

Daniel – Review

The main message of Daniel is that earthly kings and kingdoms will rise and fall but in the midst of these earthly kingdoms, God will build his kingdom which will not end. God's kingdom is the only kingdom which lasts forever. Daniel and his friends provided examples of how to stand for God in the midst of evil. Daniel and his friends were among the first Jews to be taken into exile to Babylon. Daniel lived long enough to hear that a number of exiles had returned to Judah and Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Daniel saw the rise and fall of the Babylonian empire. He saw the rise of the Medo-Persian empire. Most importantly, Daniel was part of God's everlasting kingdom.

Examples of standing for God in the midst of evil.

1. In Daniel 1:3-20, Daniel and his friends were taken into exile to Babylon. They were given the king's food and wine to eat and drink. Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's food and drink. He asked that he and his friends be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. He did this even though it may have gotten him into trouble or it could have caused him to be put to death. Daniel obeyed God first. He would have obeyed the king's orders as long as they did not violate God's commands. God honored Daniel and his friends and elevated them in the eyes of the king of Babylon. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
2. In Daniel 2:12-23, the king's men sought Daniel and his friends to kill them. They had not done anything wrong but they were a part of the "wise men". Daniel and his friends were not part of the "wise men" whom king Nebuchadnezzar called to discern and interpret his dream. When the "wise men" could not give the king what he wanted, the king was furious and ordered that all the "wise men" be killed. Daniel knew that only God could tell the king his dream along with its interpretation. By faith Daniel told the king that he could tell the king what his dream was and the interpretation of the dream. When Daniel told the king this, he did not yet know what the dream was or its interpretation. He asked his friends to pray with him for God's mercy. Their prayers were answered and their lives were saved.
3. In Daniel 3:1-30, king Nebuchadnezzar made a 90 foot golden image and commanded that his officials bow down before the image. Anyone who didn't bow before the image was to be cast into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego took a stand and did not fall down and worship the image. They stood out in the crowd for not bowing down. They were brought before king Nebuchadnezzar who ordered them to be bound and cast into the fiery furnace. The king then saw them walking around unbound in the fire along with someone else who had joined them. The king ordered them to come out of the furnace. They showed no signs of being in a fire. They and their clothes were unharmed. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to disobey God's first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3. They obeyed God's command rather than the king's command because the king's command violated God's command. They were willing to die rather than disobey God.
4. In Daniel 4:4-27, king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which the "wise men" again could not interpret. Daniel told the king the interpretation even though it was bad news for the king. He even told the king to repent so that the fulfillment of the dream might be delayed. Daniel spoke God's truth to the king even if the truth was not what the king wanted to hear.

5. In Daniel 5:5-28, king Belshazzar saw the hand writing on the wall and was afraid. The “wise men” could not understand the writing on the wall. Finally Daniel was called before the king and he gave the king the bad news that he was weighed in the balances and found wanting. His kingship was over and the Medo-Persians would take over his kingdom. Once again, Daniel was not afraid to deliver God’s message of judgment to the Babylonian king.
6. In Daniel 6:1-28, the Babylonian empire had fallen. The Medo-Persians were now in charge. Darius, the Mede, was king in Babylon. He promoted Daniel to a high position in his kingdom. Other officials planned to destroy Daniel. They tricked the king into making an irrevocable law that everyone could only pray and worship the king for 30 days. No one could worship or pray to anyone else. If someone broke the law, they were to be cast into a den of lions. The enemies of Daniel knew that he prayed three times a day. Even though Daniel knew about the new law, he prayed as he had always done. Daniel’s enemies waited for him to pray towards Jerusalem. When he did, they turned Daniel into the king. The king did not want to throw Daniel into the den of lions, but he was bound by the law to do it, a law which he had signed. Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. The next day, the king went to the den and asked Daniel if his God had delivered him. God had in fact delivered Daniel from the lions. Daniel was removed from the den of lion’s and his enemies were thrown in and devoured. Daniel refused to worship anyone but the one true God. He also was not willing to be forced to stop worshiping God for any period of time. He was willing to die for obeying God rather than men. Acts 5:29 “But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” In chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were commanded to worship an idol. In chapter 6, Daniel was forbidden to worship and pray to the one true God. In both cases they were willing to die for obeying God.

What the Earthly Kings Said About the One True God

- 2:47 Nebuchadnezzar: “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries”
- 3:28-29 Nebuchadnezzar: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him ... Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.”
- 4:3 Nebuchadnezzar: “How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation”
- 4:34-35 Nebuchadnezzar: “his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’”
- 4:37 Nebuchadnezzar: “all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble”
- 6:26-27 Darius the Mede: “for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”

Temporal Earthly Kings and Kingdoms

- 1:1 The third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah
- 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon
- 1:2 God gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. This was the beginning of the exile from Judah to Babylon.
- 1:21 Daniel lived to see the reign of Cyrus the Great, king of the Medo-Persian empire. He outlasted the Babylonian empire.
- 2:31-47 God gave king Nebuchadnezzar a dream about what was to come. He saw an image with a head of gold. The chest and arms were silver. Its middle and thighs were bronze. Its legs were iron and the feet partly iron and partly clay.
- 2:38-40 Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. The silver represented a second kingdom that would follow the Babylonian kingdom. Most understand this kingdom to be Medo-Persia. The bronze represented a third kingdom which would come after the Medo-Persian empire. Most believe this kingdom to be the Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great and later that of four of his generals. The iron and clay kingdom represents a fourth kingdom. Most believe this kingdom to be the Roman empire.
- 4:28-33 God humbled Nebuchadnezzar because the king was too arrogant and did not recognize that his kingdom was great because God had raised it up. God took the kingdom away from Nebuchadnezzar for a time and the king ate grass like an ox. After he repented, God restored the kingdom to him.
- 5:1-30 God permanently took the kingdom from king Belshazzar. Belshazzar dishonored God by having a feast and drinking wine from the vessels of God's temple. He literally saw the handwriting on the wall that said he had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. His kingdom would be given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar was killed that night and the kingdom went to Darius the Mede.
- 6:1-28 Daniel prospered during the reigns of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian. Darius is mentioned in the last verse of chapter 5 (vs 31). Darius is featured prominently in chapter 6. He held Daniel in high regard but was tricked into casting Daniel into the den of lions. Darius was happy when Daniel was saved. Darius threw the ones who tricked him into the den of lions where they were crushed by the lions. In 9:1, in the first year of Darius, Daniel confessed his sins and the sins of his people and prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem. In 11:1, in the first year of Darius, either an angel strengthened him or an angel strengthened Michael the angel.
- 6:28 Cyrus was mentioned in the last verse of chapter 6 along with Darius. Cyrus had already been mentioned in the last verse of chapter 1 (vs 21) as a way of letting us know that Daniel outlived the Babylonian empire. In Daniel 10:1, we learned that Daniel's last vision occurred during the third year of the reign of Cyrus when a number of Jews had already returned to Judah and Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.
- Chapter 7 is similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. In chapter 7, Daniel had a vision which involved four beasts. The four beasts aligned with the four metals of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The most likely interpretation is that the lion was Babylon, the bear was Medo-Persia, the leopard was Greece and the fourth beast was Rome. The little horn of chapter 7 is greatly debated. One belief is that the little horn is the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2), the coming antichrist (1 John 2).
- Chapter 8 focused on two of the four beasts from chapter 7. Instead of a bear, the Medo-Persian empire was represented by a two horned ram. Instead of a leopard, Greece was

represented by a male goat with a conspicuous horn between his eyes. The goat's horn was broken and there arose four horns which represented the four kingdoms which arose after Alexander the Great's death. The four kingdoms were established by four of his generals. Out of one of these kingdoms, a little horn arose. Most agree that this little horn was one of the kings of the Seleucid empire, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

- At the end of chapter 9, after Daniel had been pondering the 70 years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah, God told Daniel about 70 sevens / weeks. There is a lot of dispute about the 70 sevens. The Messianic interpretation is that God revealed the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple, the first coming of Christ and his death on the cross, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD by the Romans.
- Chapters 10 through 12 contain the final vision of Daniel. Chapter 10 is an introduction to the vision. Chapter 11, verses 3 through 35 focus on two kingdoms which emerged after Alexander the Great's death. One of Alexander's Greek generals founded an empire in Egypt. This was the Ptolemaic kingdom founded by Ptolemy Soter. Ptolemy Soter and the kings descended from him were referred to as the kings of the south. Another kingdom founded by one of Alexander's Greek generals was the Seleucid empire founded by Seleucus Nicator. Seleucus Nicator and the kings descended from him were referred to as the kings of the north. The capital of the Seleucid empire, after a time, was Antioch in Syria. Judah was sandwiched between the kings of the north and the kings of the south. The final focus is the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He killed many Jews and tried to destroy their worship and their obedience to God. For example, circumcision and observing the Sabbath were forbidden.
- In 11:36-45 there are a variety of opinions on the king who "shall do as he wills" in verse 36. Some of the opinions are Antiochus IV, Constantine the Great, the Roman empire (Calvin), the pope of Rome and the papal system, Herod the Great, and the coming antichrist. Verse 40 speaks of "the time of the end". In verse 45, the king at the time of the end will come to an end.
- In chapter 12, there will be great times of trouble but God will deliver his people, the ones whose names are written in the book, and they shall receive eternal life.

God's Everlasting Kingdom

- 2:44 In Nebuchadnezzar's dream God revealed that God would establish a kingdom which would last forever and it would smash and destroy all the earthy kingdoms.
- 4:3, 34 King Nebuchadnezzar declared that God's kingdom is an everlasting and enduring kingdom and that his dominion is everlasting and enduring.
- 6:26 King Darius wrote that God has an indestructible kingdom and a dominion which shall not end.
- 7:14 The Son of Man who came to the Ancient of Days was given an everlasting dominion and a kingdom which will not be destroyed.
- 7:18 The saints shall receive and possess the kingdom which lasts forever and ever.
- 7:27 The Most High has an everlasting kingdom which he gives to his saints.

King Nebuchadnezzar – a Man of Contradictions

- In Jeremiah 25:9, 27:6, and 43:10, God called Nebuchadnezzar “my servant”. God also called king David “my servant”. Nebuchadnezzar and David were two very different people. David had a heart for God. Nebuchadnezzar believed in multiple gods. God called Nebuchadnezzar his servant because God used him to bring judgment on Judah for their long rebellion against God. Nebuchadnezzar ultimately destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C.
- In chapter 2, God revealed a dream to Nebuchadnezzar about things to come. God revealed to him that he was the head of gold on the image in his dream. After his empire, three other earthly empires were to arise. Nebuchadnezzar was impressed that Daniel could reveal and interpret the king’s dream. In 2:47, the king said to Daniel, “your God is God of gods”. Nebuchadnezzar recognized the power of God but it was not enough for him to worship Daniel’s God as the one true God. That was evident in chapter 3.
- In chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar seemed to focus on “the gold head” from his dream and ignore that God revealed to him that his kingdom would be replaced by a kingdom of silver. He made a 90 foot golden image and made his officials bow down and worship the image. While not stated explicitly, the implication seems to be that Nebuchadnezzar was saying that Babylon would last forever and that there would not be a silver kingdom which would replace Babylon. God revealed his power to save his people when the king cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace for not bowing down to the image. The three came out of the furnace unharmed with no hint of them being in a fire. The king made a decree in 3:29. Nebuchadnezzar referred to God as “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego”. The king was still not willing to embrace God as his God. He recognized God’s power but not to the point of worshiping God and putting away his idols.
- In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar recognized the “signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me”. In 4:27, after Daniel had delivered bad news to Nebuchadnezzar about what was going to happen to him, Daniel exhorted the king to repent and show mercy to the oppressed. We are not sure if the king headed his advice for a time, but one year later God’s judgment came on Nebuchadnezzar. He was filled with pride at all he had accomplished. He did not acknowledge that he prospered because God had raised him up. God took the kingdom from him and made him eat grass like an ox. After a time, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes and blessed and praised God. God restored the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar. The king acknowledged that God was able to humble the king, or anyone else, at any time.
- Just because God called Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” doesn’t mean that Nebuchadnezzar was a godly man who sought to worship and obey the one true God. This is something to remember about our own leaders. Romans 13:1 says “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” The rulers’ authority comes from God but that does not mean that they are necessarily godly people. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, God gave him authority to judge Judah by destroying Jerusalem and the temple. Sometimes God’s rulers bring judgment and not prosperity. These rulers are also judged by God.

The book of Daniel was written with a mix of Hebrew and Aramaic. Verses 1:1-2:4a are in Hebrew. 2:4b through chapter 7 is in Aramaic. Chapters 8 through 12 are in Hebrew. The first 6 chapters are mostly historic in nature. The last 6 chapters are mostly Daniel’s dreams and visions. The book of Daniel covers the time period from about 605 B.C. to about 535 B.C.

Chapters 2 through 7 form a chiasm – an A B C C B A pattern.

Chapter 1: Introduction – Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego were taken from Jerusalem and exiled to Babylon.	
<i>(A) Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about an image made of gold, silver, bronze and iron with feet of iron and clay.</i>	<i>(A) Chapter 7: Daniel had a dream about four beasts which paralleled Nebuchadnezzar’s dream found in chapter 2.</i>
<i>(B) Chapter 3: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship an image and were thrown into the fiery furnace but were delivered by God.</i>	<i>(B) Chapter 6: Daniel defied a law and worshiped the one true God rather than an earthly king. Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den but was delivered by God.</i>
<i>(C) Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar was warned against arrogance but couldn’t help boasting about his great accomplishments in building the Babylonian Empire. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar so that he became like a beast of the field for a time before God restored him.</i>	<i>(C) Chapter 5: Belshazzar exalted himself above God when he used some of the Jerusalem temple vessels for a party. That very night Belshazzar died and the Babylonian Empire came to an end.</i>
Chapter 8: Daniel had a vision, near the end of the Babylonian empire. The vision was about two of the kingdoms from chapters 2 and 7. The two kingdoms were identified as Medo-Persia and Greece.	
Chapter 9: Daniel studied the prophecies of Jeremiah, in the first year after the fall of Babylon, and prayed that God would return his people to Jerusalem and that God would restore Jerusalem.	
Chapter 10: Daniel received a vision, in the third year of Cyrus the Persian. The vision spans chapters 10-12.	
Chapter 11: Daniel was told about the division of the Greek empire after Alexander the Great’s death. Alexander’s kingdom was divided among four of his generals. The general over Syria and his descendants were described as the king of the North. The general over Egypt and his descendants were described as the king of the South. The war between these two kingly lines spanned three centuries. Judah and Jerusalem were sandwiched between the two kingdoms.	
Chapter 12: The conclusion of the prophecy which began in chapter 10.	

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