

# Daniel: Book of Greatness

---

Daniel 4:34-37

Some of you might have saw the title of today's sermon and found disappointment that there is no mention of mothers in our message.

But that would not be entirely true. You need to understand that everything in the Bible is for everyone's benefit, especially those noble women called to be mothers. These things are written for your instruction that you might be built up in every way to serve and glorify a great God.

Included in the history of Israel are the great adventures of people following a mighty, loving and faithful Lord – which feeds our faith, our hope and our love.

Hebrews 11 – the hall of faith chapter – could easily have been the longest chapter in the Bible – longer than the 176 verses of Psalm 119.

The wonders of God can be seen in the care of the Abraham and Sarah, and their sons, the Deliverance by Moses, the Conquering of Canaan, the rescues by the Judges, and the establishment of the kingly line of David.

The great stories that dot the countryside of the promised land – the reign of rich and wise Solomon, the fiery ministry of Elijah, and the prophets like Isaiah – all light up the sky of Old Testament.

Yet some of the greatest stories of God's power on display, happen not in victorious times but lowly ones; not in Jerusalem or Judea, but

in places like Nineveh for Jonah, or here where we find ourselves in Daniel – 500 miles east of the Jordan River – in Babylon the Great.

These 12 chapters unfold for us the glories of God to hold us in awe, to humble us before His throne, to reprove our sins and our unbelief and our pride, and to encourage pilgrims to be faithful.

Our aim today is to simply whet our appetites for what is ahead.

To do so, I would have you consider three “Greats” in this book, which we will expand on more fully as we enter the volume.

They are three “Greats” which we should not miss if we are paying even a little attention.

The first is, of course, Babylon the Great.

We have read of great king Nebuchadnezzar, who is the ruler of the Chaldeans, the dominating power not only in their area, but over all the civilized world. Their borders are greater than any nation before them.

There is significance to tying Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire together – they each engulfed as no nation before or after, the known, civilized world.

Babylon has her roots all the way back to Genesis 11, and the tower of Babel. Their opposition to the true God carries them forward to the end of time in the last book of the Bible, Revelation 17, as Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots.

But for us today, we see her as the capital where Daniel with other sons of noblemen arrive as the first of many to be brought captive.

The great City Babylon held one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World, the famous Hanging Gardens. They were known for her mighty walls and gates, and being situated on the great Euphrates River.

You can hear the greatness of the place in boast of her most famous king, in 4:30 (read). These were words which choked him for 7 years.

But great Babylon is set before you first for a different reason – which is ultimately on every page of this book. And it presents a keen problem for us to this very day.

Gleason Archer, well known OT scholar, explains:

‘From a human observer, it seemed that the religion of the Hebrews had been completely discredited. Their God, Yahweh, had shown himself inferior in power to the mighty gods of Babylon; for he seemed unable to deliver his people. When they leveled Yahweh’s temple and burned its ruins, the troops served notice to all the world that their gods were mightier than Yahweh, no matter what. The Bible’s monotheism was exposed to scorn to everyone as an empty fraud, a fake.’ Page 3

But this is only a surface view, an apparent view, a shallow view.

We must not forget the key points that were too easily left out, and are left out still today:

1. Remember first that Israel was sent packing because of the same perverse worship practiced in Babylon. It was not the Babylonians but the Most High of Abraham, the Yahweh of Moses, the King of

David – who expelled Israel, especially for the height of wickedness under Manasseh and his Molech worship.

2. Second, this casting them out was both warned of by the Lord in Deuteronomy 27, and was specifically prophesied by Jeremiah and the prophets. Isaiah makes it quite clear, even before Babylon came to power, that their sins would bring this rod of God's anger to punish rebellious and pagan Israel.
3. Third, and most importantly, the same prophets specifically foretold the rescue by the Lord's hand, after he had cast them out, to bring them back again by a deliverer, Cyrus, by name, in Isaiah 45. And even more wonderfully, Daniel outlines the rise and fall of the next 4 world powers, including the kingdoms of Alexander the Great, and the iron rule of Rome.

So ironically it is the mighty hand of God on display in these pages.

God is going to accomplish something of a second Exodus, this time out of this great kingdom. He will do it in more ordinary ways, using strange and weak means to overthrow his enemies.

This has significant instruction for us.

The church is not always visibly seeing unbelief placed under the rod of righteousness and power; we find atrocious accounts of evil, unbelieving rulers like in North Korea, ruling the hearts of men with an iron-fist.

Yet our God is just as able to raise up His Daniels, His Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednegos to stand, faithful, unharmed, with their faces lifted heavenward in a dark place.

The **second great** has to do with the one whose name is in the title of the book.

Daniel is such a great model for faith and life. He is remarkable.

Think of the dimensions of this godly man. He is great in his youth in his old age. He is great not just when it goes well, but in the most difficult and dangerous of situations. When others fall apart, he stands a solid and steadfast servant.

Like Joseph, we never hear of Daniel sinning.

What we see in Daniel should whet our taste buds to learn from him, whom the Holy Spirit has set as picture before us in the Word.

He is – as Matthew Poole remarks –

1. a prophet, although not in the usual sense; he is more a statesman, in the same sense that King David or Abraham prophesied.
2. As to his heritage – he surely had a godly up-bringing, with godly parents – or at least one to disciple him.
3. He was an early captive – his entire life spent as a refugee away from home.
4. He was greatly qualified for piety, wisdom, and appearance.
5. He was highly educated and trained in all the wisdom of the realm.
6. Yet 6<sup>th</sup>, he was advanced on account not of his education but of his God-given abilities and wisdom by the Holy Spirit.
7. He was faithful and blameless in the places of advancement he received.
8. He exercised care and kindness for his companions, thinking not only of himself.

9. He is singled out in Eze. 14.14 as a man of great holiness and prayer — along with Job and Noah.
10. He was faithful in his worship of God, and would not turn to the left hand or the right.
11. He was most remarkably preserved and delivered by the providence and intervention of almighty God in the den of lions.
12. He continued his integrity and lived for his Savior under the reign of several different kings, and through most difficult times of change, unto his old age.

We summarize this point in the words of Daniel 10:11 – words spoken by an angel – “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, or highly esteemed – precious, desirable in his holiness and purity.

Who would not be attracted to a man like him! To learn from him, converse with him, be like him!

Would you not aspire to be as Great Daniel in Great Babylon? Shame on you for putting someone less before you to follow, to emulate.

But the third Great is the Greatest Great, and the Best Great – Greater than Babylon and the Greatness of Daniel.

I speak of the Great and Sovereign God of the book of Daniel, whose rule and word stand over not just the earth but the heavens; over all nations, small and great; and over all time and eternity.

The Greatness of His kingdom is revealed in the first half of the book – chapters 1-6, the historical section. Then the Greatness of the Word of His kingdom is revealed in the second half of the book – 7-12, which is largely prophetic.

There is awesome Kingdom **muscle** in this book: 2:20-23; 2:47; 3:28-29; 4:34-37; bold words in 5:22-23; 6:25-27. We read one of these for our Scripture lesson.

There are awesome Kingdom **messages** in this book: How the kingdom like a stone cut out without hands, grows to a mighty mountain and fills the whole earth, enduring forever, in chapter 2. The book ends in chapter 12 with the resurrection of the wicked and righteous.

But it is the sovereignty of God that is the central theme of the book. Archer observes that Daniel's strong health, miraculous retelling of the dream, amazing deliverance from the fiery furnace, warning to Nebuchadnezzar of his insanity, the terrifying prediction miraculously written on the wall, and Daniel's deliverance from the lions = all show that the Lord is in full charge over His people and able perfectly to care for them, keep them, protect them, and deliver them; when, how, and by what means He pleases.

This is the backbone of another high theme in the book, that of prayer, especially in the face of all human and natural discouragements. God is able, God is greater than all, and we can trust Him.

This sovereignty is not only personal and individual, but national and universal. The plan of redemption is laid out here as nowhere else in the OT, including the exact timing of Jesus' appearance, His work, His favorite name (the Son of Man) and the nature of His kingdom.

And lastly, this sovereignty is gracious – the “indomitable grace of God,” writes Archer again. Abraham's children had fallen into sin, and betrayed their trust. Yet God in His unchangeable purpose raises

up a remnant to at last welcome the Messiah, who is the Savior of the world. God never abandons true believers to the full consequences of their sins but lovingly and firmly chastens them, purifies them, brings them back to their place, their land.

This is still true today, when we look upon the troubled church of our modern period. The church professor, the late C. Gregg Singer, often remarked in his classroom that the church is sometimes found in the world, and the world is sometimes found in the church.

The church has her rises and falls. Think of what this book meant to believers in France during Calvin's service in Geneva in the 1550's. He dedicated his commentary on Daniel to the "Pious Protestants in France" – who were suffering beneath the full force of Roman Catholic persecution. Another church historian remarked that enough French Protestant blood was shed to float the Spanish Armada!

Then pick up some of our modern commentaries, writers like Young or Ferguson, and we face a different persecution, a different slaughter, where liberalism has taken the Bible away as a book by men, and cast God's word out of our schools, our universities, our halls of judgment – and Christians are marginalized on the media.

But the answer, the remedy, the call to a full-lived response, is found the same for all – especially in these 12 great and golden chapters before us.

God knows how to show us our idols, and to over throw them. He is still able to make us more than dare to be like Daniel, but to be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.



God is Lord of all, His Christ is on the throne, and He who sits in the heavens laughs at what the grasshoppers of our world are attempting to do in sin and unbelief.

Let us live for our Master; let us be assured of His Word; and let us act upon the presence of this sovereign One, Christ the Lord!

As we close, here is a great quote from Jonathan Edwards: how I hope it translates well into Vietnamese; for it must translate well into your hearts, into your praise, into your testimony before a lost and perishing world: he said, “Absolute Sovereignty is What I Love to Ascribe to God!” (Repeat) Do you love to do that? I hope you do, and I hope you will more faithfully when we have finished this great book.

Let us see, and trust, hope and walk, in the same light of the countenance of the King of kings, God of gods, as Daniel and his friends did so long ago. Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today, and forever!