

The Times and Message of Daniel

I. The Rise of Babylon

Daniel and his friends are taken into captivity when Nebuchadnezzar becomes king in 605 BC.

II. The Reason for the Captivity

It was God who gave Jerusalem into Nebuchadnezzar's hands because Israel rebelled against the Lord. Captivity would teach the Israelites the power of God and the meaning of loyalty.

III. The Message of Daniel

A. The Structure of Daniel

1. The book naturally divides by subject into two portions:
 - a) Daniel 1-6 - Narratives illustrating the power of God and godly living in difficult circumstances
 - b) Daniel 7-12 - Prophetic material about
 - o The rise and fall of nations
 - o The future of God's people among the nations
 - o God's power to arrange and execute his plans throughout history
2. But language changes in the middle of the book may suggest another structure:
 - a) Daniel 1-2:3 - Hebrew
 - b) Daniel 2:4-7 - Aramaic
 - c) Daniel 8-12 - Hebrew
3. Is the language change coincidental or deliberate?
 - a) It is common to say the sections in Aramaic (the lingua franca of the day) were material of interest to the nations generally, whereas the Hebrew sections appealed primarily to Israel. Some suggest the two sections were circulated separately, but the unity of the book makes this notion improbable.
 - o Unity seen in the development of themes.
 - o Narrative and prophecy go hand in hand.
 - b) In 1972 Adrien Lenglet proposed there is a chiastic structure within Daniel 2-7 focusing on chapters 4-5.

2 - Four Kingdoms

3 - God's Power to Save His People

4 - God's Judgement on the Rulers of Men

5 - God's Judgement on the Rulers of Men

6 - God's Power to Save His People

7 - Four Kingdoms

- c) From this structure it is suggested that Daniel 2-7 was written as a message to all the kings of the earth (literally or figuratively). It is interesting that most of these chapters end with proclamations of God's power from the king himself.

- d) If the Aramaic sections act as a message from God to the kings of the earth, the Hebrew sections (Daniel 1; 8-12) focus on God's people in persecution and God's faithfulness to protect them.
- e) Whether or not this structure is deliberate, there is merit in focusing on Daniel 4 as offering the central theme to the book, "the Most High reigns in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21).
 - o The title "Most High" in Daniel occurs predominantly in Daniel 4 (cf. Daniel 3.26; 4.2, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34; 5.18, 21; 7.25).

B. Daniel 4

1. It is surprising that Nebuchadnezzar writes these words in Daniel.
2. 4.1-3 & 4.34-37 serve as bookends introducing and concluding with the result of the experience.
3. Nebuchadnezzar was proudly "flourishing" in his palace (4.4) ("Flourishing" connected with the tree in 4.11-12?) when God sent a vision of his humiliation.
 - a) Hanging Gardens
 - b) The Empire
 - c) Babylon
 - o An inscription by Nebuchadnezzar on the Ishtar gate reads: "'I (Nebuchadnezzar) laid the foundation of the gates down to the groundwater level and had them built out of pure blue stone. Upon the walls in the inner room of the gate are bulls and dragons and thus I magnificently adorned them with luxurious splendour for all mankind to behold in awe.'" (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pergamon_Museum_Berlin_2007085.jpg).
 - d) Nebuchadnezzar would be changed for seven periods of time "in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind" (4.17).
4. Message for the Israelites: look how God handles this king of the earth!
 - a) God controls the big things in life: he can put the king of Babylon out of business!
 - b) God controls the small things in life: he affected the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar!
 - c) God's mercy on the humble: God showed mercy even to the proud gentile king.

IV. Daniel's Message for Us

- A. The Most High Reigns in the kingdoms of men
In "good" times and "bad" remember that God is in control.
- B. Kings of the earth cannot control their own future.
The United States will rise or fall by the will of God, not by the power of its leaders or military.

C. Daniel: God is my judge.

On an individual level, we must be more worried about what God thinks than what man thinks or does.