

Lesson 04: Daniel

GROW University - Old Testament 103

Context

Historical:

Time	605-606 BC (first wave of exile) — 536/537 BC (first wave of return)
Location	Babylon

Babylon was conquered by the Medes and the Persians in 539 BC.

Chapters	Who is reigning? (A, B, or C)	Answer Bank
1-4, 7, 8		A. The Medo Persian Empire
5		B. Babylon
9, 6		C. The last Babylonian king

Redemptive-historical:

Q: Who sovereignly rules the earth?

Q: Having been dominated by first the Babylonian and now the Medo-Persians, is Yahweh in control of the world of men, or are there kings and empires stronger than Yahweh?

Q: Where is their God? How will all this turn out, both in the immediate future and when all of history is said and done?

Q: How ought the people of God behave through all of this?

Theme

The Most High, the God of Daniel, sovereignly rules and reigns supreme over all mankind. Therefore His people are brave in the face of persecution.

In this book, God is largely called "The Most High."

Structure: mirroring effect (chiasm, shown in outline)

4:34-35: Middle of the structure and the major point of the book.

Another major theme: the persecution and affliction of the people of God.

Outline W. Pivotal Texts¹

- A. Chapter 1-9 — God alone is sovereign; His people are afflicted by pseudo-sovereigns
 - I. Ch. 1—*Exile; People of God afflicted*
 - B. Ch. 2— Four empires brought low by God's king (type in history)²
 - C. Ch. 3.— King sets himself up as god; People of God afflicted
 - D. Ch. 4 — Nebuchadnezzar brought low³
 - D. Ch. 5 — Belshazzar brought low
 - C. Ch. 6—King sets himself up as god; People of God afflicted
 - B. Ch. 7— Four empires brought low by God's king (eschatological)
 - B. Ch. 8— Four empires brought low
 - A. Ch. 9 — Return from exile; Messiah afflicted
- B. Chapter 10-12 — *Visions of the future*

Theme Texts

* *We'll be reading the bold verses*

Daniel 4, 5

Chapter 4:

wv24-26

wv29-30, 31

wv34-35, 37

Chapter 5:⁴

wv22-23

¹ These chapters are not chronological, but thematically arranged. (A chronology of the chapters most likely goes like this: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 5, 9, 6.)

² Chapters 2-7 were originally written in Aramaic.

³ 4:34-35 sits at the middle of the thematic chiasm.

⁴ Belshazzar was not the king of Babylon, but only the co-regent of the city for his father, Nabonidus, who was currently elsewhere in the empire.

vv26-28

vv30-31

The point: the Most High will brook no rivals. He alone rules all the affairs of Heaven and Earth. ⁵

Daniel 3, 6

Chapter 3

King: Nebuchadnezzar

Faithful Jewish victims: Daniel's three friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego
(fiery furnace)

vv12-15.

vv16-18.

v29⁶

Chapter 6: similar account:

King: Darius⁷

Faithful Jewish victim: Daniel (lion's den)

v5

vv7-9, 10.

But Darius *liked* Daniel (**vv14-15**)

v16: same emphasis as 3:15, only attended to with different words. Darius is hopeful.

vv20-23

⁵ This is much of the point Augustine makes in *The City of God*.

⁶ Notice that this story begins and ends with a decree, only of different emphasis.

⁷ Darius may not be a name, but a title (like Caesar) for Cyrus, King of the Medes.

vv26-27:⁸

The point: just because the true God reigns, does not mean that His people will be exempt from persecution.⁹

Daniel 2, 7-8:

Some Dreams and Visions about the future¹⁰

Chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, which only Daniel can interpret¹¹

Statue Part	Material (cf. vv31-33)	The Four Successive Kingdoms
Head	Gold	Nebudchadnezzar / Babylon
Chest/Arms	Silver	Medo-Persian Empire in 539 B.C.
Belly/Thighs	Bronze	Alexander the Great / Greece in 332 B.C.
Feet	Iron/Clay Mix	Roman Empire in 2nd—1st Centuries B.C.

vv34-35:

v44: What about that rock that smashed the statue and itself grew into a mountain?

⁸ Again, different sorts of decrees begin and end the story.

⁹ **2 Timothy 3:12** says, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

¹⁰ Now, there may not be time for this in the class, but it sure is interesting enough to note: Daniel is here portrayed as a new Joseph. There are many similarities between them. They are both captured and oppressed by Gentiles when they are young. They both rise high in the service of the Gentiles, second in command no less. They are both falsely accused. They are both delivered by God in life threatening situations. They both interpret dreams. They both ascribe their ability to interpret dreams to God in the face of others who cannot interpret them relying on *their* religious means. The point of all of this is most likely to encourage the people of God that as He had been with His people before in a foreign land to protect them. He will do so again. Afterwards, as He brought His people out of Egypt. He will bring them out of Babylon too. The "new Joseph" is a sign unto all these things. Both are types of Christ.

¹¹ Actually, Daniel is able to recount to Nebuchadnezzar the *content* of the dream as well without having first been told. All of this, of course, comes from the sovereign hand of God (cf. 2:19-23, 27-30.)

Chapter 7:

A dream of four beasts (cf vv. 2ff).

A vision of God, whom he calls The Ancient of Days.

V9, 13. Who is this "one like a son of man" who will rule forever with sovereignty given to Him by God?

Mark 14:61-62, *"But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*

Jesus is saying that He has the divine prerogative to approach the living and true God, and to reign with Him, and that He will return to earth on the clouds of heaven in due time to publicly take what is rightfully His!

7:17-18. (Cf. also vv. 21-27.)

Revelation 20:4, *"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."*

Revelation 22:5, *"There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."*

Further study: chapter 8 — A similar thing is going on.

Daniel 1, 9

In chapter 1, the people of God go into exile.

In chapter 9, the people of God are getting ready to come out! (Cf. 1:2 & 9:2.)

Chapter 1: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego¹² are placed in a Babylonian prep school of sorts. Have shown potential in someday serving the kingdom. They ask that they might be exempt from eating foods outside of their religious dietary laws.

The result: **v15**.

The point: to launch a doctrine that Daniel will drive home again and again throughout this book (**v17**).

Another major sub-theme: wisdom (almost every chapter)

Chapter 9.

v2. How did he know that the exile was almost over?

The prayer that follows, beginning in verse 3, is eloquent, vigorous, moving, and overwhelming.

We are all challenged to adopt the kind of language he uses in our own prayer lives. I encourage all of us to read and meditate on his prayer this week.

It's particularly exciting in this context because Daniel again refers to God as "Yahweh, our God!" The end of the exile is dawning!

The real exile will not end simply with the Jews' return to Jerusalem.¹³ *That* exile ends only when Christ makes atonement for our sins.

9:25-27.

Further study: Read those verses again carefully later, and why you'll see is that what we have here is a prophecy about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, then the coming of Christ and His death on behalf of sinners.

Daniel 10-12

Further study: These chapters don't fit in the mirroring structure of the first 9 chapters, but they are just as important.

More predictive prophesies about the future of the people of God, again both in the more *immediate* future and *into the last days*.

¹² The last three of which being given their Babylonian names.

¹³ The exile that began when Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, the separation from God that we all experience because of our sins. Israel's physical exile is a picture of that true, spiritual exile.

Conclusion

POP QUIZ: Match the Prophetic Book to its Theme.

	Fill-in	Book Theme	Book
1	E	The glory of Yahweh has departed from His land, because He is jealous for His name. But His glory will return, because He is jealous for His name. Ultimately, His glory will be restored to the entire earth in the last days.	A. Jeremiah
2	A	The old covenant has failed; not because it itself was defunct, but because the people were not able to keep it due to their sinful hearts. Therefore a new covenant is needed which will involve new hearts for the people of God.	B. Isaiah
3	D	We are in mourning because Yahweh has done this, even though it's our fault. Now we need Him to change our hearts, for He will again comfort us.	C. Daniel
4	B	Yahweh is the only God. We know this for four reasons: Exhibit A: He alone is holy, "the Holy One of Israel," whereas the idols are the creation of man's idolatrous heart, and the people are sinful. Exhibit B: He alone is high and lifted up, majestic, whereas the idols and kings of the earth are lifted up only in vain pride. Exhibit C: He alone controls history, sees and controls the future, whereas the idols and great kings of the nations can do nothing and cannot save. Exhibit D: He alone can save, bringing peace to the earth in the form of a New Creation, whereas the idols cannot save and the kings only bring war.	D. Lamentations
5	C	The Most High, the God of Daniel, sovereignly rules and reigns supreme over all mankind. Therefore His people are brave in the face of persecution.	E. Ezekiel