

Old Testament Survey—Daniel

It's amazing to see what God can do through a person who is totally devoted to the Living God, and that by the grace of God. To a person who despises the word "compromise," and seeks to do what pleases God, no matter what. What individuals from the Bible come to mind when you consider such a person?

For me, one that stands out is Daniel. As a young person, then later as an adult, and even to his senior years, Daniel stood for God, often standing alone.

Discuss: What observations stand out to you from the book of Daniel?

Observations concerning the Book of Daniel:

--the fourth book of the "major" prophets (in English Bible)

--not included among the Prophets in the Hebrew canon

--the first part of the book is "historical" (ch 1-6), and the second part records a series of visions of future events (ch 7-12).

--the book is not arranged chronologically; the chronological order probably would be chapters 1-4, 7, 8, 5, 9, 6, 11, 12, 10.

If we are confused by the book, we can be encouraged by what Daniel himself said in 8:27, "I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding."

**Who wrote the book?**

--Daniel

--L.H.B. suggests that the authorship and dating of this book is perhaps the most debated book in the Old Testament (pp. 665-668).

--No claim of authorship is made in the book (other than 7:1, which states that Daniel "wrote down the dream").

--Support for authorship by Daniel is Matthew 24:15 where Jesus says "spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (though this does not specifically assert that Daniel recorded his words in writing).

**When was the book written?**

--6th century B.C. (Archer)

--Not later than middle of 5th century B.C. (Harrison)

--Maccabean date (Childs), around 165 B.C.

--According to the Talmud, a Jewish tradition placed some sort of editorial responsibility for Daniel on the men of the Great Synagogue, sometime between Ezra (450 B.C.) and Simeon the Just (270 B.C.).

--L.H.B. "It is not unreasonable, then, to attribute the dreams and visions to Daniel, who passed them on (in written form or otherwise), and that they finally were put in canonical form in the fourth or third century (p. 667)."

### Historical Setting:

Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and the other youths to Babylon in 605 B.C. (probably on a campaign just before he succeeded to the throne; L.H.B. 662). The major deportation did not occur until 586 B.C. Daniel interpreted his dream in 603 B.C. Daniel continued in royal service "until the first year of King Cyrus" (538 B.C.; 1:21), and then received a revelation in the third year of Cyrus (10:1). So if Daniel was in his early teens in 603 B.C., he would have been about 75 in 536 B.C.

Note: The following were all built by captive Jews--the Hanging Gardens in Babylon (600 B.C.), Herod's Masada, Rome Coliseum (A.D. 70) [acc. to Leon Rowland, Prophets class notes].

### **Why was the book written?**

Daniel appears in the "Writings" section of the Hebrew Bible. Why? An indication of a late date? Better, an indication of its purpose. Essentially, the book is a story, a partial biography of Daniel. It is not strictly a prophetic book, nor is it history in the modern sense. Much of it is concerned with dreams and their interpretations. What's going on in the book? Daniel seeks to provide theological understanding of history (Craigie, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 574).

To read biblical history is not merely to learn the raw data of what happened in the past. It's to see and discover God's participation in human affairs. It's to learn how God works in this world.

Civilizations have come and gone (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, etc). Does that mean chaos reigns, that there is no purpose and meaning in this survival of the fittest? Daniel says no. In Daniel we learn that God is in control of history, moving it towards His desired end.

Theme: The kingdoms of this world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God (L.H.B., p. 659).

Discuss: From your reading of Daniel, how does the book develop this theme?

### **What is the outline of the book?**

Perspective of Book:

Chapters 1-6 (events told in third person)

Chapters 7-12 (account given in first person)

### Language Organization of the Book:

Hebrew (1:1-2:4a)

Aramaic (2:4b-7:28)

Hebrew (8:1-12:13)

### Outline:

- I. Stories from Daniel's Life (ch 1-6)
- II. Daniel's Visions (ch 7-12)

### **What is the message of the book in one sentence?**

Daniel shows that the kingdoms of this world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God.

### Observation: A key passage in the book is Daniel 9 (the Seventy Weeks)

There are actually a variety of interpretations taken by conservative scholars.

Note: The conclusions drawn about one area (e.g. authorship, dating, etc.) will influence future conclusions.

### **What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?**

1. *Daniel shows us how to live as the people of God in a Gentile-dominated world.*

See: 1:8

Q: Where was Daniel? In Babylon, outside the Promised Land. Up until this point in the OT, we have seen how people were to live for God *in* the Promised Land. Daniel is a transition book that shows how God's people can live for Him when there is no temple around, no priests around. It prepares us for the Christian life in the NT.

Discuss: What does Peter call Christians in 1 Pet 1:1? Sojourners/Strangers

- Q: What principle do we see in Daniel's life on how to live in a Gentile world (see 1:8)?

Daniel purposed he would not defile himself. He chose to put God first.

2. *Daniel reveals that persecution and struggle are the norm for God's people in a fallen world.*

Discuss: List the times you see struggle in the lives of God's people in the book.

3. *Daniel teaches that the Kingdom of God will replace all earthly kingdoms.*

See: 4:17; see also Revelation 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ..."

See also: This is the great theme of the visions.

Discuss: What kingdoms came and went as listed in Daniel?

Discuss: There is a close relationship between Daniel and Revelation. How so? Both are apocalyptic literature. Both are prophetic. Both tell what's going to happen in the world.

4. *Daniel teaches us about the doctrine of the resurrection.*

In most of the Old Testament, life beyond the grave is hinted at in many texts, but remains implicit. In Daniel we are given a clear teaching about the resurrection. Where?

See: Daniel 12:2

Q: How many groups does Daniel see in the resurrection? Two

Q: What are the destinations of the two groups? Everlasting life/Everlasting contempt

Discuss: What New Testament texts develop this theme of the resurrection?

See: 1 Cor 15