

# **Read the Bible in a Year**

Week 48 – May 1-7

**Read on Your Own this Week:**

*Psalm 138-140*

*John 1-4*

**Readings in Class:**

Daniel 1-12

## **Introduction to Daniel**

Can you lose God after you have lost your home, your land, your people, your family, and your life? The book of Daniel explores the life of God's people who have been taken captive into enemy territory. How will they live life now? Will they forget God in the land of their exile and dissipate into the culture of the nations around them? Or will they fight back and resist? Or something else?

Following the advice of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Jeremiah 29 we see how Daniel and his three friends, who were taken into exile in the year 605 BC, forge ahead with life in Babylon. They are to live life faithfully in Babylon by doing good but are given moments where they are to show their loyalty to the Lord their God when they refuse to cross lines that would betray their trust.

Daniel goes from a youth to an old man throughout the book. He lived in Babylon from the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> deportation to exile in 605 BC until his final vision in the days of Cyrus the Persian in 536 BC. We see through the eyes of Daniel how God will carry his people through the exile and the last few chapters of the book explores how God will one day set up a kingdom that will destroy all other kingdoms and a kingdom where God's people will dwell in safety. Many of the last images in the book lend themselves to Revelation and the establishment of Christ's reign on earth.

## **A Summary of Daniel**

A curious device in the book of Daniel is that the beginning chapter and ending chapters are written in Hebrew with chapters 2-7 being written in Aramaic. It has been debated why this is the case. But some wonder whether it begins in Hebrew (the language of home) transitions to a foreign language, and then ends with the mother tongue once more. Even the language shows a transition from exile to home. Linguistically, the two languages use a literary device known as a Chiasm (ABCB'A'). This is a common Hebrew poetry scheme which makes the central point in the book in the middle and the two languages create an interlocking chiasm, or a chaism within a chiasm. In Daniel the pattern is ABCC'B'A'DED'. This pattern is listed below.

1. Prologue 1:1-21 (Narrative in Hebrew)
2. A. 2:1-49 Nebuchadnezzar dreams a vision of 4 kingdoms (Narrative in Aramaic)
3. B. 3:1-30 Nebuchadnezzar sees God's servants rescued (Narrative in Aramaic)
4. C. 4:1-37 Nebuchadnezzar is judged (Narrative in Aramaic)
5. C'. 5:1-31 Belshazzar is Judged (Narrative in Aramaic)
6. B'. 6:1-28 Darius sees God's servant Daniel rescued (Narrative in Aramaic)
7. Prologue 2 7:1-28 Daniel dreams a vision of 4 kingdoms (Vision in Aramaic)
8. D. 8:1-27 Details on the post Babylonian Kingdoms (Vision in Hebrew)
9. E. 9:1-27 Jerusalem is restored. (Vision in Hebrew)
10. D'. 10:1-12:13 More Details on the Post Babylonian Kingdoms (Vision in Hebrew)

## **Son of Man & Son of God**

In Daniel 7:13-14 is where Jesus gets the name he uses for himself: Son of Man. In the book of Daniel, the Son of Man goes to the Ancient of Days (God the Father) and receives a kingdom that shall never pass away. This Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven. This is the image that Jesus uses when confronted by the Pharisees during his trial. This is also what Stephen sees when he looks to heaven before he is stoned in Acts 7. This is the clearest reference to Jesus in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel 3, we have the story of the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are thrown in but when Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace he sees that they are okay and that there is a 4<sup>th</sup> man inside the furnace with them and he calls him the son of the gods. Not being an Israelite, Nebuchadnezzar can be corrected by calling him a son of the gods, but he is right that this is the Son of God. Jesus Christ. The fiery furnace also reminds us of the burning bush that was not consumed.

## **Living as Exiles**

Central to the book point is how a faithful child of God should live in the pagan world around them. Without a kingdom and living as a way of life that is no longer protected, how should God's people relate to the world around them.

We see this often in the book as the Israelites in exile are called to live for the good of the people in Babylon. That they are to be witnesses in exile just as they were meant to be witnesses while in the land. This time around though, the people remain faithful. They do their best when it comes to the work that Babylon calls them to do. But they remain true to their God at key points in the story that remind us that they are not Babylonians but Israelites who belong to the one true God.

We learn in this book, and also in the New Testament, that God's people are now in exile, even when in their own land. Peter in his epistles addresses Christians as exiles. Reminding us that we are to care for the world around us, but at times will be called to remain faithful to God when the witness is demanded of us to an unbelieving world around us. As one theologian put it, "Every home is our place of exile, and every place of exile is our home."