

# Old Testament Survey

## Daniel

# For Discussion

- How should Christians live in a society that doesn't believe in God, and may be hostile to their beliefs about right and wrong?

# Daniel - Introduction

- Daniel
  - name means 'God is my judge'
  - taken into exile in Babylon ~605 B.C.
    - 1<sup>st</sup> wave of captives taken during reign of 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 (Daniel 5)
    - Daniel 10 - a vision in the third year of Cyrus (~536 B.C.)

# Daniel - Introduction

- Written in 2 languages
  - Hebrew
  - Aramaic
- Contains 2 main genres
  - Narratives about Daniel and his 3 friends (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego)
  - Apocalyptic prophecies
    - visions relating to future events, including end times
    - unusual imagery

# Daniel - Introduction

- Date of writing
  - Most likely written ~530s B.C.
    - Events in Daniel span 605-530s B.C.
    - Some argue for later date (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) due to historical accuracy of his prophecies
- Central theme
  - *"God is sovereign. He overrules and eventually will overcome human evil."* (Longman)

# Historical Context

- During Daniel's lifetime
  - Judah exiled, starting 605 B.C., culminating in destruction of Jerusalem 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
  - King Cyrus permitted Jews to return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C.
    - some exiles begin returning and start rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1-3)

# Historical Context

- During Daniel's lifetime
  - Babylonian empire had 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
  - Babylonian empire fell in 539 B.C.

# Historical Context

- Medo-Persian empire
  - Babylon captured in 539 B.C. by Persians under King Cyrus
    - Darius (Daniel 5-6) – possibly the general of Persian army that defeated Babylon
      - ruled Babylon perhaps as a vassal king under King Cyrus
  - Initially an alliance between Medes and Persians
  - Over time, Persians became dominant
  - Empire lasted ~200 years



# Historical Context

- Greek empire(s)
  - Alexander the Great conquered Persians ~333 B.C.
  - Alexander died 323 B.C.
    - Greek empire divided into 4 kingdoms
      - Thrace (part of Greece, western part of modern Turkey)
      - Macedonia (part of Greece)
      - Ptolemaic kingdom (centered around Egypt)
      - Seleucid kingdom (centered around Syria)

# Historical Context

- Greek empire(s)
  - Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers fought each other for centuries over Palestine
- Side note: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.)
  - a Seleucid ruler who usurped the throne
  - likely the ruler described in Daniel 8:23-25, 11:21-45
  - devastated Jerusalem & the Temple in 169 B.C.
  - erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple, triggering the Maccabean revolt

# Historical Context

- 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 Holy of Holies in the Temple, 63 B.C.

# Daniel – Summary

- 2 major sections
  - Chapters 1-6
    - historical narrative - Daniel and his friends in Babylon
  - Chapters 7-12
    - dreams and visions concerning the future

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 1 - Introduction to Daniel and his 3 friends
  - Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), Azariah (Abednego)
    - carried to Babylon in 1st wave of exile, 605 B.C.
    - resolve to keep themselves pure and not to defile themselves with the king's food
    - blessed by God with knowledge and understanding exceeding that of the other wise men

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue
  - The king has a troubling dream which only Daniel could discern and interpret
  - 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
      - strikes the feet of the statue, causing the entire statue to be smashed to bits
      - the rock becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue
  - Interpretation: The dream speaks of future kingdoms
    - 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 following it
    - the rock - the kingdom of God

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 3 - Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and the fiery furnace
  - Nebuchadnezzar commands everyone to worship and idol or be thrown into a fiery furnace
  - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse
    - are thrown into the furnace, but are delivered by God
  - Nebuchadnezzar praises God and promotes them



# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 4 - Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation
  - Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a tall tree being cut down, with its stump left in the ground
  - Daniel interprets the dream
    - Nebuchadnezzar would lose his majesty and be driven to live like an animal until he acknowledges that God is sovereign
  - This happens a year after the dream
  - After the appointed time, Nebuchadnezzar "lifted [his] eyes to heaven" and his sanity returns
    - praises God and acknowledges His supremacy (4:34-35,37)

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 5 – Belshazzar
  - King Belshazzar throws a large banquet
  - Uses cups from the Temple in Jerusalem
  - The fingers of a hand appear; write on the wall
  - Daniel interprets the writing:
    - Belshazzar to be judged; Babylon would be handed over to the Medes and Persians
  - That same night, the Medes/Persians enter the city, Belshazzar is killed
    - Darius the Mede takes over as king of Babylon

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 6 – Daniel in the lion’s den
  - Darius wants to promote Daniel to a high position
  - Others jealous, but could find no fault in Daniel
    - Persuade Darius to prohibit prayer, except to himself
  - Daniel continues to pray openly to God
    - is thrown into the lion’s den, despite Darius’ efforts to save him
    - is protected against the lions by God’s angel
  - Darius praises God and decrees that people throughout the kingdom must fear and revere God

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 7 – Daniel’s vision: 4 beasts, and one ‘like a son of man’
  - Daniel has a vision of 4 beasts
    - Represent 4 kingdoms → parallels Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue & rock
      1. beast like a lion, with wings like an eagle’s – Babylon
      2. beast like a bear – Medo-Persian
      3. beast like a leopard with 4 heads and 4 wings – Greek, with division into 4 kingdoms
      4. terrifying beast with large iron teeth and 10 horns – Roman

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 7 – Daniel’s vision: 4 beasts, and one ‘like a son of man’
  - After the 4<sup>th</sup> beast, a vision of ‘the Ancient of Days’ (i.e. God) and His throne
    - The terrifying beast is slain, and body thrown into blazing fire
    - ‘One like a son of man’ approaches & enters into the presence of the Ancient of Days
      - Given dominion over an everlasting kingdom
      - People & nations of every language worship Him

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 8 – Daniel’s vision of a ram and a goat
  - A vision of a ram & a goat fighting
    - Ram with 2 horns (*Kings of Media & Persia*)
    - Ram is struck down by a goat with a 1 horn (*King of Greek empire, i.e. Alexander the Great*)
      - Goat’s horn broken off and replaced by 4 horns (*division of Greek empire into 4 kingdoms*)
      - another horn grows up - starts small but grows large and powerful, and abolishes the Temple sacrifice (*most likely Antiochus Epiphanes*)

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 9 – Daniel’s prayer, and the 70 ‘sevens’
  - Daniel reads Jeremiah’s prophecy
    - Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years
    - Prays & fasts, and pleads with God to have mercy on Jerusalem
  - God sends angel Gabriel
    - explains that Jerusalem would be rebuilt
    - further, that there would be seventy ‘sevens’ until God would deal decisively with sin and bring in everlasting righteousness
    - Meaning of the 70 ‘sevens’ is controversial
      - A reference to the timing of Christ’s crucifixion?

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 10 – Daniel’s vision of a man
  - Daniel sees a man
    - Dressed in linen with a belt of gold
    - Body 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
  - A vision of the pre-incarnate Christ? (cf. Rev. 1:13-15) or just another angel?



# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 11-12 - The Kings of the South & North, and the Time of the End
  - a detailed account of future conflicts between the kings of the South (Egypt, Ptolemies) and kings of the North (Syria, Seleucids) (11:1-35)
    - culminating with Antiochus Epiphanes
  - then shifts to a larger, future conflict
    - 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

# Daniel – Summary

- Chapter 11-12 - The Kings of the South & North, and the Time of the End
  - 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

# Daniel – Major Themes

- God
  - His glory, power, and majesty
    - He is exalted above all things and above all the kings and kingdoms of the earth
      - E.g. 4:1-3; 7:9-10
    - All peoples must worship Him
      - E.g. 4:37; 5:22-23

# Daniel – Major Themes

- God
  - His sovereignty over all things and people
    - the forces of nature (e.g. 3:27)
    - heaven and earth, peoples and nations, kings and kingdoms (e.g. 4:34-35)
    - time and history (e.g. 10:14)
  - His eternal reign (e.g. 2:44; 4:3,34; 6:26)
    - In contrast to the kingdoms of this world

# Daniel – Major Themes

- God's people
  - Their comfort in time of trials and in the face of evil - that God is sovereign
    - God is in control and continues to work all things according to His good purposes
      - in present affliction e.g. in exile
      - in times to come, as in Daniel's visions

# Daniel – Major Themes

- God's people
  - Their witness in an unbelieving world
    - remaining faithful and obedient to God in the face of pressure to compromise
    - living upright, exemplary lives
    - speaking the truth with boldness and clarity, wisdom and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15-16)

# Daniel – Glimpses of Christ

- The Rock (2:34-45)

- 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)

# Daniel – Glimpses of Christ

- One like a son of man (7:13-14)
  - A vision of the glorified Christ

"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)



# Next class

- Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

# References

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