



A Hermeneutical Survey of the Book of Daniel: A Recipe for an Egalitarian Nigerian

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Abstract

The fourth prophetic writing in the Old Testament, known as the Book of Daniel, has recently undergone an English translation. The primary focus of this text is centred on an individual by the name of Daniel. This individual is an ancient figure who is also mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14 and 28:3. Further examples of the aforementioned designation refer to a male progeny of David (1 Chronicles 3:1) and an individual belonging to the sacerdotal ancestry of Ithamar (Ezra 8; 2; Nehemiah 10:6). The afore-mentioned references provide substantiation that this particular terminology was widespread among the Jewish community in the period following the exile. Given the aforementioned, this paper examines the historical context of the individual known as Daniel, the authorship of the text, the discerned symbolic messages and their interpretation, criticism levelled against the book. The examination of the book through a hermeneutical lens is considered appropriate as a blueprint for the establishment of an egalitarian Nigerian society. The methodology adopted in this research is purely qualitative involving content analysis, critical evaluation of biblical text on the subject matter and a hermeneutical survey of scholastic views and analogy on the book of Daniel. The research objective was accomplished through a comprehensive utilisation of textual exegesis. Despite the criticisms levelled by certain scholars, the paper ultimately concludes that the book effectively justifies its relevance to the process of nation building.

Keywords: Textual analysis, social justice, egalitarianism, hermeneutics.

Introduction

The veracity of the historical figure of Daniel, as depicted in the Bible, is subject to significant scepticism among scholars of the Old Testament. Barr (2000), notes that the likelihood of Daniel having achieved a prominent position within the Babylonian or Persian courts remains uncertain. The individual in question



has additionally stated that the appellation "Daniel" is present within the rosters of exilic date, specifically in Ezra 8:2 and Nehemiah 10:6, albeit in reference to individuals belonging to a priestly lineage. The speaker proceeded to assert that the significance lies in the inclusion of the name Daniel alongside Noah and Job in Ezekiel 14:12-20. This passage appears to position Daniel as a paragon of righteousness from a distant era, much like Noah.

Moreover, Barr (makes reference to Ugaritic texts dating back to the 14th century BC which mention a figure named Daniel who is depicted as a just ruler and arbiter. Barr arrived at the conclusion that "Daniel" was a legendary hero whose name was utilised in various manners and was particularly significant in the narrative traditions of the Persian and Greek Diaspora. In these traditions, Daniel symbolised the practical and theological challenges faced by the Jewish community in that milieu. Barr concurs that in order to establish the historicity of Daniel, it is imperative to consider the works of authors who have conducted research on Daniel's traditions and visions. This approach is essential in creating a comprehensive understanding of Daniel as a real person.

Buttrick (1962) cites Ugaritic literature to assert that there exists a narrative of a monarch named Daniel who was reputed for his dispensation of justice. He adjudicates the case of the widow and renders judgement in the matter concerning the fatherless. According to Buttrick, the name Daniel signifies the divine act of judgement, specifically denoting "God's has judged." The author establishes a correlation between the biblical figures of Daniel, Noah, and Job as depicted in Ezekiel 14:14. Daniel is acknowledged in this context for his moral uprightness, as opposed to his intellectual acumen. According to Archer (1990), an examination of Ezekiel 28:3 reveals the existence of a Phoenician-Canaanite custom that involved a monarch who, in certain unrecorded narratives, was renowned for his moral rectitude and exceptional sagacity.

Therefore, it can be inferred that this particular custom is responsible for the appearance of the name as the father-in-law of Enoch. Anderson (1986) presents the portrayal of Daniel as a youthful Jewish individual who remains devoted to his inherited faith and is bestowed with divine inspiration, thereby surpassing the wisdom of all Mesopotamian sages. Grey (1976) characterises Daniel as Israel in Babylonian captivity, predating Ezekiel (Daniel 1-4 compared to Ezekiel 1:1, 2). Additionally, Grey describes Daniel as possessing royal lineage, a robust physique, exceptional intellect, and extensive knowledge. He underwent training in the language, traditions, and astrological science of his captors, along with other eunuchs, to serve their king in responsible positions within the palace.

The Revised Standard Version Bible provides an account of Daniel as one of the youthful captives taken to Babylon during the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege. (Dillard, 1994), in their article titled "The Book of Daniel," present four distinct narratives of Daniel, which are consistent with those of other scholars. One such narrative suggests that Daniel was the second son of David, as recorded in I Chronicles 3:1. Daniel is identified as a descendant of Ithamar in the biblical text. He is mentioned as a companion of Ezra in chapter 8, verse 2, and as a signatory to the covenant in Nehemiah 10:1 and 6. Daniel is regarded as a paragon of exceptional sagacity and virtue, and his name is conjoined with those of Noah and Job in Ezekiel 14:14 and 20. Additionally, he is referenced once more in Ezekiel 28:3. IV Daniel is considered one of the "greater" prophets and little is known about his early career aside from what is presented in the book that bears his name. The individual identified who underwent a name change to Belteshazzar, was endowed with the gift of comprehension in all forms of visions and dreams (Weinfeld, 1991). This individual served in the royal court and continued to do so until the initial year of the reign of King Cyrus.

Literature Review

Consensus among Old Testament scholars suggests that the book of Daniel was not composed by Daniel himself, but rather by another author who possessed knowledge of the Danielic tradition. As Walton



(1989) notes, the precise relationship between this legendary figure and the central character of the book of Daniel remains uncertain. However, it is probable that the author was familiar with various narratives concerning Daniel, which had already undergone relocation in both temporal and spatial contexts to the Babylonian era and the Chaldean centre of wisdom. Barr (591) asserts that the prevailing view among scholars is that the book of Daniel, in its entirety, was composed during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BCE), specifically after the temple's desecration by him in 168 and prior to its re-consecration by the Maccabees in 165. Chapters 8-12 of Daniel make reference to the abomination of desolation that Antiochus erected on the altar, yet they also anticipate the eventual conclusion of this period of turmoil and sacrilege. It is likely that the narratives contained in chapters 1-6 were first conceived within the Diaspora during the reign of the Persian or early Greek empires, as their initial context does not involve the oppression of Judaism by the governing authorities. Moreover, according to Wards (1998), the book can be categorised into two distinct sections: narratives (chapters 1-6) and prophetic visions (chapters 7-12).

The contrast between the lucid simplicity of the initial section and the intricate obscurity of the subsequent one, coupled with the human appeal of the former and the apocalyptic nature of the latter, has prompted numerous scholars to view the book as a composite creation. These scholars contend that a portion of the book is written in the third person, while another portion is in the first person, and that some parts are in Aramaic while others are in Hebrew. This has given rise to various theories of composite authorship, but it is noteworthy that there is no consensus on how the book should be partitioned. According to Tullock (1987), the theories of composite authorship have resulted in a diverse range of partitions. These partitions span from Spinoza's work in the seventeenth century, which divided the book of Daniel into two sections (Daniel 1-7 and Dan 8-12), to Isaac Newton's work in the eighteenth century, which divided the book into two parts (Daniel 1-6; 7-12). Bertholdt, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, identified nine authors, while Barton, at the end of the century, identified three authors and two other contributors. In the twentieth century, Tullock (1987) identified two different time periods for the book of Daniel: the first six chapters were written in the third century BCE, while the last six chapters were written during the Maccabean period from 167 BCE-160 BCE

According to Tasker (1980), the stories' origins can be traced back to the third century. While Tyndale (1984) suggests that the stories may have only existed orally rather than in written form prior to their literary manifestation. Tenney (1967), who discusses the unity of Daniel, strongly rejects all theories that create divisions. He argues that the lack of consensus among those who promote such theories is a crucial factor, leading him to conclude that "they cannot find the lines of demarcation because no such lines exist." According to Buttrick (1962), the distinctions between narratives and visions, the differentiation between Aramaic and Hebrew, and the contrast between third and first-person accounts do not align. This necessitates acknowledging that the book is the product of an individual who altered their approach and manner of writing, yet still achieved a cohesive literary composition. Schmidt (1982) emphasises the importance of the narratives in relation to the persecution of the Jews during the second century, indicating that they are highly relevant to that context and were likely composed with it in mind. According to Sizemore (1973), it is likely that certain traditional material related to the name Daniel and set in Babylon was present, which was then influenced by Babylonian culture. However, it is evident that the stories were carefully chosen and extensively modified by a single author who had a specific objective in mind. This author was also responsible for the visions.

Mathew (1991) postulated that the likelihood of the pre-existence of the stories in written form prior to the current book is low. Instead, the author compiled the oral tradition surrounding Daniel and supplemented it with self-conceived visions, with the intention of unifying the two components. Chapter 7 holds a pivotal position within the book as it pertains to both sections and serves to integrate them. It is plausible that the foundational components outlined in chapter seven were initially transmitted through oral tradition around the era of Alexander the Great and his initial successors. However, during Antiochus' reign, these



elements were restructured into their current form and underwent a more comprehensive transformation to suit the unique circumstances at hand. This remodelling was more extensive than that which was applied to any of the preceding six chapters. Chapters 8-12 serve as a form of commentary on the events presented in chapter 7, following a subsequent progression in the historical context. The linguistic style employed in the book exhibits a late form, and notably, the presence of Greek terminology serves as a conclusive indication against the 'conservative' viewpoint that attributes the authorship of the book to Daniel himself. According to Barr (2000), the writer's comprehension of the Babylonian and Persian eras depicted in the scene is primarily derived from popular tradition and sporadic biblical allusions, rather than precise historical data. Consequently, the portrayal comprises a blend of authentic recollection and erroneous conjecture.

As a result, it has been observed that the book of Daniel is likely to have been authored during the reign of Antiochus. Furthermore, it is believed that the book was written by an individual other than Daniel, who compiled the traditions and stories associated with him. This assertion is supported by the presence of errors within the text, which will be addressed in subsequent analysis within this composition. In his article on the Book of Daniel, Walton (1989) adopts the position of Rowley, who refutes the criticisms levelled by Old Testament scholars against the book. McCain supports his argument for the book's originality and authenticity, which he attributes to Daniel in the 6th century BCE., by extensively citing the works of conservative Old Testament scholars (McCain, 2002). The individual cited Matthew 24:15 as supporting evidence for their assertion that the account in the book of Daniel aligns with the declaration of Jesus Christ regarding the "desolating sacrilege" prophesied by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel as a Symbolic Book of the Old Testament

The present discourse commences with an elucidation of the concept of symbol, with the aim of fostering a more comprehensive comprehension of the designation of Daniel as a book of symbolism in the Old Testament. Liunman (1991) posits that the term "symbol" originates from the Greek word "*symbolon*". He contends that an object can be deemed a symbol provided that a collective of individuals concur that it possesses a meaning beyond its literal interpretation. The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (1974) characterises a symbol as a perceptible indication or emblem of a particular idea, sentiment, or encounter, which elucidates that which can solely be comprehended by the intellect and imagination through an entity that becomes part of the realm of observation. Regarding Greek and Religion, symbolism encompasses two types: symbolic representation through verbal actions and symbolic representation through art. This paper will analyse certain symbolic actions of language and the symbolic text of the Old Testament. Initially, the vision of King Nebuchadnezzar remained enigmatic and incomprehensible to all except for Daniel, who was able to disclose and explicate its meaning.

The symbolic nature of the dream was attributed to the image, as stated in Daniel 2:32-33 (Milne, 1998). The aforementioned depiction portrays a figure whose head is composed of a high-quality gold material, while his breast and arms are made of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, and his feet of a combination of iron and clay. In addition to its interpretation, this constituted a depiction of the divine plan for the future. Chapter 3 of the text features the golden image crafted by Nebuchadnezzar, which serves as a symbolic representation (Hornby, 1974). The various musical instruments, including the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, as detailed in verse 5, function as visual cues to prompt individuals to bow before the image. Moreover, the fiery furnace served as a representation of retribution for individuals who declined to prostrate themselves before the image. Chapter 4 of the text portrays King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a towering and robust tree, which serves as a metaphor for his own persona and the retribution that he will face as a result of his hubris. The inscription on the wall, as described in Chapter 5:25 of the Book of Daniel, featuring the words "*ME'NE*", "*ME'NE*", "*TE'KEL*", "*U-PHAR'SIN*," (See <https://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/5-25.html> - "he hath numbered, he hath numbered"; that is, God hath certainly, perfectly, and exactly numbered; "he hath weighed", God hath



weighed thee, Belshazzar; "and they divide the kingdom"; that is, the Medes and Persians) serves as an additional indication of the symbolic nature of the aforementioned biblical text.

The lions' den, as depicted in chapter 6, serves as a symbolic representation of a punitive space that likely existed within the society in question. It is plausible that such a space was utilised as a means of deterring individuals from violating the law. The dream that Daniel had in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel can be interpreted as a representation of the impending judgement of God in the eschatological era, which is also evident in the book of Revelation. The eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel contains a symbolic vision involving a ram and a goat, which conveys significant messages. The prayer of Daniel, during which he was touched by the angel Gabriel to receive comprehension of his vision pertaining to the seven weeks and the arrival of the son of man (Jesus Christ), is emblematic in essence as depicted in chapter 9.

Chapter 10 also illustrates Daniel fasting and prayers for 3 weeks, which gave in the vision where his visions were being interpreted by the angel of God, all those are symbolic messages (Lightfoot, 1980). Chapters 11 and 12 of the text under consideration continue to focus on the exegesis of Daniel's vision. It is posited that the individual attired in linen referenced in chapter 12:6 serves as a representation of the Son of God, namely Jesus Christ. And chapter 12 messaged is related to the message in the book of revelation. From this study, one observed that symbols run concurrently throughout the book of Daniel, thus making it a symbolic book of the Old Testament. Daniel and his friends loyal to their religion in matters of food is also symbolic.

As per Wilmington's (1962) analysis, the conclusion can be drawn that the siege of Jerusalem was conclusively terminated on the 2nd of Adar (March 16), 597, following a siege that lasted for a period of less than three months. According to II Kings 23:36, Jehoiakim had ruled for a duration of eleven years. The inquiry pertains to the statement in Daniel 1:1 which mentions the occurrence of a siege during the third year of Daniel's reign. It is noteworthy that the account in Daniel 1:2, which suggests that Jehoiakim was handed over to Nebuchadnezzar, is not entirely accurate. In fact, historical records indicate that Jehoiakim passed away in Palestine, and it was his son Jehoiachin who was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and brought to Babylon, as documented in II Kings 24:12. It seems that the author of the Book of Daniel has adhered to the reliable narrative presented in II Chronicles 36:6. An additional challenge arises from the statement that Nebuchadnezzar exiled specific Judeans and directed that a group, including Daniel and his companions, undergo a three-year education in the knowledge of the "Chaldeans" (Daniel 1:5) (Harrison, 1992). Upon the completion of the aforementioned period, as stated in Daniel 1:8, Daniel and his companions achieved the highest academic standing. However, in Daniel 2:1 and following verses, it is observed that Daniel was already functioning proficiently in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Another challenge arises in the account presented in Daniel chapter 4, wherein Nebuchadnezzar is reported to have undergone a period of exile from Babylon due to his apparent madness, lasting for a duration of seven years. However, there is no evidence of this remarkable occurrence in any other documented source.

The primary issues addressed in the book pertain to three subjects, namely, the monarchy of Belshazzar, the identification of Darius the Mede, and the sequence of imperial successions. According to Buttrick, the certainty of Belshazzar's historicity is now established. Belshazzar, who was not the offspring of Nebuchadnezzar, was the progeny of Nabonidus, the ultimate ruler of the neo-Babylonian dynasty. The conquest of Babylon by the troops of Cyrus is a historical event that is shrouded in legend. It is therefore unproductive to engage in a debate regarding the veracity of the claim that "that very night Belshazzar was slain." Youngblood (1971) contends that the pivotal issue lies in determining the identity of Darius the Mede. The historical records document the reigns of Darius I (Hystaspes) and Darius II and III, who were unequivocally of Persian origin. It is plausible that Darius the Mede may have been identified by an alternate name in historical accounts. The third issue pertains to the transfer of imperial power from the Babylonian to the Median Empire. In this regard, both the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 and



the vision of the four beasts in chapter 7 aim to provide a prophetic account by Daniel of the future of the Near East subsequent to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

The prophecy predicts the emergence of four successive global empires. The fourth entity referred to in this context pertains to the Greek empire under Alexander the Great and his successors, as well as the little horn which pertains to Antiochus Epiphanes. It can be inferred that the empire preceding the Greek empire is likely the Persian empire. Additionally, it can be deduced that the second empire in question is likely the Median empire, which some scholars argue did not actually exist and therefore did not exert control over Babylon between the Neo-Babylonian and Persian hegemonies. It can be asserted that the Median Empire underwent a transformation into the Medo-Persian Empire, which was initiated by Cyrus himself, a minimum of sixteen years prior to his ascension to the throne of Babylon, resulting in the displacement of Nabonidus. It was observed in the literary work that Daniel was not present during the period when his three Jewish companions were cast into the furnace. However, upon his return, he recounted the events with remarkable clarity, without providing any account of his whereabouts during that time. Furthermore, according to biblical accounts, individuals who cast the three Jews into the furnace suffered burns (Schofield, 1964). This prompts the question as to why any rational person would approach a blazing fire and willingly subject themselves to the risk of being burned. The author incorporated a personal touch to enhance the appeal of the text to the readers.

Statement of the Problem

In light of the prevailing trend of social vices, insurgencies, crimes, and insecurity in Nigeria, there have been numerous calls for strategies to mitigate the country's inadequacies and perils. Despite the various efforts aimed at achieving a just and equitable society devoid of social vices, the outcomes have been largely unproductive. Hence, it is imperative for individuals from all walks of life to seek guidance from biblical sources, as documented in theological literature, in order to effectively address the prevalent social ills in our community. This research is timely given the precarious situation currently experienced in Nigeria. Hence, the current subject matter is both relevant and innovative at this particular point in time.

Methodology

A literary and descriptive research methodology was used in this study. The study utilises a qualitative approach, employing content analysis as the primary method of data analysis. The utilisation of library resources, scholarly publications, the internet, and relevant textbooks was deemed appropriate. Ample use was made of the theories of renowned academics in the fields of exegetical evaluation, hermeneutical and textual analysis of bible content as well as theological studies. The present study employs a qualitative methodology, which includes content analysis, critical evaluation of biblical text pertaining to the subject matter, and a hermeneutical survey of scholastic view and analogy on the book of Daniel. The research objective was accomplished by thoroughly expanding upon textual exegesis.

Hermeneutical Survey and Interpretations of the Symbolic Messages of Daniel: a Recipe for Egalitarian Nigerian

Upon comparing the event depicted in this literary work to the present-day Nigerian society, a conspicuous disparity arises in the realm of political, social, and religious leadership. In contemporary Nigerian society, there exists a tendency among individuals to engage in political lip service and sycophancy towards leaders, rather than providing constructive criticism that would benefit the general populace. This behaviour often results in the promotion of negative and harmful actions, rather than those that are beneficial and morally sound. As evidenced by the research conducted on Daniel, he exhibited a profound reverence for God over human authority and demonstrated the ability to communicate divine intentions to monarchs. Currently, a significant number of religious leaders refrain from denouncing societal vices and instead emphasise the attainment of prosperity, regardless of the means employed to



acquire wealth. This trend is particularly evident in the emerging generation of churches (Akah, 2000). In society, individuals who possess wealth and extensive networks are typically held in high esteem, while those occupying positions of authority often exhibit a sense of pride. However, Daniel stands out as an exception to this trend, as he displays a remarkable degree of humility despite his elevated status. From a political standpoint, it is evident that a significant number of political leaders fail to fulfil their campaign promises. These leaders often resort to deceitful tactics to secure their positions, only to disregard their commitments upon assuming office. However, there are exceptions to this trend, as exemplified by the case of Daniel, who was able to realise his aspirations through the fulfilment of a promise made to him by a political leader.

In contemporary society, a significant number of religious leaders are unable to effectively communicate divine will to their followers through prayer and fasting. Instead, some resort to disseminating erroneous prophecies. Conversely, during the era of Daniel, his moral integrity enabled God to reveal numerous revelations through him. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the Christian population tends to exhibit religious fanaticism and engage in inter-religious violence, rather than setting a positive example that could potentially lead others to recognise the true God (Alexander, 1983). This stands in contrast to the account of Daniel, who, when thrown into the lion's den, was saved by his God, thereby leading people to acknowledge the existence of the true God. In terms of acculturation, it is noteworthy that the European culture has a significant influence on the younger generation. This is evident in their adoption of European fashion, cuisine, and other cultural practises. For instance, Daniel and his companions exhibited resistance towards assimilating into the Babylonian culture by refusing to consume the king's food and worship the golden image erected by Nebuchadnezzar (Baker, 1980).

The Book of Daniel holds significant importance as an apocalyptic text that establishes a fundamental framework for both Jewish and Gentile history, spanning from the era of Nebuchadnezzar to the second coming of Christ. This provides a historical context for Christians and the Nigerian populace, shedding light on the plight of Jews in exile and their anticipation for a saviour (Carmody, 1984). The comprehension of prophetic utterances is crucial for the accurate interpretation of Christ's discourse, rendering it a significant instrument for Christians. Also, the book of Daniel relevance to Christian today as it is theological for its doctrines of angels and the resurrection. Additionally, it serves to cultivate Christian intellects in the direction of eschatological considerations. The compelling narratives of religious conviction presented in the book serve to fortify the religious faith of adherents of Christianity. In the perspective of the Christian mindset. Christian believers hold the expectation of divine intervention in the natural world, which manifests as a daily hope for miraculous occurrences.

There exists a notable parallel between the jovial demeanour of Belshazzar and the conduct of Nigerian politicians, who allocate substantial funds towards hosting lavish celebrations rather than directing these resources towards the provision of communal infrastructure and services (Crenshaw, 1992). The dream of Nebuchadnezzar serves a twofold purpose within its context. Firstly, it serves as a point of contrast with the magicians who are unable to reveal the true mystery. Secondly, it leads up to the revelation itself. The dream's depicted figure exhibited both discordance and coherence. According to Nebuchadnezzar, the sketch depicted in the dream represents the forthcoming historical events of empires until the establishment of God's kingdom. The author and initial readers of the text perceived it as a historical outline spanning from the Babylonian to the Greek empires. Presently, they find themselves situated in the final epoch, anticipating the forthcoming manifestation of God's dominion. It is plausible that the four kingdoms in question are the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek (Craigie, 1986). The stone in the dream represent the eschatological kingdom of god and breaks the succession of foreign dominations which has lasted since the exile began. This statement implies that the establishment of the kingdom was solely attributed to God, without any human intervention. This serves as a vocal expression through which the king acknowledges the existence of the genuine deity and extols the singular true deity.



This topic is pertinent to the current state of affairs in Nigeria. If there is a widespread recognition that Yahweh is the sole deity, individuals would be motivated to strive towards pleasing God rather than their fellow human beings. This could potentially pave the way for an egalitarian Nigerian society that prioritises fairness and justice for all. The depiction of Nebuchadnezzar's Image and the three Jews, namely Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, symbolises the veneration of either a deity or the monarch, thereby highlighting the king's accountability for the initial demand for idolatry. The Jews' perilous situation can also be attributed to the envy of other subjects of the monarch, as the Jews occupied positions of power and influence. The depiction of the Son of God observed by Nebuchadnezzar within the furnace is believed to symbolise the divine angel of God. This particular event serves as a testament to the identity of the one true God and demonstrates His capacity to rescue those in need. The conspicuous nonappearance of Daniel in the narrative is noteworthy; nevertheless, Davidson (1964) elucidates that this is attributable to the disconnectedness of the traditions from which the present book was compiled. The primary focus of this narrative is the divine intervention of God in rescuing his loyal followers and his manifestation among them during the fiery ordeal through the angelic presence.

This recipe serves as a reminder to Nigerians that God's intervention in human affairs is possible and that He can rescue His own. Therefore, it is important for Nigerians to learn from this story and rely solely on God, who is capable of granting an egalitarian society despite life's challenges. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, wherein a colossal tree casts its shadow over the entire world and its inhabitants, is interpreted as symbolising the assimilation of the individual represented by the tree into the mentality and lifestyle of the beast. This assimilation is to persist until such time as the individual recognises that the governance of humanity is under the authority of the one true God. Daniel's interpretation of the aforementioned text refers to the king's own personage, and the subsequent events transpired in accordance with the prophecy (Dillard, 1994). At the end of the prescribed period the king recovers his reason and praises the high God. The narrative bears significant resemblance to Chapter 2 in terms of its thematic focus on dreams and their interpretation. Moreover, the central emphasis of the story, which underscores the supremacy of God in the realm of humanity, serves as a precursor to Chapter 5 and is, in fact, reiterated therein.

This literary work is highly enlightening and holds great significance for the Nigerian state, which is characterised by a pervasive deviation from religious principles. This communication serves as an urgent appeal to Nigerians to re-embrace their faith in God, who is the sole guarantor of impartiality, equity, and parity for all. During Belshazzar's feast, the inscription on the wall was interpreted by Daniel to signify the message that "ME'NE" meant that God had counted and brought an end to the kingdom. The aforementioned text contains two phrases from the Book of Daniel in the Bible. The first phrase, "TE`KEL; thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting," refers to a situation where someone has been evaluated and found to be lacking in some way. The second phrase, "PE`RES; Thy kingdom is divided, and give to the Medes and Persians," describes a situation where a kingdom has been divided and given to other rulers. The current state of Nigeria is reminiscent of the perilous conditions described in the episodes of the Book of Daniel. This serves as a serious warning to the Nigerian population, who must awaken and repent, returning to God to avoid incurring His wrath and punishment (Francisco, 1977). The prevalence of daily crises, violence, and social ills in Nigeria is a clear manifestation of this warning. It is important to recognise that the concept of egalitarianism is inherently linked to notions of divinity, purity, and morality.

Daniel was thrown into a den of lions due to his refusal to acknowledge Darius the Mede as a deity. A narrative exhibiting notable resemblances to chapter 3 portrays the prominent officials of the empire who, envious of Daniel, suggest a decree that they are aware he will not comply with. Upon being informed of the act of disobedience, Darius exhibited reluctance in enforcing the prescribed penalty. However, with the aid of divine intervention, Daniel was able to evade harm from the lions. Subsequently, the king issued a decree mandating reverence for Daniel's deity. Similar to other narratives, the contextual backdrop



does not pertain to the oppression of the Jewish faith (Harper, 2023). The king exhibits a preference for Daniel and demonstrates empathy towards his religious beliefs. The adversaries who manipulate the king into condemning Daniel are motivated not by animosity towards his faith, but rather by envy of his renown and accomplishments (Gladstone, 1980). In the latter portion of the Book of Daniel, the protagonist is presented with four visions, which merit discussion.

The first vision pertains to the king's dream and is comprised of four distinct components, namely metals, which correspond to the four beasts described in chapter 7. These metals symbolise four different empires. During the era of the final empire, there existed a phenomenon wherein an image was eradicated by an unworked stone, subsequently transforming into a mountain that encompassed the entirety of the earth. Daniel explicates that God will personally establish an eternal kingdom. The commonly accepted interpretation posits that the four kingdoms depicted in these visions correspond to the four dominant world empires of Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece (Hillar, 2023).

According to the second vision, the male goat is representative of Alexander the Great, while the individuals referred to as the "king of the south" and the "king of the north" are also present. The fourth vision pertains to the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties of Egypt and Syria, whereas the first vision's boasting horn, the second vision's blasphemous little horn, and the "prince who shall come" are also referenced.

The third and fourth visions depict Antiochus Epiphanes as the furious "king of the north", who inflicted persecution upon the Jews starting from 168 and aimed to eradicate Judaism from its native land. This interpretation is presented by Hastings (1974) in an academic context. The symbolic messages conveyed in this context signify the imperative need for complete submission and unwavering allegiance to God. Those who resist the authority of God are destined to meet their demise. Therefore, it can be inferred that the attainment of egalitarianism in Nigeria hinges on the recognition of God as the ultimate authority.

Recommendations

The research proposes that in the presence of unfavourable societal issues, the sole resolution is a reversion to Yahweh and adherence to His directives.

The study additionally recommended the exploration of biblical messages and their interpretations in everyday life circumstances among individuals, groups, and society as a whole.

Comprehending the enigmas of the divine is an essential prerequisite for a society devoid of criminal activities, and the attainment of equality can solely be realised via a connection with the divine.

The practise of self-discipline is highly recommended, as evidenced by the story of the three Hebrew children who exhibited self-discipline in order to honour and glorify Yahweh. Hence, individuals who possess self-discipline shall receive sufficient recompense from the divine.

The research suggests that individuals in positions of power should consistently seek divine guidance and consult with spiritual leaders to discern the will of God and the consequences that may befall an unrepentant wrongdoer.

Conclusion

This research is significant to individuals and the church in terms of faith, it remains undiminished. This is due to its function in disclosing God's design for humanity and His ultimate judgement, which is known only to God Himself, and not even to the angels or the Son of God (Mark 13:32). The significance of the book of Daniel lies in its ability to provide a historical account of the events that occurred in ancient times, regardless of their veracity. It serves as a valuable resource for understanding the history of the Jews



prior to the advent of Christ, which may be unfamiliar to some. Thus, it is recommended that the book be read by all individuals in order to fortify their faith in God and to perpetually encounter God's significant interventions in their everyday existence.

The book primarily focuses on three subjects, specifically the monarchy of Belshazzar, the identification of Darius the Mede, and the sequence of imperial successions. As per Buttrick's analysis, the historical authenticity of Belshazzar has been firmly established. The events chronicled in the book of Daniel hold significant value as a paradigm for societies facing tumultuous circumstances. This article posits that the book's teachings can serve as a blueprint for achieving a more equitable Nigeria.

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