

## **Book of Daniel**

### **Historical Background**

About half a century before Daniel was born, the world was dominated by the superpower Assyria. Eventually the great Assyrian capital city of Nineveh fell in 612 BC to the Babylonian and Mede armies, who subsequently continued the tradition of threatening Judah. In addition, there was always Egypt in the south – no longer a superpower, but nevertheless a constant irritant. Earlier, in the summer of 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar had defeated the Egyptians at the decisive battle at Carchemish on the Euphrates far to the north-east of Jerusalem. Thereafter, Nebuchadnezzar made regular visits to his conquered territories in the west, to take tribute and personnel from them and dispense justice. It was one of those visits that Daniel and his friends were taken as personnel to the Babylonian empire, which permanently changed the trajectory of their lives.

### **How is the book of Daniel relevant to us today?**

In his book, *Against the Flow*, Dr. John C. Lennox shared the relevancy and importance of studying the book of Daniel in the twenty-first century Western society. “What makes the story of [Daniel and his friends’] faith remarkable is that they did not simply continue the private devotion to God that they had developed in their homeland; they maintained a high-profile public witness in a pluralistic society that became increasingly antagonistic to their faith. That is why their story has such a powerful message for us today. Strong currents of pluralism and secularism in contemporary Western society, reinforced by a paralyzing political correctness, increasingly push expression of faith in God to the margins, confining it, if possible, to the private sphere. It is becoming less and less the one thing to mention God in public, let alone to confess to believing in anything exclusive and absolute, such as the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior. Society tolerates the practice of the Christian faith in private devotions and in church services, but it increasingly deprecates public witness. To the relativist and secularist, public witness to faith in God smacks too much of proselytizing and fundamentalist extremism. They therefore regard it more and more as a threat to social stability and human freedom.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Daniel 1 (Holiness/Ordinary)**

**Observation:** How similar or different a concept of “holy” or holiness between the Babylonians and Israelites?

**Interpretation:** What does “holy” or holiness mean to you?

**God loving Us:** How has God stay faithful in your life even before you knew God?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who were/are considered “holy,” when and where did you experience their holiness?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate holiness in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can exercise holiness among others?

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<sup>1</sup> Lennox, John C. *Against the Flow: The Inspiration of Daniel in an Age of Relativism*. New edition. Monarch Books, 2015. 1-2.

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role of exercising holiness in the future?

### **Daniel 2 (Reason/Revelation)**

**Observation:** How does Nebuchadnezzar's dream perceived by people?

**Interpretation:** Were there any differences in interpreting the dream by Babylonians and Israelites, particularly of Daniel? If so, how?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with reason even before you knew God?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who were/are considered reasonable (with conscience) when and where did you experience their wisdom?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate reason for God in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice or demonstrate God given reason?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in exercising God given reason in the future?

### **Daniel 3 (Spiritual integrity)**

**Observation:** How did people respond to Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow before the golden statue?

**Interpretation:** Why did people respond to Nebuchadnezzar's command differently, particularly that of Daniel and his friends?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with integrity before you knew God?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who possessed/possesses spiritual integrity when and where did you experience their practices?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate spiritual integrity in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice or demonstrate spiritual integrity?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in exercising spiritual integrity in the future?

### **Daniel 4 (Pride)**

**Observation:** How did Nebuchadnezzar describe his dream?

**Interpretation:** Why did Nebuchadnezzar describe the dream the way he did?

**God loving Us:** How has God banned pride as early as in creation?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who addressed/address pride when and where did you experience their endeavors?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you address pride in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can address pride?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in addressing pride in the future?

### **Daniel 5 (Trustworthiness)**

**Observation:** How did Daniel respond to King Belshazzar?

**Interpretation:** Why did Daniel respond to King Belshazzar the way he did?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with trustworthy people in our lives?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who were/are trustworthy when and where did you experience their trustworthiness?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you be(come) trustworthy in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate trustworthiness?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating trustworthiness in the future?

### **Daniel 6 (Faithfulness)**

**Observation:** How similar or different Persians and Israelites upheld the law? Were there any similarities/differences in the law Persians/Israelites abide to?

**Interpretation:** How had Daniel's understanding of God's law prompted his action/reaction when he faced injustice? Why did he act/react in the way he did?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with God's faithfulness to us before you knew God?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who were/are faithful when and where did you experience their faithfulness?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you be(come) faithful in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate faithfulness?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating faithfulness in the future?

### **Daniel 7 (Spiritual endurance/perseverance)**

**Observation:** What did Daniel's dream and his interpretation say about the holy people, or saints? What were they like?

**Interpretation:** What kind of values, virtues, and/or characteristics do you think the holy people or saints possessed?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with endurance and perseverance?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who possessed/possess spiritual endurance/perseverance when and where did you experience their endeavors?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate spiritual endurance and perseverance in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can exercise spiritual endurance and perseverance?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating spiritual endurance/perseverance in the future?

### **Daniel 8 (Humility)**

**Observation:** What did Daniel's dream and his interpretation tell us about the end time?

**Interpretation:** How did Daniel respond to his dream and interpretation? Why would Daniel make the following comment, “it was beyond understanding”?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with humility to things that we have yet to understand?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who possessed/possess humility when and where did you experience their humility?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate humility in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate humility?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating and cultivating humility in the future?

### **Daniel 9 (Prayer)**

**Observation:** What are some themes (e.g., adoration, contrition, thankfulness, supplication, etc.) contained/reflected in Daniel’s prayer?

**Interpretation:** Why would Daniel prayed the way he did? What inspired/motivated him to pray in such a way?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with prayer before we even know God?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who demonstrated/demonstrate prayer life when and where did you experience their prayers come alive?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate prayer life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can pray unceasingly?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in praying actively and continuously in the future?

### **Daniel 10 (Visionary)**

**Observation:** In this fourth and the last vision, what are some themes (affirmation, admonition, anticipation, advice, etc.) contained/reflected?

**Interpretation:** What is/are the purpose(s) of this last vision?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with visionaries among us?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who were/are visionaries when and where did you experience their visions come alive?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate visionary values and qualities in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate visionary values/qualities?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating/cultivating visionary values and qualities in the future?

### **Daniel 11 (History)**

**Observation:** In this fourth and the last vision, what are some historical information can you glean from it?

**Interpretation:** What is/are the historical significance(s) of this last vision?

**God loving Us:** How has God revealed Godself to us in history?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who were/are historians of faith when and where did you experience their historical wisdom come alive?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you be(come) historian of faith in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate faith with historical wisdom?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating/cultivating historical wisdom in the future?

### **Daniel 12 (Patience)**

**Observation:** In this final chapter, how did God show up?

**Interpretation:** How do we make sense of this vision? What do we need to make sense of it?

**God loving Us:** How has God gifted us with patience when we had no idea of God's direction?

**God Meeting Us:** In the life of the saints who possessed/possesses patience when and where did you experience their patience?

**God Refining Us:** What are some people or means to help you cultivate patience in your life?

**God Inspiring Us to Serve:** What are some ways in which you can practice/demonstrate patience?

**Real Life Today:** What kind of community would you like to play a role in practicing/demonstrating/cultivating patience in the future?