

4. Summary of content

Daniel like Ezekiel was an exilic prophet in Babylon, having been brought there as a youth in 605 BC with the first group of deportees. Daniel is the last major prophet although his book is sometimes grouped with the “writings.”

Daniel, however, delivers no recorded messages to the people but ministers in the royal court of the kings. Daniel’s ministry spans the entire period of the 70 yr. captivity. His focus is on Israel in political and prophetic history with a strong emphasis on the wisdom, power and sovereignty of God and His kingdom prevailing over the kings and kingdoms of men (see map near Daniel 4 in the NIV/NASB/KJV or related resources in other Study Bibles). Daniel is a great interpreter of dreams and visions and allows us a far look into the future as God’s plan for Israel and mankind unfolds. Daniel was a very godly man who was held in high esteem by God and men.

Chapters 1-6 Personal History Dreams

Daniel and some of his young friends were among the first Jews to be taken into Exile around 605 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

The Babylonians tried in chapter 1 to conform Daniel to their culture but he and his friends refused to compromise God’s Word and God honored their stand and exalted them in the eyes of the Babylonians. When King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a giant statue, only Daniel could give the dream and its interpretation. The dream was about the next three political powers (Gentile nations) which would rule the earth after Babylon and impact the Jews. These kingdoms were Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. This dream in chapter 2 is later expanded in chapter 7 by Daniel’s vision of four beasts which correspond to the four kingdoms in chapter 2. There is, however, a fifth kingdom of “rock” — the kingdom of God which will triumph over all the kingdoms of the earth. Christ is that “rock”. (see **1 Co. 10:4; 1 Pe. 2:6-8**) (**Rev. 11:15; Rev. 19:15-16; Isa. 2:1-4**).

Chapter 1 – The Daniel Diet

- Daniel and his friends abstain from the king’s food as a way of signaling their loyalty to God and avoiding assimilation into the culture.
- The diet itself did not provide any benefit, it was a supernatural blessing of God. V. 9, 17.
- The Daniel Fast in all of its iterations is not wrong on purely health terms. Just be wary of anyone selling you on the concept that the diet itself is somehow prescriptive and inherently spiritual.
- Proper exegesis of this passage shows that the parameters of the diet are not what is applicable to us today.

Chapter 2 – Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

v. 11 Show's the crux of what God is demonstrating in this passage. He is not just all powerful (the Chaldean enchanters at least say that the gods can interpret these dreams)

- this is not merely a show of power, but of intimacy.

- vision of the Statue
 - o v. 37-38 Head of Gold, Nebuchadnezzar. He is given dominion that is reminiscent of that given to Adam
 - o The metals of the statue decrease in value but increase in strength and durability.
- Nebuchadnezzar's first encounter with God
 - o v. 26, 30 Daniel models humility before an all sovereign God
 - o v. 46 Nebuchadnezzar recognizes (to an extent) the power of Daniel's God.
- The kingdom of God
 - o v. 34-35 Start's small but grows significantly larger than any earthly kingdom
 - o v. 44-45 It is an eternal kingdom pointing to the Kingdom established by Jesus, administered under the New Covenant.

Ch. 3 Golden Image

- Neb sets up an image that all are to Worship
 - o See Study Note on 3:1-30
 - o Note the location, on a plain near Babylon
 - o v. 15 Neb asks the million-dollar question
 - o v. 16-18 they answer

The prophetic **“times of the Gentiles”** starts with the Babylonian empire and continues until the second coming of Christ when Israel will again be the primary instrument of God on earth.

Daniel and his friends are promoted to positions of prominence in the kingdom. But Daniel's friends are tested and proved in a furnace of fire for refusing to worship a giant statue of the king. Again, God honors their stand.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a second dream in chapter 4 which Daniel also interpreted. It related to the king's pride and his refusal to submit to God's authority. For seven years the king was insane and acted like an animal. Finally, he recognized God's sovereignty. Again, God honored Daniel. God judges nations and kings.

Chapter 4 – Nebuchadnezzar Humbled

- The dream is a warning
 - o He is told the lesson before he learns it the hard way v. 17
 - o Daniel calls him to repentance v. 27
 - o He is given a year to respond in v. 29 but fails to do so.
- Nebuchadnezzar repents after he is humbled v. 34-37
 - o Who is Nebuchadnezzar? He was the leader who overthrew Jerusalem. He was under the condemnation of judgment on Babylon as preached by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.
 - o However, God saw fit to continue to show patience and mercy. The curse put upon Nebuchadnezzar was a mercy that led him to repentance.

God's sovereignty is broad, determining the tides of history. Yet it is intimate, changing the heart of individuals, even his enemies.

Compare/contrast Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

1. Their sin
 - a. 1:1-2; 3:15; 4:17, 27; 5:20
 - b. 5:2-4, 22-23
2. Their exposure to the truth of God
 - a. 4:24-27
 - b. 5:23, 26
3. Their response to God
 - a. 4:28-30
 - b. 5:29
4. God's response to them
 - a. 4:33-34
 - b. 5:30

Daniel was also used in chapter 5 to interpret some handwriting on the wall of the palace of King Belshazzar (grandson of Nebuchadnezzar) pronouncing the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians, which partially fulfilled the dream of Chapter 2. When Daniel was about 80 years old the new king Darius of Persia in Chapter 6 was tricked into signing a death decree for anyone who worshipped any "god" other than the king. But Daniel continued to worship God and was thrown into a lion's den where God preserved him and made His name known.

Chapter 6 Daniel and the Lions' Den

- Daniel's faithfulness in a hostile land
 - o v. 4-5
 - o v. 10
- God's faithfulness to his people in a hostile land
 - o v. 22
 - o v. 26-27

Chapters 7-12 Prophetic History Visions

The focus in the second part of the book shifts to far-range prophecy related to God's plan of history as it pertains to Israel. These visions occurred during earlier periods of Daniel's life so that chronologically chapter 6 is near the end of his ministry.

First, in chapter 7, there is a vision of four beasts which corresponds to but also amplifies the dream of chapter 2 about four great world powers (see chart near **Daniel 7** in the NIV/NASB/KJV or related resources in other Study Bibles).

In chapter 8 the next two world powers are high-lighted — the Medes-Persians followed by Greece. There is also a preview in Chapter 7 about the Anti-Christ of the Great Tribulation period who arises out of a revived form of the fourth kingdom (Rome — see **Rev. 13**) and who blasphemes God and persecutes Israel. In Chapter 8 the little Anti-Christ (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) who desecrated the temple and ruled over the Jews from 175 BC - 164 BC is also predicted, along with the 4 kingdoms which emerged after the death of Alexander the Great of Greece.

Chapter 7 – The Four Beasts and the Son of Man

- These beasts correspond with the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream in ch. 2.
 - o The Lion: Babylon
 - Wings being plucked likely a reference to Neb's humbling.
 - o The Bear: Medo-Persian
 - Raised up on one side reflects the imbalance of power, Persians were the more powerful of the two.
 - o Leopard: Greece

- Winged leopard represented the speed with which Alexander the Great conquered the known world.
 - four heads represent the four generals who took over the kingdom once Alexander died
 - Fourth Beast: Roman Empire
 - see note on 7:8
- The Son of Man is given eternal dominion
 - The scene shifts to the throne room of God the Father (Ancient of Days)
 - Judges the fourth beast in v. 11 more harshly than the other beasts.
 - God the Father gives the dominion over all the earth to the “Son of Man”
 - Mark 14:61-62. Jesus attests that he is the Son of Man that Daniel spoke of.
 - How do the Jewish leaders respond? They accuse him of blasphemy.
- Daniel is told the interpretation of this vision v. 15-28
 - The identity of the little horn is disputed
 - The interpretation shifts from prediction of the “near” future (our past) and into apocalyptic prediction.
 - v. 21, 22 point toward the coming of Christ to claim his kingdom
 - This was done in two phases:
 - His First coming (Incarnation) in which his kingdom is established by the ratification of the New Covenant
 - His Second Coming will establish the kingdom physically on earth by the judgment of all of God’s enemies.
 - The “little horn” is the Anti-Christ v. 25
 - 1 John 4:3 “the spirit of the antichrist”
 - 2 Thes 2:3-7 “The man of lawlessness”
- Chapter 8 Further prophecy about the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires

- v. 21-25 The historical accuracy of these prophecies have led those who don't acknowledge the sovereignty of God to think the book must have been written after the events described.
- "little horn" in this passage refers to Antiochus Epiphanes rather than the Anti-christ
 - Though not the Anti-Christ, he definitely has the "spirit of the antichrist" and foreshadows as a type of the antichrist.
 - Chronologically, what is different between the "little horn" of Chapter 8 and that of Chapter 7:25? In chapter 7 the little horn rises out of the Roman Empire while in Ch 8 it arises out of the Greek Empire.

Chapter 9 of **Daniel** contains a great prayer and the prophecy of 70 weeks which sets the basic timetable for prophetic history during the **times of the Gentiles** beginning with the decree in 444 BC to rebuild Jerusalem and including the Great Seven Year Tribulation period before the second coming of Christ. A week equals 7 years and the 70 weeks are divided into 3 parts:

- (1) 7 weeks (49 years) until city rebuilt
- (2) 62 weeks (434 years) until Christ died [unknown amount of time]
- (3) 1 week (7 year Tribulation period)

Six things must be accomplished during this period of "seventy-sevens," the last 3 of which yet await fulfillment when Christ returns. The 70th week has yet to occur.

Chapter 9 – the 70 Weeks

- This vision is one of great significance and yet one of great mystery.
- Setting: the vision is given as an answer to Daniel's prayer of repentance.
 - Daniel realizes through reading the writings of Jeremiah that the 70-year exile of Judah is nearing its end.
 - He responds with a prayer of repentance on behalf of the nation.
 - His prayer properly recognizes who God is
 - His prayer rightly recognizes who his people are in light of who God is.
 - read 9:3-11 ,15

- Gabriel comes with the answer
 - What does this vision bring to Daniel according to v. 22? Insight and understanding.
 - How can that be when this passage contains so many mysteries?
 - Though it does not explain the details of all things, it provides comfort in showing how God is ordering history.
 - It provides the blueprint for the eternal destiny of God's covenant people.
- Daniel's 70 Weeks
 - What is the main thing accomplished during this 70 weeks? v. 24
 - put an end to sin / bring everlasting righteousness
 - Justification – Double Imputation
 - seal both vision and prophet
 - a seal is a guarantee and verification of authenticity
 - anoint a most holy place. What is this referring to?
 - Restoration of the temple by the Maccabees after Antiochus' desecration
 - This act doesn't do anything to put an end to sin
 - Some (Dispensationalists) who hold to a literal interpretation of Ezekiel's temple see this as the establishment of said temple in the Millennium.
 - Accomplished by Christ when he died: Hebrews 9:11-15,23-28

Daniel's final vision is recorded beginning in chapters 10-11 and expands on earlier prophecies related to the next three world powers as they affect Israel. Much is said here about the nature of spiritual warfare in heavenly places. The certainty of God's prophetic word, the promise of bodily resurrection and His protection of Israel during the time of "Jacob's distress" (Great Tribulation) are emphasized as the book closes in chapter 12. In **Daniel** "a time" = 1 year; "times" = 2 years and "half a time" = 1/2 year.

Chapter 10 – A glimpse into the spirit world.

- This vision corresponds with the previous ones in that it continues to shed more light on the various kingdoms vying for power.
- Through Daniel, we see that there is spiritual warfare going on around us.
- There are spiritual forces behind that earthly kingdoms
 - o Ephesians 6:10-12

Chapter 11 – Further specific prophecies that confirm God is in control of history

- While v. 1-35 accurately portray the Persian and Greek kingdoms, v. 36ff. seems to shift focus to future events. Just as before, Antiochus Epiphanes serves as a type of the antichrist.
- Seems to be pointing to the battle of Armageddon
 - o Rev. 16:14-16
 - o Jeremiah 25:32-34, Ezekiel 39:17-20 (Gog and Magog)
 - o Jesus is the one who wages war on these enemies Rev 19:11-16, 19-21

Chapter 12 – A final assurance of hope

- Daniel is comforted with the promise of bodily resurrection.
- Review the promises of what God would bring during the 70 weeks.
- How does the promise of a resurrection inform our purpose and actions of our life now?
 - o 2 Cor. 1:22 our hope in the future restoration is guaranteed.
 - o 2 Cor 3:4-6 we are ministers of the New Covenant
 - o 2 Cor 4:1-5, 16-5:5
 - o 2 Cor 5:17-21 We are to be ambassadors, pleading with the world to be reconciled to God.

Daniel's prophecies hold the key to understanding end time events and the book of **Revelation**.

5.

Theme/purpose/applicational message

Theme/purpose

Daniel wrote to (1) encourage the Jews in exile to rest in the sovereignty of God and (2) to reveal to them God's prophetic plan for Israel and the world powers who would dominate them until Messiah returned to set up God's kingdom which is superior to and sovereign over all other kingdoms.

Applicational message

When things in the world seem out of control remember that God is sovereignly working out all things in accordance with His perfect plan and will bring human history to a close in His wa kingdom, will, in fact, come on earth as it is in heaven!