

HOW WILL YOU FINISH?
DANIEL...Living a Life of Faith in an
Increasingly Hostile World
Daniel 1-12

Because of *Israel's sin of idolatry*, the *times of the Gentiles rule* has come...a time when God *turns Israel over* to be *captives*. It *began with the sins of Solomon* and the *dividing* of the nation of **Israel**. *Ten tribes* become the **Northern Kingdom** and are known as **Israel**. **Judah** and **Benjamin** become the **Southern Kingdom** and are known as **Judah** or **Judea**. The **Northern Kingdom** turns to *idolatry* and are *defeated* by the **Assyrians**. The *righteous* out of the *ten tribes* *migrated* to the *south*...and united with **Judea** and **Benjamin**. They had a *season of righteousness*, but eventually they also *rebelled* and eventually turned to *idolatry*. As a result, they were *defeated* and placed into *captivity* in **Babylon** and this is where the **book of Daniel** begins.

Babylon rebelled against the **Assyrian Empire** in **626 B.C.** and *overthrew* the **Assyrian** capital of **Nineveh** in **621 B.C.** **Babylon** then became the *master of the Middle East* when it *defeated* the *Egyptian armies* in **605 B.C.**

About **8 years** before **Ezekiel** was *taken captive* by **Nebuchadnezzar**, a young man named **Daniel** (whose name means "**God is Judge**") was taken from **Jerusalem** to **Babylon** by **Nebuchadnezzar**. *Deported* to **Babylon** at the *age of 16*, **Daniel** was *hand-picked* for *government service*. **Daniel's life** and *ministry* bridge the *entire 70-year period* of **Babylonian captivity** as a *prophet* and a *government official*. And he *continued* on after **Babylon** was *overcome* by the **Medes** and **Persians** in **539 B.C.** **Daniel** became God's *prophetic voice* to both the **Gentile** and **Jewish** world *declaring* God's *present* and *eternal purpose*. *Nine of the twelve chapters* in his book revolve around *dreams*, including

God-given *visions* involving *trees, animals, beast, and images*. In both his *personal adventures* and *prophetic visions*, **Daniel** shows God's *guidance, intervention, and power* in the *affairs of man*.

His *prophetic ministry* was focused to both...the **Gentile courts** of **Babylon** (**Nebuchadnezzar** and **Belshazzar**) and **Persia** (**Darius** and **Cyrus**), as well as to *his Jewish countrymen*. Eventually **Zerubbabel** would lead a return of the **Jews** to **Jerusalem** in the *first year* of **Cyrus**. **Daniel** lived and ministered at least *until the third year* of **Cyrus** (**536 B.C.** ...**Daniel 10:1**).

The book of **Daniel** is the Old Testament book of *apocalypse*...while **Revelation** is the New Testament book of *apocalypse*. The word *apocalypse* means *an unveiling of the secret purposes of God*...and the *secret purposes of God* can never be known until they are *revealed*. God used **Daniel** to *unveil* these *purposes*.

I. DANIEL'S UNCOMPROMISING CHARACTER:

Daniel's life was *characterized* by *faith, prayer, courage, consistency, and lack of compromise*. He was "*highly esteemed*" in the eyes of God (**Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19**). He was even *mentioned three times* by his *6th century B.C.* contemporary, **Ezekiel**, as an example of *righteousness*.

Daniel and his *three friends* (**Hananiah**, **Mishael**, and **Azariah**) were evidently *born into noble Judean families* and were..."*youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.*" (**Daniel 1:4**). They were given *3 years of training* in the best of the **Babylon's schools** (**Daniel 1:5**). As part of the *reidentification*

process, each was *given a new name*. **Daniel** was given a name that honored one of the *Babylonian deities*... **Belteshazzar**...which meant, “*Bel protects his life*” (**Daniel 1:7; 4:8; Jeremiah 51:44**). **Daniel’s wisdom and divinely given interpretive abilities** brought him into a *position of prominence*, especially in the courts of **Nebuchadnezzar** and **Darius**. He is one of the few characters in the Bible about whom *nothing negative is every written*.

Examples of Daniel’s uncompromising character:

Daniel 1:8-16...Would not defile himself.

Not only did **Daniel** have **uncompromising character**, but so did his friends. **Daniel 3**...*The fiery furnace*...*a test of faith* (**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego**).

II. DANIEL’S CONSISTENT CONVICTION:

Daniel 1:18-20...*Wisdom and understanding*...*ten times better* than all the magicians and conjurers.

Daniel 6...**Daniel’s continued prayer and worship three times a day** even after **Darius’** decree...“*according to the law of the Medes and Persians.*”

III. DANIEL’S COMPLETE CONFIDENCE:

The *central truth* in **Daniel** is...“*...That the most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.*”

~Daniel 4:32b (Also see Daniel 4:17, 25)

The *sovereignty of God* is the *core of this book* and can be seen *operating* in both the *spiritual* and the *political realms*. In the narratives of events in the lives of **Daniel** and *his friends*, the emphasis is on *living a life of faith in an increasingly hostile world*. God's *sovereignty* is *seen* in God’s ability to *prosper* or *deliver* those who are *true to their faith convictions*.

God's *sovereignty* in *political affairs* is addressed more directly in the *visions* of the book. The *purpose* was to deal with **Israel’s expectations** while in *exile*, as well as, *post-exile*. Based on their *reading* of the *earlier prophets*, the people of **Israel** were *looking* for the *kingdom of God* to be *established upon their return from seventy years of exile*. **Daniel's visions** informed them that *four kingdoms* were *yet to come before the establishment of God's kingdom*...and that while the *return from exile would come within seventy years* of **Jeremiah’s prophecy**, this *should not be confused* with the *full restoration*. Rather than *seventy years*, the required span would be *seventy weeks of years*...*seventy times seven*...or *490 years*.

In the meantime, the **Israelites** were to *live out their faith* in a *Gentile world* under *circumstances* that would make it more and more *difficult* to do so. They had to count on the *sovereignty of God* to *sustain* them *generation by generation, crisis by crisis*. They also had to *trust* the *power of God* to *control the flow of world empires* as they *rose and fell*. God's *agenda* is *never in jeopardy*; nevertheless, they needed to be *prepared for the long term*.

Daniel 7-12...**Daniel’s visions**.

- **Daniel 7**...**Daniel’s vision of the four beasts and the Ancient of Day**.
- **Daniel 8**...**Daniel’s vision of the ram, goat, and small horn**.
- **Daniel 9**...**Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks of years**.
- **Daniel 10-11**...**Daniel’s panorama vision of prophecy concerning the nations of Persia, Greece, and Egypt, and of Antiochus Epiphanes and of the Antichrist**.
- **Daniel 12**...**Daniel’s prophecy concerning Israel**.

IV. DANIEL'S COMPELLING COURAGE:

Every time Nebuchadnezzar had a *dream*, Daniel was called upon to *interpret the dream* or *vision*. Regardless of whether the *dream* or *vision* had a *good* or *bad outcome*, Daniel was *faithful* to *interpret the fulfillment of the dream or vision truthfully*.

Daniel 2:14-45...(key...vs. 28) *Four kingdoms*.

Daniel 4...Nebuchadnezzar's *vision of the high tree*.

“Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.”

~Daniel 4:29-33

Hand writing on the wall...Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s son (Daniel 5). Daniel’s sermon...Daniel 5:17-29. Darius the Mede then received the kingdom (Daniel 5:31).

Daniel in the *lions’ den* (Daniel 6:10-11, 16, 21-23) .

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- God is at WORK in the midst of every circumstance in our lives...even when we don't see His hand.

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words...And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

~Romans 8:26, 28

- We must learn to live an UNCOMPRISING life... regardless of the results.
- God is FAITHFUL...even when life is full of trials and tough situations.