

27 - Daniel

Daniel

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

God's people did not keep his laws, and as he promised in Deuteronomy, he removed them from the land and sent them into exile (Dt 4). Babylon was God's instrument of judgment. Daniel was a young teenager when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and he was taken into captivity with the first group of captives (2Ch 36:5-8). The Babylonian Empire was the super-power of Daniel's day, and Daniel lived in Babylon from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar through the reigns of five succeeding kings. He witnessed the fall of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus of Persia. His life spanned the entire 70-year period of Jewish Captivity.

Daniel received the finest education of his day and served in the courts of kings, but he was a man of prayer, and he put obedience to God as the top priority in his personal and public life. He was one who sought the Lord with all his heart (Dt 4:29).

Daniel was a layman, but he was a prophet through whom God spoke, and the shepherd of his people. He lived in the darkest period of Israel's history, but he planted in men's hearts the bright hope of the coming Messiah, and the hope of a righteous kingdom that would endure forever. The book of Daniel proclaims the sovereignty of God. Though God's people are in bondage to a godless nation, God is the ruler of heaven and earth, and he is the one who has ultimate control of the destinies of men and nations.

DANIEL'S DECISION OF FAITH

Daniel 1:1-21 (Sun.) Jan. 11

Key Verse: 1:8

1. The Babylonian captivity (1-7)

When Jerusalem fell, Nebuchadnezzar took the temple treasures and some of the most promising young people to Babylon. Daniel and three of his friends were among these. They were selected to be trained for the king's service. They were given full scholarships, including room and board, to study in the best university of Babylon. The Babylonian captivity was a national tragedy, but it became a time of great personal opportunity for these young men.

2. Daniel's decision (8-21)

Daniel made a decision before God (8). It was a decision not to eat the royal food, but to eat simple food according to God's laws. It looked like a small decision, but it was a decision to live as a man of God, and not be melted into the Babylonian culture. Immediately problems arose.

But God helped Daniel to stick to his decision. Then God blessed his school studies (17-21), and, through Daniel, blessed his people.

Prayer: Lord, help me to make a small decision of faith, and help me to keep it.

One Word: Daniel resolved not to defile himself

MEN OF PRAYER MEET A CRITICAL TIME

Daniel 2:1-23 (Mon.) Jan. 12

Key Verse: 2:23

1. "Tell me my dream--or else!" (1-13)

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. He knew it had meaning, so he asked the wise men of his kingdom to interpret it. He made a seemingly unreasonable demand. He asked them not only to interpret the dream--he demanded that they tell him the contents first. The wise men reached their human limits. They complained to the king, saying that only the gods could do what he asked. The king was furious and he ordered all the wise men in his kingdom executed immediately.

2. Daniel and his friends pray (14-23)

When Arioch came to execute Daniel, Daniel answered him with wisdom and tact. Daniel told him that he could interpret the dream if he had a little time. Then he went home and explained the matter to his three friends. When they prayed all night, God revealed the mystery to Daniel. When Daniel reached his human limits, he did not complain to the king--he prayed to God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray and not despair or complain.

One Word: Don't complain--pray

KINGDOMS OF MEN AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Daniel 2:24-49 (Tue.) Jan. 13

Key Verse: 2:44

1. The kingdoms of the world (24-43)

God, the Sovereign Ruler of history, had revealed to the king his plan for the world. Daniel received this revelation as he and his friends prayed; the next day he met the king. He proclaimed the God of heaven to the king, and told him both the contents of the dream and its meaning. The statue which the king saw in his dream symbolized successive world powers: Babylon, Medo-

Persia, Greece and Rome. The kingdoms of the world rise and fall according to the sovereign will of God. No kingdom made by men is eternal.

2. The eternal kingdom (44-49)

God promised to set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed. It would fill the earth, like the rock cut out of the mountain. Jesus, born during the time of the Roman Empire, is the king of the eternal kingdom. The most powerful king in the world received the testimony of a Jewish P.O.W., and worshiped God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to put my hope in your eternal kingdom--not in heads of gold or feet of clay.

One Word: God's kingdom endures forever

THE FOURTH MAN IN THE BLAZING FURNACE

Daniel 3:1-30 (Wed.) Jan. 14

Key Verse: 3:25

1. Three faithful men (1-18)

Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image and commanded all of his provincial officials to bow down and worship it. Those who did not would be thrown into a blazing furnace. Daniel's friends--Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego--refused to bow to the image. Jealous Chaldean astrologers reported them to the king. The king was furious, but he generously gave them another chance. See verses 16-18. They told the king that they believed God's power to save, but even if he did not save them, they would die before worshipping the idol. They knew that spiritual survival is more important than physical life.

2. God is faithful (19-30)

The furnace was so hot that the soldiers who threw them in were killed. Then the king looked in amazement. He saw four men walking around unharmed in the fire. The fourth man was the Son of God. When he walked with them, they were safe, even in the blazing furnace. The king humbled himself before the God who saved his servants.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for being with me in the worst of times. Help me to worship you alone.

One Word: The God we serve is able to save

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SECOND DREAM

Daniel 4:1-27 (Thur.) Jan. 15

Key Verse: 4:27

1. The great tree dream (1-18)

Nebuchadnezzar's dream disturbed his easy life. He dreamed of a beautiful tree whose top touched the sky; it could be seen from the ends of the earth. It provided food and shelter for every creature. Then the tree was cut down. The messenger announced that someone would be drenched with dew and live like an animal for 7 years--until all people "know that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men."

2. You, O king, are that tree (19-27)

When Daniel heard the dream, his thoughts terrified him. Then he told the king clearly that he was the tree which would be cut down to its stump, and that he, the king, would live like a wild animal for seven years. He would be restored when he acknowledged that God is the Sovereign Ruler. Daniel urged the king to repent--to renounce his sins and be kind to the oppressed.

Prayer: Lord, purge me of all hidden pockets of pride so that I may acknowledge your sovereignty in every area of my life. Grant me boldness and courage to teach repentance.

One Word: Repent before the sovereign God

UNTIL YOU ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Daniel 4:28-37 (Fri.) Jan. 16

Key Verse: 4:34

1. The proud king humbled (28-33)

Nebuchadnezzar became very proud. When he boasted of his power and glory, his dream was fulfilled exactly. He became a madman. He was driven away from people to eat grass like an animal for seven years--until he acknowledged that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men. Many people are under psychiatric treatment today because of pride which has destroyed spiritual order in their lives. Nebuchadnezzar would not recover until he became humble.

2. I raised my eyes toward heaven (34-37)

The king confessed, "When I raised my eyes toward heaven, my sanity was restored." He praised the God of heaven and acknowledged that everything he does is right. When he humbled himself, his throne was restored, and he became greater than before. He learned that God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble heart and a learning mind. Help me to live for your glory.

One Word: God humbles the proud

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

Daniel 5:1-12 (Sat.) Jan. 17

Key Verse: 5:5

1. Belshazzar's party (1-4)

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet and wine flowed like water. When he was drunk with pride and wine, he had the golden goblets which had been taken from the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem brought out, and he and his wives and concubines drank from them, praising the gods of gold and stone. He deliberately insulted the living God.

2. The mysterious hand (5-9)

In the midst of the party, a human hand appeared and wrote a mysterious message on the wall. The king was terrified. His knees knocked and his legs turned to rubber. He knew that he had sinned against God, and sensed that this message was a message of judgment, but no one could interpret the message.

3. Call Daniel (10-12)

The queen mother heard the commotion and came down. She recommended Daniel, a man of God, to come and interpret the writing.

Prayer: Lord, may those who take you and your laws lightly, and flagrantly insult you become terrified enough to repent.

One Word: Fear God

WEIGHED ON THE SCALES AND FOUND WANTING

Daniel 5:13-31 (Sun.) Jan. 18

Key Verse: 5:27

1. Your father learned the hard way (13-21)

A terrified King Belshazzar called Daniel to interpret the handwriting on the wall. Daniel refused any reward. He reminded the king of how God had humbled his father when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride. God had taught Nebuchadnezzar that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men.

2. You did not honor God (22-31)

Belshazzar did not honor the God who holds in his hand men's lives and all their ways. He was a spoiled young man who spent his time drinking and partying. He did not think about the serious issues of life. He was arrogant, and he dishonored God. When God weighed him in the scales, he fell too far short of God's righteous standard. God's judgment would--and did--fall on him that very night.

Prayer: Lord, the people of our times also have become very proud, and pleasure-seeking seems to be our major activity. Forgive our sins. Help me not to fear men, but to fear and honor you, as Daniel did.

One Word: Honor God

DANIEL'S PRAYER LIFE

Daniel 6:1-10 (Mon.) Jan. 19

Key Verse: 6:10

1. Daniel's faithful life (1-5)

King Darius recognized Daniel's exceptional abilities and promoted him to a high position in his government. He planned to give him another promotion. Some officials became jealous, so they tried to dig up some dirt on Daniel. Although they investigated him thoroughly, they could find no corruption or negligence in him.

2. Daniel's prayer life (6-10)

However, they discovered his "weak" point--he put God first, and he was a man of prayer. So they flattered the king and persuaded him to issue an edict forbidding prayer. The penalty for disobedience was the lion's den. It was Daniel's custom to pray three times every day on his knees in front of a window opened toward Jerusalem. He thanked God for his mercy and prayed for his exiled people. Daniel read the king's edict, but he did not hesitate to go home and pray as usual. He feared God, not men.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be trustworthy in life and work, and faithful in prayer.

One Word: Make prayer a regular habit

GOD RESCUES DANIEL

Daniel 6:11-28 (Tue.) Jan. 20

Key Verse: 6:26-27

1. The king was distressed (11-16)

When the king heard that Daniel was the one who violated his edict, he was distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, but according to the law of the Medes and Persians, he could not repeal the decree. So, with great reluctance, he had Daniel thrown into the lion's den. As he sealed up the mouth of the den, he told Daniel, "May the God you serve continually rescue you."

2. Because he trusted in God (17-28)

That night, the king couldn't eat or sleep or watch T.V. At dawn, he hurried to the lion's den and called to Daniel in an anguished voice. When Daniel told him that God had sent his angel to shut the mouths of the lions, he was overjoyed. He knew that God had protected Daniel because Daniel trusted in God. He disposed of the men who had tricked him and fed them to the hungry lions. Then he issued an edict praising God, and commanding all people to fear and reverence him. Daniel's faithful life had planted faith in a pagan king.

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust you in all circumstances.

One Word: He is the living God

A KINGDOM THAT WILL NOT BE DESTROYED

Daniel 7:1-28 (Wed.) Jan. 21

Key Verse: 7:13,14

1. Daniel's dream (1-14)

God gave Daniel a vision of the world and of the unfolding events of history. God is the Sovereign Lord of men and nations, and he rules history. The 4 beasts are 4 mighty empires: the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek and Roman empires. Perhaps they also symbolize all the empires of men--empires which repeatedly rise and fall. The beasts seem to become progressively more terrifying. But God, the Ancient of Days, is on his throne. And the Son of Man will come with clouds of glory. Jesus will surely come in clouds of glory to establish his everlasting kingdom. This vision is our hope.

2. The interpretation of the dream (15-28)

God told Daniel the meaning of his vision: Four worldly kingdoms will arise, but the saints of God will receive his kingdom and possess it forever. We must not be terrified, even though we live under cruel and oppressive worldly powers. The world is a spiritual battlefield, and the devil continually makes war against the saints. But God gives victory to his people.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be an alert soldier in this great spiritual battle.

One Word: The Son of Man will come

DANIEL'S VISION OF A RAM AND A GOAT

Daniel 8:1-27 (Thur.) Jan. 22

Key Verse: 8:17

1. A man of vision (1-8)

Daniel saw kingdoms rise and fall, and the world go from bad to worse. But he was a man of prayer; God gave him a vision of the flow of world history, and the assurance that God is in control of history. The two-horned ram represented the Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon and Egypt. The goat is Greece and the large horn, Alexander the Great. When he died, his kingdom was broken into 4 parts. Israel was caught in the conflict between two of these, the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria.

2. The small horn that became big (9-27)

The small horn (9) and the "master of intrigue" (23) both refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who captured "the Beautiful Land" and tried to destroy the Jewish faith. He threw truth to the ground and caused deceit to prosper. Other evil men and movements which seek to destroy God's people have arisen and will arise. When it looks like Satan is winning, we must remember that ultimate victory belongs to God.

Prayer: Lord, when deceit seems to prosper, and truth is cast to the ground, help me to stand on your truth. Be with persecuted Christians throughout the world.

One Word: God's truth triumphs

DANIEL'S PRAYER

Daniel 9:1-27 (Fri.) Jan. 23

Key Verse: 9:18b

1. Prayer based on Bible study (1-3)

Daniel was a POW in Babylon, but he could understand God's will for the nations because he studied the Bible. He found in Jeremiah 25:11 God's promise that the Jewish exiles would return home after 70 years of Babylonian captivity, so he prayed according to God's promise. God heard his prayer.

2. Repentant prayer (4-27)

Daniel worshiped God who keeps his covenant of love by blessing those who love and obey him, and punishing those who rebel against him (10,11,12). The real reason for God's people's shameful captivity was sin. Daniel does not make excuses for or gloss over the sins of his people. He repents for them and for himself. He asks God's mercy. God is righteous, but he is also merciful, and he has a sense of honor about the people who bear his name. God sent an angel to

teach Daniel about the end of the age, and to assure him that God had heard his prayer, for he was highly esteemed. God highly esteems those who pray and repent.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a warrior of prayer for my nation and for the world.

One Word: God hears repentant prayers

DANIEL'S VISION OF A MAN

Daniel 10:1-11:1 (Sat.) Jan. 24

Key Verse: 10:12

1. A vision of one like Christ (1-14)

The first group of exiles had returned to Jerusalem by the 3rd year of Cyrus. But returning was one thing, and rebuilding the temple and the walls was another. The devil hindered this work in every possible way. The real battle was a spiritual one, so Daniel set his mind to gain understanding and to humble himself before God. The vision of a great war terrified him, for he had no strength to fight. But when he sought God with all his heart, one like Christ came and strengthened him. The Devil tried to hinder Daniel's prayer by detaining this one who came to Daniel.

2. A healing touch (15-11:1)

The man had come to give Daniel God's word and teach him about the future. God is the Sovereign Ruler of men and nations. Daniel had no strength to listen to God's word, but the man again touched Daniel and gave him strength. Daniel learned that God gives victory when there is one who prays.

Prayer: Lord, give me spiritual strength to pray; open my eyes to see Christ.

One Word: Humble yourself and seek God

THE KINGS OF THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH

Daniel 11:2-45 (Sun.) Jan. 25

Key Verse: 11:33-35

1. A mighty king who fails (2-32)

The mighty king (3) who seems so successful leaves nothing behind him but war and strife. Alexander's kingdom broke into 4 parts. The continuing war between Syria and Egypt--the Seleucids and the Ptolemies--concern Daniel, for God's people were caught in the middle and suffered under godless kings. The kings of the world try to make alliances and find peace by

human means (6,7,17,27) but they fail because their hearts are evil (27,28). The devil works hard to keep wars going. The king who opposes the holy covenant and sets up an idol in the temple was Antiochus Epiphanes; he was the devil's tool. He would corrupt those who had violated the covenant, but when God's people resist him and live by God's word, he could not defeat them.

2. Those who are wise (33-45)

Those who are wise persevere and keep on teaching the Bible in the midst of the ebb and flow of worldly strife.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live according to your word in these confusing times.

One Word: Don't be fearful; be wise

THE END TIMES

Daniel 12:1-13 (Mon.) Jan. 26

Key Verse: 12:1

1. God's people will be delivered (1-4)

The end of human history will come at God's appointed time. There will be a time of great distress, but God's people--those whose names are written in his book of life--will be delivered (Rev 21:27). The dead will hear the voice of the Son of Man and rise to face the final judgment (Jn 5:28-29). Those who are wise--who have accepted God's grace of forgiveness--will rise to life and will shine like the stars forever and ever. The others will dwell in hell forever.

2. How long will it be? (5-13)

Daniel did not understand. He asked 2 questions: "How long will it be...?" and "What will the outcome be?" Neither of these questions is answered. One does not become wise by going here and there to increase in knowledge. The wise person is the one who has been purified and made spotless (by faith in Jesus' blood). The wicked never understand. The Lord tells Daniel and us to go our way until the end.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for writing my name in your book--by your grace through Jesus.

One Word: God holds history in his hand