

DANIEL

The *Thompson Chain Reference Bible* describes the Book of Daniel as “a companion to the Book of Revelation”. Its overarching emphasis, - it explains, - is to demonstrate “the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men in all ages”. ... It is a compilation of the activities of God on behalf of His people, for the expression of His glory.

The career of Daniel resembles the career of Joseph in that the Lord directed the circumstances whereby he would be promoted miraculously to such high office in the land. The name Daniel means ‘God is Judge’ ... He is the Ruler, the Sovereign, the King, the absolute authority.

He is one of four Daniels mentioned in the Old Testament ... David had a son called Daniel (I Chron. 3:1). Another Daniel was a son of the Levite Ithamar (Ezra 8:2), and a Daniel the priest is mentioned in Neh. 10:6. ... The Daniel who was the author of this prophetic book was given the Divine gift of interpreting and presenting dreams and visions to the Jews and the Gentiles relating to the times in which they lived, and also looking ahead.

He is introduced as a teenager, - probably in his mid-teens, - when he was taken along with his friends and his family from Judah, as part of the first wave of exiles in 605 BC. ... Therefore, he witnessed the second wave of exiles as they were brought to Babylon in 597 BC, and the third wave following the destruction of the city and its temple in 586 BC. He would have heard all the stories concerning those horrendous events ... and we are also given an historical background to help us understand the prophecies announced throughout the book. In the opening chapter, we are told about King Nebuchadnezzar’s policy to indoctrinate young men who showed great potential to serve the Babylonian society. It was his intention to remove all foreign vestiges with which they had entered his empire.

However, the royal household soon discovered at least one of those young men, - Daniel, - was not for changing. Since he was first brought to Babylon until the day he died, he lived a separate and faithful life dedicated to the Lord. ... He recognised God had raised him from being an *exile* to an *executive* in Nebuchadnezzar’s government ... and he was not prepared, - under any circumstances, - to abandon that commitment. His witness to Jehovah remained intact.

Shortly after he had been brought to Babylon, he began in the service of King Nebuchadnezzar, and then the joint rule of Kings Nabonidus and Belshazzar. When their Babylonian Kingdom was conquered by the Medo-Persians in 539 BC, he then served King Darius, followed by King Cyrus the Great who died in 530 BC. It was probably during Cyrus' reign that Daniel died (as an old man of about eighty-five years) ... However, God also gave him visions detailing the course of the Greek empire, which would immediately succeed the Medo-Persian empire. He described in detail the power and influence of Alexander the Great whose kingdom would eventually be divided into four regions ... one of which included the land of Israel, over which the evil Antiochus Epiphanes took control. Following the Greek empire, he described their conquerors, - the Roman Empire. The information he provided took place as he described it ... but he also spoke of additional material that has yet to be fulfilled.

Some of his prophecies had been fulfilled during his lifetime ... some have been fulfilled since ... and some of his prophecies are yet awaiting fulfillment.

In all, Daniel described the successive Gentile world domination, - "the times of the Gentiles", - and how these would culminate in the future Kingdom reign of the Messiah on earth. ... Understandably, this was a great source of encouragement to the exiled Jews in captivity in Babylon ... This was their constant hope that God had not neither abandoned them or finished with them ... He had not cast them off, but had set them aside temporarily, - a blindness in part had come upon them (Rom. 11:25), - but He had every intention of reversing that condition for He had a plan in place to restore them.

These Gentile powers would be permitted to dominate Israel, - Babylon (605–539 B.C.), Medo-Persia (539–331 B.C.), Greece (331–146 B.C.), Rome (146 B.C.–A.D. 476), - up until a pre-defined moment when the **Dan. 2:34** stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces ... **35** Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

The symbolism of the *stone* in chapter two is developed into the symbolism of the *son of man* in chapter seven, - the Lord Jesus, **Dan. 7:13** I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. **14** And there was

given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. ... ²⁷ And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Despite the pressures and strains of living in exile, Daniel was not alone in speaking the word of God for also prophesying at this time was Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah. ... But Daniel, in particular, - because of his privileged position, - he had a wealth of knowledge and experience. He was an extremely clever and intellectual man. He wrote eloquently in Hebrew and Aramaic (Dan. 2:4b – 7:28 ... Aramaic, while closely related to Hebrew, is a separate language within the Middle Eastern Semitic languages).

He never forgot his roots, and throughout his life he passionately remembered Judah, Jerusalem, and its temple. It was his focus every day. He was of such great significance the Lord Jesus impressed his prophecy upon the disciples, **Mt. 24:15** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place). Daniel is also mentioned by Ezekiel (Ezek. 14:14,20; 28:3), and he is referred to by the writer to the Hebrews, **Heb. 11:33** ... stopped the mouths of lions.

In turn, Daniel was familiar with the prophecy of Jeremiah, **Dan. 9:2** In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem ... taken from **Jer. 29:10** For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

This is a great book, - the book of Daniel, - for it relates to the Sovereign control of God upon the nations. Yes, Daniel's prophecies have engendered much debate and controversy. Similar to the Book of Revelation, he uses imagery ... and imagery, - by its very nature, - can mean different things to different people ... and if we are not careful, it can be made to say 'anything'. We, therefore, need to be very careful that this is God's Word and must be handled in a way that upholds its truth and validity.

Keep it simple ... When we read the first verse of the Bible, we believe it literally. We start off as we mean to go on. We don't make problems for ourselves by trying to find something that is not there ... *Keep it simple* ... And

it is the same here, and in other prophetic Scriptures. Keep as much as possible to the facts, unless it is otherwise obviously indicated.

Keep away from allowing our imaginations to form that which is not immediately there ... Since many of the prophecies of Daniel have already been literally fulfilled, it is only fair to use the same elementary principle of hermeneutics to understand the remainder of his prophecies have yet to be literally fulfilled. ... That is the great hope for which we still await. The Gentile kingdoms are presently crumbling ... but it is not yet like anything the Lord declared in His Word for *He* says their catastrophic collapse will come about as a consequence of *His* dealings with them. And when that happens, the Messiah will come to reign. Jesus Himself explained, **Lk. 21:24** *And they [the Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* ... That is when the Stone, - the Lord Jesus Christ, - will return, **Lk. 21:27** *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* ... Coming to reign, **Dan. 7:27** *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.* ... The promised triumph of God's Kingdom over its enemies.

There was so much of the future prophecy Daniel was told that he could not understand. Rather than explaining it to him, - and because he knew all he needed to know at that time, - the Lord instructed him, **Dan. 12:9** *Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.* ... I believe the evidence points to us being in those times. Almost at the end, the Lord told the prophet, **Dan. 12:10** *Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.* ... Despite the world becoming increasingly anti-God, God promises to keep His faithful people.

Today, we understand more of Daniel's prophecies than *he* understood because we have seen their fulfilment in the history books. ... And we can also see how the prophecies that have not yet come to pass are rapidly shaping up to be completed. ... *We are living in Biblical times!*

God is sovereign, and He is working out His plans to inevitably and ultimately demonstrate His glory across His creation. His people will be safe and saved, and His Name will be forever praised and honoured. Amen.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

- I. The Personal Background of Daniel the Prisoner (1:1–21)
 - A. Conquest of Jerusalem (1:1, 2)
 - B. Conscripted of Jews for Training (1:3–7)
 - C. Courage of Four Men in Trial (1:8–16)
 - D. Choice of Four Men for Royal Positions (1:17–21)

- II. The Prophetic Course of Gentile Dominion, – Daniel the Interpreter (2:1–7:28)
 - A. Dilemmas of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1–4:37)
 - i. His dream relating to the great image (ch. 2)
 - ii. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego (ch. 3)
 - iii. Vision concerning the tree (ch. 4)
 - B. Debauchery and Demise of Belshazzar (5:1–31)
 - C. Deliverance of Daniel (6:1–28)
 - D. Dream of Daniel (7:1–28) - The four great beasts and the Stone

- III. The Prophetic Course of Israel's Destiny – Daniel the Seer (8:1–12:13)
 - A. Prophecy of the Ram and Male Goat (8:1–27)
 - B. Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9:1–27)
 - C. Prophecy of Israel's Humiliation and Restoration (10:1–12:13)