



The Book of Daniel

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Introduction

- This is real history
- This is relevant

Background

Historical Context

The exile

- 605 BC - Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon
- 605 BC – Daniel and friends taken to Babylon (Dan 1:1-2)
- 597 BC - Further deportation of the Judean aristocracy (cf 2 Kings 24v13-26)

- 587 BC – Jerusalem destroyed

End of the exile

- 539 BC – Cyrus' decree (Ezra 1:1-4)

Daniel ch.1 encompasses whole of this period (cf 1:1, 21)

Salvation-Historical Context

- 1:1-2

The book points us to:

- God's faithfulness to his Word
- God's people living in exile
- The end of all God's purpose

Structure of Book

- According to genre

- Chs 1-6

- Chs 7-12

- A linguistic division

Hebrew 1:1-2:4; chs 8-12

Aramaic 2:4 - 7:28

- A – B – C – C¹ – B¹ – A¹
 - Chs 2 and 7
 - Chs 3 and 6
 - Chs 4 and 5
- The focus of the chiasm

Author & Date

- 2nd century date?
- 6th century date

In NT, Daniel presented as the author (cf Matt 24:15)

Daniel Chapter 1 – Living in Babylon

Read 1:1-7

- *How do we see the challenge of Babylon to God's people?*
- *What questions would these events have given rise to in the minds of God's people?*

A programme of assimilation (v3-7)

- A Babylonian education
- Food and wine from the king's table
- Brought into running the nation
- New names
 - Daniel – 'God is my Judge'
 - Hananiah – 'The LORD has been gracious'
 - Mishael – 'Who is what God is?'
 - Azariah – 'The LORD has helped'

2 Main questions:

-
-

Daniel's resolve (v8, 11-14)

God acts (v9, 15, 17)

A spectacular turn-around

The long-term perspective (v21)

Application

Daniel 2 – Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream of the Statue

2 issues:

Who can interpret the dream?

What is the meaning of the dream?

Question 1 - *Who can interpret the dream? (v1-30)*

- Impotence of the Babylonian gods
- Daniel prays
- Daniel’s praise to the God who rules, the God who reveals, the God who speaks (v20-24)
- The contrast between Daniel and the astrologers (cf v27, 10)
 - Many of them and only one of Daniel
 - Daniel takes the initiative
 - Daniel stresses that it is God who gives the meaning, not himself (v22, 28 and v30)
 - The astrologers panic, but Daniel speaks with wisdom and tact
 - The Babylonian gods are inaccessible, whereas Daniel declares that God can reveal the mystery

Which God or gods are superior?

- The result (v46) – Nebuchadnezzar’s action
- Nebuchadnezzar’s declaration (v47)

Question 2 - *What is the meaning of the dream? (v31-49)*

- Everything is given by God (v37-38)
- Empires will rise and fall
- God will set up his kingdom that will never be destroyed (v44-45)

Application

- God raises up and brings down kingdoms – so have confidence in Him
- Know that we're part of God's unshakeable kingdom

Chapter 3 – Into the Fiery Furnace

- The shock
- Suffering is inevitable
- Remember that the God who rules is the God who rescues

How the story is told

- Beginnings and endings of chapter
- Humour (eg the lists) & irony

Application

- In Babylon suffering is inevitable for God's people.

- How are we to cope with suffering? By trusting in a sovereign God who will rescue his people.

Daniel 4 – The Great Tree

Message

- The Lord is the Most High God – sovereign over the kingdoms of the world, and he gives them to whom he wishes
- God can humble anyone

Structure

A	v1-3	Nebuchadnezzar's confession
B	v4-18	Record of Nebuchadnezzar's dream
C	v19-27	Interpretation
B ¹	v28-33	Fulfilment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream
A ¹	v34-37	Nebuchadnezzar's confession

Rhetorical devices

- Repetition (v17, 25, 32) - "the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."
- Contrast (v30; 34-35)

General comments

- Presented as testimony of a pagan king (v1-3) – *How did this happen?*
- Dream of a great tree
- Daniel's faithful interpretation (v19-27) - combining compassion and truthfulness
- Rooftop (v29)
- Greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (v30)

- Nebuchadnezzar – humbled and restored
- Is Nebuchadnezzar converted? (v34-35, 37)

Application

- God is sovereign
- God can humble anyone
- Will we be faithful witnesses?

Chapter 5 – The Writing is on the Wall

Message: God is sovereign. He will not allow proud opposition to continue forever, no matter how powerful it may appear

- A clash of kings

Structure

A	v1-4	Belshazzar's pride
B	v5-17	The vision and need for an interpreter
C	v18-24	Juxtaposition of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar
B ¹	v25-29	Interpretation of the vision
A ¹	v30-31	Belshazzar's downfall

Message

- Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar contrasted (v18-24)
- The significance comes at the end (v30)
- A solemn warning

Daniel 6 – Into the Lions’ Den

Persecution (v1-9)

- Daniel very old, facing death
- A new regime (v1-3)
- Daniel’s integrity
- A clash of loyalties
- A series of deceptions

Prayer (v10-11)

- The real battle
- Daniel praying – his public expression that God is King
- Daniel knows that God is both great and gracious – ‘Asking God for help’, v11 (cf 2:17-18)

A Powerless king (v12-18)

A Powerful God – who rescues and vindicates his people (v19-28)

A Preview of the Resurrection

- Parallels between Daniel and Jesus:
 - Both faced trumped up charges
 - Both have leaders who try to save them
 - Both are sentenced to death
 - Both go into a tomb which is sealed
 - Both have angels involved in the tomb
 - Both have supporters who run to the tomb at the earliest possible opportunity
 - Both emerge from the tomb

- Daniel's innocence? (v22)
- Both vindicated
- Differences between Daniel and Jesus
 - Jesus was innocent in everything.
 - Jesus really died
 - Jesus was really raised

Application

- When persecution comes trust in the real King who will rescue and vindicate his people

Introduction to chs 7-12

The purpose of chs 1-6 in relation to chs 7-12

Apocalyptic Literature

- Forces attention
- Provides comfort
- Mediated revelation
- Unveiling and obscuring

Reading chs 7-12

- Structure – 4 visions (chs 7, 8, 10-12) and an answered prayer (ch 9)
- Preaching 7-12

Chapter 7 – The Coming of the Son of Man

The Message: The Most High God is the King who reigns even when his enemies seem to be successful

The Vision (v1-14)

Setting of the vision (v1)

- Daniel - an old man
- During Belshazzar's reign
- To prepare Daniel for a difficult time

Four terrifying beasts (v2-8)

- Beasts coming *out of the sea*
- The 4 beasts
 - The Lion (v4)
 - The Bear (v5)
 - the Leopard (v6)
 - A terrifying beast (v7)
- A repetition of ch.2?
- The little horn (v8)

A scene of judgment (v9-12)

- The throne room of the Ancient of Days (v9-10)

A king who reigns forever (v13-14)

- *One like a son of man*
 - A person, not a beast
 - Coming on the clouds
 - He's *given* the kingdom
 - He's worshipped by all
 - He reigns forever

Jesus – *the Son of Man*

The significance: God is on the throne

The Interpretation (v15-28)

- Daniel's questions
- The horn (v19-25)
- The rescue (v26-27)
- Daniel's reaction (v28)

What is God teaching us?

1. See the majesty of Jesus
2. Expect persecution
3. We will share in Jesus' kingdom

Chapter 8 – The Ram, the Goat and the Horn

- Switch to Hebrew (8:1)
- The setting: in Susa (v1)
- The two-horned ram (v3-4, 20)
- The goat (v5-8)
- The great horn replaced by 4 other horns (v8)
- The rise of the little horn (v9-12)
 - A geographic rise
 - An assault on heaven
 - Removal of the daily sacrifice (Ex 29:38-42)
 - A devastating reign of wickedness
- A sinister leader - Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175 – 164 BC)
- “How long?” (v13-14)
- 2300 evenings and mornings
- Interpretation from Gabriel (v15-26)
- A portrait of evil (v23-25)
 - A fierce-looking king
 - A master of intrigue
 - Incredibly destructive
 - Will cause deceit to prosper
 - Yet he will be destroyed

Lessons from chapter 8

1. God is sovereign over the future history of the world
2. God interprets for us what is important
3. God knows about the suffering of his people (John 16:1-4) – so take seriously what he says
4. Remember Gabriel's message about another horn (Luke 1:69)

Daniel 9 – Daniel's Prayer and the Seventy Weeks

1. A model of confession (v4-19)

Daniel's understanding from Scripture (Cf Jer 25; 29)

- He considers God to be very great and merciful
- He speaks of his own sinfulness in very real terms
- He appeals for God's help

2. The answer (v20-27)

- Daniel has asked for mercy – is it unlikely that God would answer it with confusion and a burden
- The answer comes fast (v23)
- Daniel has been thinking about 70 years, but God widens his focus
- A summary of God's great purposes (v24)
- 3 distinct stages
 - v25 – Going back to Jerusalem (7 sevens)

- v26 – Waiting for the Anointed One, who will be cut off (62 sevens)
 - v27 – A covenant confirmed (1 seven) – city and sanctuary destroyed, an abomination that causes desolation, judgment poured out on him
- The God of mercy will fulfil his great purposes

Daniel 10-12 - A Great War

A great war (10:1)

Ch.10 – The Spiritual War

Ch.11 – The Earthly war

Ch12 – An End to war

Daniel 10

Theme: In the spiritual war, God hears and strengthens his servants

- The reality of the unseen (v1-9)
- The importance of prayer (v2-3, 12)
- An unseen spiritual battle (v13, v20-11v1)
- The Lord strengthens his weak servants (v15-19)

Daniel 11

Theme: In the earthly war, God is in control as his people suffer

- Astonishing accuracy of these events – *how do we explain this?*

- God reveals the future to his people
 - Persia and Greece (v2-4)
 - Kings of South and North (v5-20) – Ptolemies and Seleucids
 - Outbreak of the conflict (v5-9)
 - The reign of Antiochus III (v10-19)
 - The Battle of Raphia, 217 BC (v10-12)
 - The Battle of Panium, 200 BC (v13-16)
 - Defeated by the Romans in Asia Minor, 191-190 BC (v18)
 - The contemptible person (v21-35) – Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BC)
 - Deceitful (v24)
 - His first campaign against Egypt (v24-28)
 - Anti God (v28)
 - Rome on the rise, Antiochus stopped by Popilius (v29-30)

At the time when Antiochus approached Ptolemy and meant to occupy Pelusium, Caius Popilius Laenas, the Roman commander, on Antiochus greeting him from a distance and then holding out his hand, handed to the king, as he had it by him, the copy of the senatus-consultum, and told him to read it first, not thinking it proper, as it seems to me, to make the conventional sign of friendship before he knew if the intentions of him who was greeting him were friendly or hostile. But when the king, after reading it, said he would like to communicate with his friends about this intelligence, Popilius acted in a manner which was thought to be offensive and exceedingly arrogant. He was carrying a stick cut from a vine, and with this he drew a circle round Antiochus and told him he must remain inside this circle until he gave his decision about the contents of the letter. The king was astonished at this authoritative proceeding, but, after a few moments' hesitation, said he would do all that the Romans demanded.

Polybius 29.27.16

- Suffering will come to God's people (v30-35)

- Antiochus vents his fury on the people of God, 167 BC (v30)

When news of what had happened reached the king, he took it to mean that Judea was in revolt. So, raging inwardly, he left Egypt and took the city by storm. ¹² He commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses. ¹³ Then there was massacre of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of young girls and infants. ¹⁴ Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed.

He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. ²² He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. ²³ He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. ²⁴ Taking them all, he went into his own land.

2 Macabbees 5:11-14

- An attack on the faith of God's people

54 On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-five,* the king erected the desolating abomination upon the altar of burnt offerings, and in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars. **55** They also burned incense at the doors of houses and in the streets. **56** Any scrolls of the law* that they found they tore up and burned. **57** Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the law, was condemned to death by royal decree. **58** So they used their power against Israel, against those who were caught, each month, in the cities. **59** On the twenty-fifth day of each month they sacrificed on the pagan altar that was over the altar of burnt offerings. **60** In keeping with the decree, they put to death women who had their children circumcised, **61** and they hung their babies from their necks; their families also and those who had circumcised them were killed.

1 Maccabees 1:41-61

- Intense suffering – an account of martyrdom from 2 Macabbees 7

"It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and thongs, to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. ² One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." ³ The king fell into a rage, and gave orders to have pans and cauldrons heated.

⁴ These were heated immediately, and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. ⁵ When he was utterly helpless, the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and to fry him in a pan. ⁷ After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport. They tore off the skin of his head with the hair, and asked him, "Will you eat rather than have your body punished limb by limb?" ⁸ He replied in the language of his ancestors and said to them, "No." Therefore he in turn underwent tortures as the first brother had done. ⁹ And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws." ¹⁰ After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, ¹¹ and said nobly, "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again." ¹² As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man's spirit, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing. ¹³ After he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. ¹⁴ When he was near death, he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!" ¹⁵ Next they brought forward the fifth and maltreated him. ¹⁶ But he looked at the king, and said, "Because you have authority among mortals, though you also are mortal, you do what you please. But do not think that God has forsaken our people. ¹⁷ Keep on, and see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants!" ¹⁸ After him they brought forward the sixth. And when he was about to die, he said, "Do not deceive yourself in vain. For we are suffering these things on our own account, because of our sins against our own God. Therefore, astounding things have happened. ¹⁹ But do not think that you will go unpunished for having tried to fight against God!" ²⁰ The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honourable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. ²¹ She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them, ²² "I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. ²³ Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws." ²⁴ Antiochus felt that he was being treated with contempt, and he was suspicious of her reproachful tone. The youngest brother being still alive, Antiochus not only appealed to him in words, but promised with oaths that he would make him rich and enviable if

he would turn from the ways of his ancestors, and that he would take him for his Friend and entrust him with public affairs. ²⁵ Since the young man would not listen to him at all, the king called the mother to him and urged her to advise the youth to save himself. ²⁶ After much urging on his part, she undertook to persuade her son. ²⁷ But, leaning close to him, she spoke in their native language as follows, deriding the cruel tyrant: "My son, have pity on me. I carried you nine months in my womb, and nursed you for three years, and have reared you and brought you up to this point in your life, and have taken care of you. ²⁸ I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being. ²⁹ Do not fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again along with your brothers."

³⁰ While she was still speaking, the young man said, "What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king's command, but I obey the command of the law that was given to our ancestors through Moses. ³¹ But you, who have contrived all sorts of evil against the Hebrews, will certainly not escape the hands of God. ³² For we are suffering because of our own sins. ³³ And if our living Lord is angry for a little while, to rebuke and discipline us, he will again be reconciled with his own servants. ³⁴ But you, unholy wretch, you most defiled of all mortals, do not be elated in vain and puffed up by uncertain hopes, when you raise your hand against the children of heaven. ³⁵ You have not yet escaped the judgment of the almighty, all-seeing God. ³⁶ For our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk of ever-flowing life, under God's covenant; but you, by the judgment of God, will receive just punishment for your arrogance. ³⁷ I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that he alone is God, ³⁸ and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation." ³⁹ The king fell into a rage, and handled him worse than the others, being exasperated at his scorn. ⁴⁰ So he died in his integrity, putting his whole trust in the Lord. ⁴¹ Last of all, the mother died, after her sons. ⁴² Let this be enough, then, about the eating of sacrifices and the extreme tortures."

2 Macabbees 7

- 2 reactions (v32-35)
- But God is in control (v27, 29, 35, 45)
- An arrogant future king (v36-45)

Daniel 12 - Resurrection

Theme: An end to war - God's people will be delivered

- Distress and deliverance - 'for everyone whose name... is in the book' (v1)
- Resurrection - with 2 destinations (v2-3)

- A call to endure (v5-12)
- Rest, then resurrection (v13)

Lessons from chs 10-12

- In the spiritual battle, look to God for strength
- In our suffering, remember the end of the story

What are the lessons that God has been teaching you from today?

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