

Daniel an Introduction

Welcome to Harvest Community Church
Series - The Book of Daniel

Text: Daniel 1:1-7

The book of Daniel is one of the most thrilling books in all of the Bible and one of the most significant books of **prophecy** in the Old Testament. The book of Daniel is **45%** prophecy. Fifty-eight separate prophecies are given in Daniel. God gave him some of the most vivid prophecies of “things to come”. A proper understanding of the book of Daniel assists us in the proper interpretation of the book of Revelation. Many of the same symbols and parallel prophecies are used in both books. The image vision that God gave King Nebuchadnezzar is the most important prophecy of the “times of the **gentiles**”. This prophecy details world events from Daniel’s day until the kingdom of the Antichrist is displaced at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

A full one fourth of the books of the Bible are prophetic in nature: the subject and the statements of the books are eschatological, that is they deal with prophecy. One fifth of the content of scripture was **predictive** at the time of its writing. A large segment of that has been fulfilled. Prophecy in scripture is divided into two parts. Fulfilled and unfulfilled. In Daniel we find much that has been fulfilled in **world** history. We can be sure that we will see the rest come to pass. Reading Daniel is like reading the newspaper without the “fake news”.

Daniel lived 2400 years ago. He was taken into captivity when he was just 15 years old. Daniel’s life and ministry span the entire **70** year period of the Babylonian captivity. This happened in 605 B.C. He was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon which is in current day Iraq.

As a young man, Daniel **distinguished** himself in wisdom, administration and spiritual leadership. **Daniel 1:17-20** In his lifetime he went on to serve as a chief counselor and advisor to **nine** different monarchs in two dynasties of both Babylonians and Persians. He is one of the few Bible characters about which nothing negative is written. His life was characterized by faith, prayer, courage and consistency. His contemporary Ezekiel mentions Daniel three times as an example of righteousness. Daniel’s name means “God is my **Judge**”.

We know more about Daniel than we do about any other prophet. He gave us a personal account of his life from the time of his captivity until the first year of King Cyrus he would have been in his 80’s. We know what God **thought** of Daniel. **Daniel 10:11**

The book of Daniel has been so influential throughout history that the historian, Flavius Josephus, records an incident during the time of **Alexander** the Great when he came to invade the Near East. Juddua, the High Priest, went out to meet him and showed him a copy of the book of Daniel in which Alexander is clearly mentioned. Instead of destroying Jerusalem, he entered the city peaceably and worshiped at the temple.

There are three words that define and characterize Daniel:

- Daniel was a man of **purpose**. **Daniel 1:8** Daniel lived his life intentionally. What was going on around him and other people's opinion or pressure would not deter him or his friends from serving God. He determined that he would not be defiled by the immorality, he would not participate in paganism or be involved in idolatry.
- Daniel was a man of **prayer**. **Daniel 2:17-23, Daniel 6:10, Daniel 9:3-19** Daniel prayed three times every day. His every decision was based on his prayer life. It was in prayer that God showed him great things and revealed things that were intentionally hidden from others. It was in prayer that Daniel knew God. **Daniel 11:32**
- Daniel was a man of **prophecy**. The book of Daniel divides itself equally. The first half is history, and the second half is prophecy. When you read the prophecies of Daniel alongside of a world history book it will leave you amazed to see the accuracy with which Daniel described kingdoms that did not yet exist that we can read about and study today.

Daniel gives us the framework or the skeleton of prophecy on which all prophecy is placed. The image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the beasts are the backbone of prophecy and the revelation of the "Seventy weeks" are the ribs that help flesh out the prophecy so that it fits into place. **2 Peter 1:20, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

A proper study of prophecy will not lead us to **sensationalism** or fanaticism, but it will lead us to a life of holiness and the fear of the Lord. **1 John 3:3** The proper study of prophecy should not lead to wild theories. It will actually produce a practical, profitable and purposeful life filled with understanding of the times in which you live.

Daniel was recognized as a prophet by **Jesus**. **Matthew 24:15** The key verse of the Book of Daniel is **Daniel 2:44 – And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.**

G. Campbell Morgan defined the theme of the book of Daniel as, "Persistent **government** of God in the Government of the world."

Today we hear a great deal about leaving God out of politics and government. This is because government is mankind's answer to God. It is man ruling himself and governing himself and making his own laws apart from the laws of God.

The book of Daniel reminds us of the universal **sovereignty** of God. The word sovereign means **king** or ruler. Daniel reminds us that while mankind tries to rule himself, God is still sovereign over all the governments and politics of the world. **Isaiah 6:9-10**

The book of Daniel deals with political issues apart from ecclesiastical matters, giving the final outcome of events and issues that are at work in the world today. He answers the question – who will rule the world? Not how will the world be converted?

In the book of Daniel, prophecy is interwoven with history to show that God is overruling idolatry, blasphemy, self-will and the intolerance of the Gentiles. Daniel brings together the “time of the Gentiles” and the “time of the end”.

Daniel 8:17, Daniel 11:35 &40, Daniel 12:4

Daniel and his friends refused to hide or compromise their belief in Jehovah God, and time and again this put their life in jeopardy. Daniel was literally thrown to the lions and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a blazing furnace. They all refused to bend or bow to the demands on them or the culture around them.

The Historical setting for the book of Daniel

The Babylonian Empire was just coming into its own in 600 B.C. The city of Babylon sat 900 miles east of Jerusalem on the Euphrates River. The kings were bright, the armies were ferocious they were known to be cruel to those who did not willingly cooperate. They were consumers of other people’s property and belongings.

The city of Babylon was huge for the times. It dwarfed Jerusalem. This city had massive walls that were considered impregnable. They were 80 feet thick, 320 feet high and 56 miles long. All built without modern equipment. It was home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—the famed Hanging Gardens. The gates to the city were not only massive but decorative with deep blue ceramic tiles and pictures of white and yellow lions, dragons and bulls.

There were two things that would have caught Daniels’s attention as they were brought captive to Babylon—

- 1) The elegance of the architecture and the advanced state of learning. It would be like someone from a third world country walking into New York City or London, going from mud huts to Skyscrapers. To go from sidewalk stalls in the market place to the inside of a Walmart or a shopping Mall.
- 2) The fact that idolatry permeated every niche of society. There were “gods” all over the place. The main gates were named after them and there were temples everywhere. The same is true in our society today. Our movie franchises like Marvel, Harry Potter and many others glorify idolatry. Throughout our cities are churches and other “temples” built to pagan gods. Today it is fashionable to have Buddha’s sitting in our gardens and stores.

While Babylon was increasing in power, Judah was growing more and more wicked in the eyes of God. Their main sin was idolatry. They knew better because they had the Law of Moses.

Exodus 20:3 The people of Jerusalem had been warned over and over by the prophets of God.
Jeremiah 22:3-9

The prophet Jeremiah was put in prison and suffered greatly for delivering God's message to Judah. Because the people rejected God and His messengers, God **rejected** them.

Jeremiah 15:1-6 Remember that the Prophet Jeremiah was a contemporary of Daniel. Judah and Israel all serve as examples to the world that God will keep His word that was prophesied.

When Babylon came to overthrow Jerusalem, this once blessed nation received no divine intervention. Judah should have known better. 130 years earlier the 10 tribes of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 721 B.C. for the same issue of idolatry. Judah did not learn from them and suffered the same fate. They fell under the **judgement** of God. Daniel shows how one day, Jesus will judge not only the people of Israel, but as the **righteous** Judge, He will judge all of humanity from every nation, tribe and language throughout history.

Even though Judah had been delivered from the Assyrians, the people did not **appreciate** their deliverance. As soon as the good king, Hezekiah, passed away, his son Manasseh did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord and led an administration marked by witchcraft, wizardry and child sacrifice. It is clear that God deals with nations based on what their **leaders** do. As goes the leader so goes the nation. **Jeremiah 3:6-25, Jeremiah 8:1-12**

In the small country of Judah, Jeremiah and others did everything they could to get the people to **repent** of their wickedness and to somehow hold off the humanly unstoppable Babylonians. The books of Jeremiah and Lamentations chronicle this historically and prophetically. Jeremiah become so unpopular in Jerusalem that even the priests mocked him. **Jeremiah 5:31, Isaiah 30:9-15** When King Jehoiachin could not coerce Jeremiah to stop his warnings, he had Jeremiah arrested. When a friend had rescued him, Jeremiah wrote the warnings on parchment and had them delivered to the king who immediately tore them up. **Jeremiah 19:14-20:6, Jeremiah 26:1-24** Calling a nation to repentance will never be a **popular** undertaking. It will truly disturb people.

The Babylonians fairly easily got Jerusalem to surrender the city and Nebuchadnezzar arrested the king, the soldiers and ten thousand leading men with their wives and children. Among those were Daniel and the three Hebrew friends. King Jehoiachin spent the next 37 years in a Babylonian prison. Jerusalem was not destroyed but became a **vassal** state to Babylon and Zedekiah was made king, by the approval of King Nebuchadnezzar. A Vassal state stayed their own territory but had to show allegiance to their overlords so there would be peace in the land. Jeremiah continued to warn the people that the worst was yet to come. **Jeremiah 27:1-15**

In 597 B.C. the Babylonians again attacked Jerusalem carrying off more treasure and many of the citizens. Many patriots persuaded Zedekiah to throw off Babylonian control. This was a poor mistake. In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar led his army to the very gates of Jerusalem and starved them into surrender. So many people died that it was impossible to bury the dead.

2 Kings 25:1-21

Jeremiah was not killed during the battle but when he returned to his grotto, he began to pen his **lament**. **Lamentations 1:1-8**

This is where we pick up the story of Daniel, he was one of the first Jews **exiled** from Jerusalem. There he found his fellow countrymen mourning their loss.

Psalm 137:1-2, Daniel 1:1-7

Daniel and his three friends were taken from Jerusalem in the middle of starvation and disease and were now being offered the finest food, the kind given to the King Nebuchadnezzar himself. This was the type of favor no young Hebrew had ever known, but they **refused** the provisions.

Daniel and his friends were being pressured to go along so they would get along and all would be great for them. Daniel and the boys all refused to **compromise**. Their captives even changed their names. They were given pagan names meant to turn them into idolaters. Their original Hebrew names reflected their devotion to the Lord. Their pagan names reflected their captors desire to honor their pagan gods. **Daniel 1:6-7**

Daniel - 'God is my Judge' - Belteshazzar means - Bel - 'chief god of Babylon, protect his life'; Hananiah - 'the Lord shows grace' was named Shadrach - 'servant of Aku', the moon god.

Misael - 'who is equal to God' was named Meshach - 'the shadow of the prince' / 'who is this' Azariah - 'the Lord helps' was named Abednego - 'servant of Nego', the god of wisdom or the morning star.

Remember they came out of Judah as some of the few who had not participated in the nation's wickedness. They refused to **conform** to the "new normal" in their captive country. Daniel who was a brilliant scholar and leader, fully understood that there could be no testimony in this foreign land without the foundation of a life lived holy to God. The peer pressure from the name change, and the enticement of food and luxury was meant to reprogram them to act and think like Babylonians. Satan will always work to try and reprogram you. He will take you captive and try to make you like him. We make the determination on whether or not we will compromise or conform. **Daniel 1:8** You determine who you are before the attacks of the enemy.

It is important to realize that, in his protest, Daniel was not pushy or obnoxious. He **requested** that he might eat the normal Jewish food he would have eaten. It is key to note that he refused to drink wine. He refused anything that would affect his physical or mental health. Daniel also made this conditional. He challenged them to check on them in a certain number of days to see if it worked. Because of Daniel's approach, he found favor with those over him. **Daniel 1:9-17**

Notice that in their captivity and not being where they wanted to be they still gave their **best**. As they applied themselves God gave them knowledge of all kinds of learning and literature. They were ten times better than all the rest. Daniel was given special abilities to understand and interpret visions and dreams. **Daniel 1:18-21**

Verse 21 seems almost out of place. But it is an important end to the introduction to Daniel. Verse 21 skips 60 years into the future. It lets you know that there is a lot coming in the remainder of the book. King Cyrus became king in 539 B.C., this is **66** years after Daniel was deported to Babylon. King Cyrus was the first Persian (Iran) to have world dominance and power. Daniel was still a statesman and a power broker. Daniel was front and center in politics for longer than six decades. Daniel lived to see the first exiles **return** from captivity in 538 B.C.