

LITERARY OVERVIEW

- **Title/Author:** Daniel (“God is my judge”), the primary character in most of the narratives (excluding ch.3) and recipient of the visions in last half of the book. Sometimes Daniel writes in 1st person, and at others in 3rd person.
- Daniel and his three friends are about 16 years old when they are first chosen to be trained as part of the king’s court.
- An *anti-supernatural worldview* demands that because of the detail of knowledge of subsequent empires revealed in the second half of the book, the book must have been a 2nd century B.C. writing. Not surprisingly, this view also denies the miraculous events of the 1st half of the book, and suggest that they are only hero myths and events that are “inspiring” stories.
- From a biblical and *supernatural worldview*, the narratives actually happened and the prophecies are actually God-revealed visions of the future. From this perspective, Daniel as the primary author is not a problem.
- **Time Covered:** The Jewish exile under the Babylonian Empire and then under the Persian Empire.
- **Form/Genre:** The first half of the book is primarily *narrative* (with visionary elements). The second half of the book is primarily *visionary* or *apocalyptic* (with narrational elements). There are clear parallels between Daniel (combined with Ezekiel) and the Revelation of John as apocalyptic literature.
- **Main Characters:** God, Daniel and his friends (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego), pagan kings (*Nebuchadnezzar II*, conquering king of Babylon [r.605-562 B.C.], *Belshazzar*, co-regent and last king of Babylon [r.550-539 B.C.], *Cyrus*, conquering king of Persia [r.539-530 B.C.], and *Darius*, king of Persia [r.522-484 B.C.]).
- **Original Audience:** The Jewish people in Babylonian exile, struggling to live faithfully in a foreign land and in a pagan culture.
- **Purpose:** To record prophetic dreams to display the glory of God over the future and the kingdoms of men to give hope to an exiled people (and so, by extension, to us – 1 Peter 2:11).
- **Challenges:** To shift from the narrative to the visionary genre of literature mid-book. The interpretation of the visions in the latter ½ of the book (to take away primary message, or try to work through details?).¹

OUTLINE

I. NARRATIVES DURING THE LIFE OF DANIEL

- A. Hero Story #1 - The 4 Young Men in the King's Court (ch.1)
- B. Hero Story #2 - Daniel's Interpretation of the King's Dream (ch.2)
- C. Hero Story #3 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Tested (ch.3)
- D. Humbling Story #1 - The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar (ch.4)
- E. Humbling Story #2 – The Humbling of Belshazzar (ch.5)
- F. Hero Story #4 – The Plot against Daniel (ch.6)

II. VISIONS AND PROPHECIES OF THE DAYS AFTER DANIEL

- A. Vision #1 – The 4 Beasts and the Ancient of Days (ch.7)
- B. Vision #2 – The Ram and the Goat (ch.8)
- C. Prophecy #1 – Daniel's Prayer and the Prophecy of the Prince (ch.9)
- D. Prophecy #2 – Visit and Prophecy of the Glorious Man – (ch.10-12)

MAJOR THEMES IN DANIEL

- The central theme of the book is the sovereignty of God in the here and now, as well as the future.
- There are examples of how to live faithfully in an un-biblical culture, both were there can be accommodation as well as an uncompromising steadfastness. This displays exemplary faithfulness in troubled times.
- Faithfulness to the Lord is not dependent on good circumstances.
- The book gives examples of how He can use faithful men in influential positions.
- There is an emphasis on the significance of dreams and visions even in the life of pagan kings.
- There is a clear assertion of the miraculous.
- God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- While God has ordained suffering under ungodliness for a time, in the end He will return and bring about glory.

¹ See *ESV Study Bible* for charts of overview of major interpretations as well as listing of important rulers pertinent to visions.