

DANIEL

1. Introduction

A) We come to the last of the Major Prophets tonight – a book which contains two of the most well known stories in the Bible.

> What child growing up in a Christian family / church doesn't know the stories about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace?

Or how about Daniel in the lions' den?

> Unfortunately the main focus of these stories and the other 10 chapters of Daniel are often missed because we aren't as aware of their context as we ought to be.

B) The Author is Daniel

> He writes over a span of about 70 years – the years of exile, which began with the invasion of Babylon and during the first deportation Jews in 605. (Daniel 1:1-7)

C) The underlying premise for Daniel

> The story of Israel is important because they are the people God entered into a covenant with, made promises to, and even dwelt with.

> God's reputation, by His sovereign choice, is tied to Israel

His intent was to reveal His glory through Israel (Psalm 96:1-13)

But His commitment was to His own glory – even if it meant severe judgment upon Israel (Ezekiel 36:22-23; 39:21)

> The problem: The assumption of the nations during this time was that the nation who won in battle had the greater god

Do you remember what the Philistines did with the Ark of the Covenant when they defeated Israel in battle?

Do you remember what happened to Dagon? (1 Samuel 5)

What did Babylon do when they destroyed Jerusalem and the temple? (Jer 52:12-19)

What did King Belshazzar do that incurred God's wrath? (Daniel 5:1-4)

* God's commitment to His glory would not be frustrated by Israel's rebellion, it would be accomplished.

2. Structural Overview of Daniel

A) Chapters 1-6 recount six separate stories that reveal God's glory while His people are in exile

> Chapter 1 – God will bless His people Israel through 4 young Hebrew boys who will excel in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (Daniel 1:17-21)

The significance of this blessing for Israel is seen in that last verse (Daniel 1:21)

How important is Cyrus in God's plan? (Ezra 1:1)

> Chapter 2 – God reveals His glory to Nebuchadnezzar through a dream

An impossible demand from the king (Daniel 2:1-11)

Daniel's confidence in and commitment to God's glory (Daniel 2:25-28)

Daniel's impact upon the great King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:46-47)

> Chapter 3 – God reveals His glory in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar's idol

What was Israel's greatest offense against God? Idolatry! (Ezekiel 16)

What is the commitment of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? (Daniel 3:12)

What is King Nebuchadnezzar's response? (Daniel 3:13-19)

What did King Nebuchadnezzar learn? (Daniel 2:28-29)

> Chapter 4 – God reveals His glory to a proud Nebuchadnezzar – again

King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and warning (Daniel 4:24-25)

King Nebuchadnezzar's pride (Daniel 4:27-31)

What did King Nebuchadnezzar learn? (Daniel 3:34-37)

> Chapter 5 – God reveals His glory to Nebuchadnezzar's arrogant son

King Belshazzar's foolish choice (Daniel 5:1-6)

What did King Belshazzar learn? (Daniel 5:18-28)

> Chapter 6 – God reveals His glory to King Darius the Mede

The arrogance of King Darius (Daniel 6:1-9)

The foolishness of King Darius (Daniel 6:14-17)

What lesson did the king's advisors learn? (Daniel 6:24)

What lesson did King Darius learn? (Daniel 6:25-27)

* Each of the first 6 chapters is a snapshot that reveals God's glory

Ezek 36:22-23 - "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

B) Chapters 7-12 focus on God's glory that will be revealed through His sovereignty over the future

> In this section of the book we find God revealing to Daniel sovereignty over the future
In relationship to the kingdoms of the world
In relationship to the nation of Israel
In relationship to the only kingdom that will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:9-14)

> Not only were these visions difficult for Daniel to see, but they were difficult for him to understand even when explained (Daniel 7:15; 8:27)

ILLUSTRATE: Some of you may remember a man named Al Kinney – he attended our church back in the early eighties.

Al was on the cutting edge of a movement that was unfamiliar to the general population – computer technology

I remember going to his house and just looking at his computer

One time when we were having lunch I asked Al about the significance and future of computers to someone like me

He smiled and said I wouldn't believe it if he told me.

He said that in the near future computers would be a part of our lives
Every business would have one. Amazing!
Every home would have one. What? Why?

And then he said the technology that was being developed would allow for computers to be small enough to carry around

I remember asking him, "Why would anyone want to carry a computer around?!"

I thought he was a foolish dreamer.

25 years later what seemed incredible to imagine is now commonplace.

How many of you have an I-Phone?

That phone is far more complex than that big computer in Al's home.

* Now, imagine what it must have been like for Daniel to see and hear what would happen hundreds and thousands of years in the future

Dan 8:26-27 - "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future." I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; **it was beyond understanding.**

> But now, through the lens of history, we can see with clarity that the rise and fall of kingdoms is according to God's sovereign plan

3. Significant Lessons to Learn from Daniel

A) Israel may have been decimated due to rebellion but God preserved a remnant to fulfill His promises

> 4 Hebrew boys who are not willing to compromise their devotion to God's law

The underlying issue of the king's food – previously offered to the idols and presumed to contain the power of the idols.

> 3 Hebrew boys who are unwilling to bow down to any god but God

A fiery death is a better option than facing the wrath of God

> 1 Hebrew man - a prayer warrior who intercedes on behalf of his people

3 times a day in front of an open window facing Jerusalem?

Why? (1 Kings 8:46-52)

Being consumed by lions a better option than disloyalty to his God

1 time in response to the prophecies of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:1-19)

B) The Importance of Seeking to Understand God's Prophetic Word

> Nebuchadnezzar's experience (Daniel 4)

> Daniel's experience (Daniel 9:1-2)

> Our admonition toward God's Word – even His prophetic Word (Daniel 9:24-27; Matt 24:15)

C) God is God and He will be glorified

> Through the exile and return of Israel into their land

And through His fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David

> Applied: I can either be a vessel He uses to reveal His glory

Or I can refuse to acknowledge His glory and reap the consequences