



Part 1 of 2

The book of Daniel dates from beginning of the third year of king Jehoiakim's reign in Judah (605 BC) to the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia (537 BC). He lives through the devastating times when the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and carry off most of the surviving Israelites into captivity. Daniel is taken captive at a young age from Jerusalem, and spends the rest of his life advising foreign kings to two empires, first in Babylon and later in Susa, capital city of the Persian empire who overpowered Babylon.

Daniel was a remarkable person but he is neither a priest nor a professional prophet. He had a long career as an administrator working for the Babylonian government and later for the Persians. The book of Daniel is composed of two major sections. First half, chapters 1-6, contain stories about Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) standing strong for their faith with the major theme being that God is more powerful than any king. The second half, chapters 7-12, broadens the message that even in difficult times, when it appears that forces hostile to God are dominating, God still wants His people to live faithfully, trusting in His promise that He will bring about His glorious Kingdom in due time.

Daniel's experience in Babylon has many parallels to Joseph's in Egypt, both are exiled as young men, face temptations yet remain faithful to God, able to interpret the king's dream, and rise to power in a foreign government. The book of Daniel also contains many riveting stories (the fiery furnace, the lion's den, others...) and with symbolic visions (handwriting on the wall, "Ancient of Days," others). While some of these visions are fulfilled during Daniel's lifetime, others are yet to be fulfilled.

By the end of the first half of this book (chapter 6), the Babylonian kings had been forced to recognize the power of Daniel's God, followed by the Persian king who also makes the same acknowledgment, "For he (the God of Daniel) is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end" (Dan. 6:26). *More next week...*