

THE BOOK OF DANIEL and ITS APPLICATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

* * * WISDOM FOR LIVING IN A PAGAN CULTURE * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

DANIEL AS PROPHETIC LITERATURE. The Book of Daniel is widely regarded as a book of prophecy, indeed the pre-eminent book of prophecy in the Old Testament and perhaps the whole Bible, and it surely contains some of the most detailed prophetic revelation to be found in the Word of God. The prophecies of Daniel are all the more impressive since many of them have already been remarkably fulfilled in precise, exacting and literal detail, giving clear testimony to Jehovah as the sovereign Creator of the universe, in whose hands history is being providentially guided to His appointed end (Isa46:9-11). It is for this reason that the Book of Daniel is possibly the greatest offense to the natural man of any portion of the Word of God, and as a result it has been a primary focus of attack by both secular scholars and liberal (so-called) Christianity; in order to deny supernaturalism in general, and the God of the Bible in particular, the Book of Daniel must be destroyed. Notwithstanding, Daniel is not primarily a book of prophecy; although the Book of Daniel consists of much prophetic material, prophecy is not necessarily its primary purpose.

DANIEL AS WISDOM LITERATURE. Daniel's place in the Hebrew canon is the first clue as to the real purpose of the book. It resides in the 3rd division of the TNK (in the *Writings*, **not** in the *Prophets*). While liberalism has used this fact as a point of attack, asserting that the division of the *Writings* was the final phase of the Hebrew canon to close and concluding this supports a "late" date for the book, this is a misunderstanding of the three divisions of the TNK. The three divisions of the TNK were not organized on the basis of chronology, but on the basis of theme or subject matter. The books that were put into the division of the *Writings* all speak to the matter of practical living, known technically as **wisdom literature**.

Certainly, the Book of Daniel presents both a message of comfort and hope to the nation of Israel and a message of rebuke to pagan Gentile nations in a position to oppress the Jews. Beyond this, however, the Book of Daniel has an important personal application to the individual believer, especially the believer in the present Christian age. The Book of Daniel was appropriately placed in the *Writings* division of the TNK because it was also written to give the individual believer wisdom for living in a pagan and demonized culture.

Remember that Daniel lived and worked as a government official in Babylon and Persia. Most of the other OT heroes were men who lived inside the nation of Israel under the influence of priests and prophets, in a culture saturated with God's revelation. Although the nation often slid into apostasy, the Temple ritual and the Hebrew Scriptures were always present as a restraining influence on the culture. Not true for Daniel in Babylon/Persia. Daniel had to stand for the LORD, often alone, in a culture that was completely antagonistic to Biblical truth. In just such a context, Daniel honored the LORD not by suppressing his faith in his public life, but by aggressively applying the Word of God in every area of his life. The trend today is to isolate our Christian faith into a "spiritual" compartment that is only relevant to salvation and the afterlife, as if the Word of God had nothing to say about history, science, education, economics, politics, etc. The life of Daniel stands as a rebuke to that cultural trend! **Daniel's life is a model for godly living in a pagan culture**, which is either ignorant of God's Word or has consciously rejected it.