

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. Today we introduce the book of DANIEL - PART 1.

POINT 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

First. The book of Daniel is a book of revelation in apocalyptic terms.

One. The book of Daniel reveals the course and significance of history from God's point of view.

The book of Daniel is unique in the whole Old Testament. It does not contain prophetic proclamations in the name of the Lord after the manner of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. It also does not relate history after the manner of the historical books of the Old Testament. Although the book of Daniel is not a historical book, it is certainly concerned with *history*. It is concerned, not with describing history of the past, but with *revealing what may be expected to take place throughout the whole history of mankind on earth*. Therefore, the book of Daniel is a book of revelation! By making use of dreams and visions, signs, symbols and numbers it appears to be *mapping out the course of history* in this world and to be *showing the significance of history* in this world. By means of a series of special visions, it was revealed to Daniel what is God's purpose for this world.

Two. The book of Daniel is concerned with the history of the whole world.

Like the author of Genesis chapter 1-11, Daniel is concerned not only with the history of Israel, but with the history of all the nations and kingdoms and rulers of the world. In the Old Testament, the tension between God's promises and the fulfilment of these promises made history. But while the prophets of the Old Testament looked towards the fulfilment of God's promises in the history of *God's people only*, Daniel looked to the fulfilment of God's promises in the history of *all the nations of the world!* Like the author of Genesis 12:3, Daniel looked to the end-time and the completion of God's purpose for the whole world he created.

Three. The main message of the book of Daniel is that God is sovereign in the affairs of man.

God is sovereign over all the nations and their kings, sovereign over all the empires and their emperors, at all times in history right up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! The God of the Bible created human life, controls human time, human life and human history on earth, and will bring human history to its appointed goal! Whatever the threat against God's people may be, God's purpose cannot be thwarted! The reason why certain governments today forbid the preaching from the books of Daniel and Revelation is that these books undermine confidence in human governments in general and undermine support to proud tyrants in particular!

Four. The book of Daniel reveals that throughout the history of the world, three events may be expected.

In the first place, God will sovereignly set up kingdoms and empires with their kings and depose them again (2:21). In the second place, the kingdoms of the world together with their tyrants will persecute God's people and God's people will suffer (7:25; 12:1). In the third place, after death and resurrection, God will vindicate his people and only they will inherit the new earth (7:26-27; 12:1-3).

Five. The book of Daniel reveals that at the end of the history of the world, three great events will happen.

In the first place, the resurrection from the dead of all people who have ever lived (12:2). In the second place, the Final Judgement of all people and nations before God's throne, when God's court will be seated and the books will be opened (12:3; 7:10). In the third place, God will give the authority, glory and sovereign power to one like the son of man (7:13-14) and to his people (7:18,27) and they will possess it forever!

Second. The book of Daniel reveals future world-history in the form of the four kingdoms of the world.

Daniel unveiled the subsequent history "from the exile to the end" in the form of four kingdoms.

One. The four kingdoms during the Old Testament period.

The first kingdom was identified as the Babylonian empire (2:38), the second kingdom was identified as the Medo-Persian Empire (8:20), the third kingdom was identified as the Greek Empire (8:21) and the fourth kingdom was not identified at all (7:7). The four-kingdom scheme first of all had its significance for people during the Old Testament time, between the time of the exile and the First Coming of Christ. The fact, that God was sovereign over all people and all events of history, was a marvellous revelation for them! Because the explaining angel in Daniel did not give the fourth kingdom a name, the book of Daniel may still have symbolic meaning, representing the relationship between the kingdoms and rulers of the world and the people of God throughout the history of this world.

Two. The fourth kingdom in the New Testament perspective.

The early Christians were not wrong when they saw the fourth kingdom as the Roman Empire, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the focal point to which Daniel chapters 2 and 7 were looking. Christians had the Gospels and the Letters of Paul to teach them that *a cosmic battle had been won on the cross* during the First Coming of Christ (Jn 12:31-32; Col 2:15). The First Coming of Jesus Christ marked the powerful *coming of the kingdom of God* onto the earth (Mk 1:15).

However, the fact that in Matthew chapter 24, Jesus applied Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11 concerning “the abomination that causes desolation” to a time still in the future, shows that the book of Daniel still has relevance for the Christian Church right up to the Second Coming of Christ. According to Matthew 24:6, the “end was not yet”, because the task of proclaiming the gospel throughout the world had not yet been carried out (Mt 24:14). The book of Revelation takes up the theme of the book of Daniel.

Third. Revelation in the book of Daniel is both parallel and progressive.

Revelation in the various chapters of the book of Daniel is both parallel and progressive.

One. The contents of the chapters in Daniel are to some extent parallel.

Especially chapters 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11. Chapters 2 and 7 span the whole subsequent history of the world from the exile to the end of the present world history. They deal with four kingdoms. Chapters 8 and 11 has a later starting point, deal only with the second and third kingdoms and especially concentrate on a particular wicked king.

Two. The contents of the chapters in Daniel are to some extent progressive.

While Daniel 2 reveals that God is ultimately going to have his way in the affairs of nations by setting up an everlasting kingdom, Daniel 7 reveals more, namely that God will on the one hand judge the human kingdoms and their arrogant rulers and on the other hand give the kingdom of God to God’s people, who will possess it forever! While Daniel 8 concentrates on the *defilement* of the sanctuary (8:9-14), which happened in 167 B.C. by Antiochus IV, Daniel 9 goes further and speaks of the *destruction* of the sanctuary (9:24-27), which happened in A.D. 70 by Titus. And Daniel 12 goes the furthest and reveals that in the end, *God’s treasure, listed in his book, does not consist of a lifeless monument like a temple, but consists of the people of God, the Church in the Old Testament.* While Daniel 9 speaks of persecution and sacrilege during half of the final 70th week, but nothing is said about the final half of the 70th week, Daniel 11-12 goes further and speaks not only of unprecedented persecution, but of a general resurrection of the dead that will bring history to its completion (“end” 12:13)!

Fourth. The numbers in the book of Daniel have symbolic significance rather than numerical significance.

One. The number seventy in Daniel 9:2.

According to Zechariah 1:12, seventy years was the fixed period of God’s indignation against Israel’s sins. And according to 2 Chronicles 36:19-21, from the time Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people were carried into exile to Babylon to the beginning of the Persian Empire, “the land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed.” This *ritual* understanding of the term “seventy years” as “sabbath rests” takes us beyond the merely *numerical* into the theological and ethical realm. *Numerically*, there are various ways of reckoning the years of the exile, but none come to exactly seventy years! For example, from the first deportation in 605 B.C. to the first return in 538 B.C. was only 67 years. And the period of Jerusalem’s desolation or abandonment according to 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 was from 587-538 B.C., thus about 49 years! *Theologically*, the important point was that restoration marked acceptance with God, who had forgiven and reinstated them in the land (Isa 40:1-2). It is possible to be so preoccupied with numbers as to miss the essential truth that those numbers declare!

Two. The number seven and sixty-two sevens in Daniel 9:25-26.

There are people who claim that Daniel 9:25-26 predicted the exact time of the crucifixion. Their calculation is reckoned from 445 B.C., the time of king Artaxerxes I, who gave Nehemiah permission to go to Jerusalem and repair its walls and gates (Neh 2:1-10). Using 360 days to the year and adding extra days for leap years, they arrive at A.D. 31. However, numbers in the Old Testament often have symbolical significance. The numbers in Daniel 9:25-26 are not explained! The starting point is 539 B.C. rather than 445 B.C., because while Artaxerxes did not issue a *decree* concerning the rebuilding of the city or the temple, Cyrus did (Isa 44:28; Ezra 1:1-5)! Moreover, it is more certain that Jesus Christ was crucified in April A.D. 30 and not in A.D. 31. Therefore, it would be more consistent to keep to *the symbolic explanation of all the numbers.*

Three. The number a time, times and half a time in Daniel 7:25.

In the context of Daniel 7, the tyrant ruler of the fourth kingdom *tries to change the times*, but the sovereign God has all time in his control and has decreed for him “a time, times and half a time”. The tyrant king may have expected his plan

to work as “one, two three”, but the sovereign God cuts off his “four” arbitrarily and decisively! He will not complete “four”. He would not be allowed to accomplish his evil plan!

Four. The number half of the seven in Daniel 9:27.

The question, “How long?” is always answered in Daniel. However, in the detailed application, the sequence is always cut short. In Daniel 9:24-27, sixty-nine and a half weeks *fall short of* seventy weeks. The tyrant king intends to enforce an agreement on many people for *one seven*, but he carries out his defiant activities against God and God’s people only *for half a seven!* Without accounting for *the second half of the seven*, the book of Daniel ends with the statement that this tyrant is judged. Without completing his *full seven*, this tyrant is cut short in his evil plan. It is as if Daniel says, “*the end is not yet!*” (lit. Mt 24:6). This is confirmed by Daniel 7:12. Although God’s judgement had already fallen on the fourth beast together with all its horns, the other beasts were sovereignly allowed to live “for an appointed time and period”. Evidently, *after* the fall of the fourth beast, world-history had *not yet* come to an end! Therefore these numbers should not be explained numerically, but symbolically.

Five. The number seventy sevens in Daniel 9:24.

For Daniel, the *seventy sevens* of years covered the *period decreed by God to accomplish his purpose in divine and secular history*. The part of divine and secular history that lies ahead of Daniel begins in 559 B.C. with the decree of the Persian king Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (Ezra 1:1-4) and would end when God’s purpose for that part of history was accomplished. It would end when Jerusalem and the temple would again be destroyed and again be rebuilt. God’s purpose in secular history is to establish his sovereignty in the affairs of political and religious leaders in this world. Because *the last half of the seventieth seven* is not accounted for in the book of Daniel, the number should be explained symbolically, not numerically.

Conclusion:

The book of Daniel *outlined all subsequent history in the world in a schematised form of four kingdoms and then depicted the end of history in the world*. But although to a certain extent, the future history in the world is predetermined, *the numbers given may not and cannot be used as historical data. The numbers have symbolical significance*. Within this framework of the kingdoms of the world and the growing kingdom of God, human rulers throughout history will unwittingly fit into a pattern of behaviour and implement policies that are recognisable from the book of Daniel. The people of God throughout history will be victims of these policies. They are forewarned and must set themselves to endure in the knowledge that their *God is still in control* of this world, its rulers and *its times* and that time and again he will vindicate his own people.

POINT 2. THE WRITER, TIME AND PLACE THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN.

There are people who hold the view that the book of Daniel was written by an unknown writer in Palestine at the end of the Greek Empire, during the reign of the tyrant Antiochus IV between 175-163 B.C. This view is mainly based on the view that revelation of future events are scientifically impossible, on the view that the whole book was written against the tyrant Antiochus IV, and on the view that the Aramaic language proves a later date. However, there is increasing evidence that the book was written by Daniel in Babylon during the sixth century B.C.

First. The internal evidence and the unity of the book.

Daniel 1:1 states that Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C. and according to Daniel 10:1, he lived to at least 537 B.C., by which time he must have been well over eighty years of age. He was an eye-witness, a well educated person and a very capable high official, who, according to the early Jewish and Christians traditions, wrote his own book. The division of the book shows a wonderful unity. As a literary work, it manifests unity of purpose and design. The history contained in chapters 1-6 are historical proof that God sovereignly controls the history of this world, as the visions in chapters 7-12 reveal.

Second. The Aramaic language.

Aramaic was the main world language in the near east from the seventh to third centuries B.C. Three facts point rather to an earlier than a later date for the book of Daniel: The word-order of the Aramaic in Daniel has been influenced by the Babylonian language. The Persian words used in Daniel belong to the old Persian language from before 300 B.C. But most remarkable is the fact that there are only three Greek words in the whole book. If the book had been written during the height of the Greek Empire, one would have noticed more influence from the Greek.

Third. Against a second century writer.

Daniel chapter 1 raises a cultural problem: “How far should a loyal Jew accept the alien culture of the conqueror?” The second century Jews during the Greek Empire, rejected outright the language, literature and customs of the Greeks, whereas Daniel and his friends accepted and adapted to all three, taking a stand only on the matter of gifts from the royal table. In Daniel 4, the gradual capitulation of Nebuchadnezzar before the God of his captives, and in Daniel 5-6, the favour shown towards Daniel by Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and especially Darius, make it hard to see that these kings point forward to the tyrant Antiochus IV, who only defied God and showed no favour whatsoever to the people of

God. Nebuchadnezzar publicly praised God (4:34-37). Belshazzar does not even appear as the destroyer of the Jewish religion, but only as a typical spoiled and frivolous king. And Darius made a decree in his whole empire that the God of Daniel should be feared and revered (6:25-27). Therefore these kings do not function as types of the arrogant tyrant Antiochus IV, who lived in the second century B.C.

Conclusion:

We conclude that the book of Daniel was written by Daniel himself in Babylon in the sixth century B.C.

POINT 3. DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

The book of Daniel may be given the title: **“God sovereignly controls human history in the present and will bring human history in the future to its appointed goal”.**

The book of Daniel may be divided into two parts, chapter 1-6, which relate incidents that happened to Daniel and his friends, and chapter 7-12, which overlap chronologically and recount four visions that came to Daniel in his old age.

Part one consists of Daniel 1:1 to 6:28. **Stories.**

Daniel 1:1-21 is the introduction and setting of the stories. Daniel 2:1 to 6:28 relates the acts of the Most High God within the nations.

Part two consists of Daniel 7:1 to 12:13. **Visions.**

Daniel 7:1-28 consists of the first vision concerning the four kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. Daniel 8:1-27 consists of the second vision concerning identification of the second and third kingdoms of the world. Daniel 9:1-27 consists of the third vision concerning the seventy weeks. Daniel 10:1 to 12:13 consists of the fourth vision concerning the heavenly messenger and his final revelation.

The book of Daniel may also be divided in another way: The main part is written in the Aramaic language and the rest is written in the Hebrew language. Aramaic was the world language of that time. Daniel 2:1 to 7:28 was written in Aramaic, because it contains the main message of the whole book and is a message, not only for Jews, but for all the kings, emperors and people in the world.

Daniel 2 to 7 are arranged cyclically in ascending and descending themes as follows:

The three ascending themes are: Daniel 2:1-49 in which Nebuchadnezzar dreams about the four kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. Daniel 3:1-30 in which Nebuchadnezzar, the tyrant, sees God’s servants rescued from the fiery furnace. Daniel 4:1-37 in which God’s judgement strikes Nebuchadnezzar.

The three descending themes are: Daniel 5:1-31 in which God’s judgement strikes Belshazzar. Daniel 6:1-28 in which Darius the Mede sees God’s servant rescued from the lion’s den. Daniel 7:1-28 in which Daniel has a vision of the four kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. The central two chapters, Daniel 4 and 5 are the climax of Daniel’s message: God wants to be acknowledged as the God of heaven by the mighty rulers of the world. Thus, Daniel 2-7 as a whole forms *a theology of history*, addressed to the kings of the world. That is why it was written in the international language, Aramaic!

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read Daniel 7-12. Next week we will introduce the book of Daniel - part 2.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.