

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### Daniel

#### *Introduction*

- Daniel
  - name means 'God is my judge'
  - taken into exile in Babylon as a young man with other captives taken by King Nebuchadnezzar (~605 B.C.), during reign of King Jehoiakim
  - rose quickly to a high position in the government
  - continued serving at least into mid-530s B.C.
    - 539 B.C. - Babylon taken by the Persians under King Cyrus - described in Daniel 5
    - Daniel 10 describes a vision in the third year of Cyrus (~536 B.C.)
- book contains 2 major genres
  - narratives about events surrounding the lives of Daniel and his 3 friends (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) in the royal court in Babylon
  - visions relating to future events in world history, including the end times
    - "apocalyptic"prophecy - pertaining to end times, often with unusual imagery
- written in Hebrew & Aramaic
- likely written in the 530s B.C.
  - some argue for a much later date, because of the historical fulfillment of many of Daniel's visions (see below)
- major theme - "*God is sovereign. He overrules and eventually will overcome human evil*" (Longman)

#### *Historical context:*

- spans a period from 605 B.C. to ~mid-530s B.C., but predicts future events stretching to the time of Christ and beyond
- during the period in which the events in Daniel occur
  - Israel/Judah
    - Judah exiled, beginning ~605 B.C., culminating with destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.
    - Jeremiah prophesied 70 years of exile (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Daniel 9:2)
    - Ezekiel prophesied from exile near Babylon
    - edict by King Cyrus in 538 B.C. permitted Jews to return to Jerusalem
      - some exiles begin returning and start rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1-3)
  - Babylonian empire ruled by a succession of kings
    - Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.)
    - Amel Marduk (aka Evil-Merodach - 2 Kings 25:27-30) (562-560 B.C.)
    - Neriglissar (560-556) and his son, Labashi Marduk (556)
    - Nabonidus (556-539), with his son/co-regent Belshazzar
- Rise of the Medo-Persian empire
  - Babylon taken in 539 B.C. by Persians under King Cyrus
    - Darius (from Daniel 5-6) may have been the general of Persian army that defeated Babylon, who then ruled Babylon as a vassal king under King Cyrus
  - Persian empire lasted ~200 years

- Rise of the Greek empire(s)
  - Alexander the Great conquers the Persian empire ~333 B.C.
  - When Alexander died (323 B.C.), his empire was divided among 4 of his generals, resulting in 4 kingdoms - Thrace (Greece/western Turkey), Macedonia (centered around Greece), Ptolemaia (centered around Egypt), Seleucia (centered around Syria)
  - Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers fought each other for centuries over Palestine
    - Antiochus IV Epiphanes - a Seleucid ruler who usurped the throne (175-164 B.C.)
      - likely the ruler predicted in Daniel 8:23-25, 11:21-45
      - manipulated the high priesthood in Jerusalem to install Jason into the high priest, then later replaced him with Menelaus
      - 170 B.C. Jason returned with army of 1000 men --> Antiochus devastated Jerusalem & the Temple in 169 B.C. - erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple
        - triggered the Maccabean revolt
- Rise of the Roman empire
  - Roman influence rose starting ~3rd century B.C. and encroached on Greek control
  - Roman control of Palestine consolidated by 1st century B.C.
  - Pompey sacks Jerusalem, enters the Temple, 63 B.C.

### ***Summary of the book***

- 2 major sections
  - Chapters 1-6 - historical narrative about Daniel and his friends in Babylon
  - Chapters 7-12 - Daniel's dreams and visions concerning the future
- Chapter 1 - Introduction to Daniel and his 3 friends
  - Daniel (Beltshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), Azariah (Abednego)
    - carried to Babylon in 1st wave of exile, 605 B.C.
  - resolved to keep themselves pure and not to defile themselves with the king's food
  - were blessed by God with knowledge and understanding exceeding that of the other wise men
- Chapter 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue
  - Daniel able to tell the king his dream and interpret it, where the other wise men failed, resulting in his promotion and the promotion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
  - Dream:
    - huge statue with head of gold, chest & arms of silver, thighs of bronze, legs of iron, feet of iron and clay
    - a rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands
      - struck the feet of the statue, causing the entire statue to be smashed to bits
      - the rock became a mountain that filled the whole earth
  - spoke of future events - kingdoms that were yet to come
    - head of gold - Babylonian empire
    - chest & arms of silver - Medo-Persian empire
    - thighs of bronze - Greek empire
    - legs of iron & feet of iron/clay - Roman empire and confederation of states that followed it
    - the rock - the kingdom of God
- Chapter 3 - Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and the fiery furnace
  - Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge idol of gold (90 feet tall) and commanded everyone to worship it or be thrown into a fiery furnace
  - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse and are thrown into the furnace, but are delivered by God

- results in Nebuchadnezzar giving praise to God and promoting the 3 men
- Chapter 4 - Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation
  - chapter written by Nebuchadnezzar (4:1)
  - Nebuchadnezzar has a terrifying dream of a tall tree being cut down, with its stump left in the ground, bound with iron and bronze
  - Daniel interprets the dream to mean that Nebuchadnezzar would lose his royal majesty and be driven to live like an animal until he acknowledges that God Most High is sovereign
    - counsels Nebuchadnezzar to repent, but the events come to pass as Daniel predicted a year later, after Nebuchadnezzar expresses his pride in his accomplishments
    - Nebuchadnezzar loses his mind and is driven to live like an animal
  - After the appointed time, Nebuchadnezzar "lifted [his] eyes to heaven" and his sanity returns
    - gives praise to God and acknowledges His supremacy (4:34-35,37)
- Chapter 5 – Belshazzar
  - King Belshazzar threw a large banquet for 1000 of the Babylonian nobles
    - For many years, people questioned historicity of Daniel because no other record of Belshazzar, until discovery that he was co-regent with his father Nabonidus, who lived away from Babylon
    - Held party while the armies of the Medes/Persians were encamped outside Babylon, besieging it – apparently was not too concerned, and didn't think they could ever get in
  - Used some of the cups brought from the Temple in Jerusalem to be used in the party
  - The fingers of a hand appeared and started writing on the wall
  - No one able to interpret the writing except for Daniel
    - rebuked Belshazzar for his pride, in setting himself against the Lord of heaven
    - prophesied that Babylon would be handed over to the Medes and Persians
    - was made 3rd ruler over the kingdom (after Nabonidus & Belshazzar)
  - That same night, the Medes/Persians entered the city, Belshazzar was killed, and Darius the Mede took over as king of Babylon
    - Some ambiguity about identity of Darius the Mede, since no extrabiblical references
    - Most likely the general who took the city, who then was allowed to reign as a vassal king under Cyrus
- Chapter 6 – Daniel in the lion's den
  - Daniel was retained in high-level administration service by Darius, who thought to promote Daniel to oversee the whole kingdom
  - Others were jealous, but could find no fault in Daniel
  - Persuaded Darius to issue a decree that no one could pray to anyone except him for 30 days, or be thrown into a lion's den
  - Daniel continued to pray openly to God (as had been his practice) and despite Darius' efforts to save him, was thrown into the lion's den
  - Daniel was protected against the lions by God, who sent an angel to 'shut the mouths of the lions'
  - Darius then threw Daniel's accusers and their families to the lions, which killed them immediately
  - Darius then praised God and issued a decree that people throughout the kingdom must fear and revere God
- Chapter 7 – Daniel's vision of the 4 beasts, and of one like a son of man
  - In 1<sup>st</sup> year of reign of Belshazzar, Daniel had a vision of 4 beasts
  - Interpreted by an angel as representing 4 kingdoms → parallels Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue
    - A beast like a lion, with wings like an eagle's – Babylonian empire (gold)
    - A beast like a bear, raised up on one side – Medo-Persian empire (silver)
    - A beast like a leopard with 4 heads and 4 wings – Greek empire (bronze)

- A terrifying beast with large iron teeth and 10 horns – Roman empire (iron)
    - After the vision of the 4<sup>th</sup> beast, Daniel saw a vision of ‘the Ancient of Days’ (i.e. God) and His throne, with His court seated in judgment
      - The terrifying beast was slain, and body thrown into blazing fire
      - Then ‘one like a son of man’ (the rock), coming with the clouds of heaven, approached & entered into the presence of the Ancient of Days
        - given authority & dominion over an everlasting kingdom
        - people & nations of every language worshiped Him
- Chapter 8 – Daniel’s vision of a ram and a goat
  - A vision of a powerful ram with 2 horns
  - The ram was struck down by a goat with a single horn, but whose horn was broken off and replaced by 4 horns that grew up
    - One of the 4 horns was replaced by another horn that started small but grew large and powerful, and abolished the Temple sacrifice
  - Vision interpreted to Daniel by the angel Gabriel as concerning ‘the time of the end’
  - 2-horned goat = kings of Media & Persia
  - 1-horned ram = first king of Greek empire (i.e. Alexander the Great) → died in his prime and replaced by 4 horns (i.e. Alexander’s 4 generals who set up 4 kingdoms)
  - The little horn – most likely refers to Antiochus Epiphanes
- Chapter 9 – Daniel’s prayer, and the seventy ‘sevens’
  - Daniel reads and understands from Jeremiah’s prophecy that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years
    - Prays & fasts, and pleads with God to relent, and have mercy on Jerusalem
  - God responds by sending Gabriel to explain that Jerusalem would be rebuilt
  - More than this, there would be seventy ‘sevens’ until God would deal decisively with sin and bring in everlasting righteousness
    - - 69 sevens (7 + 62) (i.e. 483 years) from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One comes and is cut off
      - End would come after another ‘seven’, during which there would be trouble and desolation
      - Meaning of the 70 ‘sevens’ controversial
        - Often interpreted as 70 x 7 years (i.e. 490 years)
          - Reference to decree by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem in 454 B.C. → Christ’s crucifixion 483 years later?
          - Last seven doesn’t actually happen until much later on → 7 year tribulation?
        - Others see no precise ‘literal’ significance, but argue that the language is symbolic, in the context of Daniel’s apocalyptic prophecy
- Chapter 10 – Daniel’s vision of a man
  - Daniel sees a man dressed in linen with a belt of gold, whose body was like chrysolite, face like lightning, eyes like flaming torches, arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, voice like the sound of a multitude (v.5-6)
    - A vision of the pre-incarnate Christ? (cf. Rev. 1:13-15) or just another angel?
- Chapter 11-12 - The Kings of the South and the North, and the Time of the End
  - the man of the vision in chapter 10 gives Daniel a detailed account of future conflicts between the kings of the South (Egypt, Ptolemies) and kings of the North (Syria, Seleucids), culminating with Antiochus Epiphanes (11:1-35)
  - beginning in 11:36, a shift occurs from the conflict between the kings of the South and North over Palestine, to a larger, future conflict involving a king who "shall exalt himself and magnify himself

above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods." (11:36) --> the Antichrist

- 12:1-4 speaks of "the time of the end"
  - a time of unprecedented trouble followed by final judgment and vindication for the righteous
- Daniel is told to seal up the words and the book until the time of the end, and to go his way until the end

### *Major Themes and Concepts*

- God

- His glory, power, and majesty
  - He is exalted above all things and above all the kings and kingdoms of the earth

"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before Him; a thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened." (7:9-10)

"King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation." (4:1-3)

- All peoples must worship Him

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are right and His ways are just; and those who walk in pride He is able to humble." (4:37)

"And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven.... you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored." (5:22-23)

- His sovereignty over all things and people

- the forces of nature

"And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them." (3:27)

- heaven and earth, peoples and nations, kings and kingdoms

"At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for 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?" (4:34-35)

- time and history

"[I] came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come." (10:14)

- His eternal reign (e.g. 2:44; 4:3,34; 6:26)
  - In contrast to the kingdoms of this world

- God's people

- Their comfort in time of trials and in the face of evil, that God is sovereign
  - God is in control and is continuing to work all things according to His good purposes
    - in present affliction, as with the people of Israel in exile
    - in times to come, as seen in Daniel's visions
- Their witness in an unbelieving world
  - remaining faithful and obedient to God in the face of pressure to compromise
  - living and speaking the truth with boldness and clarity, but respectfully and with wisdom (cf. 1 Peter 3:15-16)

### *Glimpses of Christ*

- the Rock - a reference to Christ and His kingdom, which will fill the whole earth

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold." (2:44-45)

- one like a son of man

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (7:13-14)

### **References & Resources**

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