

Equip: Resources on the Book of Daniel

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When many people think about the book of Daniel, they think about the lion's den, Daniel and three friends thrown in the fiery furnace, or perhaps they think of the Daniel diet.

People often see Daniel as an adventure story and think if they do the right thing, God will save them from the lions and the fiery furnace. However, a close reading of Daniel reveals he and his three friends were the only ones who made it out of Judah without a scratch. This means Daniel was an exception rather than a rule.

Pastor Larry Osborne in his book *Thriving in Babylon* makes it clear, no matter how godly we become, making it out of the lion's den and the fiery furnace is extremely rare. Typically, God chooses to walk with us through our challenges and difficulties rather than removing them from us.

The Bible promises God will use hardships to mature us in our faith. The Bible also warns God will discipline us when we rebel.

The theme of the book of Daniel is the sovereignty of God. He is angry with his people, and he sends the prophet Jeremiah to warn Israel, because of their wickedness, he will send the Babylonians to destroy the temple, Jerusalem, their identity and their way of life. The people of God did not listen. So, God sent persecutors.

Another danger in studying the book of Daniel is to view it only as a prophetic book. This leads to trying to decipher obscure passages and trying to link them to verses in Revelation. Although there is connection, this approach could lead to missing the importance of the book to our lives

today.

No doubt, there are some amazing stories in this book and some passages that speak to the future. However, my hope is Christians will be strengthened and instructed on how to be bold in the faith by studying the book of Daniel.

In some sense, we can identify with Daniel in the fact we are living in exile, sojourners in a foreign land. Babylon and America have many similarities. If we live here, God's intent for his disciples is the same as it was for Daniel: Be a positive influence on culture, and point others to the one true God.

Here are some resources I have found helpful.

Discovering Daniel by Amir Tsarfati

Amir Tsarfati wrote a nontechnical commentary that reads like a novel/devotional.

Tsarfati is an Israeli and leads tours and holds conferences on Israel from a biblical and prophetic standpoint. He wrote this book with Rick Yohn, former dean of Biblical and Theological Studies at Colorado Christian University. This combination of authors drives the book's focus on the context of the book of Daniel and how it brings hope to our world amid the chaos.

The book examines each chapter in Daniel, giving attention to the main points in each chapter along with insight into what was happening at the time. Each chapter demonstrates, although the world is in chaos, God is sovereign. He continues to guide the world and the lives of individuals committed to following him.

Tsarfati also wrote *Revealing Revelation*. There is a definite connection between the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation. The author makes

these connections regarding prophecy in his book on Daniel.

Although Daniel is more than a prophetic book, prophecy does play a major role. *Discovering Daniel* gives in-depth explanation of the prophecies in Daniel for the purpose of providing hope and assurance for believers.

God will deliver his people just as he did in the book of Daniel. Hope is a theme throughout the book, and the focus on prophecy seeks to undergird the reasons believers can find hope and purpose in God.

***Theology of Daniel* by Joyce G. Baldwin**

Daniel is a difficult book. The structure of the book can be confusing. Many people divide the book into two sections. Chapters 1-6 comprise the first section with its stories of adventure, and Chapters 7-12 are the unique prophecies that include some odd characters.

Baldwin addresses the fact Daniel was written in two languages. This is helpful to understand how Daniel works. Chapter 1 was written in Hebrew, and Chapters 2-7 were written in Aramaic, the language used in international trade during that period.

Baldwin outlines Chapters 2-7 around four empires and God's coming kingdom. She outlines Chapter 3 showing God's deliverance for Daniel and his friends from a trial of fire. Chapters 4-5 focus on Daniel's warnings to a king who was warned, disciplined and delivered—furthermore, a king who was warned, arrogantly ignored the warning and was overthrown in the end.

Baldwin focuses her book also on the reasons the church can be confident during perilous times. She explains how the book of Daniel demonstrates God is in control of worldly empires and evil leaders. God's kingdom is the only lasting kingdom. Every empire that rises will fall, except the kingdom

of God.

God's communion with Daniel gave him the strength to face wicked world powers without fear.

This is a great resource to use to show the church what it can look like to belong to God's kingdom. The sovereignty of God is a major theme that runs through the entire book.

NIV Application Commentary: Daniel **by Tremper Longman III**

The *NIV Application Commentary* series is unique in its approach to the text. This series of commentaries is an excellent resource for preachers or teachers tackling the difficult task of taking an ancient manuscript and showing how it is relevant to people today.

The commentary includes an introduction to each book, with discussion of authorship and date. The purpose, structure and any significant or difficult-to-understand events or words are explained in the introduction of each book. The commentary also includes helpful footnotes and an extensive bibliography that can be used for further study.

This commentary, as most commentaries do, dives into the original meaning of the text. Each chapter is divided into three sections.

"Original Meaning" includes the context and the exegesis of a passage. It gives insight into the life of the original readers and how the author addressed the issues of the day.

"Bridging the Contexts" connects the context at the time the book was written with today's context.

“Contemporary Significance” focuses on application. This section reveals how the Scripture, written long ago, still has application today. It discusses eternal guiding principles. Although contexts and circumstances are different from when the text originally was written, the Bible includes instructions, insights and principles that fit with today’s culture.

Tremper Longman highlights what Daniel and his friends went through as exiles in Babylon. He discusses Daniel’s relationship with King Nebuchadnezzar and how God showed the evil king it is God who is sovereign, not any earthly king. Longman does a masterful job of painting a picture of the culture and times of Babylon and the similarities with today’s culture.

Other helpful resources

***Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Daniel* by Daniel L. Akin**

This commentary also can be used as a study guide for individuals or groups. It takes an in-depth verse-by-verse look at the book of Daniel. Each chapter begins with a main idea and an outline of the chapter.

David Platt and Tony Merida join Daniel Aiken as authors of this commentary. They share interpretations and practical insight into each chapter of Daniel. Each chapter of the commentary concludes with the section “Where is Christ in This Text” and questions for reflection and discussion.

***Exiles: The Church in the Shadow of Empire* by Preston Sprinkle**

Exiles is not a commentary. However, it does examine passages in the book of Daniel, Romans and Revelation, as well as many other Scriptures to discuss the difficulty of living for God's kingdom in Babylon.

This book focuses heavily on Christians living in allegiance to Christ amid today's empires. Sprinkle discusses many of the cultural and political issues facing the church today. The book also contains an extensive bibliography helpful for conducting further research into aspects of today's culture against the backdrop of the culture of Babylon and the early church.

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