

Responding to a World Turned Upside Down, Part 1

Daniel 1

In our English Bibles, the book of Daniel is rightly sandwiched between the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, on the one hand and the twelve minor prophets on the other.

However, it's interesting that in the Hebrew bible Daniel isn't grouped with the prophetic books. Nevertheless, we know Daniel to be a prophet because Jesus said he was a prophet in **Matt. 24:15**.

A broad outline of Daniel would divide it nicely into two halves. We might call Chapters 1 – 6, "*Daniel's Memoirs*." These chapters are historical in nature. And chapters 7 – 12, could be called "*Daniel's Message*," because those chapters are prophetic in nature.

The book of Daniel is considered an Old Testament version of the book of Revelation. It is likewise apocalyptic which means it possesses the following characteristics:

- God's truth was revealed in visions.
- Signs and symbols were used extensively.
- Normally, apocalyptic literature reveals God's program for the future of His people Israel.

One of the more unusual things about the book of Daniel is that it was written in two different languages:

Chapter	Language
1:1 – 2:4a	Hebrew
2:4b – 7:28	Aramaic
8 – 12	Hebrew

For those parts of the book that had special Jewish relevance Daniel wrote in Hebrew, and for those parts having Gentile relevance he wrote in Aramaic.

One of the criticisms of liberal scholars is that the prophecies in the book of Daniel are too accurate. The astonishing detail of many of these prophecies has led some scholars to believe that Daniel was written **after** the events happened rather than **before**.

However, you and I know that such a view denies the power of God to reveal what He has predetermined.

The supreme message of the book of Daniel is that no matter what's going on in the world **God is in control!** God is sovereign over the profound events of this world, and He is equally sovereign over the most trivial and mundane.

A secondary message of this great book is the hope, encouragement, and comfort of a disobedient, discouraged, and demoralized people. The Jews would be able to see in Daniel's prophecies that though Gentile kingdoms would come and go, there would be a future deliverance for Israel. And God will protect and preserve His covenant people and will one day bring them back to occupy their promised land.

- I. **The Besieged City** (v. 1)
- II. **The Broken Covenant** (v. 2)
- III. **The Brainwashed Captives** (vv. 3 – 7)
- IV. **The Bold Choice** (vv. 8 – 16)
- V. **The Best Candidates** (vv. 17 – 21)

I. The Besieged City (v. 1)

1a “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah...”

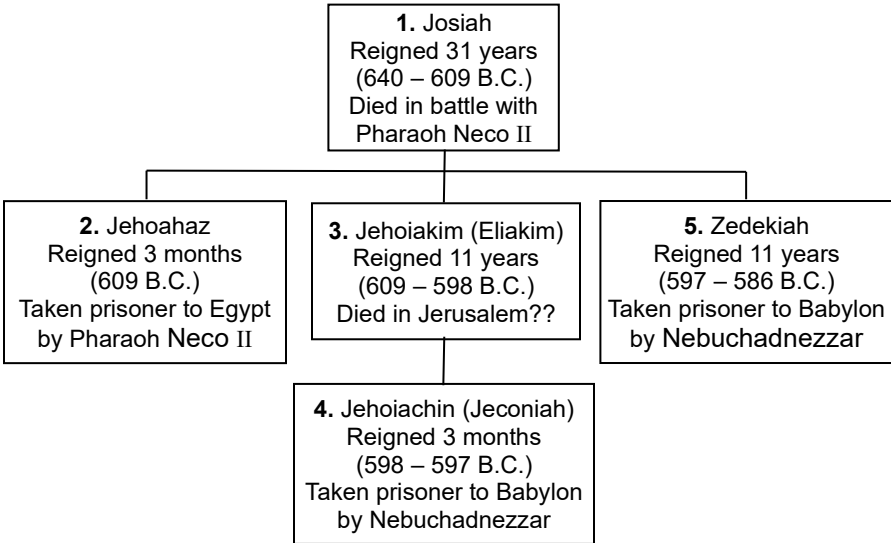
Because of Solomon’s disobedience, God pronounced judgment and foretold that Solomon’s son would rule only a small portion of the nation Israel rather than the whole.

And after Solomon died, God’s word came to pass. The nation was divided. The *northern* kingdom, made up of ten tribes, selected their own king. While the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became what is called the *southern* kingdom and they had their own king.

The *northern* kingdom had a total of **19** different kings. However, ***not one*** of those kings ever obeyed God! They were all wicked. Because of their continual disobedience, the northern kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Those taken by Assyria never came back to their homeland. They are what we now refer to as the *lost tribes of Israel*.

The *southern* kingdom had a total of **20** kings. Only **eight** of these kings *did what was right in the eyes of the Lord*. Those eight were **Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah,** and the last one was a man by the name of **Josiah**.

The Last Five Kings of Judah
2 Kings 22 – 24; 2 Chron 34 - 36



On the Babylonian side, in 612 B.C., the Assyrian capital of Ninevah fell to the Babylonians and the Medes (Jonah ministered to Ninevah in 775 B.C. ± 25 years).

In 609 B.C., the Assyrians sought the assistance of Egypt and Pharaoh Neco II led an army to join forces with Assyria.

Josiah, king of Judah, hoping to curry favor with Babylon tried to stop the Egyptians from joining up with the Assyrians. Josiah and his army fought the Egyptians at Megiddo. Josiah was killed in that battle and his army defeated (**2 Ki. 23:28 – 30; 2 Chron. 35:24**).

Pharaoh Neco II placed ***Eliakim*** on the throne of Judah as his puppet king. ***He renamed him Jehoiakim.***

The Assyrians pass off the scene. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish in May/June. That same year, Nabopolassar died of natural causes sometime after the battle of Carchemish.

Upon learning of his father's death, Nebuchadnezzar traveled back to Babylon in August 605 B.C. where he received the crown.

Then, at the end of **verse 1**, in September 605 B.C., ^{1b}“...Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.”

So, who is Nebuchadnezzar? He was a very proud, arrogant man who would become one of the most powerful kings in history. He was a gallant soldier who was responsible for the rise of Babylon's economic prosperity and political power. Nebuchadnezzar was a brilliant statesman and politician and is also famous for building the Hanging Gardens in Babylon as a gift for his wife, Queen Amytis.

“Babylon” is a city recognized by anyone who reads very much of the Bible. Its origin lies in “a plain in the land of Shinar” (**Genesis 11:2**). As families migrated away from the ark, they disobeyed God's mandate to fill the earth, and instead, the “people...***settled***...in the land of Shinar” (**Genesis 11:2**).

There, Nimrod (whose name means “*rebe*”), would build the city of Babel, and eventually the Tower of Babel which was meant to serve as a ladder to connect man with the gods.

Therefore, mankind was setting up a beachhead here in Babel. They were essentially declaring war against God. And though God would scatter the people and confuse their language, down through the centuries Babylon became known as a bastion for idolatry and false religion.

Sinclair Ferguson says this, “Babylon and Jerusalem represent the two cities to which men and women belong. They symbolize the two loyalties of which Scripture speaks in many different word pictures: two gates, two ways, two masters. As such, Babylon and Jerusalem are permanently opposed to one another.”

Ferguson goes on to say, “We should never forget that this is the meaning of history on both the cosmic and personal scales. A spiritual conflict lies at the heart of every event, however great, however mundane. Our own contribution to history depends on our answer to this question: Am I living for the city of God and according to its code of conduct or am I living according to the by-laws of the city of destruction?”

II. The Broken Covenant (v. 2)

^{2a}“And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...”

Daniel refers to God as “the Lord.” Notice the “o-r-d” are in lower case letters in our English bibles, which alerts us to the use of the Hebrew word *Adonai*. The use of *Adonai* emphasizes *God's rightful ownership* of every member of the human race.

Now, notice the next word: Daniel writes, “And the Lord ***gave***...” Therefore, all the powers of Babylon and all the powers of this world could have never prevailed against “Jerusalem” ***unless*** “the Lord ***gave*** Jehoiakim...into [Nebuchadnezzar’s] hand”!

So, don’t miss this! God Himself orchestrated the defeat of His own people and the overthrow of His own city.

Why would God do such a thing? And the answer is that God’s orchestration of this siege was a fulfillment of God’s word. God was simply keeping a covenant promise He had made centuries earlier (**Lev. 26; Deut. 28 – 30**).

A covenant is an *arrangement made by one party (in this case God)*. It is presented to a *second party (Israel)* which could either accept or reject it ***but*** could not alter it.

In this covenant, God established a principle for how He would deal with His people. Their obedience would bring blessing (**Deut. 28:1 – 14**). However, their disobedience would bring discipline (**Deut. 28:15 – 68**). And the ultimate discipline that God could impose can be found in **Deut. 28:49 – 68**. And then, in **Deut. 30:1 – 10**, Moses says that when Israel came under God’s discipline, it would only be lifted when they forsook their sin and turned by faith to God.

Other related verses:

Jeremiah 7:24

Isaiah 39:5 – 8

2 Chronicles 36:14 – 21 (God was in effect saying, “If you won’t let the land rest, I will!”)

Jeremiah 21:1 – 10

Jeremiah 25:3 – 11

Habakkuk 1:5 – 6, 11

^{2b}“...with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s ransacking of Jerusalem and the plundering of the temple would be seen by the world as a great victory over the God of Israel.

And yet, we see in God’s judgment that His ultimate goal was mercy. God is faithful to His chosen people even though His faithfulness might sometimes be considered harsh.

God is so humble that He was willing to suffer the shame of apparent defeat at the hands of Babylon, if it meant that His people would be cleansed and purified through repentance.

Of course, the greatest picture of this humility and loving care for others can be seen in Jesus Christ and the cross where He bled and died that His people might be forgiven.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

TIMELINE OF DANIEL

