

The Battle for Daniel

Today I want to address a specific book of the Bible from a particular aspect. It is the book of Daniel. Daniel has been subject to numerous battles and attempts upon his life. A good place for us to start today is in Daniel chapter six.

As a result of the political set up that Darius had been exposed to, Daniel been thrown into the lion's den, because he worshipped the true God rather than obeying the creed of Darius. Darius spent a rather sleepless night that night because he had obviously come to respect Daniel very greatly. We don't know the period of time that he had worked with Daniel but during the time that Darius had been in Babylon, and Daniel had been working under him, he had come to respect him very greatly.

In the early morning, Darius came to the lion's den ...

Daniel 6:20 And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

That was quite a statement on the part of Darius - the realisation that Daniel served a God that was able to save him from the destructive forces of lions! Such is the nature of lions, no one expected to come out of the lion's den alive! They get hungry. They like to destroy their food. Daniel was expected to be the latest meal! But Daniel wasn't, because God had intervened and protected him.

Daniel is a remarkable example of living and succeeding in a hostile world. Oftentimes we don't quite appreciate how hostile that world in which he lived was. Perhaps today we'll appreciate a little more of that.

Our normal focus in terms of Daniel though is not upon his survival in a hostile world. When we think of Daniel we normally think of one thing. We normally appreciate the faithfulness of Daniel and the way in which God used him to record prophecies relating to the end of this age of human rulership. That's the way in which we have traditionally focused upon Daniel. That is quite appropriate, because as Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar:

Daniel 2:28 "... there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:

He then went on and described the vision that Nebuchadnezzar had had, that he had never revealed to anybody. He not only described the vision, but he also gave the interpretation of it. It was a very important dream and interpretation in terms of God's plan and God's purpose.

Daniel was able to present that understanding to Nebuchadnezzar and preserve it for us today. We can appreciate God's plan and the overall context of world affairs in light of that.

But there is another aspect to Daniel that we focus on less frequently, and that is the way in which God used him as a servant. Have we ever considered how many times Daniel's life had been imperilled prior to the lion's den? In fact, if we go through the book of Daniel from chapter one to chapter six, we see that Daniel is in a life and death situation in literally every chapter. We don't necessarily focus upon that. What he faced there in the lion's den was just the latest, the closest brush.

In chapter one we find Daniel having a problem with the king's dietary regime:

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

There was something about the king's diet that Daniel felt would defile him and make him unclean. He doesn't give us all the details. He simply tells us what the consequence would be of following that regime.

**9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.
10 And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."**

Who was going to endanger the chief of the eunuch's head before the king? What might happen as well to those people who were under him? They could find their lives endangered as well. Daniel was dealing with a situation where someone's life was being endangered because of HIS beliefs. So what did he say to the chief eunuch?

**11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,
12 "Please test your servants for ten days (let us have an alternative regime for ten days), and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.
13 "Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."**

"If you are going to take our lives and say we are out of here, fine. We are prepared to face the consequences."

Daniel was given the opportunity of being able to eat simple items, rather than the king's delicacies, and on that occasion, the chief eunuch's head was saved.

**14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.
15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.**

In the next chapter, it isn't the life of the chief eunuch that is imperilled. It is now the life of Daniel who has been inducted in amongst the wise men of the king's court. This involves a challenge to the very life of Daniel and his fellows. Nebuchadnezzar is infuriated that the wise men can't tell him what his dream was.

Daniel 2:12 For this reason the king was angry and very furious ...

Those were the days when kings could become angry and furious because they were absolute dictators. Whatever they wanted had to be done.

12 ... and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

It doesn't matter what the consequences were. This is what the king said! "Bang off with his head!"

13 So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

The execution gang went out to collect these people, to bring them in to where they could be executed.

14 Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon;

Daniel was facing the captain of the guard who had been instructed to execute the wise men under the king's orders.

**15 he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.
16 So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.**

We know how things worked out; the way in which God revealed the dream to Daniel, and how Daniel was able to both tell Nebuchadnezzar the dream and interpret it. The dream is very much a central tenet of our understanding of prophecy, and appropriately so. But it came about as a result of Daniel facing death.

What about chapter three? That chapter provides the account of the three men in the fiery furnace. The furnace was so hot that it destroyed the men who were throwing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in; yet the three young men survived. It wasn't a fake. God intervened and saved them alive and taught Nebuchadnezzar a lesson at the same time.

We might scroll forward to chapter six and the lions' den. In between chapter three and chapter six were many possible situations where Daniel's life could have been endangered. How do you tell the king that he is going to spend seven years insane, as a wild animal, and not lose your head? How do you go about that?

If Nebuchadnezzar wants something, he gets it, even if it means killing or destroying a good portion of his kingdom. Daniel was able to stand before him and say: "Nebuchadnezzar, what God is telling you is that you are going to be mad for seven years, and you are going to eat straw like an ox. You are going to be thrown out into the fields." Babylonian fields were not particularly nice fields to be in.

How do you tell the prince regent that the kingdom is going to fall that very night, without being accused of being a spy, a fifth columnist, a subterfuge etc, etc? How do you survive through these situations?

Clearly, God was involved in the life of Daniel. Daniel survived through the changes in the government from one Babylonian king to the next, from one kingdom to another kingdom. Why did he survive through successive changes? Because God gave Daniel wisdom in the circumstances, and in the process, protected his life.

You might say it all comes to an end in chapter six with the lions' den. But does it? In reality Daniel has had many attempts on his life SUBSEQUENTLY. This is the really fascinating part in terms of the book of Daniel.

Oftentimes we underestimate the importance of the book of Daniel. The book is a part of God's word, and it is crucial to the understanding of the Messiah and the plan of God. It is essential as well to the correct understanding of the New Testament. In fact, the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland Critical Greek New Testament lists some 200 quotations, allusions and references to the book of Daniel in the New Testament - which places Daniel on a par with three other books from the Old Testament: Deuteronomy, Psalms and Isaiah. We might say that Daniel is part of the "Big Four" that are used in terms of references in the New Testament. They are used in a very profound way.

Today we will have a look at just one of those references - and that is to the Son of Man. Jesus describes Himself as the *Son of Man*, an expression that is found in the book of Daniel (chapter seven). If we go through Mark's gospel the only way in which Jesus Christ describes Himself is as the Son of Man. He does so for a very specific and a very, very powerful reason. We will touch upon that.

The *Son of Man* is an expression that we find throughout the gospels, especially Mark's gospel, which is drawn from Daniel chapter seven. We don't have time to look at that chapter today. We can do that another time.

Commentators and scholars, in order to distance Jesus from the Scriptures, have long debated the relationship of the *Son of Man* in Daniel to Christ's self identity. They say: "These two can't be the same." They have created arguments whereby they say that Jesus was not using the same imagery as Daniel chapter seven.

The problem today is that the evidence is inescapable. Daniel chapter seven was the very clear source of Jesus' self identity. Scholars can't escape it. The Nestle-Aland 27th edition of the Critical Greek New Testament, which anybody who is translating a Bible today would use as a basis for their translation of the New Testament, lists some two hundred quotations, references and allusions to the book of Daniel. We can't get away from it.

There are other associations such as *the kingdom of God*. The New Testament reference to *the kingdom of God* is very clearly rooted in the book of Daniel. Paul's use of the term *mysteries* is very clearly rooted in the book of Daniel. There is one another that is associated with the *Son of Man* that we will look at - *the Rock*.

Daniel chapter two refers to *the Rock that is cut out without hands* that rolls down and destroys the great image that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about, and for which dream Daniel faced death - until God revealed to him the dream and its understanding.

The association of *the Rock cut out without hands* in Daniel 2 is also frequently found in Jewish commentaries written about or after the time of Christ. What as? It is a reference to the Messiah. In other words, the Jews of

Christ's day understood that *the Rock* of Daniel chapter two was a reference to the Messiah. They associated it with various other references to rocks within the Scripture: the *Rock of salvation* for instance in Genesis 49:24. Jacob was blessing his sons. Addressing Ephraim, he says:

***Genesis 49:24 (Tanakh) Yet his bow stayed taut,
And his arms were made firm
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob -
There, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel -***

The *Rock of Israel* is equated with *the Shepherd*, the One who was also described as being *the Mighty One of Jacob*. He provided strength to Ephraim.

It doesn't stop there because the people associate Daniel chapter two with:

Psalm 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

... and with Psalm 121:1-2. What did the stone become? The stone of Daniel chapter two didn't remain as a stone. It grew and became a great mountain that filled the earth. So it's not surprising that the Jews sang Psalm 121 round about the Feast of Trumpets.

***Psalm 121:1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills -
From whence comes my help?***

The hill was not really a hill. It was a mountain - or a mountain in the making!

***2 My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.***

The Jews associated all of these Scriptures together with Daniel chapter two. Interestingly the subject of Daniel chapter two arises in the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin. It is one of those things that we can very easily gloss over and lose sight of. Jesus had been arrested. He had been brought before the Sanhedrin. Notice what Mark again has to say:

Mark 14:55 Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.

That's not surprising, because he had done nothing wrong.

56 For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

You would have thought they would have got their act together better. You would have thought they could have orchestrated this a little more - or maybe God was frustrating their plans so that Jesus Christ could never be accused falsely! They had a problem on their hands. They couldn't get any evidence or testimony against Him. Notice how it continues:

***57 Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying,
58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'"***

We skim over that today. We never think of it being of any great consequence. We read in the gospel accounts how Jesus had made a comment about rebuilding his body within three days. But to the Jews of Christ's day, that simple comment *made without hands* was nothing less than a Messianic claim! In other words: "I am that Rock that is cut out without hands."

Based upon that, they sought to put Him to death. The reference here is to Daniel 2:45. Mark is establishing that the Jews of Christ's day had a real appreciation of the prophecies given through Daniel and the relationship to the Messiah, in quite a profound way, and a way in which we oftentimes don't appreciate.

They knew that Jesus Christ was using Messianic language. It was a challenge to their power and to their

authority, and as such, they rejected Him. He wasn't one of them. He wasn't of their party. Even if He had been a Sadducee, the Sadducees would have supported Him against the Pharisees. If He had been a Pharisee, the Pharisees would have supported Him against the Sadducees, or whoever else it may have been. They knew the language that Jesus Christ was using, and they hated Him for it.

Notice the way that Christ used these same references that we have already looked at. We can pick up on the parable of the vineyard where the lord planted out a vineyard, let it out to countrymen and husbandmen. He went away, and sent his servants to collect the fruit. What happened? They were beaten, mistreated and killed. Eventually he said he would send his son. What happened to the son? The son was killed.

Matthew 21:40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

... these men who have ill-treated his servants, who have killed his son, have never paid their dues, have never provided the fruit that was due to the lord. The Scribes and Pharisees, the people listening on at that point in time, said:

41 ... "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

A trap had been set into which they walked without ever considering what Jesus Christ had set up for them. Notice how Jesus then responds to this:

***42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:
'The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone (Psalm 118:22).
This was the LORD'S doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"***

43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

44 "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

Jesus Christ has introduced another Scripture relating to stone (from Isaiah chapter thirty).

45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.

Excuse the King James English here! It probably needs to be a lot more forceful than perceived. You might say it would be better to translate it as: *They were cut to the quick*, because they realised exactly what Jesus Christ was saying to them.

Why? How do I know that? It's very straightforward. Jesus was saying a lot more to them than we normally understand. We have previously looked at the aspect of the vine, but let's take a look at the last comments of Jesus to them at this point, relating to *the Rock* and the way in which it breaks people.

Jesus is linking Psalm 118, Isaiah 30:14, Daniel 2:45 together. Why? Because that's what THEY did. They used the same Scriptures together for a different purpose.

Let me read a section from a Midrash or Jewish commentary. This is a section on Esther known as *Esther Rabah* (chapter 7). It relates to Esther 3:6 - the occasion when Haman had received authority from King Ahasuerus to destroy the Jews, because Mordecai would not bow to him and worship him.

"(Israelites) are compared to stones, as it says: "From there (comes) the shepherd, the stone of Israel" (Genesis 49:24); and "the stone that the builders rejected" (Psalm 118:22).

"But the other nations are likened to potsherds, as it says: "And He shall break it as a potter's vessel is broken" (Isaiah 30:14). If a stone falls on a pot, woe to the pot! If a pot falls on a stone, woe to the pot! In either case, woe to the pot!"

... a great problem! There was a difference though. The *Esther Rabah* continues:

"So whoever ventures to attack them receives his deserts on their account. And so it says in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, "You saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which broke in pieces the iron, the bronze and the clay "(Daniel 2:45).

This Rock can break anything. It doesn't matter whether it is Ahasuerus and Haman. It doesn't matter whether it's the Medo-Persian empire or any other empire. Our Rock is better than their iron, clay or whatever it may be!

The Rabbinic view versus Christ

They saw themselves as *the rock* ("the Messiah is one of us so He is on our side"). They saw everyone else, the other nations, as the pottery. "The Messiah is one of us. We are okay. He has to be on our side. It doesn't matter what we do. He is on our side."

Is that the way Jesus Christ saw it? Christ saw Himself as *the Rock* and ALL humanity as the pottery.

Interestingly, Jesus Christ talked to them about bringing forth fruits; the way in which they needed to bring forth fruits. The question is, who really is in charge? The Jews understood this in part. They knew that God could intervene just as He had intervened in Egypt, just as He had intervened in Daniel's life and numerous other times. They knew that God intervened in the life of Esther and Mordecai. They understood that - hence their commentary. But they failed to realise one very important part of it.

Let's go back to Daniel chapter four and the time of Nebuchadnezzar's madness, the time of the dream of the tree that got cut down. In the British Museum is a stone from Babylon (which is now known as the East India stone), engraved with cuneiform writing, expressing Nebuchadnezzar's opinion of himself in a way which is very characteristic of Daniel chapter four. It talks of the greatness and the egocentric grandeur of this man; of just how great he was in his own eyes. It was the very reason that God brought the problems of Daniel chapter four upon him.

***Daniel 4:23 And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';
24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:
25 They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.***

Who said that God is not involved in the government of men? God says He can take government that He has bestowed upon people, and He can give it to whomsoever He chooses! That is A VERY POWERFUL LESSON in terms of God's view of government. Daniel continues:

26 And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.

"You are not the great 'I am' that you think you are, as you describe on stones with cuneiform writing. You need to get it into your head that you exist as a ruler in human affairs at the pleasure of the Almighty God."

27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

What was he telling Nebuchadnezzar to do? To put it in the words of John the Baptist, he was telling him *to bring forth fruits that are evidence of repentance*. God seeks fruit of those He places in positions of responsibility. If those fruits are not produced, God will take that position and allow it to be given to another.

You might say it's a very powerful lesson for all who seek to be part of the government of God. It requires fruit - godly fruit. If that fruit isn't evident in our life, God will take that position away from us. It's within His power to give it, and it is within His power to remove it.

So here we are at the beginning of the sixth century. Let's scroll forward a few centuries later to the time of Christ. What was the fruit of the religious leaders of Christ's day? It was such that it sought to take the life of the Messiah, the Being they longed for themselves! They longed for Him for the wrong reasons. They sought for the wrong reasons - for the wrong fruit. You might say that in seeking to take Christ's life, they were striking yet another blow against the book of Daniel, seeking to subvert it.

Why? Because there was a genuine Messianic expectation at that period of time. They were rejecting what God had prophesied through Daniel. They understood those prophecies. They understood the way in which those prophecies related to them, and more importantly, to their time. Some forty years later the temple was destroyed. Jerusalem was sacked. The state of Judea no longer existed.

Their Messianic expectations didn't end there though because from AD 132-135 we find that a person by the name of Simon Bar Cochba led a revolt against the Romans - the end result of which was that Hadrian ploughed Jerusalem and banned Jews from entering Jerusalem for literally centuries. Jerusalem was forbidden to Jews!

Simon's name is interesting. He calls himself *Bar Cochba* which means *son of the star*. In the book of Numbers we find that Balaam prophesied to Balak the king of Moab. Much against Balak's wishes, and probably against Balaam's own wishes, he told Balak that there is *a star from Jacob rising* - a Messianic reference. Simon saw himself as a messiah. In fact, not only did Simon style himself as a messiah, but the prominent rabbis of his day, such as Rabbi Akiba PROCLAIMED him the messiah!

With the death of Simon Bar Cochba and the destruction of his plans, the Messianic expectation departed from the Jews. The hopes that they had firmly rooted in the book of Daniel disappeared.

We move forward again to Tiberias, a city on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee, a place which was a transit point of Jesus Christ and His disciples in His ministry in Galilee; a city that had probably seen and heard of many of the miracles that Jesus Christ had performed at Capernaum, Nazareth, Canaan, Nain, and various other places.

They had heard of the teachings of Jesus Christ. In AD 150, no longer able to meet in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin finally reassembled itself in Tiberias. Tiberias became the centre of rabbinic schools in that part of the world. The Jerusalem Talmud was written in Tiberias. Material relating to Scripture and the Talmud etc known as the Masora was collected there.

We can scroll forward a little further. The Masora gave rise to a group of people known as the Masoretes, the men who had the responsibility of preserving the Hebrew Scriptures. Because of the problem of the dispersion of the Jews, with no real home such as Jerusalem any more, the difficulty was in preserving the knowledge of the Hebrew language, so the Masoretes performed a very vital function. They introduced vowels to the Hebrew language so that it could be vocalised.

In the AD 500s, and maybe 600s, the Masoretes introduced the vowel system to the Hebrew Scriptures - based upon the tradition that had been handed down over the years, based upon the Masora. Up until that period of time, the Hebrew Scriptures had been recorded simply as a consonantal text without any vowels. You might wonder HOW you handle text without any vowels!

It is very simple. Let me ask you some questions, and you can answer it for yourself. When you drive down the highway and you see a large yellow 'M' what does it say to you? If someone says to you, *I'm going to KFC*, you know where they are going.

My computer has *HP* on the front of it. It used to stand for *Hewlett Packard*. We live in a world which is dominated by acronyms. We reduce everything to its simplest. We abbreviate things. One great company in America is known as *AT&T*. Another is *IBM*.

If you are across the Atlantic, you may be dealing with *BT* or other companies. Our lives are full of words that have been reduced to letters, and we know them. We read magazine articles where people use abbreviations. *Price Earning Ratio* becomes *PER*. Various other acronyms are used. We exist with it.

They were able to exist with it very well as well. Why? Because while to us, without half the letters, it may sound as a cryptogram, the script was simply a memory prompting device with the Hebrew Scriptures and the oral tradition. They simply needed to be prompted as to what the Scripture was saying.

Their whole educational system had been built around it. If a boy went to school (many boys did go to school) what did he learn to read? The Scriptures - by heart, verbatim! When some of the people from the New Testament like the apostle Paul are resurrected, you will be able to ask them: "How much of the Old Testament were you able to recite from memory?" It will be a lot more than we can! Such was the educational system.

By adding vowels, variations can be made. Let's play the game. Hebrew words were normally based on a three letter root. So let's take three English consonants (WLD) and see what we can do.

How many words can you create from "WLD" simply by adding vowels? You have one other opportunity and that is, you can double the consonants if you wish.

I came up with: *weld, weald, wild, willed, wield, wold, would, walled, welled and willed*. By adding vowels we can create a variety of words. Consider the effect of this upon the book of Daniel.

Before we touch on the Masoretes again let's touch upon Josephus. Josephus made a statement about Daniel. I think it's fair to see that Josephus admired Daniel greatly. He desired one thing more than anything else in life - and that would be that the Romans would make HIM their *Daniel*! Daniel was Josephus' role model. He would have liked to have been the *Daniel* in the Caesar's court. Notwithstanding, Josephus makes this comment:

"Daniel was not only accustomed to prophesy future things as did the other prophets, but he also fixed the time at which these would come to pass."

In other words, there was a certain specificity relating to some of Daniel's prophecies in a time framework. The particular prophecy in question was Daniel chapter nine. That chapter deals with *the seventy weeks prophecy*.

***Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.
25 "Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;
The street shall be built again, and the wall,
Even in troublesome times.
26 "And after the sixty-two weeks
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it shall be with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.
27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate."***

This is what we have referred to as the *seventy weeks prophecy* which we have used to date the coming of the Messiah. In the Jewish Bible, the *he* of verse 27 is associated with the *prince* of verse 26, instead of the Messiah. Why? Because of the way in which the pronoun has been pointed by vowels - not by changing the text, but simply by the vowels that have been used.

It can be shown that the change in antecedent of the pronoun in the Jewish Bible was simply brought about by the Masoretes in the vocalisation of the text. It was as simple as that. They didn't change the text. They would never change the text, but they simply changed the vowels and introduced different vowels.

Why? How can we say that with such certainty? It's very easy. Every Jewish sect who wrote prior to the time of Christ used Daniel chapter nine as a basis for the calculating the arrival of the Messiah. Everyone did!

The Essenes looked for the Messiah's coming as early as 10 BC. Others had alternative dates, some reaching into the third century AD. They all used Daniel chapter nine as a justification for their calculations.

Why the variety of dates? They all calculated out the seven weeks, the sixty two weeks and the half week in Daniel chapter nine in exactly the same manner, but they STARTED from different dates.

Various sects took different events and dates as the benchmark, hence arriving at different dates. Some took the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the cleansing of the temple as a benchmark. Others took it, as we have taken it in the past, dating back to the time of Ahasuerus, the time of Ezra chapter seven.

With the fall of Jerusalem the prophecy was seen to be redundant or misunderstood by the rabbis and reinterpreted accordingly. They said: "We got it wrong. We didn't understand it. It was a mistake." Yes, they got it wrong - in a very, very powerful way. The result was another attempt to destroy the credibility of the prophecies through Daniel.

Some of you may remember that until the mid 1970s we used to have an article entitled Daniel Nine Proves Jesus is the Christ. It was withdrawn, probably for two reasons - one was to do with the author of the article, but secondly it was also withdrawn because the Hebrew Bible did not APPEAR TO support that interpretation of Daniel chapter nine because of the Masoretic vowels that had been inserted. But the Hebrew Bible still supports it. The original consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible still supports Daniel chapter nine.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls led to a review of many of the things that people had never really looked at for many years, for centuries, for millennia. They started to come to an understanding of the incredible Messianic expectation that existed at the time of Jesus Christ, and what it was based upon.

So Josephus' claim about Daniel being exact in his timing was not just "pie in the sky" on Josephus' part. He knew whereof he spoke - in a very powerful way. In fact, Josephus also tells us something. The basis of the revolt against Rome that started in Galilee in AD 66 was based on the Pharisaic interpretation of Daniel chapter nine. The Pharisees expected the Messiah in the period through what we call 61-68 CE.

The Zealots said: "He's slow coming. Let's force Him to come. Let's have a war, then He is going to have to intervene on our behalf."

Josephus records that other than the aspect of the revolt, the Zealots were in harmony with the Pharisees. They accepted the Pharisaic view and interpretation of Scripture. They just felt that they could bring the Messiah themselves. They were sadly mistaken.

So what is the summation of the matter? Let's go back to where we started - with Darius. Darius had an understanding about God that we need to have. Let's carry on from where we were at the beginning. Darius had come to the lions' den. He had lamented to Daniel: "Daniel, is the God whom you serve continually, been able to save you from the mouths of the lions?"

And Daniel responded! It would be interesting to see a replay of Darius' reactions on hearing Daniel speaking from the lions' den! What impact would that have had on the king? We see the end result of it because Daniel recorded for us the end result of that incredibly emotional experience for Darius.

Daniel 6:26 (Tanakh) Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language that inhabit the earth, "May your well-being abound!

27 I have hereby given an order that throughout my royal domain men must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God who endures forever; His kingdom is indestructible, and His dominion is to the end of time;

28 He delivers and saves, and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, for He delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

You have to ask: who was it who was trying to destroy Daniel in chapters one, two, three, and six? Who has tried to destroy Daniel subsequently, not only in the minds of the religious leaders of Christ's days, or the Masorettes, or

the Greeks, or the critical scholars, but to this very day - when there's a God that Daniel served that endures forever? As Darius said, His kingdom is indestructible. His dominion is to the end of time.

Notice what it says: *He delivers and saves*. This is the God that Daniel served. This is the God that has preserved the book of Daniel and the integrity of the book of Daniel to this very day - and WILL CONTINUE TO PRESERVE IT irrespective of the arguments that people may raise against it.

That is the God that WE worship; the God of Daniel, the God who is able to serve and to deliver, who is able to deliver us from the power of the lions, fiery furnaces and whatever else the god of this world may throw against us.

That is the God who preserved Daniel himself, and who has preserved Daniel's writings to this very day; a book that is central to the correct understanding of the New Testament, that was CENTRAL to Jesus Christ's understanding of His own self identity, of who He was, and what He is, and what He will forever be!

... *Peter Nathan*
09 Aug 03

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