**Surviving in Dangerous Times – Lesson 1 – Introduction & Dan 1**

I. So why study Daniel?

A. What to expect

B. What I did – may help you launch your own study of a Bible book

1. Study of key words and cross references; outlined each chapter

2. Worked through two published Bible study guides on Daniel

3. Read three contemporary books/commentaries on Daniel

4. Used other classic reference books

C. Overall approach

1. Standard sequence – chapters 1-12 in order published

a. First 6 chapters are historical narrative

b. Last 6 chapters are apocalyptic prophesy

2. We will use chronological sequence – the Babylonian years and the Persian years

a. Babylonian years – 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 5:1-30

b. Persian years – 5:31, 9, 6, 10-12

D. Some general background information – history of Israel

1. Narrative part of the book begins in ~605 BC

a. N. Kingdom (Israel) has already fallen to Assyria – 722 BC

b. Southern kingdom of Judah is hanging on by a shoestring

c. Nebuchadnezzar makes first invasion of Judah and carries off some Jewish exiles

d. Contemporary prophets – Jeremiah in Judah; Ezekiel in Babylonia

2. Most events of the book occur in Babylon, a magnificent city

(https://www.hslc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/8-7-Oppert.pdf)

a. Outer wall – 56 miles around; inner wall – 42; up to 350 ft high; 87 ft wide

b. Surrounded by a moat

c. Temple of Marduk – 480’ tall with magnificent furnishings – 53 other temples

d. Palace of Nebuchadnezzar was an impregnable fortress within the city walls

e. Hanging Gardens – one of 7 Wonders of the Ancient World

3. Book ends somewhere around 536 BC, 3 years after Persians defeat the Babylonians

4. Book is written in two languages

a. Hebrew – 1:1-2:3 and 8-12

b. Aramaic – 2:4-7:28 – the international language of the region

5. Author – Daniel, who was exiled from Judah in 605 BC

6. Modern biblical criticism says Daniel was written in 2nd century BC – major problems with this thinking

E. Why was it written?

1. God is sovereign over the kingdoms and empires of this world

2. We need to know God’s kingdom will replace all of man’s kingdoms – God’s faithfulness to us

3. Prepping Israel for the long haul vision of God’s plan to encourage them to endure till the end (Acts 7:6-7)

4. God is giving us a “realistic survival manual” – in a real sense we are all exiles on earth – aliens and strangers (I Pet 2:11) – trust in Daniel’s God (Jas 5:10)

II. The situation for Daniel and his friends (v1-7)

A. Deportation

1. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem (ruled from 605-562 BC)

a. In 3rd year of King Jehoiakim of Judah (~605 BC)

b. Lord gave Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand

(1) Problem not Nebuchadnezzar’s power, but Israel’s unfaithfulness (II Ki 23:34-24:6)

(2) Judgment came after clear direction and repeated warnings (beginning in Lev 26:14-39 and repeated in Deut 28; Is 39:6,7)

(3) Sin has a cost – prolonged sin has a prolonged cost

c. Also took some vessels from the temple to his own temple in Babylon

2. Ashpenaz, chief of state, took sons of Israel back to Babylon

a. Some from royal family and others from the nobles

b. Characteristics of the youth – no defect, good appearance, showing intelligence, endowed with understanding, discerning knowledge, ability to serve in king’s court

B. Training program – goal to completely reorient them

1. Learn the literature and language of the Chaldeans – to replace the Scriptures

2. Eat the king’s food and drink the king’s drink

3. A 3-year education program – complete re-culturalization

4. Graduate to enter king’s service

C. Children of Israel in the program

1. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah – descendants of Judah

2. Given new names – purpose was to destroy all vestiges of their previous lives

a. New names all related to entirely different set of gods rather than Israel’s God

b. Meaning of names of Babylonian gods not precise

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hebrew Name** | **Meaning** | **Babylonian Name** | **Meaning** |
| Daniel | God is my judge | Belteshazzar | May Bel (national god) protect his life |
| Hananiah | Jehovah is gracious | Shadrach | Command of Aku (the Sumerian moon god) |
| Mishael | Who is what God is | Meshach | Belonging to the goddess, Shach |
| Azariah | Jehovah has helped | Abed-nego | Servant of Nego (or Nebo, god of wisdom) |

III. Daniel seeks training program alteration (v8-16)

A. Problem for Daniel and his friends – willing to serve the king, but did not want to eat the king’s choice food and drink

1. Would be defiled so made up mind not to partake – a line that would not be crossed

2. Implies that the diet went against strict Israelite dietary laws

3. Also wanted to be dependent on God, not the king, for food

4. Courage required for teens to make these requests of ruling authorities

B. Seeks to change chief of state’s mind first – worked within Babylonian system not against

C. Proposes a test of his plan to a lesser official

D. Test results – God honored Daniel’s request

1. Appearance of Israelite youths was better – fatter of flesh

2. Daniel and friends allowed to continue on their special diet

IV. Overall training program results highlights God’s faithfulness (v17-21)

A. God blessed the Israelite youths because of their stand

1. Gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom

2. Gave Daniel ability to understand visions and dreams

B. King impressed by the Israelite youths

1. After talking with them, Nebuchadnezzar found no one better

2. Found to be 10-times better in wisdom and understanding than kingdom’s wise men

3. Entered the king’s service

4. Ironic that captured Jewish youths should be next to the throne serving the king

5. Daniel continued serving all Babylonian kings until Cyrus – God faithful to Daniel

C. We are not Daniels – but we have a Savior who delivers us even when we are faithless

1. Daniel is a good example, but he is not the focus

2. But fix your eyes on Jesus, not Daniel (Heb 12:2)