



Who Can Understand God's Prophetic Plan?

"But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

– Daniel 12:4

"I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

– Luke 18:8

For most people studying the book of Daniel, the emphasis would be on the visions, the miracles, and perhaps unraveling the various numbers provided which describe the timing of the unfolding of God's prophetic plan. In other words, the quest is often to determine the meaning of those things which, as of Daniel's time at least, were sealed up. But Jesus offers what at first blush is a contrast to the quest for knowledge in stating that the important character trait He will be looking for at His Second Coming is faith. I would offer that if we were to study the book of Daniel looking for what we as believers are to personally apply just like any other portion of Scripture, we will accomplish **both** goals simultaneously. In other words, the greater treasure provided in the book of Daniel is that biblical insight and understanding is promised not as a gift to a privileged few granted a superior intellect, but to **anyone** attaining to greater faithfulness by putting God's Word and ways into practice.

How does the book of Daniel begin? It begins with Daniel finding himself in the exact, same situation as every believer of every age: living **IN** the world but not **OF** the world.

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But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

– Daniel 1:8

The first and foremost concern of a believer in the Last Days is personal faithfulness. The world separated and isolated Daniel. The world tried to rename him. The world tried to re-educate him according to their ways. But someone who we have come to know as one of the wisest and most knowledgeable individuals in all of history did not become so by setting out to attain knowledge; his quest began by seeking to remain faithful. All that followed was predicated on what began from the heart.

Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

– Daniel 2:17-18

When the situation worsened? Daniel convenes a prayer meeting. A person of faith finds comfort and support in the company of other people of faith. Daniel did not seek experts who could provide an answer, but found the answer together with others in the pursuit of faith. How often when we read about events today which clearly lend themselves to being the fulfillment of God's prophetic plan are we driven into deeper fellowship with those of a similarly inclined heart? In other words, the response of the truly faithful in such times is an actual, visible response of faithfulness.

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

– Daniel 3:17-18

And what will happen when the persecution which Scripture repeatedly warns will inevitably come materializes? Yes, these men's knowledge was certainly tested to its limits, but their endurance was born out the quality of their faithfulness. The events of the Last Days certainly serve up judgment on those refusing to repent and believe, but at the same time they serve to affirm and strengthen those clinging to God's Word and ways from the heart.

Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

– Daniel 6:10

And from the furnace to the lion's den, the test is the same. In the Last Days the challenge is made directly against one's faithfulness which is something not built **during** the Last Days when the events foretold all come about, but in the course of a daily, consistent life leading up to them. Daniel did not suddenly become faithful because he witnessed events, but because he spent his whole life practicing daily faithfulness he was prepared when such events finally arrived. The repeated biblical teaching is that those who understand that the fulfillment of prophetic events is at hand are the ones who have been putting God's Word and ways into practice all along. Daniel did not live his life any old way he wanted and then, when faced with the impossible, finally come around to God's ways because of the crisis. Daniel spent his life putting into practice the faithfulness which would see him through the crisis when it came.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

– Daniel 9:1-3

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What did Daniel do when he recognized from the plain meaning of Scripture that God's prophetic plan was being fulfilled in his lifetime? Did he write a book? Embark on speaking engagements? Convene prophecy conferences? *"So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes"*. I truly believe that if the myriad of books, websites, and conferences dedicated to the topic of the Last Days were accomplishing their biblical mission that they would not measure their success by attendance numbers, book sales, or the amount of information they put out but by the sincere repentance, return to the cross, and earnest desire to engage God on behalf of those who still have time to return to Him.

The book of Daniel begins with a commitment to faithfulness, is peppered with examples of faithfulness in action, and ultimately displays the quest for faithfulness for every party involved.

"Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

– Daniel 12:3

It is not merely knowledge which identifies the Last Days over-achiever, but righteousness. This is really a corollary to the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) where we are commanded not to make converts but disciples. Those who have real biblical wisdom where God's prophetic plan is concerned are not purveyors of information but act in the same character as the Old Testament prophets whose message was always accompanied by a call to return to God's Word and ways.

I would submit that this hits home for what I believe is a very serious yet underestimated problem in the shadow of the Last Days. On the one hand there are outright false prophets and false teachers who are trying to deceive the Elect; on the other hand there are a great many

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"information providers". There seem to be no end of authors, speakers, books, websites, and conferences whose goal is to provide information, and yet those who also attach the application of righteousness to their message are sparse and few. I will admit that one of the reasons I am drawn to the teaching of Jacob Prasch, David Hocking, Dave Hunt, Roger Oakland, Chuck Smith, and many others cut from the same cloth is that they never simply provide information. They never conclude a message without a personal challenge to put it into practice, to return to God's ways. I would suggest that we do not just need teachers who can provide "*insight*", but who are actively leading in the quest for "*righteousness*".

"Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

– Daniel 12:10

Here we are provided the stark contrast of who will and will not "*understand*" as it is defined biblically. If to this point it has not been clear to you that understanding is the natural outcome of faithfulness, it should be clear in this specific distinction that it will not come to "*the wicked*", someone who by definition behaves unfaithfully.

Scripture uses a number of different terms which describe specific sinful states. "*Sinner*", "*backslider*", and "*unbeliever*" are used to describe not only different kinds of behavior but to specify that person's relationship (or lack thereof) with the One True God. Someone identified as "*wicked*" in Scripture is referring to someone in rebellion to what they know, someone not just influenced by evil but putting it into practice. Just as Daniel provides an example of daily, personal faithfulness which produces the kind of person who comes to know and understand what God is doing, someone termed "*wicked*" is the result of the habitual pursuit of faithlessness resulting in spiritual ignorance to what is going on. The practical question to ask yourself is which of these two destinations are you going to most likely arrive at based on what you consistently put into practice?

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Notice too in this verse that the events of the Last Days work to confirm the quality of **everyone's** faith. The wicked do not simply continue unchanged, they actually "*act wickedly*" whereas the faithful are "*purged, purified and refined*". When the events of the Last Days materialize, they drive each person ever more forcefully down the path they had been regularly pursuing leading up to them. The quality of our faithfulness (or faithlessness) in times of relative peace is amplified when times of extreme duress push it to its limits. Do you really think if you do not regularly hold to God's Word and ways now that you will suddenly change when these events actually take place?

"Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy."

– Revelation 22:11

I honestly believe that everything which today is only partially or completely not understood in the book of Daniel will, according to God's timing, be plainly, fully, and completely understood. But I would suggest that the book of Daniel contains a greater teaching of how we are to attain the position wherein we will come into that knowledge. The deeper things of God are going to come to those who seek to go ever deeper in their exclusive commitment to God's Word and ways alone. In truth, Daniel teaches it is going to come not as the result of the exclusive pursuit of Bible codes or the application of extraordinary intellect, but the consistent, daily pursuit of putting what we already know into practice.

As it was at the first coming of Christ, so it will be at His return. Those who recognized what was happening were enlightened not because of extraordinary wisdom, but practicing ordinary faith.

In His Love,

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