



Daniel: God of the Future

Memory Verse: Daniel 2:44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."

Background

Daniel is the 27th book of the Old Testament and the fifth and final book of the Major Prophets. The prophet Daniel is the author and main character in the book and his name means "God Is My Judge." As a teenager, Daniel was one of the Jewish exiles in the first wave of deportation to Babylonia in 605 BC. Daniel, along with several others, was handpicked to serve in the Babylonian king's palace due to his noble blood, handsomeness, wisdom, and intellect (1:3-5). Trained in the best Babylonian schools for three years, Daniel then entered the king's service and eventually became one of only three administrators over the provincial governors in the kingdom (6:1). Daniel's life and ministry cover the entire seventy-year period of Babylonian captivity c. 605-536 BC. He served under the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and the Medo-Persian kings Darius and Cyrus when the Persian empire overcame the Babylonians. Throughout his entire time in a foreign land and government, Daniel remained faithful to the Lord and he is one of the only major characters in the Old Testament about which nothing negative is ever recorded.

Daniel was written to the gentile courts of the Babylon and Persian empires as well as to the Jewish people in exile there. While much of the book was written in Hebrew, chapters 2-7 were written in Aramaic as Daniel interprets prophetic dreams about the future of the gentile world powers. The remaining chapters revert back to Hebrew as Daniel begins to prophesy about the future of the Jewish nation and God's plan for Israel.

The Short Story

Daniel, living in a foreign nation, is blessed as he remains faithful to the Sovereign Lord.

What's the Big Idea?

Daniel is often called the "Apocalypse of the Old Testament" being very similar to the book of Revelation in its imagery and symbolism. Of its twelve chapters, nine deal with prophetic dreams and visions. Daniel divinely interprets the first dream of King Nebuchadnezzar in which God reveals how He, in His sovereignty, will raise up and bring down four earthly gentile kingdoms. Daniel further states that, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever" (Daniel 2:44). Daniel continues to divinely interpret dreams and visions finding favor in the those he serves under. In the last few chapters, Daniel himself receives visions about God's plan for Israel (both near and in the distant future) and angels explain to him the meaning of these visions. The Lord reveals to Daniel in these visions a detailed timeline for God's plan of redemption and deliverance for His people through the coming Messiah and His establishment of His kingdom on earth.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

Daniel was written during the time of judgment and exile for the Jews. In Daniel, God's sovereignty and greater plan of redemption for His people shines through. No matter who is in power, what is happening in the world, or what the current circumstances are, God is sovereign and powerful over all heaven and earth (Daniel 4:17). Daniel's prophecy of the Ancient of Days, the Messiah who will save His people and establish a Kingdom that will last forever gave the exiled Jews hope and encouragement that God had not abandoned them. The Messiah would come as Daniel predicted and bring restoration to God's people. Just as God kept His promises and fulfilled the prophecy through Jesus Christ, we have hope and can trust God to fulfill the prophecy of Jesus' return. God is sovereign and He has not abandoned us. Jesus is coming back for His own. "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Daniel 3:17 ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. ¹⁸ But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- What was Nebuchadnezzar trying to accomplish in demanding worship to his false God?
- What impact did the threat of death have on the three Hebrews young men?
- Why did they refuse to worship the idol and obey the King? What do you think of their response?
- What character traits are being demonstrated in the life of the three Hebrew men?
- Who is really being challenged in this passage? What is the real story behind this narrative?

Practical Application

- Where do you feel challenged in your faith and belief in God in everyday life? On the job?
- Does God always rescue us when we are in a real pinch? If no, then what is His promise?
- When and where have you felt abandoned and forgotten by God? Looking back was He there?
- When have you experienced the rescue of God in a tough situation? How did it change your view?
- Where do you currently need to have "**Bold Trust**" in God and His activity in your life?
- Where do you need to take a stand for or against something? What social issue is important to you?

Hitting the Highpoints

- 2:19-23 "Praise the name of God forever and ever for he has all wisdom and power"
- 3:4-29 "They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up."
- 4:34-37 "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven."
- 5:22-30 "....yet you have not humbled yourself. For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven..."
- 6:10-26 "I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel."

Bonus Feature—Where is Jesus?

Daniel's prophecy of the Ancient of Days, the Messiah who will save His people and establish a Kingdom that will last forever gave the exiled Jews hope and encouragement that God had not abandoned them. The Messiah would come as Daniel predicted and bring restoration to God's people. Just as God kept His promises and fulfilled the prophecy through Jesus Christ, we have hope and can trust God to fulfill the prophecy of Jesus' return. God is sovereign and He has not abandoned us. Jesus is coming back for His own. "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Personal Takeaways and Notes