

Daniel Intro

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[0 : 00] Let me invite you to take out your copy of God's Word and turn to the book of Daniel. There is no shame this morning in turning to your table of contents.

You'll find it between Ezekiel and Hosea. While you're getting the artist to share a funny thought I had with you this morning, sometimes the room is so quiet and it's amazing.

You go like, man, all these kids are in the room and it's so very quiet in here. And sometimes the babies are so chatty. And I think, I think, when you start paying attention, because when they walk in, I think they look at each other like, if you'll speak up, I'll speak up.

Like, we'll show them who's in charge. Seems to be one of those mornings. They're on the same rhythm this morning, aren't they? Before I begin speaking about the book of Daniel, I just want to remind you there's a few of them left out there.

I think 10 or so of these ESV scripture journals. This is something we've been doing for a little while, back when we started the book of Hebrews. Great little resource. It's got the text on one side and notes, the spot for notes on the other.

[1 : 06] So if you'd like to pick one of these up out there in the book nook, if they run out, they're not expensive. I think Amazon has them for six bucks. We've got them out there for five, so we're saving you a little. But feel free to take one, even if you don't have money today to pay for it.

You can owe us. It'll be just fine. We will trust you. So if you'd like to grab one of those, I want to encourage you to grab that out there in the hallway in the book nook. Today, I'm simply going to preach a Daniel overview sermon.

I'm going to labor to give you a brief summary of the book of Daniel as we are set to begin our study of it starting next Lord's Day. We'll spend 10-ish weeks in the text.

I'll first give you a quick flyover of the entire book, and then we will consider the three most prominent themes of the work. So even as you have the book open in front of you, I'm going to reference it at a number of times, and I would encourage you to flip to those spots and see that text yourself.

But just keep in mind we're big picture, high flyover this morning. So Daniel consists of 12 chapters, and it is widely agreed that Daniel is its author.

[2 : 13] It's not even really up for debate. The first six chapters of it are historical narrative and consist of six accounts, six different stories, one for each chapter.

This is probably the part of Daniel you're most familiar with. The final six chapters are predominantly visions that Daniel has about the future. It is helpful that this work is largely, not entirely, but largely written in chronological order.

The entire work takes place during the exile of the Jewish people after the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem in the 6th century BC. The first four chapters occur during the reign of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

In chapter one, we learn of the famous story of the four young Hebrew boys who refused to eat the defiled food of their captors and end up prospering both in health and in position because of their faithfulness.

In chapter two, king Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that he wants interpreted, but to ensure that none of his wise men can fabricate the interpretation, he insists that they tell him both the content of his dream and the interpretation.

[3 : 30] And their response to that is, that's impossible. How could we know? So they're unable to do so, but God makes Daniel able to do so. In chapter three, we have the famous story of the king's great idol that Daniel's friends refuse to worship.

So Nebuchadnezzar throws them into the fiery furnace, but God is merciful to them and they survive. Chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar writes a letter to his whole empire praising God in response to what happened in chapter three, but then it seems across a bit of time, he becomes very proud and God through an illness humbles the king.

In chapter five, Belshazzar, who is Nebuchadnezzar's son, is now king and we are told of a riotous feast he holds for pagan gods.

In fact, they take vessels that were taken out of the temple in Jerusalem and they're drinking wine. They're getting drunk out of those vessels, which were meant for the worship of God. And so a hand appears and writes on a wall, a language nobody understands.

And Daniel is called upon to interpret the writing. He tells the king that he has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. And that night, Belshazzar is slain.

[4 : 51] Chapter six contains the most famous story from Daniel. Daniel, Darius the Mede is now king and he issues an edict that he alone is to be prayed to.

Daniel continues to pray to the Hebrew God, to our God, and he's therefore thrown into a den of lions. Interestingly, this is toward the end of Daniel's life.

He's likely about 80. I don't know that many of us have seen a story Bible with a picture of Daniel in his 80s in the lion's den. And then you likely know that God mercifully spares his life from those lions.

Chapters seven and eight contain visions Daniel has during the reign of King Belshazzar about the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms. So it's prophetic, but that prophecy has been fulfilled.

Chapter nine is a record of a long prayer prayed by Daniel during the reign of Darius. Possibly one of those very prayers he was praying when he's taken captive and thrown into the lion's den.

[5 : 58] And then chapters 10, 11, and 12 are the most challenging chapters of the book. And they present another vision of Daniel's about the end of this age. So they're prophetic, but yet to be fulfilled, most will argue.

So this is a big and broad overview of the entire book. This morning, I want to present to you the three major themes of the book of Daniel, right?

So we're setting up framework for ourselves. If you're a guest this morning and you're from out of town, I apologize that you won't be able to hear the rest of what we'll be doing. But certainly for those of you who are here regularly, take some good notes.

Have these themes in your mind as we study the rest of this work. So those three major themes are, number one, the rise and fall of man. Number two, the immovable sovereignty of God.

And number three, the resilient faith of Daniel and his friends in a hostile culture. The resilient faith of Daniel and his friends in a hostile culture.

[7 : 07] So the first theme, the rise and fall of man. A careful study of Daniel, which we intend to do, will teach us that God raises up men and God brings men low.

The story of Daniel is set in the context of a Babylonian renaissance. Under King

Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the Babylonian empire flourished after a thousand year decline.

He had really turned the empire around. Country after country fell to its military might and it reached its largest size during this time.

In the region, there was just a domino. They just conquered and conquered and conquered. And Nebuchadnezzar is not just famous for the stories that we find in Daniel, but much was written about him in an extra-biblical literature.

So in my note writing this week, I often have to teach pages, the names, Bible names. Pages already knew the name Nebuchadnezzar. I did not have to teach it that so it would not spell check it any longer.

[8 : 13] Like lots of extra-biblical literature writes of this historic character, Nebuchadnezzar. He was a big deal in his time. And he was not only concerned with military might, but also cultural renewal.

He was zealous to make the city of Babylon great, and he did. It was massive. The Greek historian Herodotus said, in addition to its enormous size, it surpasses in splendor any city of the known world.

The city had large gates and avenues, a new palace, and as many as 50 temples built to false gods. This is the days of the hanging gardens of Babylon, if you know your ancient wonders of the world.

We get a picture of Nebuchadnezzar's pride in the city in Daniel chapter 4 and verse 30, where he says, is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty.

But Nebuchadnezzar's life came to an end. He did all of this, and it came to an end. And the city itself also is a memory. He is a distant memory, and the splendor of Babylon is no more.

[9 : 35] His reign was followed by another, and another, and so on. Kings are raised up by our God, and they are brought low by our God, as it is with all men.

So we obviously, none of us have positions of power like Nebuchadnezzar or any of the kings that followed him. But in the same way, we are brought high, we are promoted, and we are brought low. We are humbled by God. Nebuchadnezzar himself has a dream in chapter 2 of a man made up of different materials. And when the man is struck by a rock, it cannot withstand the blow, but it crumbles.

It's utterly destroyed by this rock that strikes it. In the last days, all the kingdoms of this world will be as nothing when God establishes his everlasting kingdom.

Daniel chapter 2 and verse 44. Daniel, in his interpretation of the dream, says, And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.

[10 : 45] It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever. The visions of chapter 7 and 8 reinforce this, as we will observe four beasts in chapter 7 and a ram and a goat in chapter 8, all which represent kingdoms that will rise and fall.

We now can look back on that and see that they rose and they fell. Beloved, we ought never be too proud of our achievements.

We must not become entranced by some idea of our might, for it is God who raises up and God who brings low. Daniel and his friends, as conquered captives, find much success in this foreign land.

We'll see that repeatedly throughout the text. But not, Daniel records that he didn't accomplish it. It was nothing that he did. Daniel chapter 1 in verse 17, we hear, as for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

He understood the means by which he was promoted as being means that were given to them by God. This book will, or at least it ought to, teach us about the fragile nature of the power of man.

[12 : 19] But, what a wonderful thing in response, it will also teach us about a power that stands in contrast to the rise and the fall of man.

And that power is, number two, the immovable sovereignty of God. This is a very good thing, beloved, when we recognize how little control we have, and we also realize who is in control. You are right to feel anxious in this age when you recognize that you have very little control. control. But, you have a reason to be faithful to the end when you realize that God is in control.

It's not a single thing in this world that escapes his grasp. He is an absolute, immovable sovereign. This book teaches us that.

The God of Daniel, our God, is unchanging, and he never ceases to rule over his creation. It is his. He declares mine over it.

[13 : 28] After God reveals the content and meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel in chapter 2, Daniel prays this, beginning in verse 20. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.

He changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and I have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter.

Daniel begins his prayer specifically praising God for his eternal sovereignty over the kings of the earth. Right? He mentions also seasons.

He's the dispeller of wisdom and of understanding. The interpretation of the dream showed that not only would earthly kingdoms come and go, but that they would come and go by the hand of God.

[14 : 42] Daniel chapter 2 and verse 34, and you can also see this in verse 45, Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, as you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand.

It was the hand of God that cut the stone out in his dream, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces.

After Daniel tells the king the interpretation of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar falls before Daniel and says to Daniel in chapter 2 and verse 47, truly your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, reigning over all the powers.

In chapter 5, we will observe King Balthazar calling upon Daniel to interpret the handwriting on the wall. Daniel tells him in chapter 5 verse 18 and following, O king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty.

God gave it to him. Verse 19, And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he killed and whom he would he kept alive.

[16:01] Whom he would he raised up and whom he would he humbled. But when his, Nebuchadnezzar's, heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne and his glory was taken from him.

He was driven from among the children of mankind and his mind was made like that of a beast and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the most high God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

God taught Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel's here telling this to his son Belthjar, right? By humbling him, making him mad, he went and lived like an animal for a while for God to say to him, you were the king because I made you the king and just like I made you the king I can make you like a dumb ox and when he realized this, he was restored once again to be the king.

King Darius too would eventually confess the sovereignty of God. after the observance of Daniel's faithfulness and God's deliverance of Daniel from a knight in the lion's den, Darius proclaims in Daniel chapter 6 and verse 26, I make a decree that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel for he is the living God enduring forever.

His kingdom shall never be destroyed and his dominion shall be to the end. So here the king saying my royal dominion in my royal dominion in my reign we will worship this God because his reign will never come to an end.

[17:51] Because of the immovable sovereignty of God the book of Daniel teaches us that he will bring the earthly kingdoms to an end and establish his kingdom forever.

I love this. I love this vision in chapter 7. It is good. I'm eager to get to Daniel chapter 7 beginning in verse 9.

If you'll turn there you'll want to see this so if you'll turn there. We'll talk about it very briefly but I want to read it. Daniel chapter 7 beginning in verse 9. Daniel says!

! So here he is ruling over lifting up casting down verse 13 I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed if you're familiar with the book of Daniel you know who he's talking about if you are not who is this one like a son of man the Lord Jesus Christ that's who this vision is of God the son coming to God the father as you're reading your new testament this phrase may be familiar to you places like Mark chapter 10 verse 45 Jesus says for even the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many right he means for his listeners to go whoa wait this is the one you're the one like a son of man who comes and sets up a kingdom that reigns forever!

[20:44] was sent by God the father in human flesh like a son of man to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law that we spoke about this morning in the catechism to die the death that all transgressors of the law deserve so that by faith in him we might become citizens of a kingdom that will never fade but it'll last forever and ever with Jesus as its ruler this future reality this sure and future reality purchased by the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is great reason for us as we await that final day to have resilient faith to recognize that we are not of this world while we are still in it so thirdly we're going to note the theme of the resilient faith of Daniel and his friends in a hostile culture finally let's look briefly at the lives of

Daniel Hananiah Mishael and Azariah those are their Hebrew names these young men were captured in the taking of Jerusalem they had been of high position in Israel but were now slaves in a

foreign land and they were being asked to betray their God for the sake of other gods there's lots of cultural pressure on them to turn their backs on the Hebrew God we will spend the next seven weeks considering the details of these stories are so much good to be unpacked out of them so I will just give you one example this morning in chapter in chapter three Daniel's friends are asked to bow their knees to a massive golden image built by Nebuchadnezzar they refuse to do so I think you're familiar with the story and so this report comes to the king these three will not do it and he brings them before him so they're before this Nebuchadnezzar this great and grand mighty king Daniel chapter! 3 beginning in verse 14 we read then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach Meshach and Abednego these were the names given to them change their names as they went to be slaves in Babylon be brought so they brought these men before the king Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them is it true oh Shadrach Meshach and Abednego that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn pipe lyre trigon harp bagpipe and every kind of music to fall down and worship the image that I have made well and good but if you do not worship you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace and who is the God who would deliver you out of as a God who is a God who would oppose King Nebuchadnezzar verse 16 Shadrach Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king oh Nebuchadnezzar we have no need to answer you in this matter no need to answer in the face of this king I don't think we have a lot of context for what's happening here the fact that they're even standing before the king was massively significant thing and he is furious at them this is the kind of off with their heads sort of situation and they say we have no need to answer you in the matter what moxie what faith but they go on to say if this be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand oh king he is more mighty than you verse 18 but if not be it known to you oh king that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up!

two ish months the rise and fall of man the immovable! sovereignty of God and the resilient faith of Daniel and his friends in a hostile culture and I hope that you will join me in eager expectation of what the Lord will teach us as we continue our study of this book oh that it would make us humble that it would make us confident in our unchangingly sovereign God and that it would help us to be faithful to the end after all beloved this is God's word to us written for his glory and our good so we would all do well to listen to it nor believe its promises and to obey its commands let's pray together