

The Book of Daniel

Introduction

Daniel was contemporary with both Ezekiel and Jeremiah. As young men, it is likely that both Daniel and Ezekiel would have heard Jeremiah preach in Jerusalem. Daniel, as he was being put in chains for the long journey to Babylon, probably heard the Lament of Jeremiah, which is our book of Lamentations.

Many of the events of the Babylonian captivity affected each of these men in different ways. Each of them was given a message by God to warn the ungodly, to comfort the faithful, and to confront their enemies.

Each of these books is very relevant to us today as we watch the decline of America, and the judgment of God fall on this once great nation.

Daniel is a logical book to follow our recent study of The Revelation. It will relate to that book by the Apostle John as surely as it relates to those other prophets of the Old Testament.

The book easily divides into two sections: the first is full of vital lessons for believers living under a hostile world power, while the second gives us insight into the future, where our hope rests on the sovereignty and faithfulness of the God of grace.

Outline

I. Servants of God in a Hostile World (History from Human Viewpoint), Chapters 1–6

- A. Standing firm in faith (Ch. 1–2)
- B. Standing firm in freedom (Ch. 3–4)
- C. Standing firm without fear (Ch. 5–6)

II. The Son of Man over the Kingdoms of the World (History from Divine Viewpoint), Chapters 7–12

- A. The Son of Man is the King of Kings (Ch. 7–8)
- B. The Son of Man is over God's people (Ch. 9–10)
- C. The Son of Man and His future kingdom (Ch. 11–12)

Daniel 1:1–8, The First Test of Dedication

Imagine that you are a fifteen-year-old son of nobility, and you watch as your nation declines, until it is completely overthrown by a hostile, godless, foreign power. As if this were not enough, now you are taken as a slave, along with a host of other children of the nobility, and you are carried away captive, never to see your homeland or your family again. Since you are one of the “chosen people,” how do you reconcile this with the promises of a faithful God?

Jeremiah mentions three deportations of captives taken to Babylon (Jer. 52:28–30). Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were in the first (see also 2 Kings 24:14; 25:11 and 2 Chron. 36:20). This would have been the most disheartening and frightening of them all.

Jeremiah's Final Message to the Captives

I believe, along with many other Bible expositors, that while the captives were being chained neck-to-neck, Jeremiah preached one last message to them. With the smoking ruins of Jerusalem all around them, he gave them hope and encouragement, in preaching what we know today as the book of Lamentations.

“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she, who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave! She weeps bitterly in the night. Her tears

are on her cheeks; among all her lovers [false gods] she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies. Judah has gone into captivity, under affliction and hard servitude; she dwells among the nations, she finds no rest; all her persecutors overtake her in dire straits.” – Lamentations 1:1–3

For decades, Judah had played Babylon against Egypt, turning from one to the other for security and supply, until her treachery had come back on her own head.

America Following Judah’s Example

As we begin this study, we see the final decline of America taking place in real time. America has played the harlot with the nations of the world. There is no “ally” that we have not betrayed, for our own fickle ends. Now, we are being invaded by an alien horde that hates us and has no loyalty to the principles on which our nation was founded. This invasion is being orchestrated by our own government and paid for by taxpayer dollars. We are watching, in living color, the answer to the question long asked, “Why do we not see America in the book of Revelation?” While God in His matchless grace could still deliver this nation, do we deserve deliverance? And if He does not step into our history in a mighty way, well may we find ourselves observing scenes similar to those of Judah in 606–605 B.C.

Jeremiah’s Light in the Darkness

As the captives in chains prepared for their long “death march” to Babylon, the prophet who had warned Judah for forty years of what was coming, gives to the captives the only hope they can carry with them.

“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul, therefore, I hope in Him. The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.” – Lamentations 3:21–27

The Foundation of Faith for the Captives

Many of the captives took to heart the final words of “the weeping prophet” Jeremiah. His challenge became the daily meditation of the unknown author of Psalm 119. It was the message of Jeremiah that became the song of the captives on the lonely nights of the journey, as recorded in Psalm 137.

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it ... How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

As the author of Psalm 119 learned to say,

“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word ... It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.” (vv. 67, 71).

A Workout for the Soul

Try to put yourself in the place of Daniel and his three friends, and ask yourself, honestly, if you would have the spiritual poise, discernment, and courage that they displayed from the beginning. It’s very possible that this could be a “dry run” for what our future holds!

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” – Daniel 1:8