

INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Sunday 19th July 20

Getting the best of worst situation from the God who rules and overrules

Introduction:

"I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men." This statement was credited to Benjamin Franklin which he made to the then USA president George Washington on June 28, 1787 when he was asked to serve in a committee to develop the constitution of the country.

Nowhere in the world today would anyone dare make a similar statement without being challenged and accused that he was making a politically incorrect statement and he must apologise. Nevertheless, God is still in control of his universe including human beings. He is the architect and builder of his world and there is nothing anyone can do about it and he still gives us the freedom to say and do what we like and he will hold us accountable to what we say or do. He is truly sovereign.

Anyone who fails to heed always learn in a hard way. Nebuchadnezzar learnt it in a hard way hence he pronounced:

"At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" Daniel 4:34-35 NIV.

God is sovereign.

The Book of Daniel

Daniel is the one of the most important book of the Old Testament even though it is the shortest of the major prophets of the Bible apart from lamentation. It is possible that it is most widely studied in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Daniel is being referred to more than any other Old Testament prophets. And it contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book in the Bible. In fact, I call it the Revelation from the Old Testament.

This book is extraordinary for the following reasons. It gives the historical account of what happened to the exile in Babylon. It offers great hope in the face of despair and frustration and it shows the power of God at work in the believers if they trust God.

The captivity followed Jeremiah's prediction that they will spend 70 years in exile and now God visited his people by relocating them to a place they never wanted to be and do what they were told. They lost their independence.

Authorship and Date:

From the beginning of the book it is not clear as to who the author was but chapter 9:2, 20; 10:2 states 'I Daniel' clearly makes Daniel to be the author. Even though he did not reveal himself as the author, reading through will give you a sense that he was the writer as the

people in those days always write about themselves in the third person. The authorship of the book was even acknowledged by Jesus when he referred to it in Mark 13:14 about his predictions of the end time 'abomination'.

It is believed that Daniel was a young man of about 15 years of old when he and his colleagues were taken captive and he hailed from the royal family of David.

The first captivity was around 605 BC. If that was correct, we can say that Daniel was born around 620 BC. More will be said about the date later when I speak about it in verse 1.

The original text of Daniel was written in two languages, chapters 1, 8-12 were written in Hebrew and 2-7 were written in Aramaic, the reason I do not know.

Theological Values of the book of Daniel

1. The absolute Sovereignty of Yahweh

At a time when it appears that His cause was lost, the people he promised to keep have been taken away in captivity and his people who supposed to be strong were so weak to be defeated by their enemies, God displayed his all powerful nature to the people that took His people in captivity.

The miracles recorded in chapter 1-5 are clear demonstration of His omnipotent nature. The surpassing health of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah just on vegetable diets as against the king's rich delicacies are clear pointer that God is sovereign and who honours Him will be rewarded by Him.

The debase of king Nebuchadnezzar to walk on his four limbs and eat grass like an animal was a powerful sign as to the nature of Yahweh, who else can do such things expect the all powerful God.

2. Prayer is potent and powerful

Daniel and his three friends never stopped asking God to intervene in their affairs, deliver them from the life threatening dangers that faced them and to ask God for wisdom and revelations to hidden things. God honoured them by granting all their requests and even after He had granted their request, the Devil through the prince of Persia withheld their answer and further prayer brought release through the intervention of God (Daniel 10:20).

3. The Revelation of God's ultimate plan of redemption.

Apart from Isaiah, Daniel was another prophet that God used to bring into view His ultimate plan of redemption of the world through His son Jesus Christ. The plan was not only for the Jews but for the whole world and it is up to each person to take the gift of salvation God offers for free. Whilst Isaiah predicted the substitutionary atonement as a means to salvation Daniel 9_25-26, Daniel predicted the exact time this would happen and even beyond to His second coming Daniel 11;36 – 12:12.

4. The indomitable grace of God

Despite the fact that God knew that Abraham's children will violate His law, go after other god and serve them, yet God has an unquenchable, impossible to subdue plan to redeem them back to himself through Abraham seed – Jesus Christ. Like God, His plan is unchangeable and unconquerable. Despite rebellions and captivities, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Micah saw the return of the remnants from exile. God is faithful to his promise and never go back on His word whenever His children repent he will always forgive and come to their rescue.

Direct Quotations

1.	Daniel 3:6	Matthew 13:42, 50
2.	Daniel 7:3	Matt 24: 30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; 22:69 and Rev 1:7
3.	Daniel 9:27	Matthew 24:15; mark 13;14

Many other allusions were made to the book of Daniel

Jerusalem's defeat and Daniel's deportation

Dan. 1:1-2:

The first two verses of the Book of Daniel state when and how the prophet was taken to Babylon. The events in the book began in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah. This seems to conflict with Jeremiah's statement that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was in the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim's reign (Jeremiah 25:1). At least two explanations may be given for this apparent discrepancy.

The first is the difference between Jewish and Babylonian reckoning. The Jewish calendar began the year in Tishri (September-October) while the Babylonian calendar began in the spring in the month of Nisan (March-April). If Babylonian reckoning were used, the year Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem was the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. But if the Jewish reckoning were used it was Jehoiakim's third year. Daniel, a Jew, may well have adopted the familiar Jewish calendar. This may be responsible for the difference depending on which calendar the writer of Jeremiah and Daniel used.

The second explanation is based on the Babylonian method of reckoning the dates of a king's reign. The portion of a king's reign that preceded the beginning of a new year in the month Nisan, that is, the year of accession, was called the first year even if it was of short duration. If Jeremiah followed that method of reckoning, he counted Jehoiakim's year of accession (which was only part of a full year) as the first year. And if Daniel used the Jewish method of reckoning (which did *not* count the first months of a king's reign before the New Year) he then counted only the three full years of Jehoiakim's reign. The year was 605 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Jerusalem took place during the reign of Jehoiakim, the 17th king of Judah and eldest son of Josiah (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:2 with 2 Chronicles 36:5). Jehoiakim's younger brother Jehoahaz had been placed on Judah's throne after Pharaoh Neco killed King Josiah in 609 B.C. Jeremiah had warned Jehoiakim of impending invasion by Babylon. And Jehoiakim had heard of the prophet's instruction to God's people to submit to Babylon without resistance. So when Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city, little or no resistance was offered, and Jehoiakim was captured and taken to Babylon. Thus Judah came under Nebuchadnezzar's authority.

Daniel 1;2 showed that all that was accomplished was not due to Nebuchadnezzar's prowess alone but the work of the True divine God of creation who controls the world's affairs. He was the one who deposed the Judean kings, installed and empowered the Babylonian kings to subdue and rule over the people He punished.

The divine motive behind all these humiliations, suffering and loss was redemptive and altogether in harmony with God's promises given to the generation of Moses in Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28.

Nebuchadnezzar would not have been able to do anything without Yahweh who delivered the Jews into his hands and he punished him later for this captivity.

Why are we studying this book now?

1. We must recognise that God is sovereign and he is unquestionable. He does he want and no one can stand in his way.
2. We must know that if we obey him, he will bless, protect and fulfil his promises for us.
3. We must cultivate prayer habit and set ourselves aside for God to accomplish His purpose through us. Through this relationships he will reveal to us His will and hidden things like wisdom and understanding.
4. We must also realise that He has given us freedom to choose how we live our lives; what we think, say and do. We must also realise that whatever way we choose we must be ready to bear its consequences. If we confess him he will confess us, if we deny him he will deny us; if we are faithful, he will be faithful but if we are unfaithful, he remains faithful because he cannot deny himself.
5. God's power still very available to us if we are committed to Him.

No matter how young or old we are, wherever we are in our spiritual and life journeys, we can always trust God and he will show himself. 15 years old lads were committed to values of God and God rewarded them by deliverance from inescapable death, he gave them surpassing wisdom and knowledge and gifts that no one else had.

God is looking for Daniels, Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs of today and he will still do what he did in those days.

I believe somebody will be blessed by this series, somebody will be delivered by this series, somebody will experience unprecedented miracle through this series and somebody will be given wisdom and understanding than never before through this series. To maximise this series bring your friends.

May God bless you.