

Bible Survey - Daniel

by Peter Hammond

The sermon explores the life of Daniel, emphasizing his unwavering faith and the prophetic significance of his experiences in Babylonian captivity.

Scripture: Exodus 23:2, Daniel 1:4, Daniel 2:44, Daniel 3:17, Daniel 5:23, Daniel 6:22, Daniel 7:14, Daniel 12:3, Hebrews 11:32

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Prophecy"

Description

Peter Hammond preaches on the life of Daniel, a wise and righteous prophet who remained faithful to God despite being exiled to Babylon. Daniel's integrity and courage in the face of moral conflicts and idolatry serve as powerful examples for believers. Through Daniel's visions and prophecies, we see God's power over the past, present, future, and eternity, emphasizing the importance of never compromising our faith and trusting in God's deliverance and protection.

Transcript

"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:3

Who was Daniel?

As a young man of 16 years, Daniel was exiled from Jerusalem, in 605BC, when Babylon conquered Jerusalem. Daniel and his three friends were selected for special training and service in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, because they were "good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve..." Daniel 1:4. Although in exile, in a foreign land, Daniel rose to the highest levels of leadership under three kings, yet without compromising his Faith. Daniel means: "God is my Judge."

One of the Greatest Prophets

Daniel was a contemporary of the prophets Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah. Ezekiel described Daniel as one of the most righteous and wise examples of integrity, along with Noah and Job (Ezekiel 14:14). Our Lord Jesus quotes from the prophet Daniel in Matthew's Gospel.

Historic Background

The Book begins in 605BC when Babylon conquered Jerusalem and exiled Daniel and other nobles from Jerusalem to Babylon. It continues to the demise of the Babylonian Empire in 539BC when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon (5:30-31), and goes on to the rule of the Persian king Cyrus, who gave permission for the exiles to return and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (10:1).

Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon for 45 of its 70 years of existence. Babylon ruled the most powerful empire that had existed up to that time. Daniel lived through the whole 70 years of Babylon's existence, seeing its rise and fall.

Daniel bridges the entire 70 years of the Babylonian captivity (605-536BC); (Daniel 1:1-9; 1-3). Daniel is referred to by the Book of Hebrews as one of "...the prophets; who through faith... stopped the mouths of lions" Hebrews 11:32-33.

Daniel and Joseph

There are remarkable similarities between the careers of Joseph and Daniel. Both were exiled from their home country in their youth and taken captive to foreign lands. Yet, because of their integrity, they rose to serve in the king's court. Both were unjustly accused and harshly treated. Yet God used their hardships, and their wisdom in interpreting dreams, to have them promoted to rule in pagan courts, without compromising their principles.

Daniel and Moses

Like Moses, Daniel was both a statesman and a prophet. Given telescopic vision, Daniel was permitted to see far further than most other prophets.

Courage in Conflict

The Book of Daniel includes six moral conflicts which confronted Daniel and his companions:

1. Pagan self-indulgence, gluttony and idolatry were confronted by courageous conscientious abstinence from alcohol and food offered to idols. The fruit and vegetables of Daniel proved superior to the royal meat and wine, so that Daniel and his friends proved healthier than those who ate the royal food (1).

2. Heathen mysticism and magic were confounded by the wisdom God provided Daniel in interpreting the king's dream (2:1-47).

3. The heathen idolatry of state religion was confronted by courageous determination to worship God alone (3:1-30).

4. The pride of the pagan king was confronted by the sovereignty of Almighty God (4:4-37).

5. Blasphemous sacrilege and drunken revelry was confronted by the hand of God writing on the wall (5:1-30).

6. Malicious backbiting and conspiracy to condemn Daniel to the Lion's Den was defeated by the protection of God over Daniel in the Lion's Den (6:1-28).

The Four Great Empires

Nine of the twelve chapters of Daniel relate prophetic revelation through dreams or visions. This includes the domination of Babylon (605-539BC), Medo-Persia (539-331BC); Greece (331-146BC); and Rome (146BC-AD476).

Detailed Prophecies of the Future

There are more prophecies in the Book of Daniel than in any other Book in the Old Testament. The Book of Daniel contains 166 prophecies. It is calculated that the Bible as a whole contains 2,000 prophecies which predict 735 future events, of which 593 (i.e. 81%) have already been fulfilled. Daniel is the most quoted in Revelation.

The Dream

In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar has a most disturbing dream and requires his wise men to tell him the meaning of the dream, or lose their lives. However, he had forgotten the dream himself, so he required them to describe his dream to him as well! As he condemned all his wise men to death for their inability to do so, Daniel was provided with the answer by God.

The Giant Monster

The dream was of a giant with head of gold, the chest of silver, the stomach of bronze, the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay. A stone struck the statue and it crumbled to dust. The wind blew the dust away and then the stone grew to become a mountain that filled the whole world. This, Daniel explained, referred to the great empires of the world. The head of gold was Babylon. After Babylon would arise another kingdom, like silver, then another of bronze, then a fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, shattering everything. Then will follow a divided kingdom.

The Kingdom of God

"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the Kingdom shall not be left to another people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Daniel 2:44

State Idolatry Rejected

Perhaps inspired by this dream, Nebuchadnezzar ordered a gigantic gold covered statue, 90 feet high, to be erected on the plain of Dura. All people were ordered to bow down and worship this statue. When the music played all people bowed down, except Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. When the king, in a rage and fury, commanded the three young men to bow, they responded: "...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." Daniel 3:17-18. They refused to budge. They refused to bend. They refused to burn.

Delivered From the Fiery Furnace

Despite the fiery furnace being so intense that even the soldiers who cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the fiery furnace were incinerated, it became clear that the three men were unharmed in the midst of the furnace! Nebuchadnezzar was shocked when he saw a fourth man, "like the Son of God" walking in the midst of the fire with them. He called them out and was astounded to see they were

unharmd by the flames: "...Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him... there is no other God who can deliver like this!" Daniel 3:28-29

This incident occurred the same year 586BC that Babylon burned Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem had been burned but God was not burned. He had judged idolatry in Jerusalem but had protected His faithful servants who resisted idolatry in Babylon.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon

To please the beautiful princess that he had married from the mountains of Persia, Nebuchadnezzar built a huge mountain of brick and covered it with trees, shrubs and plants, the famous hanging gardens of Babylon. On top he placed a private zoo of wild animals. All of this, he did to please his wife who was unused to the flat plains of Babylon.

Pride Comes Before a Fall

One day when he was on the roof of this magnificent palace, his pride overwhelmed him and his boasting led God to send him a dream which Daniel interpreted as a warning, that unless he humbled himself before Almighty God, he would lose his mind and live like one of the beasts of the field. Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation afflicted him for seven years before he came to his senses, and he said: "I... lifted my eyes to Heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His Kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. And no one can restrain His hand... now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all of His works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride, He is able to put down." Daniel 4:34-37

The Writing on the Wall

Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus (the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar), was hosting an extravagant feast for a thousand guests. As he blasphemously used some of the holy vessels which had been stolen from the Temple of Jerusalem, the Finger of God wrote these words on a wall: "Mene, Mene, tekem, parsin." In terror, they called for Daniel to interpret: Number, number, weight, divisions. You are weighed in the balances and you are found wanting. "Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." That night, Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain as Darius the Mede seized the capital through a surprise attack.

An Excellent Spirit

Darius the Mede set three governors over his 120 satraps. One of the three governors was Daniel. "Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him." Daniel 6:3-4

The Lions' Den

So those who sought to bring down Daniel persuaded king Darius to issue an edict by which the people were to abstain from worshipping any other god, except the king, for 30 days. When Daniel knew of this edict, he continued in his practice of praying towards Jerusalem, on his knees, before an open window. So the conspirators pressured the king to enforce his edict by having Daniel thrown into the den of lions.

The Lions Obey God

As a law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered, Daniel was cast into the Lions Den. However by the morning, Daniel could report: "My God sent His Angel and shut the lions mouths, so that they could not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O King, I have done no wrong before you." Daniel 6:22. Those who had accused Daniel were thrown into the Lions Den. "...and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they even came to the bottom of the den." Daniel 6:24

Fear God Alone

"Then king Darius wrote: 'To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His Kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.'" Daniel 6:25-27

God's Power is Revealed in His Acts of Judgement

1. Jerusalem is judged for its immorality and idolatry (1:2).
2. The heathen diet of food offered to idols and alcohol is rejected (1:8-16).
3. Worldly wisdom is exposed as worthless (2:1-47).
4. Idolatrous state religion defeated (3:1-30).
5. Arrogant king humbled (4:1-37).
6. Carnal sacrilege condemned (5:1-31).
7. Pagan persecutors punished (6:1-27).
8. Human kingdoms destroyed.

God's Power is Seen in His Revelations

1. Power over the past.
2. Power over the present.
3. Power over the future.
4. Power over eternity.

Never Compromise Your Faith

Compromise can be co-operation with the devil. Compromise makes you powerless. Dare to be different. Dare to be a Daniel! "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil..." Exodus 23:2

God is All-Powerful

- 1.Power over life and death (Dan. 5:23).
- 2.Power over nations and rulers (Dan. 2:47; 4:17,32).
- 3.Power over angels and people (Dan. 4:34; 7:14).

What a Saviour!

- 1.Delivered from execution (Dan. 2).
- 2.Saved out of a blazing furnace (Dan. 3).
- 3.Protected in the pit of lions (Dan. 6).

God saves us from Judgement.

God is with us in the worst of circumstances.

God knows the future better than we know our past.

God protects us from the power of evil.

Praise Him! Serve Him! Trust Him!

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