**DANIEL**

**The Lord is Sovereign**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

In our walk through the Major Prophets, we first witnessed Isaiah’s 44-year career of prophetically speaking to the people during the reigns of four human kings. Isaiah’s job wasn’t easy, as it required the delivery of a lot of unpopular and harsh information to a bunch of people who didn’t want to hear it. However, the negative messages were given in the hope of a positive response in the lives of the people. The positive outcome God was angling for is found in the meaning of Isaiah’s name, which is “Yahweh Saves,” or, “The Lord Saves.”

Then came Jeremiah’s 42-year career as a prophet. Jeremiah spent his entire adult life speaking prophesies of warning and impending judgement in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He was maligned and physically mistreated by the people for his sacrificial attempts to spare them from being removed from the land by the Babylonians. It took a while for God’s judgement to be perfected, but during Jeremiah’s ministry God allowed the Babylonians to make sorties into their territory, each time carrying some of the people back to Babylon. The exiled Jews were resettled to Tel Abib, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in modern day Iraq.

While Jeremiah was proclaiming his prophesies in Judah, God commissioned another prophet named Ezekiel to speak to the displaced Jews in Babylon. The theme of these prophesies is repeated over 60 times in the book of Ezekiel, *“They will know that I am the Lord!”* The pervasive theme of Ezekiel’s messages was the insistence that God’s people give Him His rightful place in their lives.

**What you need to KNOW:**

In this final book of the Major Prophets, we will see that during the ministries of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Lord raised up a third prophet named Daniel. Their division of labor was along these lines, Jeremiah spoke to the people of Judah, while Ezekiel and Daniel operated among the Babylonian exiles. Ezekiel served the people living in the countryside and Daniel engaged those in the royal palace.

During this time, the Babylonians were in ascendancy, asserting their power over the entire region. Their dominance included the destruction of Jerusalem and the Lord’s Temple, as well as, the subjugation of the people. Daniel was exiled to Babylon as a young man. He was an upstanding young man with strong convictions and a rightly calibrated moral compass. The Lord gave Daniel a strategic prophetic assignment inside the palace as the exile of the Jews was completed.

To understand Daniel’s prophesies, you need to know that the capital city of Babylon was magnificent and included an enormous and lush garden system that was one of the wonders of the ancient world. The aesthetic design and the hydraulic engineering were a jaw-dropping example of human ingenuity. It’s noteworthy that it was constructed between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the location of the divinely constructed Garden of Eden described in Genesis 1-2.

Because of its power and magnificence, it seemed that the Babylonian Empire would last forever. It appeared that Israel would be permanently vanquished and banished from the Promised Land and the holy city of Jerusalem. It is against this backdrop that the central theme of Daniel’s prophesies finds its full meaning. The book of Daniel teaches us that The Lord is the Magnificent King and only His Kingdom will last forever. He is the one who decides the fortunes of all people. The Kingdoms of this world rise and fall at His command. The Omnipotent Lord of the Universe will accomplish his purposes even in the face of the most determined human opposition. God’s purposes cannot be thwarted. The exiles would return to the land, the holy city and the temple would be restored. In the end, The Lord’s Kingdom will forever reign.

The details of Daniel’s story are fantastic – it would make a great script for a movie! There is much human drama, palace intrigue, and existential danger here. And, through it all, Daniel’s faith and courage are a model for all who wish to live a life of influence, while staying true to their values and commitments. Daniel lived as an upstander, never a bystander.

**GET GOING!**

**As you enjoy your walk through this 12-chapter book, note that the first six chapters are written in the third person (e.g., “Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact” – 2:14), while chapters 7-12 are written in the first person (e.g., “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit” – 7:15).**

**Also, like some of the prophesies in Ezekiel, Daniel contains prophetic utterances that are made into the presenting historical situation, but also have a kind of double meaning that will find future fulfillment. As such, there is much material here that foretells events that will occur in ‘the end times.’**

**Finally, as a sidenote, nearly all of the Older Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language. Daniel is different. It was written in two languages. Chapter 1 and chapters 8-12 were recorded in Hebrew, while chapters 2-7 were written in Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of trade and diplomacy in Daniel’s day.**