



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## Old Testament Survey

### Lesson 38 – The Prophet Daniel and His Comforting Visions of the Future (Daniel)

#### The Prophet Daniel

Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among those skilled young Jews carried off into Babylonia in the first attack in 605 BC. Daniel rose to prominence in Babylon and was a respected wise man in the court of Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC) and his successors. Daniel continued to be prominent in the first years of the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great (559-529 BC) and Darius the Mede.

Since Darius the Mede is not mentioned by this name in any of the historical records, unbelieving scholars doubt whether he ever existed. They had doubted that Belshazzar had ever existed until records were discovered that mentioned his name. It is possible that Darius the Mede had another name that was used in the records. It is also possible that Cyrus of Persia and Darius the Mede are the same person with two names. Cyrus had ancestors from both the Medes and the Persians.

Daniel lived through the entire 70-year period (606-536 BC) of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah. He probably died around 530 BC, at the age of 90 or more. Already during his lifetime he had acquired a great reputation for wisdom and piety (Ezekiel 14:14; 28:3). Part of Daniel's book is written in Aramaic instead than Hebrew. Aramaic was a common language in the world at that time.

#### The Emperors of the New Babylonian Empire

Baladan

Berodach-Baladan – in the days of Hezekiah of Judah (2 Kings 20:12)

Nabopolassar (626-605 BC)

Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC)

Evil-Merodach (562-560 BC)

Nergalshuruzur (560-556 BC)

Nabonidus (556-539 BC)

Belshazzar (553-539 BC)

#### The Emperors of the Medes and Persians

The Persian kings were as follows:

Cyrus the Great (Darius the Mede?) – 559-530 BC

Cambyses, conqueror of Egypt – 530-522 BC

Smerdis (Bardiya), a rebel king – 522 BC

Darius I, the Great – 522-486 BC

Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) – 486-465 BC

Artaxerxes I – 465-424 BC

Xerxes II – 424 BC

Darius II – 423-404 BC

Artaxerxes II – 404-358 BC

Artaxerxes III – 358-338 BC

Arses (Artaxerxes IV) – 338-336 BC

Darius III, conquered by Alexander the Great – 336-331 BC

Thus, the Persian Empire lasted roughly from 555 to 333 BC.

### **Important Dates in the History of the Exiles:**

605 BC – Some skilled Jews, including Daniel and his 3 friends, were sent to Babylon.

597 BC – More Jews, including Jehoiachin and Ezekiel, were exiled to Babylonia.

586 BC – Jerusalem was destroyed, and most of the remaining Jews were exiled.

605-536 BC – The 70-year Babylonian Captivity, as prophesied by Jeremiah

539-536 BC – The Persians overthrow the Babylonian Empire, and some Jews return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) and Jeshua (Joshua) the priest.

520-516 BC – The Jews rebuild the Temple under the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

458 BC – Ezra, scribe and priest, arrives in Jerusalem with more Jews.

445 BC – Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, arrives in Palestine.

God sends Malachi to the Jews as the last of His prophets.

At about this same time the Buddha was active in India, and Confucius was active in China.

### **The Visions of Daniel**

Although there are some chapters of Daniel that are chiefly historical in nature (such as chapters 1, 3, and 6), the main part of the book consists of visions or dreams. Thus, the book of Daniel is similar to the book of Revelation in the New Testament. Daniel interprets two dreams of the emperor Nebuchadnezzar II. He interprets the handwriting on the wall for Belshazzar. And he himself has dreams and visions. The angel Gabriel and another angel appear to him and reveal the future to him. The chief concept in all these visions is the triumph of the kingdom of God over all the kingdoms of the world. Daniel receives visions concerning kingdoms of the future and the future of the Jewish nation. His visions extend into the New Testament age and even to the end of the world.

Since the eternal kingdom promised to David and his family seemed to have come to an end with the Babylonian Captivity, God's people needed these visions to assure them that the God of Israel had not forgotten them, that He was still in control, and that the kingdom promised to David and his Son, the Messiah, would surely come.

Read the chapters in Daniel listed below. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

#### Chapter 1 – *Daniel and His Three Friends Are Brought to Babylon*

1. Nebuchadnezzar II captures many skilled Jews in 605 BC (vv. 1-7).
2. Daniel and his three friends refuse to eat the king's food but stay healthy (vv. 8-16).
3. God blesses Daniel and his three friends in Babylon (vv. 17-21).

**"He (the king) found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers"** (v. \_\_\_\_)

#### Chapter 2 – *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of God's Everlasting Kingdom*

4. The Chaldean wise men are unable to tell or interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 1-13).
5. God gives Daniel the dream and its meaning (vv. 14-23).

**"He reveals deep and secret things"** (v. \_\_\_\_)

6. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was (vv. 24-35).
7. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 36-45).

Kingdom #1: A head of gold: Babylonia

Kingdom #2: Breast and arms of silver: Persia

Kingdom #3: Belly and thighs of bronze: Macedonia, Alexander's empire

Kingdom #4: Legs of iron, feet partly clay: Rome

The Eternal Kingdom: Kingdom of God and of His Christ

**“In the days of these (Roman) kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed”** (v. \_\_\_\_ This referred to Caesar Augustus, the ruler at time of the birth of JESUS.

8. Nebuchadnezzar promotes Daniel and his three friends (vv. 46-49).

Chapter 3 – *The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace*

9. Nebuchadnezzar commands that his golden image be worshiped (vv. 1-7).

It was 27,5 m (90 feet) high and 2,75 m (9 feet) wide.

10. The three friends of Daniel refuse to worship the image (vv. 8-18).

**“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace”** (v. \_\_\_\_

11. God saves the three men from death in the fiery furnace (vv. 19-30).

**“The hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected”** (v. \_\_\_\_

Note: Archaeologists have uncovered a library in Babylon. In this library a Babylonian regulation was found which demanded that persons guilty of showing impiety to the gods were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Those guilty of committing wrong against the king were to be thrown into a den of lions (see #24 below). In fact, both a fiery furnace and an animal cage have been discovered in the ruins of Babylon.

Chapter 4 – *Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream, His Pride, and His Madness*

12. Nebuchadnezzar tells his strange dream to Daniel (vv. 1-18).

A mighty tree is cut down, and just its stump is left in the grass.

13. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (vv. 19-27).

Nebuchadnezzar will be cut down and will be made to eat grass like an ox.

14. God makes Nebuchadnezzar insane because of his pride (vv. 28-33).

15. God restores Nebuchadnezzar’s mind when he humbles himself (vv. 34-37).

Note: Babylon was indeed a magnificent city. The wall enclosing it was 17,7 km (11 miles) long and 26 m (85 feet) thick. It was 91,5 m (300 feet) high and went 10,7 m (35 feet) into the ground. Nebuchadnezzar II had a huge palace near which were his famous Hanging Gardens – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Other sights in the city were the Ishtar Gate and the Temple of Marduk.

Chapter 7 – *Daniel’s Dream of Future Kingdoms* (in 533 BC in Belshazzar’s reign)

16. Daniel dreams of four beasts, ten horns, a little horn, and judgment (vv. 1-14).

17. God reveals the interpretation of the dream to Daniel (vv. 15-28).

The first beast, a lion: Babylon

The second beast, a bear: Persia

The third beast, a leopard: Macedonia

The fourth beast with iron teeth: Rome

The ten horns arising out of the Roman Empire

The little horn: the New Testament Antichrist (the Roman papacy) (see 2 Thessalonians 2)

The judgment by the Son of Man, the Ancient of Days: The End of the World

**“His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom”** (v. \_\_\_\_

Chapter 8 – Daniel's Visions of the Ram, the He-Goat, and Another Little Horn

18. The ram: Persia (the Medes and the Persians)  
The he-goat: Macedonia (Alexander the Great)  
The Four Horns: Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, Egypt arising out of Alexander's empire  
The little horn: Antiochus IV of Syria (Antiochus Epiphanes), the Old Testament Antichrist

Daniel's visions came to pass many years after Daniel died. The he-goat overcame the ram, and the ram's kingdom was divided into four parts. From one part (Syria) came Antiochus IV (175-163 BC), who tried to wipe out the Jewish worship of the true God.

**"He shall even rise against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken"** (v. \_\_\_\_)

Chapter 5 – Belshazzar's Feast and the Handwriting on the Wall

19. Belshazzar celebrates a feast and uses utensils stolen from God's Temple (vv. 1-4).  
20. Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall that frightens Belshazzar (vv. 5-29).  
**"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN"** (numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided) (v. \_\_\_\_)  
21. The Persians take Babylon that same night, and Darius the Mede (Cyrus?) begins ruling (vv. 30-31).  
These events were prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Chapter 6 - God Preserves Daniel's Life in the Lions' Den

22. Daniel's enemies trick Darius into making a law against prayer to Daniel's God (vv. 1-9).  
23. Daniel disobeys the king's orders and prays to God as always (vv. 10-13).  
24. God saves Daniel from the hungry lions, but his enemies are killed (vv. 14-24).  
**"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
25. Darius the Mede orders his people to worship the true God of Daniel (25-28).

Chapter 9 – The Results of Daniel's Study of Jeremiah's Prophecies

26. Daniel realizes the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah are about to end (vv. 1-2).  
27. Daniel confesses the sins of Israel and prays for deliverance (vv. 3-19).  
**"To us belongs shame of face... To the LORD our God belong mercy and forgiveness"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
**"Let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
**"O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
28. The angel Gabriel prophesies the days of the coming Messiah and New Testament (vv. 20-27).  
**"Seventy weeks (sevens) are determined...to make reconciliation for iniquity"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
**"Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
**"Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
**"The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary"** (v. \_\_\_\_)  
Seventy sevens would be 490 years. Within that time the Messiah (**JESUS**) would come and would atone for the iniquity of the people by being cut off (crucified) in their place. After that Jerusalem and its Temple would be destroyed. This happened in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple.

Chapter 10 – Daniel Is Strengthened to Receive Further Revelations

**"I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days"**

(v. \_\_\_\_

Chapter 11 – Prophecies of Egypt, Syria, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes).

Daniel is given detailed information about the future history of his people, including the prolonged hostility between Egypt (the king of the South) and Syria (the king of the North). He was told about the rise of the Old Testament Antichrist from Syria, who will even dare to offer pigs (which were unclean) as a sacrifice in God's Temple. But some faithful Israelites would arise (the Maccabees) to withstand him. It seems that Daniel is even told about the future Herod the Great.

Chapter 12 – Prophecies of God's Deliverance of His People

**"You shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days"** (v. \_\_\_\_

**Questions**

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1. Why did Nebuchadnezzar take Daniel and his three friends to Babylon?
2. What impossible task did Nebuchadnezzar ask his magicians to do?
3. How was Daniel able to accomplish this impossible feat?
4. In what way was Jesus prophesied by God in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
5. How did the God of the three men in the furnace show that He was the true God?
6. What lesson did God teach Nebuchadnezzar through his insanity?
7. What were the four kingdoms in the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel and how were they pictured in each dream?
8. What added feature appeared in Daniel's dream that was not in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
9. What event took place on the same day Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall?
10. How did Darius the Mede punish those who accused Daniel of wrongdoing?
11. Which prophecy of Jeremiah led Daniel to fervent prayer?
12. Which New Testament events did Gabriel reveal to Daniel?
13. Who was the "Old Testament Antichrist"?
14. Who are the kings of the south and of the north?