

YOUNG ADULT

SUNDAY SCHOOL

WINTER QUARTER, 2017-2018

DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

SEASONS OF LIFE

DANIEL

QUARTERLY AIM: Helping Christians navigate the seasons of life by having a clear understanding of God's Word.

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YOUTH IS A CIRCUMSTANCE YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT.
THE TRICK IS TO GROW UP WITHOUT GETTING OLD.

—Frank Lloyd Wright

YOU CAN ONLY HOLD YOUR STOMACH IN FOR SO MANY YEARS.

—Burt Reynolds

RETIREMENT AT 65 IS RIDICULOUS.
WHEN I WAS 65, I STILL HAD PIMPLES.

—George Burns

YOU ARE ONLY YOUNG ONCE, BUT YOU CAN BE IMMATURE FOREVER.

—Germaine Greer

I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD A BALD SPOT.

—Robbie Horne

I HEARD, BUT I UNDERSTOOD NOT.

—The prophet Daniel in his seventies

SEASONS OF LIFE

Lesson Text: Daniel 1:1, 2; Matthew 24:15-18

Principle: Daniel, a prophetic book, foretells the future and what God's people experience as they negotiate the seasons of life.



“Class of the 20th Century” was a twelve-part TV series that was broadcast on the Arts and Entertainment television network. The first segment aired on Sunday evening, January 5, 1992. Grasp the significance of this! In 1992, most people considered the twentieth century as history. Why? It was because of the fantastic changes that had already occurred. Twenty-six years have passed since “Class of the 20th Century” aired, and God’s people have experienced much in that time.

Baby boomers (people born after World War II) have lived through some of the most dynamic changes that have occurred in the history of human-kind? In the twentieth century, man has gone from being earthbound to airborne. In the twentieth century, man left the bonds of earth and traveled to the moon. In the twentieth century, man developed computers. The first computers were huge and tape driven. Now, we have personal computers on our desks, in our laps or in the palm of our hands. Nothing has changed the life of man on earth like computers.

Baby boomers, by and large, have adjusted to the dynamic changes that occurred during the latter part of the twentieth century. They enjoy having the world at their fingertips (the Internet), they enjoy their smartphones, but they understand—now that they are retiring by the millions—they are reaching the final season of life: old age.

Daniel was a young man, a teenager, when he was captured by the Babylonians and carried away to the court of King Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC). Daniel was an old man—in his nineties—when the book of Daniel closes (534 BC). There is no doubt that the book of Daniel contains some of the Bible’s most important prophecies. There is, however, something that can be easily overlooked: seasons of life.

Everyone transitions from infancy, to small child, to teenager, to young adult, to middle-aged adult and to senior adult. During the transition—it is called life—people grow and change. A sixty-year-old has a different perspective than a twenty-year-old. Growing, maturing and changing causes a person to think and act differently.

For example, when we are first introduced to Daniel, he is brave and strong and willing to put his life on the line (Daniel 1:8). Fifty years later, when Daniel received a vision from God, he “fainted, and was sick certain days” (Daniel 8:27). Twenty years later, Daniel received his final vision and said, “I heard, but I understood not” (Daniel 12:8). Life changed Daniel, and life changes you and me.

EXPLORING THE PRINCIPLE



THINK ABOUT IT!

Every book in the Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

The Holy Spirit led Daniel to write the book of Daniel.

Christians can trust Daniel as a guide in the seasons of life and as an accurate barometer of the future.

Daniel and Rationalism

There is not a liberal theologian in the world who accepts the authenticity of Daniel. In fact, liberals say that Daniel should not be taken literally.

Why? It is because of modern rationalism. Rationalism believes thought and action should be governed by reason. The modern rationalist believes that reason and logic are the primary sources of knowledge and truth and should be relied on in searching for and testing the validity of things. To the rationalist, the supernatural (God and spiritual things) cannot be tested; therefore, they do not make sense and cannot exist.

Rationalism, by rejecting the supernatural (God and spiritual things), claims the Bible is just like any book; therefore, rationalism removes God’s Word from human life. Daniel, of course, is vulnerable to criticism, especially by

scholars who are tainted with rationalism, because much of Daniel contains supernatural events and prophecy.

Daniel, like every book in the Bible, is inspired by God. In fact, Jesus, the Son of God, mentioned Daniel's prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation (Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15). We cannot deny the inspiration of the book of Daniel because the Son of God quoted it. In fact, one of the parameters for determining inspired books is whether a book has been quoted by other Bible writers.

Daniel and Prophecy

Prophecy is unique to the Bible. Very few ancient books contain prophecy because when prophecy isn't fulfilled, it disproves a writer's claim of inspiration. Jesus said, "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29). Only holy men of God can claim inspiration.

Fulfilled prophecy proves the reliability of a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:19-22). God, speaking through Moses, asked, "How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?" (verse 21). God replied, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken" (verse 22). According to Moses, to differentiate between true and false prophets is to wait and see if their prophesies come true.

Prophecy is history written in advance. For example, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, "The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure" (Daniel 2:45). God, in a dream, declared

to Nebuchadnezzar what was going to happen in the future. There was no changing it. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was history written in advance.

In the Bible, prophecy is presented in a twofold manner: sermonical, pleading with the people and predictive, unveiling the future. Old Testament prophets, therefore, were forthtellers and foretellers. Consequently, prophetic books contain a present message—for people living at the time—and a future application—what God has determined He will do.

THINK ABOUT IT!

"Prophecy" (*propheteia* in Greek), is the utterance of an inspired prophet who foretells the future and predicts future events.

A good example of fulfilled prophecy is the virgin birth of Jesus.

Isaiah predicted the virgin birth nearly 750 years before Jesus was born (Isaiah 7:14).

Matthew, an inspired writer, emphatically pointed out that the birth of Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Matthew 1:22, 23).

Prophecy is history written in advance.

THINK ABOUT IT!

“To him give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43) points out the prophetic aspect of Jesus’ life.

The virgin birth of Jesus was predicted (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

The triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was predicted (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:9).

Jesus as a Lamb slain in sacrifice was predicted (Isaiah 53:1-7; John 1:29).

The pierced hands, feet and side of Jesus on the cross was predicted (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).

The resurrection of Jesus was predicted (Psalm 16:8-10; Matthew 28:1-6).

The prophets—many times—predicted the life, death and ministry of Jesus.

The Importance of Daniel

The book of Daniel is important because Jesus called Daniel a prophet (Matthew 24:15). The late Dr. W. A. Criswell stated, Jesus “did not say ‘Daniel the forger’ or ‘Daniel the deceiver’ but He said ‘Daniel the prophet.’” Dr. Criswell concluded, “If the visions of Daniel are past history clothed in the garb of prophecy and pawned off four hundred years after they were supposed to have been written, then Daniel was no prophet. But Jesus said he was ‘a prophet’” (*Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel*, page 21). If Daniel is not an inspired book, what does this say about Jesus?

The book of Daniel is important to New Testament prophecies. To understand the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24), the prophetic writing of the apostle Paul (2 Thessalonians 2), and the prophetic writing of the apostle John (Revelation), we must accept and understand the book of Daniel, especially since Jesus quoted Daniel and since the apostles Paul and John amplify Daniel’s prophecies.

Sir Isaac Newton, who discovered the law of gravity, wrote, “Whoever rejects the prophecies of Daniel does as much as if he undermined the Christian religion, which, so to speak, is founded on Daniel’s prophecies of Christ” (*Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*).

To destroy Daniel—any of the prophets—is to destroy Jesus, because, “To him [Jesus] give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43). Furthermore, at the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7), a thundering voice told the apostle John, “Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (verse 10). Daniel, no doubt, had the spirit of prophecy, he spoke of Jesus and the eternal destiny of humankind.

We can depend on the validity of Daniel’s prophecies—some have already been fulfilled—and we can learn from Daniel’s character. From youth to old age, Daniel’s spiritual strength and character is an example for every generation.

Prophecy Establishes Authenticity

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus led Peter, James and John to a high mountain and was “transfigured before them” (Matthew 17:1, 2). “Transfigured” is an outward change caused by an inward nature. The *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* defines transfigured as a “change from an earthly to a supernatural figure.” On the mount of transfiguration, Peter, James and John saw the deity of Jesus shine through His flesh. Jesus’ face glowed like the sun and His clothing was as white as a bright light. What a glorious sight! “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), but for a brief moment Peter, James and John saw the original and future glory and majesty of Jesus, God in the flesh (Philippians 2:5-11; Revelation 1:12-16).

Thirty years later, the apostle Peter wrote, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). The majesty Peter witnessed was the transfiguration of Jesus. On the high mountain—Peter called it a “holy mount” (verse 18)—he saw the power, majesty, greatness, prominence and preeminence of Jesus. This is important. Peter saw the glory of Jesus with his own eyes.

Not only did Peter see Jesus glorified, but he heard also God the Father say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (verse 17). Peter wanted “them that have obtained like precious faith” (verse 1)—you and me—to know that he wasn’t following a myth or a fairy tale. Peter wanted those who had obtained like precious faith—you and me—to know that he saw the glory of Jesus and that he heard the Father declare Jesus as His Son on a holy mountain in Israel.

Our eyes and ears can fail us. Sometimes, what we see is not at all what it appears to be. Sometimes, what we hear may not be what the speaker is

THINK ABOUT IT!

In 1993, a sixties TV show had its twenty-fifth anniversary performance.

One clip included a segment called News of the Future.

Two futuristic anchormen acted as though they were reporting current news from decades in the future.

Two of the predictions didn’t appear outlandish or crazy.

One anchor forecasted that Ronald Reagan would be the president of the United States from 1980-1988.

The other anchor reported—in 1968—that the Berlin Wall would fall in 1989.

False prophets may get lucky and be right some of the time.

True prophets, however, never miss.

Old Testament prophets confidently wrote that Jesus, the Son of God, would be born, live, die, come back from the dead and rule the earth; they got it right.

trying to express. Peter understood this, and said, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” (verse 19). Peter is saying that the Holy Scriptures are more certain than personal experience. (*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, page 772).

Prophecy is more sure because prophecy comes from God. In fact, Peter wrote, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (verse 21). Being “moved by the Holy Ghost” means God filled the prophet’s sails and moved them to write and say the things He wanted them to say. Prophecy is the inspired Word of God. Sight and hearing may lead us astray, but the Bible will never lead us astray. Jesus is the Son of God. Peter saw and heard many things that Jesus did. Yet, Peter, an inspired man himself, said that if his readers didn’t believe him, they should look to the prophets which hold more weight than a man’s personal experience.

GRASPING THE PRINCIPLE

The book of Daniel is historic and prophetic. As we study the book of Daniel, we will see the “more sure word of prophecy” (verse 19) confirmed, and our faith in God and future events will be strengthened.

I will never downplay the importance of prophecy. There is, however, more to the book of Daniel than future events. When the book of Daniel begins, Daniel is a teenager, a prince removed from his homeland, wondering about the future. As the book of Daniel continues, Daniel becomes an adult and lays his life on the line for his God and his faith. Finally, as an old man, Daniel is weaker, shaken at times, but he is still trusting God.

Jean-Claude Killy, an alpine skier and an Olympic champion, said, “The best and fastest way to learn a sport is to watch and imitate a champion.” As Daniel negotiated the seasons of life, he was a champion. There were many times when Daniel could have thrown up his hands and quit, but he didn’t. As a teenager, Daniel could have compromised his faith, but he didn’t. As an adult, Daniel could have followed illogical, governmental edicts, but he didn’t. As an old man, still a captive in the court of Babylon, Daniel could have died a bitter and disillusioned old man, but he didn’t. Daniel negotiated the seasons of life with grace and trust in God. Daniel is a champion, and we can learn, not only prophecy, but how to live as children of God.

DISCUSSING THE PRINCIPLE

1. Why is rationalism opposed to the book of Daniel?

2. How do we know if a prophet is a true prophet?
3. Why is the authenticity of Daniel important?
4. According to the apostle Peter, why is prophecy important?

LIVING THE PRINCIPLE

I will understand that rationalism rejects the book of Daniel because it contains prophecy, which rationalists believe is beyond reason. I will accept the fact that the Bible is filled with prophecy—some fulfilled and some yet to be fulfilled. I will accept the validity of the book of Daniel and all Bible prophecy, and as I negotiate the seasons of life, I will emulate the life of Daniel, a true champion of the faith.