

a synopsis of DANIEL

Proverbs reminds us that we are not meant to live this life as loners. Surrounded by trustworthy advisors we are more likely to make wise decisions (Proverbs 15:22; 11:14; 24:6; 20:18). Whether we are sitting in a situation room, a board room, a dorm room, or a living room “a friend sharpens a friend as iron sharpens iron” (27:17).

Daniel was that trusted advisor. As a teenager (15 to 18 years old), he belonged to the first wave of Jews carried to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s first siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. (Daniel 1:1-2). Isaiah prophesied a hundred years before Daniel’s time that the descendants of King Hezekiah of Judah would become servants of the King of Babylon (compare Daniel 1:3 with Isaiah 39:5-7). Daniel and his three friends (commonly known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were among the royalty and nobility who would serve in the Babylonian court after intense training (Daniel 1:3-4) while remaining steadfast in their devotion to Jehovah God (1:8, 18; 3:16-18, 25-26; 6:4-14, 19-22). While a powerful man in the Babylonian and Persian empires (1:21; 2:48-49; 6:1-3), Daniel remained true to his God throughout all his days in a pagan culture (probably died in his late 80s to mid 90s). God used Daniel and his friends to soften the hearts of kings that they might see the glory of the living God (3:28-29; 6:25-27).

It is important to remember that the whole book of Daniel was lived out in Babylon—and that is no small matter. Under Nebuchadnezzar Babylon was a world power. Ancient historians said that the wall around Babylon was 15 miles on each of its four sides. It was 300 feet high, 80 feet thick, and extended 35 feet below the ground so that enemies could not tunnel under. It was built of brick one foot square and three to four inches thick. In the days of ancient warfare the city was simply impregnable (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, pp. 336-337). Once Nebuchadnezzar felt reasonably secure he turned his attention to architecture and cultural advancement. His palace, into which Daniel often went, was magnificent. He developed new canals and waterways and laid out beautiful parks. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. For almost all his life Daniel lived in, governed in, and served his God in the most “notable city in all the world” (*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*).

The book of Daniel can be divided into two great parts. Chapters 1-6 describe the various historical events in Daniel’s life. Chapters 7-12 relate visions of days beyond Daniel to the end of the world.

Daniel is a book of hope. “God had not suffered defeat in allowing Judah’s fall (Daniel 1), but was providentially working His sure purposes toward an eventful, full display of His King, the exalted Christ” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, p. 948). God wins! Now, that’s good news—good news indeed.

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