

The book of Daniel *Who's in charge?*



Not often that we try to capture a whole book in a single session, but it's all the more important here with this book: if ever there was a book that is "a game of two halves", this is the one! But it is presented to us as a single book, and it is therefore very useful to understand what the *single* key theme running through it all might be. Or else ... it's a set of Sunday School Stories, followed by ... just what??

➤ **Getting our bearings**

The background: when and where is this happening?

So what's in each chapter? – just in outline (don't worry about details at this stage, we'll be coming back for that later).

➤ **Putting it together**

Are there some repeated messages coming through?

Does any emerging theme give you ideas as to how to think about the more challenging (less clear?) chapters?

➤ **Likely applications**

So what kind of applications to our own times might we expect to find here, based on these initial considerations?

➤ **Why study Daniel?**

Overleaf are five considerations from James Montgomery Boice's commentary on the book. This could actually be superbly relevant for the 21st century!

- Daniel was a godly man sent to live in ungodly Babylon at a time when God's blessing upon the Jewish nation seemed to have been withdrawn or postponed. This means his position was much like that of believers trying to live in secular society today.
- The Babylon of Daniel's day was a type of all kingdoms that do not acknowledge God or think they can dispense with him. This is an apt description of most of the world in our time.
- Daniel (and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) was under tremendous pressure to conform. That is, his religion was tolerated, even respected, as long as he did not allow it to intrude into public life or "rock the ship" of state. This is our situation also. We can practice our religion so long as it is not in the schools, at work, or in any public place. We have to keep it "on the reservation".
- The world seemed to be winning. Nebuchadnezzar (and after him Belshazzar) reigned. Nebuchadnezzar believed himself to be above having to answer to anyone.
- Nevertheless, despite these things, God told Daniel that it is he, God, who is control of history and that it is his purposes that are being accomplished, even in the overthrow and captivity of his people. Moreover, in the end God will establish a kingdom that will endure forever. The destiny of the people of God is wrapped up in that eternal kingdom.