel’s favor and affection” (Bultema, 172).

3Stephen R. Miller, 166. Josephus said that “Belshazzar was in great sorrow and affliction, as was to be expected, when the interpretation was so heavy upon him” (Josephus *Antiquities* 10.11.4 [*The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 355]).
seemed to accept Daniel's interpretation as authoritative and determined to face what had been predicted, he only acknowledged Daniel, not his God (cf. 2:46-48). There is no record that the king acknowledged the greatness and the power of Israel's God. This perhaps indicates that the king was not repentant even though he was frightened by his encounter with the supernatural. Although Belshazzar did not recognize the sovereignty of God in spite of God's direct intervention (handwriting on the wall), the story itself finds its climax with the fulfillment of prophecy, not with the exaltation of Daniel.

To sum up, in witnessing cross-culturally to King Belshazzar, Daniel contrasted the true "Most High God" and "Lord of Heaven" with the Babylonian gods, which cannot see or hear or understand (vs. 23). Daniel's faithful witness included a message of judgment given in front of thousands of officials as well as the king in a heathen kingdom suggesting that modern cross-cultural witnesses should also include a judgment message as part of their cross-cultural message.

Witness to Darius

In the Court of Darius the Mede

After the fall of Babylon, Darius the Mede involved Daniel in the reorganization of the government of the province of Babylon (6:1-2). Although Daniel was one of three

---

1 Wood, 150.
2 Goldingay, Daniel, 117.
3 Ibid.
administrators over 120 satraps, Darius soon came to trust Daniel and planned to set him over the whole kingdom “because an excellent spirit was in him” (vs. 3, KJV, emphasis supplied). Daniel’s excellent spirit is assumed to be of supernatural origin (cf. 4:8; 5:11, 12) and hints that Darius had already noticed Daniel’s religious identity.¹

Daniel’s religious belief and practice were also behind the plot of Daniel’s enemies. The fact that his enemies mentioned the law of Daniel’s God (6:5, 8, 12) indicates that they knew of Daniel’s monotheistic religious convictions and believed that he would choose to obey his God even at the risk of his life. Daniel’s enemies, in their mad edict and scheme, condemned and blasphemed God boldly and dangerously. But through it all, Daniel showed that he lived by his faith in God even in the face of a death decree.²

In the Den of Lions

Religious dialogue

When Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den because of the plot of his enemies, the reaction and pain of the new king, Darius, showed again that he understood the One whom Daniel served (6:16). Contrary to the narrative of chap. 3, where Nebuchadnezzar asked “what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (3:15), here Darius hoped for the

---

¹Goldingay, Daniel, 128.

²Ibid.

Period IV,” AUSS 10, no. 2 (July 1972): 147-178; idem, “Darius the Mede: An Update,” AUSS 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 229-247; Stephen R. Miller, 171-177; “Daniel,” SDA Bible Commentary, 4:814.. I prefer to designate Darius as Gubaru who was the governor of Babylon.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
appearance of the saving power of God. It is not likely that Darius had any experimental confidence in God to build his hope on, but it is remarkable that he could voice even such a wish. Daniel’s three friends testified that God would save them from the burning furnace in the previous chapter; here the heathen king expressed the same idea. Darius’ words “whom you serve countinually” (vss. 16, 20) hint that Daniel witnessed to him, as he had done years earlier to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. This also demonstrates that how a missionary conducts his or her life is as important in cross-cultural witness as a verbal witness.

Early the next morning, the king went to the den of lions and called him a “servant of the living God” (vs. 20). It is notable that the king used the term “the living God” even before he knew whether or not Daniel was alive, perhaps hinting that Daniel had witnessed to Darius about some of the characteristics of his God. The king was

---

1For a comparative study of chaps. 3 and 6, see Hartman and Di Lella, 196, 197; Goldingay, Daniel, 132.

2Wood, 168.

3Stephen R. Miller, 185.

4Wood, 168.

5Ibid.

6Lacocque explains that it was a custom of the ancient Babylonians that a victim would be pardoned if he had survived tortured and was still alive the following day (Lacocque, 118).

7This expression is used frequently in the Old Testament (Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26) and in the New Testament (cf. Matt 26:63; John 6:69; Heb 9:14, etc.). Longman says: “This [living God] indicates that he not only exists, but is active in the world” (Longman, 164).

8Wood, 170.
saying that the God of life might have been able to save Daniel’s life. Perhaps Daniel had even shared the story of deliverance from the fiery furnace with the king.

Darius may not have had a strong faith in God, but his statement reveals that he was somewhat acquainted with the God and religion of Daniel. The evidence is inconclusive as to whether or not Darius had already become a believer in the strict sense, but the narrative suggests that Daniel had witnessed enough so that Darius recognized the reality of Daniel’s God.

In response to Darius’ call and question, Daniel testified how his God saved his life: “My God sent his angel and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me” (vs. 22). Through this witness, Daniel was saying that the Lord rules over everything and governs his obedient children with a special care.¹

Result of witness

When Darius ordered his servants “to lift” Daniel from the den, they found no “wound” on him (vs. 23). The king’s servants became witnesses to God’s saving power. It is not hard to believe that Daniel’s faith would have soon become a matter of general knowledge, due to his life and witness and miraculous escape.²

After the king had the accusers thrown into the den, he issued a decree (6:26, 27), similar to the pattern of that made years earlier by Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 4). However, whereas Nebuchadnezzar had forbidden any slander against God, Darius ordered people to

¹Bultema, 173.
²Wood, 174.
adore God (vs. 26). Throughout the empire, Daniel’s God was not merely to be tolerated but to be worshiped with reverence and awe. Darius was admitting that the power of Daniel’s God extended far beyond the boundaries of Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar praised God’s everlasting kingdom (4:3) and “the Most High” who lives forever (vs. 34), and exalted and glorified God as the “King of heaven” who is right and is able to humble those who walk in pride (vs. 37). Darius shows a deeper understanding of the Hebrew God than did Nebuchadnezzar. Darius described God as a “living God” who “endures forever and his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end” (6:26; cf. vs. 20). This Old Testament title for God suggests not merely that God is alive rather than dead, but that he is active and powerful, awesome and almighty.” In the past, the king came to know God through Daniel, but now he saw the saving power of the living God.

Darius also described God as One who “rescues and saves” and “performs signs and wonders,” and confirmed that God rescued Daniel from the power of the lions (vs. 27). Because of this power, Darius acknowledged that the living God “endures forever” and that “his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end” (vs. 26). Darius lived in a power-oriented world so his experience of power encounter with God caused

---

1Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 95.

2Goldingay, *Daniel*, 135. Thus, White concludes, “once more a proclamation was issued by a heathen ruler, exalting the God of Daniel as the true God” (White, *Prophets and Kings*, 544).


4Goldingay, *Daniel*, 133.
him to acknowledge the everlasting characteristics of God, as well as being impressed by the power of God. This was most likely the purpose of God’s miracles: “Neither was Daniel deliverd primarily for his own benefit but so that the Lord could manifest to a lost king and a lost world his reality and power (cf. Exod 20:18-20; Deut 2:25; Josh 2:9).”¹

There is no evidence that Darius gave up the polytheism of the Medes, but it is clear that the king acknowledged Daniel’s God as a “living God” and through the king’s decree, God’s character became known throughout the Median kingdom to a greater degree than Nebuchadnezzar’s decree in chaps. 3 and 4. Daniel’s faithful witness through his life and words brought unexpected results through the testimony of King Darius.² This again suggests the importance of a holistic approach in cross-cultural witness.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed cultural perspectives and the process of cross-cultural proclamation and witness as found in the book of Daniel. Daniel and his friends were successful in learning a new culture, and their Babylonian names seemed to help them gain acceptance. When dealing with the food issue, Daniel showed the importance of understanding the social system before determining which methods were appropriate to

¹Miller, 189.

²Based on Dan 6:28, “Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” White suggests that the generous treatment by Cyrus the Great towards the Hebrews was influenced by his knowledge of the story of Daniel’s miraculous rescue from the lion’s den, as well as the prophecies outlining his role in the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple (Isa 44:26-45:13) (White, Prophets and Kings, 545, 557). Fewell also says, “Even the mention of Daniel’s prosperity during the reign of Cyrus in 6:27 might suggest that Cyrus’s decision to let the Jews return home was influenced by none other than Daniel” (Fewell, 154).
solve a cross-cultural conflict. However, Daniel never sacrificed any fundamental truth for the sake of conflict resolution.

Daniel had opportunity to share concerning the true God of Heaven with the Babylonian wise men through his identification with their destiny without losing his religious identity. In the area of language learning, Daniel and his friends showed excellence, suggesting that learning a language is a major aspect of success in cross-cultural ministry. The use of several languages in the book of Daniel, especially Aramaic, the lingua franca of that age, also suggests that the message concerning God’s sovereignty over the nations had a wider intended audience than just the Babylonian kings.

The symbolism of the great image, the huge mountain, the big tree, and the animal images shows God’s sensitivity in using the surrounding cultural forms for effective communication. The symbols in the book of Daniel came from common public usage and were used to make clear transcendent realities. Daniel used these symbols creatively for the purpose of portraying future history. However, the narrative of the golden image shows the limitation of using cultural symbols and warns Christian witnesses of the danger of using local symbols that could compromise biblical truths.

Daniel’s prayer, which he offered after God revealed the content and meaning of the king’s first dream, indicated that Daniel already possessed a concrete understanding concerning his God that allowed him to witness to the “God in Heaven” and “Great God” to King Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 2). It is notable that Daniel used terms for God that were similar to the terms used for the gods of Babylon, “God in heaven” (vs. 28), and the “Great God” to build a common ground, but he explained the truth of his God in detail. Although the king acknowledged the existence of God, he was still not converted.
However, he was moving toward monotheism by acknowledging the superiority of Daniel’s God, although he expressed theological confusion and was still a polytheist. Nebuchadnezzar’s motive in erecting the golden image was not only political but also religious. Through the dramatic rescue in front of many of the leaders of the nation, God made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar (who believed his gods were stronger than Israel’s God, and who challenged Yahweh’s power by erecting the golden image) that Judah’s defeat (Dan 1) was not because Israel’s God did not exist or was anemic. Although the king designated Daniel’s God as the “Most High God,” he used it in a polytheistic sense. The king was not ready to admit that his power should be subject to God’s divine power nor did he require people to worship the God of Daniel’s friends, but only required people to respect or not despise the God of Daniel’s friends in his decree.

The narrative in Dan 4 is mainly a type of personal testimony given by Nebuchadnezzar himself. After his encounter with God through the dream and after spending seven years living with the wild animals, the king used the phrase “the Most High God” in an absolute sense, as a deity superior to other gods, even as a personal God (vss. 2-3), indicating that the king had a genuine conversion experience. The fact that the king’s conversion become widely known to “all people, nations, and languages” through a royal decree is more important than the king’s personal conversion. God’s original plan to appoint Israel to be a light to the nations was achieved through the witness of a converted heathen king.

The hidden meaning of Belshazzar’s banquet was a challenge to the same God who had humbled Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar was, in reality, denying the sovereignty of the God who predicted the future. Through the mysterious handwriting on the wall, God
gave Belshazzar a clear message that Babylon’s defeat was the result of God’s judgment. Although Daniel proclaimed God’s judgment message in front of thousands of officials, as well as the king, in a heathen kingdom, Belshazzar did not repent and recognize the sovereignty of God as Nebuchadnezzar had.

Daniel’s religious belief was well known even in the Median kingdom. Darius may not have had a strong faith in God, but his statement indicating hope that Daniel’s God could save him from the lions, reveals that Darius was somewhat acquainted with the God and religion of Daniel. In response to Darius’ call, Daniel testified how his God had saved his life. Darius acknowledged that the reason for Daniel’s miraculous deliverance was because Daniel had trusted in his God (vs. 23). Darius then wrote a decree to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language throughout the land to testify concerning the “living God” of Daniel. Daniel’s faithful witness, through life and word, brought unexpected results through the confession of King Darius.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS: MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The book of Daniel is rich in its missiological perspective. The concept of *missio Dei*, "mission of God," and "God’s salvific purpose for all people" in the book of Daniel supports the premise that the book is a strong missionary document. From a practical sense, the cross-cultural ministry of Daniel and his three friends provides insight for present-day missionaries in the areas of strategy and cross-cultural witness. This chapter presents missiological implications in the areas of: (1) theology of mission; (2) mission strategy; and (3) cross-cultural witness.

**Implications for Theology of Mission**

As a missionary document in the Old Testament, the book of Daniel describes how God achieves his salvific purpose for nations. Theologically, the concepts of *missio Dei* and "God’s salvific purpose for all people" are dominant themes in the book of Daniel and provide a strong foundation for mission theology from the Old Testament.

*Missio Dei* and Mission

Daniel and his friends could have easily been disappointed by their status as captives in a foreign land. However, they committed themselves to not being defiled, willingly dedicated themselves as God’s witness, were active in godly service for both God and heathen kings, and were keenly aware that God was the God of the nations as
well as of Israel. Daniel seemed to be aware of God’s sovereignty and purpose in the process of the exile because he was familiar with the message of Scripture as found in Jeremiah and Isaiah. Through the fulfilled prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, he seemed to understand God’s sovereignty and intervention in world history and was able to identify himself with God’s mission for the nations. In Daniel’s strong understanding of Scripture we are reminded of the importance of a biblical foundation for mission theology and a consciousness of the sovereignty of God. In order for humans to react positively to *missio Dei*, they must be firmly grounded in the authority of the Word of God and be aware of God’s sovereignty in the context of missions.

There are some who suggest that *missio Dei* excludes the church’s involvement.\(^1\) However, the book of Daniel shows that God uses human agents who are aware of his salvific purpose.\(^2\) Although *missio Dei* has a universal claim and God is taking the initiative in saving people from all nations, God also calls human agents from the nations to achieve his salvific purpose. This theological understanding should push every believer to be involved in the accomplishment of *missio Dei*.\(^3\) God’s agents, who realize the salvific purpose of God in the world, should then participate in *missio Dei*. The book of


\(^2\)White also supports this view: “It is true that in every generation God had His agencies. Even among the heathen there were men through whom Christ was working to uplift the people from their sin and degradation” (Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940], 35).

\(^3\)Simmons, 145. He also says, “Believers occupy a vital part of the plan” (ibid., 146).
Daniel offers a balanced model for today's mission: understanding God's purpose and willing involvement in *missio Dei* motivated by acceptance of the sovereignty of God based on the authority of the Word.

**God's Salvific Purpose for All People**

A dominant theme in the book of Daniel is "God's salvific purpose for all people." God's purpose invites the active involvement of God's people for witness but nowhere supports a kind of universalism that guarantees that every person will be saved. Daniel's request that the king show justice for the oppressed also implies that God had a universal rule and concern for all people, not just the people of Israel.

**God's Universal Purpose versus Universalism**

The scene of the "Son of Man" vision implies a judgment for all nations (Dan 7). The covenant relationship, as expressed by the phrase, "for the sake of God" (chap. 9) and the messiah motif (chaps. 8, 9), also suggests messianic salvation for the nations. Furthermore, the "wise" motif suggests that the eschatological wise will lead many peoples and nations to righteousness (11:33, 35; 12:3).

Although the book of Daniel provides a sound biblical foundation for God's universal purpose for the salvation of nations and peoples, the "Son of Man" judgment scene denies the theory of salvation for everyone. The covenant motif also suggests conditionality. Keeping the covenantal relationship is a vital part if God is to achieve his salvific purpose for his people (7:13-14). Only those who live within the covenantal relationship with God will be saved. We are also reminded that Daniel confessed the corporate sins of his nation as well as his personal sins to God before asking God to
restore the temple and the city of God, as promised in the book of Jeremiah (9:5-15). This also suggests that unconfessed sins can block God’s purpose and perfect will.

Daniel proclaimed with absolute certainty that the Son of Man “was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan 7:14). However, God’s universal reign will only be realized after the judgment on the little horn (vss. 26, 27). As mentioned earlier, God’s judgment presupposes the proclamation of the saving Word of God.¹

Thus, those who support the notion of universal salvation should take note of this emphasis on responsibility and obedience for those who have heard the gospel. The book of Daniel shows clearly that the universal aspects of God’s reign cannot diminish individual responsibility for mission.²

**Requirement of Justice**

In Dan 4, the main message is about the sovereignty of God. God’s sovereignty

¹Bosch says, “God’s righteousness does not come into effect automatically, but is dependent upon being appropriated by faith, which is only possible where people have had the gospel proclaimed to them” (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 149).

²Ibid. Dunavant proposes some missiological implications of universalism (Dunavant, “Universalism,” 989). First, universalism redefines the meaning of missions as bettering the lives of people in this world and not affecting their destiny in the world to come. Second, it regards the assertion about the uniqueness of Christ or soteriological necessity of faith in Christ as arrogant and divisive in relationship to other faiths. Third, the pressing motivation to take the gospel to the entire world is eliminated because that explicit knowledge about the person and the work of Christ as a definitive decision in this life is not necessary for salvation. Fourth, it begs the question of the imperative to take the gospel to the unreached multitudes of the world because all will be saved.
has universal implications. God cares for the oppressed even in foreign lands, whether they are believers or not. Knowing this, Daniel urged the king to treat the message from God seriously. Daniel then preached justice to one who was responsible for social justice in the heathen kingdom (vs. 27).

God requiring justice from a heathen king illustrates two aspects of God’s universal rule. First, every person is required to honor a vertical relationship between God and humans by recognizing God as creator and savior and by obeying his law. Second, every person must also honor horizontal relationships between human beings by treating people as brothers and sisters and by treating people with kindness and love. These perspectives suggest that missio Dei also includes the welfare of the marginalized: “The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression, and discrimination.”

Therefore, this requirement of social justice that is a part of the cultural mandate should also be a part of the practice of the cross-cultural missionary. The proclamation of the Word of God should be balanced by an inclusion of God’s concern for justice. The missionary task includes calling on local leaders to care for the oppressed, the poor, and the miserable whether they believe in God or not. The book of Daniel illustrates that the missionary mandate and missio Dei apply to all areas of life.

---

Implications for Mission Strategy

The book of Daniel has much to say regarding God's strategy to achieve *missio Dei*. The book shows how God chose his missionaries and how God used dreams and visions to communicate with heathen leaders and his prophet Daniel. The book also acknowledges the existence of the conflict between good and evil in salvation history and shows how we should engage in spiritual battle.

Committed Individuals and Mission

The book of Daniel illustrates the importance in a cross-cultural ministry in having the right person at the right place to do God's work. The personal characteristics that Daniel and his friends possessed as they witnessed for God in a foreign land suggest that there are also crucial qualifications for modern missionaries.

Conviction of God's Call

Daniel was aware of God's sovereignty in the process of the exile and acknowledged God's initiative in sending Israel to captivity (1:2). Daniel's awareness of God's call to him as an individual was also revealed in his decision not to be defiled (vs. 8). Through this awareness of God's call and sovereignty, Daniel seemed to recognize that his mission was to fulfill God's mission, which the Israelites had failed to accomplish. It is also possible that God chose Daniel because he was aware of the sovereignty and call of God and was willing to participate in God's salvific purpose for all people. It is also
notable that a sovereign act of God in the life of a person can bring that person to a point of decision to serve God in a missionary capacity.1

One of the major reasons why people fail to fulfill mission service is a lack of a sense of God’s call.2 The lack of a true missionary call not only affects the life of the missionary, but also the lives of those working with the person.3 Authenticating the call of an individual should be a very important part of the screening process for new missionary candidates. All missionaries should be convinced that they are called, and should be able to say why they have such an awareness of their call. Missionary training should also contain material to promote and confirm the candidates’ awareness of God’s call to missionary service.

Spirituality

As a man of prayer, Daniel’s spiritual life could be a model for missionary spiritual formation. Daniel’s prayer-driven life and his understanding of the Word of God allowed others to recognize his spirituality. Without these spiritual qualities, Daniel would never have been recognized as a spiritual man in a heathen court; he would never have been able to interpret the dreams and visions of heathen kings or lead them to praise the God of Heaven. Spirituality was a primary factor that allowed him to be a successful


missionary. Daniel’s life also proves that true spirituality includes active involvement in God’s salvific plan for the nations.

Spiritual formation is of vital importance for world mission\(^1\) because spirituality is that which causes people to be aware of God’s call. An awareness of call or vocation to Christian mission arises from one’s spirituality. True biblical spirituality includes mission and elicits participation in mission.\(^2\)

Prayer and the disciplines of the spiritual life, such as the study of the Word of God, are essential sources of grace, wisdom, and emotional and spiritual strength in cross-cultural ministry.\(^3\) Building spirituality should be a whole life process because “spiritual formation is essential throughout the overall development of a missionary.”\(^4\) Spirituality must always be present if the missionary is to be effective. Therefore, it would be good to offer courses for spiritual formation in missionary training curricula.

---

\(^1\) Plueddmann, 901. Plueddmann says, “The goal of mission is to foster the life-long process of spiritual formation among tribe, people, and language so that together we may sing the Hallelujah chorus at the wedding feast of the Lamb” (ibid.).

\(^2\) Gordon T. Smith, “Spirituality,” \textit{EDWM} (2000), 904. Thomas Austin suggests that Christian spirituality intersects the Christian mission at three critical points. First, Christian mission is an extension of and an expression of authentic spirituality. Second, the spirituality of the church sustains Christian mission. Third, mission is calling the nations of the world to a true spirituality: a life lived in submission to Christ and a communion with Christ Jesus as Lord (Austin, 645).


\(^4\) Girón, 31.
Spirituality is not just a matter of praying and studying the Word of God in isolation from what is happening in the world. True spirituality includes service in response to the call of God and the brokenness and alienation of the world. Before missionary candidates are accepted for mission service, it would be good if they were already ministering to the brokenness of people's lives. Service causes Christians to be thirsty for deeper spiritual formation, and proper spiritual formation causes Christians to be actively involved in service for God and the world.

**Holiness**

The decision of Daniel and his friends not to be defiled provided them with an opportunity to witness to the sovereignty of their Creator and illustrate the relationship between holiness and mission, showing how God can work through consecrated people. Daniel and his friends maintained a careful balance between separating themselves from the religious and ethical influence of heathen religions and mingling with the people and witnessing to them about the “God of Heaven.”

The concept of holiness is relevant to present-day missionaries in both the physical and spiritual sense. Holiness is a prerequisite for God’s missionaries. Although missionaries must mingle with the people in the target culture, they must also reveal God’s character through consecrated lives. A desire to obey God rather than self can be shown in acts of consecration and a hatred of sin.¹ Missionaries must protect themselves from any impurity, which could affect the way they are viewed by the people they hope to

¹Ibid.
The challenge is to model a holiness that is according to God’s definition and character, not according to one’s own culturally conditioned assumptions.

While missionaries are trained and conditioned to be culturally relevant, there is always the danger that in striving for acceptance by the people to whom they are ministering in a foreign country they might be tempted go too far in the acceptance of local cultural practices. Seeking acceptance could possibly lead to unknowingly compromising the holy standards of God in order to be welcomed into the new community. God’s standards, holiness, and character must always be the criteria used by the missionary to evaluate each situation. The highest goal is not to be accepted by the new culture, but to correctly demonstrate God’s holy character to those needing to understand God’s message of sin and salvation.

However, the pursuit of a consecrated life does not mean a passive lifestyle or a lack of involvement in the lives of people in the secular world. The reason why the people of Israel ultimately failed was because they shut themselves away from the world to avoid being seduced into idolatry. While missionaries must remain separated from evil

1Ibid.

2Glasscock, 447.

3White, Prophets and Kings, 708. White applies it into our context: “It is not God’s will that we should seclude ourselves from the world” (idem, Counsels on Health [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923], 592). She also says, “The followers of Christ are not to isolate themselves from the world” (idem, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913], 323). Gottfried Oosterwal also points out the same thing: “The church never is content to live for itself, in isolation from the world. God called the church into existence for a missionary purpose. The church therefore exists for the world. . . . We can serve God only if we become involved in the world and its activities with the purpose of claiming the world for Christ and showing others a better way” (Gottfried Oosterwal, Mission Possible: The Challenge of Mission Today [Nashville, TN: Southern Pub.
cultural influences in their field of service, they must also work hard to reach people in culturally relevant ways.

**Excellence**

Excellence is another quality for committed missionaries to strive for. Daniel and his friends glorified God through their easily recognized excellence in comparison to their heathen colleagues. Daniel and his friends acknowledged God as the giver of that excellence that later became a useful medium to witness to the people in a heathen court concerning the power of the true God.  

God not only uses those who are prepared to serve him effectively, but also equips his dedicated servants so they can successfully achieve their goals. Even though we should remember that God takes the initiative in preparing his future missionary agents, we must also realize that the academic ability of a missionary applicant needs to be considered in the screening process.

The excellence demonstrated by Daniel and his friends also offers a model for modern Christian life in the secular workplace. There is still a need for dedicated followers of God to seek education that will enable them to be at the top of intellectual greatness, to qualify them to sit in deliberative and legislative councils, to help enact laws

---

1 Baldwin says, “The specific gift entrusted to Daniel was to make him not only a trusted adviser to Nebuchadnezzar but also a channel of [God’s] revelation” (Baldwin, 84).

2 David Harley suggests that “degrees are not essential requirement for a cross-cultural missionary, but the ability to learn is . . . A teachable spirit, a willingness to learn and the ability to cope with the program are essential” (David Harley, *Preparing to Serve: Training for Cross-cultural Mission* [Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995], 66).
for nations, and to hold high offices with a purpose to fulfill *missio Dei* and to be a blessing in society.¹

Vegetarianism and Mission

At the end of a ten-day trial period, Daniel and his friends were healthier and better nourished than the other young men in the Babylonian court. The Hebrews’ decision to ask for a vegetarian diet led to an opportunity to witness both through their personal health and in word. The question we should ask is if there is still any validity to a vegetarian diet for missionaries going to certain groups today.

In connection with the ritual laws concerning food, the early church council in Jerusalem decided that gentile believers should “abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood” (Acts 15:20).² This prohibition is based on the ritual law of Leviticus warning against eating blood (Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14). According to the context of Leviticus, the law was not given for health reasons, but was related to the ritual law, which symbolizes that “the life of a creature is in the blood” and “it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” on the altar (17:11). However, God promised the blessing of health to the Israelites in the context of obeying all his laws (Deut 7:11-15). This suggests that “physical health is part

¹Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1930), 36, 37.

²Donald Hohensee explains what the decision meant: “Since the Gentiles were saved, the council did put on them some injunctions as to how they were to live the Christian life. These were not conditions for salvation, but rather obligations because of salvation” (Donald Hohensee, “To Eat or Not To Eat?: Christians and Food Laws,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ)* 25, no. 1 [Jan. 1989]: 81). In his article, Hohensee discusses the issue of eating blood in the mission field.
of a large covenant package,"¹ because "the holiness motif resident in these laws had the
effect of elevating the value of the person's body to establish a vital connection between
the body and service to God."²

In a practical sense, application can be drawn from the side effects of Daniel's
dietary decision. The choice of a simple vegetarian diet by Daniel and his friends seemed
to give them increased clarity of mind as well as to improve their physical condition,
while at the same time serving as a test of their commitment to God in a foreign land.³

Food issues should be approached as a matter of health and good nutrition. Marion G.

¹Gane, Leziticus, Numbers, 210. Gane says, "Everything God's people do impacts their
health one way or another" (ibid.). Richard M. Davidson sees the laws of Lev 11 as universal:
"The law of clean and unclean foods (Lev 11) must be seen in the context of numerous lexical,
structural, and theological indicators (both in OT and NT) to make plain that this is part of a
universally binding legislation; the same is true for the laws enjoined upon the Gentiles in Acts

²George W. Reid, "Health and Healing," in Handbook, 774. See additional comments that
Reid makes regarding the connection between health and holiness (ibid., 772-776). Reid points
out that the validity of distinguishing between clean and unclean animals is not cultic, but
universal: "Cultic uncleanness could be removed by cleansing; however, the uncleanness of
animals was permanent, with no ritual available for its removal. Furthermore, Israelis could
come into contact with unclean animals without themselves becoming unclean. Application of the
regulation was universal, the obligation applying even to aliens in Israel (Lev 17:12-15)" (ibid.,
776). It is notable that Reid also suggests principles for vegetarianism based on scientific reasons:
"Given the limited sources of food available to common people in ancient times, a return to the
Edenic vegetarian diet is not an issue in the Scriptures; however, it remains as the ideal, and as
noted above, is increasingly supported by current scientific research" (ibid.). Miller also points
out that "Daniel's diet was similar to many so-called health food diets today," although Daniel was
not suggesting that eating meat was wrong (Stephen R. Miller, 69). He also says, "Nutritional
experts today advocate a diet of mostly fruits and vegetables for optimum health" (ibid., 70).
Lebram notes that the self-imposed restrictions on diet in the narrative literature in the post-exile
period often exceed the probable kosher laws of that time, and in fact are usually vegetarian (cf.
Tobit 1:10-12; Esth 14:17 Old Greek; Jud 9:5, 12:1-4; 2 Macc 5:27; Jub 22:16) in Jürgen C.
Lebram, Buch Daniel (Zürich: Theologischer, 1984), 47, quoted in Lawrence M. Wills, The Jew in
the Court of Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol.
26 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 81.

³Reid, 775.
Fray suggests that a strong and energetic body and an alert and informed mind are admirable qualities for any missionary. The reason why “most mission boards maintain high health standards and anyone who falls below them is rejected” is because “experience has taught them that a poor risk can turn out to be very costly, not only for the mission but also for the missionary.”

Christians and missionaries in many parts of the world have to struggle with the implications of Scripture when deciding what constitutes a proper diet. A basic principle is that no missionaries should sacrifice health or compromise Christian standards. Holistic mission suggests a relationship between holiness and physical health. Modern Christians who want to serve God as missionaries should pay attention to practical issues of healthy goodness by choosing the best diet and by living holy lives because it is impossible to be a successful cross-cultural missionary without maintaining good health and having a consecrated life.

Another merit of vegetarianism is a philosophical one that can often be effectively used and emphasized in an Asian context. It is well known that the deeply committed religious Buddhists and Hindus are often vegetarians for various reasons. In Buddhism,

---


2 Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, 68. Pat Gustin gives practical advice to missionaries on this matter: “Your mental state is often related to how well you are doing physically” (Pat Gustin, “Staying Healthy,” in Passport, 102).

3 Hohensee, 81. Hohensee’s discussion deals only with the issue of whether or not it is proper (moral) to use animal blood in one’s diet. The discussion should be widened to also consider the issue of health.

4 For a historical survey on vegetarianism of Buddhism and Hinduism, see Jo Ann...
the first precept forbids killing and encourages that no harm be done toward any living thing. Monks apply this instruction most strictly. Buddhist vegetarianism is intended to arouse a sense of compassion and moral goodness, and is also connected with the teaching on *karma* and reincarnation. Buddhism teaches that “there is not a single being that has not been our mother, our father, husband, wife, sister, brother, son or daughter in its ascent and descent of the ladder of cause and effect through countless rebirths.”

Because of this doctrine of reincarnation, Buddhists regard eating meat as an act of cannibalism.

Phillip Kapleau, a Buddhist writer, points out the biblical foundation for vegetarianism in Gen 1 as sharing common ground with Buddhists. Christian vegetarians share common ground with Buddhists in this area, and, like Daniel, they could use this food issue in their witness to show religious loyalty and demonstrate the superiority of the diet of Eden. Christian vegetarianism could also open an opportunity for dialogue on the

---


3Ibid., 20.

4Ibid.

5Ibid., 21. White also supports this common ground shared with Buddhists: “How can they [Christians] take the life of God’s creatures that they may consume the flesh as luxury? Let them, rather, return to the wholesome and delicious food given to man in the beginning, and themselves practice, and teach their children to practice, *mercy toward the dumb creatures* that God has made and has placed under our dominion” (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1905], 317, emphasis supplied).
doctrine of reincarnation and could provide a possibility of sharing the biblical truth on the
salvation by faith in Jesus for those who are troubled with faith in karma, the law of cause
and effect, and successive rebirths or transmigration of the soul. Again it should be
stressed that building common ground and understanding through communication and
dialogue should be done without surrendering biblical absolutes.

When Daniel went through a period of fasting, he only ate simple food sufficient
to maintain his strength (Dan 10:3). Although Christian fasting is an action of self-denial
and self-affliction, it can be regarded as a sign of self-control of inner desire. If Christians
can share their food with the poor while fasting, they could also have a greater impact on
the surrounding community. In Buddhism, the path to Nirvana involves the cessation of
all desire. Non-attachment to food was generally practiced as one way of withdrawing
from desire.1 Thus, to gain respect in the Buddhist community, missionaries should
follow a simplistic lifestyle.2

Too often Christian missionaries have shown no control or concern with what they
eat—often eating too much, or eating very expensive foods, or becoming fat, or showing
no restraint among people who respect those who are under control. Just as Daniel and his
friends impressed the Babylonian officials with their simple diet in an affluent court,

---

1Jo Ann Davidson, 116.

2To communicate effectually with Tibetan Buddhists, Marku Tsering proposes the
following missionary lifestyle in Tibet: “Eating local food and wearing local clothes show that we
have taken Tibetan Buddhist culture seriously and accepted its ways (within Scriptural limits) as
our own” (Marku Tsering, Sharing Christ in the Tibetan Buddhist World [Upper Darby, PA: Tibet
Press, 1988], 146).
Christians should also adopt the simplicity of the apostles who followed Jesus’ simple lifestyle in diet and dress (Acts 20:33-35; 2 Cor 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 1 Pet 5:1-3).¹

Dreams, Visions, and Mission

Some Western Christians treat dreams as merely psychological phenomena, feeling “dream revelation would seem to be unnecessary in the light of the fact that both the Old and New Testament records have now been completed.”² Another problem is that too often missionaries treat those who claim to have encountered supernatural beings through the medium of visions or dreams as having active imaginations or as dabbling in the demonic.³

However, Richard D. Love proposes some missiological implications for dreams and visions in the modern mission field:⁴ (1) dreams and visions are biblical and play an important part in life for people in the Two-Thirds World; (2) God speaks through dreams and visions to convert sinners even today; (3) because many of the unreached are beyond the reach of the gospel and because much of the world is illiterate, dreams and visions may serve to fulfill missio Dei.


²Stephen R. Miller, 71. See also Kelsey, God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams.

³It is also true that dreams and visions can be satanically inspired (Love, 292).

⁴Ibid., 291, 292.
The book of Daniel also indicates that God uses dreams and visions to reveal his salvific purpose, his sovereignty, his judgment, and his control of world history even over heathen kings. The book suggests four characteristics of dreams and visions that come from God: the importance of focusing on the content of the message; encountering supernatural beings in the dreams and visions; the importance of the role of an interpreter; and the need for an attitude of humility when faced with limited understanding.

However, before we too strongly affirm the need for dreams and visions in God’s mission, we need to remember that “the Bible is the exclusive medium of special revelation, whereas dreams and visions are at best only supplementary and secondary.”\(^1\) The reason why God gives an interpretation of a dream indicates that the interpretation is regarded as important as the dream itself\(^2\) because dreams are not always divinely inspired. New converts must learn to examine their dreams and visions in the light of Scripture (Deut 13:1-5).\(^3\) Those who experience dreams and visions also need to submit their dreams and visions to the leaders of their churches to have them help determine if God is speaking.\(^4\) However, the authority of the interpreter should also be tested by the biblical message (cf. Isa 8:20). The most important aspect in this matter of visions and dreams is that the message conveyed through a vision or dream must always be in harmony with the

\(^{1}\)Ibid.

\(^{2}\)Everts, 231.

\(^{3}\)Ibid. The Bible is also concerned with distinguishing between true dreams and visions and false ones, and is concerned whether they are genuine revelations of God or not (Jer 28:32).

\(^{4}\)Ibid.
message of the Bible. The church, as a corporate body, also has a role to play in the interpretation of dreams and visions, testing them against God’s Word.

Spiritual Conflict and Mission

The book of Daniel pictures a God who often intervenes in human history for the sake of his salvific purpose. God was active in sending dreams and visions, in delivering from furnace and lions, and intervening in spiritual conflicts. Dan 10:13, 20 is regarded as the most informative biblical support for the concept of territorial spirits in the area of spiritual warfare.¹ The book of Daniel offers some insights into this issue of spiritual conflict.

Issue of Territorial Spirits

Some adherents of spiritual warfare theology persist that since the text describes angelic powers that have a specific connection to the successive empires of Persia and Greece, they might more appropriately be called “empire spirits.”² Some also propose that a hierarchy of demons (authorities and powers) has been assigned to specific geographical areas and controls the people of their territory.³

¹Wagner defines “territorial spirits” as the spiritual enemies, the high-ranking principalities and powers (Eph 6:12) who “attempt to keep large numbers of humans networked through cities, nations, neighborhoods, people groups, religious allegiance, industries or any other form of human society in spiritual capacity” (Wagner, Confronting the Powers, 22).


However, there is a danger that such a view could deny the work of the cross.\(^1\) Before the cross, Jesus called Satan “the prince of this world” (John 12:31). Whatever delegated authority Satan had at the time of creation was taken away after the resurrection when Christ declared that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18).\(^2\) The death of Christ marks the casting down of Satan as well as the exaltation of Christ on his heavenly throne (Rev 12:10-12).\(^3\)

It is true that Satan was “the prince of the power of the air,” but he is now only “the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph 2:2) because “having spoiled principalities and powers, he [Jesus] made a show of them openly, triumphing over them” by the cross (Col 2:15). Now, Jesus reigns over “all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21, KJV). On the cross Christ won the supreme victory over Satan and his supporters.\(^4\) So if our understanding of spiritual warfare does not see the cross as the final triumph, it is incorrect.\(^5\) The issue involved in spiritual battle in the Bible is not an issue of power, but the authority of Jesus who only can give salvation through the cross.\(^6\)

---

\(^{1}\) Ibid., 250.

\(^{2}\) Ibid. Hiebert used the term “authority” instead of “power” in KJV.


\(^{5}\) Ibid., 252.

\(^{6}\) Hiebert, “Spiritual Warfare,” 251. Hiebert supports this through his interpretation of two
The belief in spirits who rule territories and control people can also imply that these people are helpless victims of the cosmic powers and that if the power of the cosmic forces could be broken they would be delivered and would be ready to convert to Christ en masse.¹ This view neglects the reality of human sinfulness. Sin and suffering can be caused by the weakness of the flesh, the attractions of the world, and by direct demonic harassment. Thus Hiebert points out a problem of Christian exorcism: “Even if demons are driven out, human beings call them back and renew their individual and corporate rebellion against God.”²

In contrast to the teaching on territorial spirits, the New Testament seems to indicate that demons need people (and on occasion, animals) in which to dwell, rather than regions, houses, or territories (Matt 8:31-2; 12:43-46; Mark 5:8-13).³ The issue of Dan 10 as it involves spiritual conflict does not deal with territory or power, but influence. The princes of Persia and Greece are evil angelic beings who work to influence the people in the territory. Ultimately, spiritual battles are fought over control of the mind.⁴

---

¹Ibid., 247. Hiebert criticizes the concept of Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), and Wagner, *Engaging the Enemy* (1991), as using the traditional tribal themes of territory and power.


⁴Warner, 903.
Issue of Warfare Prayer

The most controversial aspect of battling territorial spirits is direct engagement with “territorial spirits.”¹ This has been called “prayer evangelism” or “warfare prayer.” Wagner defines “prayer evangelism” as an underutilized proactive evangelistic tool.² However, many proponents of warfare prayer would go further and contend that there is a stage in the battle when one needs to take authority in the name of Jesus and command the ruling spirit(s) to leave.³

¹Timothy Warner explains the concept of territorial spirits: “Satan delegates high ranking members of the hierarchy of evil spirits to control nations, regions, cities, tribes, people groups, neighborhoods and other significant social networks of human beings throughout the world. Their major assignment is to prevent God from being glorified in their territory, which they do through directing the activity of lower ranking demons” (Timothy Warner, “The Power Encounter and World Evangelization, Part 4: The Missionary on the Track,” 1988 Church Growth Lectures, audio-taped by Fuller Seminary Media Services, October 27, 1988, quoted in C. Peter Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in Wrestling, 77).

²Wagner, “Power Ministries,” 776. Wagner gives an extreme model of prayer evangelism: “On the Day to Change the World in 1993, YWAM and others recruited and deployed prayer journey teams that traveled to the 24 cardinal points of the world (the northernmost, southernmost, easternmost and westernmost points of six of the continents) to pray that the strongholds over the continents would be pulled down and the fullness of God’s kingdom would come” (Wagner, Confronting Power, 31). He introduces Edgardo Silvoso, That None Should Perish: How to Reach Entire Cities for Christ through Prayer Evangelism (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994) as the major contributor arguing that prayer is a superior evangelistic methodology (Wagner, “Power Ministries,” 776). Edgardo Silvoso suggests 6 steps for reaching a city for Christ: (1) establish God’s perimeter in the city; (2) secure God’s perimeter in the city; (3) expand God’s perimeter in the City; (4) infiltrate Satan’s perimeter; (5) attack and destroy Satan’s perimeter; (6) establish God’s new perimeter where Satan’s once existed (Silvoso, 294).

The book of Daniel shows the importance of prayer when faced with spiritual battles. Note the characteristics of Daniel’s prayer in chap. 9 and its connection with the spiritual battle in chap. 10.\(^1\) Daniel was involved in praying and fasting on behalf of the people of Israel and actually had no awareness of the angelic struggle in the spiritual realm until he was told about it after the fact by the interpreting angel.\(^2\) In this most informative Old Testament account about territorial spirits, it is notable that Daniel was not engaging in any kind of warfare prayer against the heavenly powers (Dan 10:13, 20, 31). The existence of the princes of Persia and Greece in Dan 10 hints that there were satanic efforts behind Nebuchadnezzar’s requirement to worship the golden image and the decree by Darius concerning worship, but Daniel’s prayer in chap. 9 was not one seeking to overthrow strongholds, but rather a petition to seek God’s sovereign providence. This suggests that the true nature of prayer should focus on God rather than Satan.

---

\(^1\) Tim Crosby explains the connection between chaps. 9 and 10: “Daniel’s prayer resulted in three weeks of warfare between the angel of light and the principality of darkness controlling the nation of Persia (Dan 10). Ultimately Gabriel prevailed because Daniel kept fasting and praying during those three weeks... Daniel’s wrestling with God in prayer helped to determine the destiny of his nation; it temporarily defeated the efforts of the force who were opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem” (Crosby, 123).

\(^2\) Arnold, “Powers,” 779. Arnold also says, “God has not given believers the authority or responsibility to cast demons out of cities or territories. God himself will direct his angels to fight the battles against the high-ranking powers” (ibid.). Pawson also suggests: “What needs to be noted is that Daniel did not directly engage them, nor was he commanded to do so. They were dealt with by angelic intervention” (J. David Pawson, *The Fourth Wave* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993], 69).
Although ultimately prayer may be the most important weapon in the Christian’s arsenal against the enemy,¹ prayer should never be understood primarily in terms of power but rather as relating to God who is the source of all power. If prayer is understood as power, Christians will readily seek power words or power rituals rather than personally relating to a sovereign God and waiting for him to act in his own time.

Daniel’s prayer should help us comprehend the nature of spiritual conflict. Spiritual battle is not about fighting Satan, because he has already been defeated by the death and the triumphal resurrection of Jesus Christ (Col 2:15; Eph 1:21). Spiritual conflict means rather standing firm in Christ’s mighty power. It is accepting God’s victory through Christ by faith and allowing God’s redemptive power to work through Christ.²

Prayer should pervade all missionary work. The trials a missionary faces should not be allowed to hinder one’s prayer life but should be used by God to deepen it (1 Thess 5:18; Acts 16:25).³ On the personal level, God aids the missionary in sustaining a prayer life even in the midst of the crises we face. True prayer is exemplified by an attitude of lack of trust in self but deep faith in God. God uses cultural shock, language learning difficulties, relational and spiritual conflicts, lack of receptivity, and seemingly insurmountable obstacles to draw us to himself in prayer.⁴

---

³Thrasher, 782.
⁴Ibid. Hiebert introduces some guidelines for understanding spiritual warfare: (1) there is a
Issue of Power Encounter

The book of Daniel illustrates three types of spiritual encounter: truth, allegiance, and power. The reason why Daniel was a successful witness in his cross-cultural context was that he had faith in the power of God, was committed in his allegiance to God, and lived his life based on the truth of God’s Word.

Spiritual practitioners in other religions often challenge Christians to demonstrate the power of God in various ways. There are times when missionaries should call on God to demonstrate that he is more powerful than the spirits worshipped or feared by the people. Christian missionaries have been accused of providing only secular answers to basically spiritual issues, such as when the people need healing, or when barren women want a child, or when there is not enough rain, or when there are floods. God is still interested in people’s everyday problems. Christian missionaries must still encourage trust in God’s power and witness to the fact of his direct intervention in human affairs.

It is notable that many places have been opened to the gospel through seeing a person set free from evil spirits or healed of chronic illness. Such signs and wonders in the Bible usually occurred in the context of proclaiming God’s message in the Old

spiritual battle for the hearts and souls of humans; (2) Satan has no power over God’s people other than what God permits him for the testing of their faith; (3) Satan and his hosts can and do demonize people, but those with a demonic presence are to be pitied more than feared; (4) our focus as Christians should be on love, reconciliation, peace, and justice; (5) the supreme event in spiritual warfare is the cross; (6) we must avoid two extremes: a denial of the reality of Satan and the spiritual battle within and around us in which we are engaged and an undue fascination with, and fear of, Satan and his hosts (Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections, 213, 214).

1Kraft, “Three Encounters,” 413.
Testament or in the preaching of God’s Kingdom in the New Testament. When signs and wonders accompany modern missionary evangelism, they have come to be called “power encounter.” The proponents of this approach believe that power encounters need to be part of evangelism in order to move the new converts from one realm of spiritual power to another (cf. Acts 26:18).

However, conversion demands more than just a power demonstration. Pharaoh and Belshazzar did not turn and follow God even after seeing fantastic displays of God’s power. Belshazzar did not humble himself before God even though he knew what God had done to Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather (Dan 5:18-23). Power encounters must always be linked with allegiance and truth encounters. Unfortunately, many missionaries have failed to help their converts move from an animistic worldview of power, where the spirit world is manipulated, to a biblically shaped worldview where a Christian submits to a sovereign God who is in control.

---

1Mark Wagner, 875. Jesus used his power demonstration in the context of teaching his disciples (Kraft, “Three Encounters,” 410).

2White points out that evangelism in the last days will include healings and miraculous signs: “Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be brought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers” (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy [Mountain View, CA; Pacific Press, 1911], 612). With this quotation, Pardon Mwansa challenged the church to have “faith enough in God to believe He can perform miracles today” (Pardon Mwansa, “Healings and Miraculous Signs in World Mission,” in Adventist Mission, 131).


4Kraft, “Three Encounters,” 413.

The use of power encounters must always be tied to truth that leads to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Balance is needed. Presentations that stress truth and commitment alone are often unsuccessful, especially in areas of the world where people's lives are influenced by evil spiritual powers. However, converts will not grow into a mature relationship with Jesus on the basis of power alone. Christians need to show God's power through transformed lives.

There are two dangers. First, that some will avoid any bold demonstration of power for fear the demonstration may be confused with magic. On the other hand, in an effort to demonstrate God's power, some may seek the sensational and be tempted to use power for personal glory.

There is also the possibility of a significant distortion of the Christian message when Christianity is reduced to power. The testimony of Daniel's friends indicated that their faith in God was based on more than power (Dan 3:17, 18). Christians need to acknowledge the sovereignty of God even in situations where God's power is not demonstrated. God's power is ultimately seen in its broad eschatological framework. Although God has already defeated Satan through the death and resurrection of Christ, he will consummate his work at the end of time.

---

1For the interworkings of these three aspects of Christian life and witness, see the charts in Kraft, "Three Encounters," 411, 412.


3Ibid., 252, 253.

4Van Rheenen, 777, 778. See also idem, Communicating Christ in Animistic Context (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991).
Implications for Cross-cultural Witness

The book of Daniel illustrates how God’s message can be effectively communicated to people living in a particular culture context, how God chose culturally acceptable means to communicate with both gentiles and Israelites, and how Daniel was sensitive to the local culture when he witnessed about his faith in God. The book of Daniel also contains many examples on how to make God’s salvific message relevant to peoples in different cultural backgrounds.

Cross-cultural Perspectives and Missions

Daniel and his friends show the importance of cultural learning for those who want to be relevant in their cross-cultural witness. The book of Daniel also illustrates the use of local cultural means, such as symbols, to communicate the Word of God effectively to people of a different culture. Many of the cross-cultural aspects in the book of Daniel still hold validity for missions today.

Cultural Learning

When Daniel and his friends encountered the foreign Babylonian culture, they were given foreign names by a Babylonian officer and had to learn foreign languages for three years. Their local names and the use of the local language helped them to be accepted by the Babylonians and provided opportunities to witness to their God.

Use of foreign names

It is notable that Daniel and his friends were given Babylonian names by a Babylonian officer. Choan-Seong Song calls the ability to name others as “a God-given
ability” or “a prerogative of human beings.”¹ He also says, “A name stands for the totality of the being denoted by it, and, on the other hand, it represents the power of the name-giver over the totality given its name.”² Although Song argues against the custom of naming converts using Western Christian names in a mission field, he does provide insight into the custom and purpose of missionaries receiving local names, such as Daniel and his friends received from the Babylonians.

In an authoritarian society such as Asia and Africa, asking an older person in a family or society to name a newly born baby is a traditional custom. The giving of a name not only confirms the authority of the group, but also denotes acceptance of someone into the social system. A name is a means of confirming someone’s social identity. When working in a cross-cultural context, it could be beneficial to have the local people give a local name to the missionary.

Language learning

Daniel and his friends had to learn foreign languages in a heathen court for three years. They were able to communicate fluently with the Babylonian and Persian kings and officers in their own dialects. Few would deny that language learning is usually an essential first step for those wanting to be a successful cross-cultural missionary.

¹Choan-Seong Song, _Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective_ (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 90.
²Ibid., 91.
From the vision of the “Son of Man,” where people from all languages worship and serve God (Dan 7:13, 14), we can easily see that all people should hear God’s salvific message in their own language. In order to achieve Jesus’ commission to reach people of all languages (Matt 28:19, 20), missionaries need to learn and understand each local language. In order to communicate clearly and effectively with the people they want to disciple, witness, and train, language learning is a critical component of the missionary mandate. God also demonstrated the importance of understanding languages by communicating through the disciples on the day of Pentecost in such a way that people heard the message in their own languages (Acts 2:6, 8-11). This event suggests that language barriers can be overcome and language learning is a basic missionary tool.

Some wonder how Daniel and his friends could speak so many foreign languages fluently. As discussed earlier, God gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning (1:17), but they also lived in a Babylonian court surrounded by native speakers for three years. They most likely spoke at least one or more foreign languages before they were taken captive. Even while living in Judah, they had most likely been exposed to an atmosphere of foreign language learning from a very young age.

---

1The importance of language is reemphasized in Rev 14:6 where it mentions that the everlasting gospel is to be preached unto them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.


3Ibid.

4Ibid., 861.

The implication for missions today is that it is important to consider the age of a missionary candidate in the screening process. Younger is better if one hopes to become a fluent communicator in a foreign language.1

Symbolism

In the book of Daniel, the symbolism of the great image, the huge mountain, the big tree, and the strange animals shows God's sensitivity in using local cultural forms to declare his sovereignty and salvific purpose for all people. As discussed earlier, there are some similarities between the use of symbols in the book of Daniel and other Near Eastern literature. However, Daniel used the symbols creatively for the purpose of symbolizing future history. In the narrative of the golden image (chap. 3), there is an implied warning that God's people should never use a local symbol in a way that compromises biblical truth.

Whenever local cultural symbols are used to communicate biblical truths, one must be extremely careful that the use of those local cultural forms will not lead to syncretism. A typical attitude of syncretism is captured in 2 Kgs 17:41: “So these nations worshiped the LORD, but also served their carved images; to this day their children and their children’s children continue to do as their ancestors did” (emphasis supplied, NRS).2

---

1White recommends: “It is a great undertaking for a man of middle age to learn a foreign language; and with all his efforts, it will be next to impossible for him to speak it so readily and correctly as to render him an efficient laborer” (Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers, rev. and enl. ed. [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915], 83).

2See more cases of syncretism in the Old Testament: idolatry (Judg 2:19; Ps 106:35-39); shrine prostitute (1 Kgs 14:24); witchcraft (2 Kgs 17:16-17). In the New Testament, especially in the Epistles we can see warnings against syncretistic tendencies (e.g., 1 Cor 10:20; 2 Cor 11:13-15; Gal 1:6-9; 3:1-6; Col 2:8-23; 1 Tim 1:3; 6:3; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1-6).
phenomenon can be found in places where the process of evangelization has been
defective and incomplete, leaving the pre-Christian animistic belief-system and practices
virtually intact but fused with some Christian elements.¹

Therefore, there needs to be a balance in using local cultural symbols to present the
gospel in culturally relevant ways. If all local cultural forms are rejected and condemned
because of fear of syncretism, the church will be viewed as foreign and the door of
evangelism will be closed. The key to remember is that God’s message can be
communicated to every people group through their cultural forms and symbols, but those
forms and symbols must have biblical meanings poured into them. Good biblical teaching
is the antidote to religious pluralism and syncretism, two plagues of modern mission.²

Christian cross-cultural workers must become experts in the use of symbols and be
sensitive to the deep meanings those symbols convey in their cultural context.
Missionaries should also “study the people whom they wish to see shaped into the image
of Christ to discover the vital issues of their lives and to determine how these issues can
be connected symbolically with the Lord Jesus.”³ As missionaries work through this

¹John McIntosh, “Christo-Paganism,” EDWM (2000), 189. Alan Tippett describes his own
observation of the phenomena in areas of Mexico and Guatemala. He sees clear evidence of the
old animistic belief-system and associated practices in the devotion of Catholic Indians of Mayan
descent (ibid.). Hiebert proposes three dangers of syncretism and his reactions to it: (1) it makes
Christianity a new kind of magic in which we seek to use formulas to manipulate God into doing
our will; (2) it leads us to lack discernment; (3) it leads us to set wrong priorities where we seek
God’s care and provision in the everyday lives of people rather than the salvation and eternal
destiny, which is the central focus of gospel (Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 224).

²Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 224.

³A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures
(Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997), 85.
process, they must also be humble and careful while recognizing that their knowledge is partial and biased.\(^1\) In its final stage, the local community must be empowered to biblically evaluate their own practices and teachings.\(^2\)

**Cross-cultural Witness**

Daniel and his friends encountered foreign religions and had opportunities to witness about their faith in God in front of heathen kings. In their witness they demonstrated cultural sensitivity in presenting God’s purpose in bringing a blessing to the heathen kingdoms.

**Encounter with Other Religions**

Daniel and his friends were forced to live in a country surrounded by heathen religions. They were able to distinguish religious matters from political ones. They gave political allegiance to heathen kings, but they never compromised their religious commitment. When Daniel and his friends encountered and studied the local heathen religions, there is no indication that they condemned the pagan worshippers. Instead, they introduced the truth of God whenever they had an opportunity.

The publication of William Ernest Hocking’s *Re-Thinking Missions* (1931) created a debate concerning the relationship between Christianity and other religions. Hocking suggested that Christians should no longer seek the conversion of those who followed

---

\(^1\)Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 224

\(^2\)Hiebert recommends four safeguards against syncretism: (1) take the Bible seriously; (2) recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all believers open to God’s leading; (3) the church as a hermeneutical community; (4) an international hermeneutical community helps test the
Hocking's concept was followed by pluralism that denied the uniqueness of Christianity. In contrast, some scholars see non-Christian religions as evil and inadequate and refuse or are reluctant to have any contact with other religions. However, it is important to realize that one cannot communicate the gospel without dialogue and an understanding of other religions.

The book of Daniel shows a balanced approach that allowed Daniel and his friends to communicate with those in other religions without compromising the truth, without losing their religious identity, and without sacrificing the biblical imperative for mission.

contextualization of cultural practices as well as theologies (ibid.).

1William E. Hocking, Re-Thinking Missions: A Layman's Inquiry after One Hundred Years (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931). Hocking suggests that only dialogue is necessary because all religions are one (ibid., see also idem, The Coming World Civilization [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956]).

2See John Hick, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987). Patrick J. Mahaffey criticizes the pluralist approach as: (1) pluralists tend to move away from a christocentric point of view in favor of a theocentric perspective, which leads Christians to lose confidence in the efficacy of their faith; (2) by definition, the theocentric perspectives are tied to theism, which say there is the possibility of more than one ultimate; (3) pluralist approaches lead to relativism; (4) the pluralist sees religions as complementary rather than contradictory. The notion tends to smooth over genuine differences and incompatibilities regarding basic doctrines and claims about the nature and destiny of human existence and thus denies converting non-Christians to Christianity (Patrick J. Mahaffey, "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth: An Inquiry in the Philosophy of Religious Worldviews" [Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1988], 125-128). For the matter of dialogue see John R. Cobb, Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982).


4Peter Cotterell suggests that there are two major areas to be questioned in our encounter with other religions: first, the question of salvific validity of other religions and second, the question of the origins of those religions (Cotterell, "Pluralism," 761).
The challenge for the church is to engage the religions in society and the world with a confident yet compassionate insistence that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.¹

**Using the Names of God**

Daniel was careful to contrast and pour new meaning into the terms he used to introduce the true God to his Babylonian audience, even though he used names of local deities. Daniel introduced the idea that God is in heaven but still has power to reveal things on earth (2:28). The Babylonian wise men and Nebuchadnezzar did not conceive of any god having power and ability over heaven and earth (cf. vs. 11). The idea that God had sovereignty over matters both in heaven and on earth was totally new to them. Daniel also used terms that the surrounding nations and peoples used in a polytheistic way to represent the Hebrew understanding of God in a monotheistic way. This shows that Daniel effectively communicated biblical meanings, as did New Testament writers, who used the Greek word “theos” to designate the Hebrew God, in spite of the pagan origin of the word. Daniel added biblical meaning to the terms he used, just as modern missionaries do.

The impact of using a local form (word) is not because of its familiar associations, but because of the new meanings that are added.² The new meaning added to a word begins to produce within a culture a subgroup that assigns new meanings to familiar forms,

¹Ibid., 762.

thereby creating Christian functional substitutes. However, there is risk involved when a word (form) is used in a different way by different groups within the same culture. Misunderstandings can arise. The key to communicating biblical meanings is to carefully choose the right local forms (words) and then continue to pour the new biblical meanings into those new verbal symbols, just as Daniel did. Biblical teaching (pouring biblical content into local forms) is a safeguard against syncretism.

In conclusion, when understanding and interpreting Scripture, it is very important to realize that “God’s revelation is given to a specific time, place, circumstance, and in a particular language.” This understanding of the relationship between missio Dei and culture is very important for the one who will communicate the Word of God in a cross-cultural context in modern missions.

---

1 Malinowski introduced the functional theory of culture (Bronislaw Malinowski, The Dynamics of Culture Change [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1945], 52). Carlos Martin defines “functional substitutes” as “culturally appropriate elements which take the place of rituals or practices which are incompatible with scriptural teaching” (Carlos G. Martin, Christianity Among Traditional Religions [Silang Cavite, Philippines: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1997], 309). It is also true that in the process of translating the Bible, translators have had to work hard to find terminology from the receptor’s language to designate accurately biblical meanings. Cultural forms (words) usually have to have biblical meanings poured into them to catch the message God wants to convey. For example, missionaries to China adapted the word Shangti, which was a word used to designate the monotheistic supreme god of Confucianism to designate the God of the Bible. Missionaries in Korea adapted the word Hananim, which was used to designate the One Great Lord of Creation within Korean shamanism (Sung-Deuk Oak, “Shamanistic Tan’gun and Christian Hananim: Protestant Missionaries’ Interpretation of the Korean Founding Myth, 1895-1934,” Studies in World Christianity 7, no. 1 [2001]: 43, 48, 42-57).

Summary

In this chapter, several missiological implications for the book of Daniel have been noted. Daniel’s consciousness of *missio Dei*, based on his biblical understanding and his participation in God’s sovereign purpose, confirms the importance of a Bible-based theology of mission. The concept of “God’s salvific purpose for all people” stands in opposition to a universalism that claims salvation for all. The judgment scene in the vision of the “Son of Man” (Dan 7:14, 26, 27) presupposes the proclamation of the saving Word of God. *Missio Dei* is God’s universal purpose, not only to save nations but also to call human agents to be involved in the accomplishment of God’s intent. Daniel’s request to Nebuchadnezzar (4:27), to be kind to the oppressed reveals *missio Dei* includes justice and the welfare of the marginalized.

The book of Daniel shows that God’s strategy to save the nations involves choosing the right person. Daniel and his friends show many of the qualifications needed by present-day cross-cultural missionaries, such as an awareness of God’s call, spirituality, holiness, and excellence. Daniel’s request for vegetarian food suggests that although food issues should be approached as a matter of health and good nutrition, vegetarianism can be used as a bridge to reach out to Buddhists and Hindus in Asia and with other vegetarians in other parts of the world.

God used dreams and visions to reveal his salvific purpose, his sovereignty, his judgment, and his control of world history. God still uses dreams and visions to reveal himself to the people of this world. However, the content of dreams and visions should be examined in the light of Scripture. The church should also function as interpreter and tester.
The book of Daniel illustrates God’s direct intervention in our world. Spiritual warfare proponents often refer to Dan 10 as the most informative Old Testament account of territorial spirits. However, it is evident in the book of Daniel that the real issue is not territory or power, but a battle for the mind.

The book of Daniel also illustrates the importance of prayer. Daniel prayed and fasted on behalf of the people of Israel, but had no awareness of the angelic struggle in the spiritual realm until after his interpreting angel informed him of it later. Although some proponents of warfare prayer insist that Christians should engage in prayer to expel territorial spirits, Daniel’s prayers show that prayer should never be understood primarily in terms of power.

Power encounters are evident in the book of Daniel, but truth and allegiance encounters must be part of the equation. The testimony of Daniel’s friends (Dan 3:17, 18) suggests that God’s power must always be seen in its broad eschatological framework. Although God has already defeated Satan through the death and resurrection of Christ, he will consummate his work at the end of time.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the book of Daniel shows how Daniel was culturally sensitive in communicating the Word of God to people from a different culture. Daniel and his friends accepted their Babylonian names, suggesting the importance for missionaries to also receive local names that can be easily pronounced by the local people. Local names can also encourage closer identification with the local culture.

The language-learning process that Daniel and his friends went through shows the importance not only of the gift of learning and understanding from God, but also the importance of choosing younger missionary candidates. Daniel’s understanding of
language allowed him to use and communicate with culturally relevant symbols in creative ways without compromising biblical truths. To avoid the danger of syncretism, missionaries need to carefully select local cultural symbols that can have biblical truths added to them in order to convey biblical meanings.

As a missionary document, the book of Daniel also suggests several implications for present-day cross-cultural witness. Daniel and his friends encountered and studied the Near Eastern religions, but never compromised their religious commitment. Instead, they introduced Babylonians and Medes to the truth of God whenever they had an opportunity. Likewise, the whole church must engage other religions with a confident yet compassionate and humble witness to the gospel.

Daniel’s use of local titles for God that were the same or similar with usages in his Near Eastern context suggests the possibility of using local forms, symbols, and words in the course of Bible translation, as well as in cross-cultural ministry. To avoid misunderstanding and in order to communicate the proper meaning when using such new verbal symbols correctly, forms must be carefully chosen and biblical meaning must be poured into them.

Conclusions

It is true that a comprehensive approach to the book of Daniel from a missiological perspective has largely been neglected. This study explored the biblical foundation of God’s salvific purpose for all people, *missio Dei* in the book of Daniel, and investigated the means that Daniel employed as a missionary who was sent to witness concerning God’s salvific purpose in the cross-cultural context of Babylon.
The result of this study shows that the theology of *missio Dei* in the book of Daniel is prominent. Daniel and his friends were aware of God's sovereignty in human history and of "God's salvific purpose for all people." Furthermore, the book of Daniel demonstrates some strategies used in *missio Dei* such as God's use of committed individuals, dreams and visions, prayer and spiritual formation, power encounter, and spiritual conflict. From a cross-cultural perspective, the book of Daniel also shows that Daniel and his friends were sensitive to their surrounding culture as they communicated the truth of God in relevant way with people in the heathen kingdom.

This study has shown many missiological implications in the book of Daniel that are relevant for present-day cross-cultural missionary work. The book of Daniel is a valid missionary document that has relevant missiological implications for today's missionaries.

Although this study covered almost the whole book of Daniel, I cannot claim to have examined all missiological aspects or perspectives in the book of Daniel. Future study could investigate the relationship between the judgment motif and mission, the relationship between eschatology and mission, the relationship between *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God, and analyze Daniel's approach of witnessing to heathen kings based on modern cross-cultural communication theory. Furthermore, while this study was quite broad in its attempt to demonstrate the validity of the book of Daniel as a missionary document, I would hope that future researchers could look more deeply at some of the issues discussed.


_____. "The First and Third Years of Belshazzar (Dan 7:1; 8:1)." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 1977): 153-168.


________. “A Dubious Twilight: Reflection on Dreams in Patristic Literature.” *Church History* 55, no. 2 (June 1986): 153-164.


Peretti, Frank. This Present Darkness. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1986.


________. *Jesus and His Coming.* London: SCM, 1957.


Snyder, Howard A. The Community of the King. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


______. Messages to Young People. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1930.


The Spiritual Gift: The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels. Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1858.


