

Lesson 2 Purpose or Theme of Daniel

STUDY GUIDE

1. One indication of the theme of this book is to be found in Daniel himself. In what way is he different from the other prophets? Compare Jer. 1:4-10 and Is. 6:1-9 with Daniel 1:19-, 20 and 6:1-3. What is Daniel by occupation?
2. The main indication of the theme, of course, is in the content of the book. Read the following passages to get the general topic to which all the content is related: 1:3, 4; 2:21, 39,40; 3:1-3; 4:30-32; 6:1-3; 7:17,18; 8:20,21; 9:1-2; 11:2-3. Does this topic relate to what you saw about the man Daniel? What would you like to know if you had passed through this crisis of Daniel's time? The purpose of Daniel is to give God's answer to this. How would you express it?

NOTES

Daniel is different from the other prophets in that he was evidently of royal blood, as he was taken from Jerusalem at the first deportation with Jehoiakim. He and his companions were referred to as children, which would mean that he was perhaps 12 years old when put in training as a courtier, according to Eastern tradition. He advanced in position under the rulers whom he served — as we see in Daniel 6:1-3 following the successful conquest of Babylon and the surrounding territory. Daniel was appointed as one of three presidents placed in rule over 120 princes who were the ruler of the various provinces of the kingdom of Darius. Of Daniel was responsible for financial accounts and protecting the king's interest. Daniel, an honest and capable administrator familiar with the territory and problems of taxation, would undoubtedly have been of immeasurable benefit to Darius.

The main indication of the theme is in the content of the book. It is a historical narrative, a book of politics. We see the sovereignty of God throughout the book. This ties in with Romans 13:1, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." We see this in Nebuchadnezzar as he recognized God when he viewed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace (Daniel 3:2-26). God gave great power and dominion to Nebuchadnezzar until he put himself in the place of God (Daniel 4:30). He was then driven to live with the beast of the fields until He once again recognized God and he said, "all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." We see in Daniel the way he stood for God without wavering even when his life was threatened. Daniel saw the reason for the captivity of his people for sins that they committed and was given assuredness of God's divine plan of the restoration of the temple and the return of the people to Jerusalem.

Daniel is God's proof of His loving care during the time of Gentile rulers, during a time when the people of God were living outside God's promises.

Plan of the Book

STUDY GUIDE

1. During this particular study do not refer to any books or notes on the book of Daniel. Our goal now is to get a general picture of the content and a definite mastery of the plan of the book.
2. Go through the book and for each chapter, write a phrase that will summarize the content of that chapter. Do not study the detail of the content but try to get an over-all picture of it. After you have made your chapter summaries, think through the list several times to fix them in your mind. When you need to refresh your memory on any point of content, refer to the chapter in Daniel rather than to your list of phrases.
3. As you think through these chapters, can you see two large sections into which the book might be divided? What are the differences between these sections? What difference is suggested by comparing such verses as 1:1; 3:1; 4:4 with verses as 7:2; 8:2; 9:23? Is there a difference between these two sections as to who is the chief character? Who is prominent in the first section (see 2:1; 3:1; 4:1, etc.) Who is prominent in the second section?
4. What time span does each section cover? Mark any time reference you can find (as 2:1) and study them in the light of the above question. What about 1:21? Does that suggest anything about chapter 1? Would you make chapter 1 a distinct section of the book? How is it different from chapters 2-6?
5. Review briefly the purpose of Daniel from last lesson. With this in mind, think through the content of these three sections (chap.1, 2-6, and chap. 7-12) and give a summary description of each. These should be in terms of the purpose of the book.

NOTES

Chapters 1-6: a historical narrative; the focus is on the rulers of the nations.

Chapters 7-12: apocalyptic visions; the focus is on Daniel and his experiences.

Chapter one: Daniel trained in the king's palace. We see here the setting for the book in the captivity and then the setting aside of a few to serve in the king's court. Daniel and his companions sought to maintain their faith in the eating of certain foods, which they were given and this was granted to them. As a result, Daniel and his companions were healthier than those who had eaten the king's choice foods.

Chapter two: Daniel interprets the first vision of Nebuchadnezzar. He tells him what the vision was after the magicians, conjurers and Chaldeans failed. The vision was of a statue, which had a head of Gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and its legs of iron with the feet being of iron and clay. A stone not made with hands then struck the statue on its feet and crushed them. The stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The statue was a symbol of nations to come with Nebuchadnezzar being the head of gold.

Chapter three: The fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar builds an image of gold and orders that everyone is to bow and worship the image when the music command is issued or they will be thrown into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were bound up and thrown into the furnace, however, they were loosed in the fire and were walking around with a fourth, which was described as like a son of the gods. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged from the fire, Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree that no one could speak any offense of their God.

Chapter four: Daniel interprets the second vision of Nebuchadnezzar. This happened again after the magicians, etc. failed. This vision was one of a towering tree, which was ordered by an angelic watcher to be cut down, leaving only the stump and roots of the tree. Daniel said that the vision was of Nebuchadnezzar and that he would be driven from mankind to live with the beast of the fields for seven periods of time until he recognized that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. This came about when Nebuchadnezzar was overcome with pride with the kingdom he had created.

Chapter five: The handwriting on the wall. Here Belshazzar held a great feast at which he used the vessels from the temple from which to drink wine. At the feast, a hand appeared and wrote a message on the wall. Again the magicians, etc. were summoned and could not interpret the writing so Daniel was called upon to do it. Daniel reminded him of the happenings to Nebuchadnezzar his father and because he had not followed God, his kingdom was to be divided between the Medes and the Persians. Belshazzar was slain that very night and Darius the Mede received the kingdom.

Chapter six: Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel was appointed one of three presidents to oversee 120 provinces of the kingdom of Darius. He enjoyed great success and the other leaders under Darius, became jealous and plotted to find fault with Daniel. They suggested that Darius erect a statue and that everyone one was to worship only Darius for thirty days or be thrown into the lions' den. Daniel knew of the decree, but continued to worship God and was thrown into the lions' den, but was not harmed. As a result Darius issued a decree that men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel. The leaders and their families who plotted against Daniel were thrown into the lions' den and killed.

Chapter seven: The four beasts. This chapter details the first vision of Daniel was of four great beasts coming up from the sea. The first was like a lion with wings of an eagle, the second resembling a bear, the third a leopard with four wings like a bird, the fourth was a great beast with ten horns. The beasts were four kings which would rise to rule on the earth.

Chapter eight: The ram and the he-goat. The second vision of Daniel was of a ram of two horns which was defeated by a goat with a conspicuous horn between its eyes. The ram was the kingdoms of Media and Persia and the goat was the kingdom of Greece.

Chapter nine: Daniel's prayer for his people. It was revealed to Daniel here from Jeremiah, that the desolation of Jerusalem was to be for 70 years as Daniel prayed and fasted in sackcloth and ashes for his people. This book contains the prophesy of the weeks of years in verses 24-26 concerning the reconstruction of the temple and the coming Messiah.

Chapter ten: Vision of the man. After three weeks of prayer and fasting, Daniel saw a vision of a man appearing to him, which caused much fear, who came to Daniel to give him an understanding of what will happen to the people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.

Chapter eleven: Coming conflicts. Daniel is told the truth of future generations and kings from Persia and Greece to the king of the South and the king of the North and many things that will come to pass.

Chapter twelve: Visions of the latter days. Here Daniel is told that Michael will arise during a time of great distress and everyone's name who is found in the book will be rescued.