

### LITERARY OVERVIEW

- **Title/Author:** Daniel (“God is my judge”), the primary character in most of the narratives (excluding ch.3) and recipient of the visions in last half of the book. Sometimes Daniel writes in 1<sup>st</sup> person, and at others in 3<sup>rd</sup> person.
- Daniel and his three friends are about 16 years old when they are first chosen to be trained as part of the king’s court.
- An *anti-supernatural worldview* demands that because of the detail of knowledge of subsequent empires revealed in the second half of the book, the book must have been a 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. writing. Not surprisingly, this view also denies the miraculous events of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the book, and suggest that they are only hero myths and events that are “inspiring” stories.
- From a biblical and *supernatural worldview*, the narratives actually happened and the prophecies are actually God-revealed visions of the future. From this perspective, Daniel as the primary author is not a problem.
- **Time Covered:** The Jewish exile under the Babylonian Empire and then under the Persian Empire.
- **Form/Genre:** The first half of the book is primarily *narrative* (with visionary elements). The second half of the book is primarily *visionary* or *apocalyptic* (with narrational elements). There are clear parallels between Daniel (combined with Ezekiel) and the Revelation of John as apocalyptic literature.
- **Main Characters:** God, Daniel and his friends (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego), pagan kings (*Nebuchadnezzar II*, conquering king of Babylon [r.605-562 B.C.], *Belshazzar*, co-regent and last king of Babylon [r.550-539 B.C.], *Cyrus*, conquering king of Persia [r.539-530 B.C.], and *Darius*, king of Persia [r.522-484 B.C.]).
- **Original Audience:** The Jewish people in Babylonian exile, struggling to live faithfully in a foreign land and in a pagan culture.
- **Purpose:** To record prophetic dreams to display the glory of God over the future and the kingdoms of men to give hope to an exiled people (and so, by extension, to us – 1 Peter 2:11).
- **Challenges:** To shift from the narrative to the visionary genre of literature mid-book. The interpretation of the visions in the latter ½ of the book (to take away primary message, or try to work through details?).<sup>1</sup>

### OUTLINE

#### I. NARRATIVES DURING THE LIFE OF DANIEL

- A. Hero Story #1 - The 4 Young Men in the King's Court (ch.1)
- B. Hero Story #2 - Daniel's Interpretation of the King's Dream (ch.2)
- C. Hero Story #3 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Tested (ch.3)
- D. Humbling Story #1 - The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar (ch.4)
- E. Humbling Story #2 – The Humbling of Belshazzar (ch.5)
- F. Hero Story #4 – The Plot against Daniel (ch.6)

#### II. VISIONS AND PROPHECIES OF THE DAYS AFTER DANIEL

- A. Vision #1 – The 4 Beasts and the Ancient of Days (ch.7)
- B. Vision #2 – The Ram and the Goat (ch.8)
- C. Prophecy #1 – Daniel's Prayer and the Prophecy of the Prince (ch.9)
- D. Prophecy #2 – Visit and Prophecy of the Glorious Man – (ch.10-12)

### MAJOR THEMES IN DANIEL

- The central theme of the book is the sovereignty of God in the here and now, as well as the future.
- There are examples of how to live faithfully in an un-biblical culture, both were there can be accommodation as well as an uncompromising steadfastness. This displays exemplary faithfulness in troubled times.
- Faithfulness to the Lord is not dependent on good circumstances.
- The book gives examples of how He can use faithful men in influential positions.
- There is an emphasis on the significance of dreams and visions even in the life of pagan kings.
- There is a clear assertion of the miraculous.
- God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- While God has ordained suffering under ungodliness for a time, in the end He will return and bring about glory.

<sup>1</sup> See *ESV Study Bible* for charts of overview of major interpretations as well as listing of important rulers pertinent to visions.