

Daniel #2**January 14, 2024****Series Title: Daniel's Visions Of the Ages****Today's Message: Daniel Prepares to Serve God (Not Nebuchadnezzar); Daniel 1**

The Book of Daniel is a book of both history and of visions. We've entitled the forthcoming series of messages from Daniel, "Visions Of the Ages." Not only do we learn about the historic events surrounding Daniel and the exile of the southern kingdom of Israel, but we learn of God's plan for the ages!

Daniel is considered one of the major prophets in the Bible. It is the shortest book among the major prophets. The shortest is Lamentations, which was given to Jeremiah. It may surprise you that the book of Daniel is quoted more in the New Testament more than any other OT book! And it may also surprise you to know that it contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book in the Bible.

The book of Daniel teaches us numerous truths about God. First, the book of Daniel is straightforward in declaring that God, "the Sovereign Lord," rules over kings and kingdoms. He raises up and He brings down. He uses kings and nations for a season to serve His purposes, then brings them down. In other words, the rise and fall of kings, nations and empires is in the Sovereign Lord's hand! Second, as you studied in the sermon notes from last week, nearly 800 years passed from the time God warned Israel in Deuteronomy 28 of national exile and a scattering among the nations if, in the course of time, they refused to earnestly repent from their sins. The exile began in 605 B.C.¹ It should become evident--and it is quite hidden from us if we aren't looking--that God is long-suffering and patient with His people. He patiently bore with the stubborn, hard-hearted people of Israel. Surely, knowing this about the character and nature of God should bring us much comfort and encouragement!

The setting and historical period of Daniel is significant. I cannot think of a more gut-wrenching time in the history of Israel than what we find summarized in 2 Chronicles 35 and 36. From Josiah's humble beginnings and successes, to his high handed pride and fall (2 Chronicles 35), through the next four evil kings who ignored the word of God spoken through the mighty prophets of Israel, to the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of many people, Israel suffered untold griefs and punishments at the hand of wicked kings according to the will of God!

In summary, God did use the kings and kingdoms of men to carry out His judgments and discipline of Israel. But, as we know, God raises up and brings down kings and kingdoms according to His wise purposes. It will happen to every king and nation mentioned in the book of Daniel and beyond! For more thrilling reading about this, and the fall of Babylon and the other nations by the hand of God read Isaiah, chapters 11, and 13 – 21, etc. God is the judge of kings and kingdoms!

Daniel, whose name means "God is my Judge," is the author of the book. Daniel was among the first exiles to Babylon. He was probably in his early teen years when he was taken by force to Babylon by the Babylonian army led by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. Per Nebuchadnezzar's decree the best and brightest families were first exiled to Babylon (Daniel 1:3). From 605 B.C. until the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., many other Israelites were led away to captivity. Daniel probably wrote this book in the latter days of the 70 years of captivity of the people of Judah in Babylon, or just after 536 B.C. Daniel would have been around 85 years old at the end of captivity.

¹ Deuteronomy 28 occurs just days before the people of Israel set out to pass through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. By adhering to a conservative timeline, this date would be set in 1406 B.C. Then, the first exiles to leave Judah for Babylon, which included Daniel, would have occurred in 605 B.C. O, my soul! behold the mercy and patience of God!

Today, let us take note of 1) how Israel prepared for exile; 2) how the best of the young men was prepared for Nebuchadnezzar; and 3) how Daniel prepared for God.

I. (Daniel 1:1-2) Israel Prepared for Exile

- A. The Key: Refusal to listen to the prophets.
 - 1. Jehoiakim, the last king to be warned.
 - 2. Jeremiah, the prophet, warned the kings and the people of Judah for 23 years.
 - a) **Read** Jeremiah 25:1-11
- B. (1:2) The **Lord gave** Jehoiakim over to the will and desire of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 1. Along with the articles of the temple. All the valuables used for worship.
 - 2. The Lord does not love the stuff of the “temple” so much.
 - 3. Nor does He love His reputation among the wicked kings more than He does His Word!
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar would “glory” in his taking of the “things” of the “god” of Jehoiakim.
 - b) Jehoiakim was obviously “worshiping” but not worshiping the True God, the Sovereign God according to Truth.
 - (1) God detests outward worship without any regard of the inward condition of the heart.
 - (a) See Isaiah 1:1-23; Hosea 6:6
 - 4. The Lord exercised His Sovereign decree according to His Word from Deut. 28:47-52, when He warned them that a powerful nation would overtake Israel!
 - a) But, if--as Deut. 32:28-30 says-- if they would have repented, they would have overcome all enemies who came against them!
 - 5. The Lord exercised His Sovereign Promise that they would be in exile for 70 years, as Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 25:11.
 - a) God had warned them in Leviticus 26:33-43 that when they were given over to a wicked nation, the land would be left empty, and would “enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them...” (Lev. 26:34 and 43)
 - (1) The 70 years: 1 year for all the sabbath years neglected from 1026 B.C. until the exile ended in 536 B.C., or 490 years.
 - (2) But failure to keep the sabbath years were not the only reason for the exile. According to the prophets, Israel had an appetite for idolatry as well as the wicked practices of the nations around them, including prostitution and child sacrifice.
- C. Israel had prepared itself for exile through its neglect of God and of His laws.

II. (1:3-7) Good Young Men are prepared for Nebuchadnezzar’s Service

- A. The selection and preparation of the finest young men.
 - 1. The best of the best.
 - a) The best in physical appearance: no physical defects, and handsome.
 - b) The best in intellect and leadership abilities: having an aptitude for learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace.
 - c) The best and brightest in learning the language, and the Babylonian way.
 - 2. The young men ate from the king’s table
 - 3. The young men were rigorously trained for three years

- B. Brainwashing or the unseen hand of God?
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar intended to train and indoctrinate these young men in the Babylonian way of thinking and of life.
 - a) In three years, a man would probably be successfully indoctrinated.
 - 2. But the Sovereign hand of God was preparing them for ultimately accomplishing His will in relation to the Jewish people, their wellbeing, and eventual return to the land of Judah.
 - a) In three years, God had prepared His men for His service.
- C. **Application:** First, in our lives and in our circumstances the hand of God may move in ways least expected and recognized. "His ways are not our ways" and the situations He works through are often difficult, but nevertheless, His way of preparing us for His service and glory!
 - 1. Fearing God and Trust in His Sovereign plan unfolding providentially is necessary!

III. (1:8-21) Daniel Prepared himself for God's service

- A. (1:8-10) Daniel's troubled conscience and God's favor
 - 1. The fear of self-defilement by eating the royal food
 - 2. The fear and favor of the officer over Daniel's development
 - a) The official was fearful of the king who prescribed the diet.
 - b) The official was gracious and sympathetic toward Daniel.
 - (1) **"God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel."**
- B. (1:11-16) Daniel's test proved a favorable outcome.
 - 1. Daniel and the other three's desire to obey God resulted in God overseeing their health during the entirety of their training.
 - 2. Daniel and his friends were motivated by their desire to know God and be faithful to Him. More than good health, they desired to seek God's face without hinderance or guilt!
 - 3. **Application:** You and I must learn to be energized by a desire to know God better!
- C. (1:17-20) Daniel and his friends are presented to the king.
 - 1. At the end of the training period, having obeyed God and sought Him, God gave them favor with the king!
 - a) This would have been a most difficult interview. If the king disapproved, death awaited!
 - 2. "They entered the king's service."
 - a) They worked hard to excel on every point, working with diligence, but God was behind their success.
 - (1) God had providentially arranged their capture and exile, and he "ensured their promotion to a place of influence" to fulfill the will of God for the Jews in Babylon.
 - 3. Their good attitude and effort to succeed was in obedience to God's word through Jeremiah.
 - a) Jer. 29:7, "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace, you will have peace."
 - (1) We are pilgrims in a dark and difficult world. God's ways are contrary to the world in which we live. Nevertheless, we are Christ's ambassadors (See 2 Cor. 5:19-20).
 - (2) Be in the world but not of the world! See what Jesus prayed in **John 17:14-16**.
- D. (1:21) Daniel was given privilege and place in God's service all the days of his life in exile!
 - 1. If you would spend your life for God, you must spend your time with God!