

Reading Daniel

The Big Picture

1	Daniel and friends exalted	}	Daniel and friends are faithful despite persecution and are exalted
2	Daniel interprets the dream > exalted		
3	Friends don't worship the statue > exalted		
4	Daniel interprets the dream		
5	Daniel interprets the writing > exalted		
6	Daniel's faithfulness and persecution > exalted		
7	Daniel's vision of the four kingdoms > disturbed	}	Daniel sees visions of what lay beyond the exile and is disturbed
8	Daniel's vision of the three kingdoms > disturbed		
9	Daniel's prayer > Interpretation of the 70yrs of exile		
10-11	Daniel's vision of the kings of Greece and Syria > disturbed		
12	Daniel's vision of the final day of Yahweh		

Main Themes in Daniel

1. God's people need to be faithful despite the brokenness and injustice in the world
 - God's people can expect opposition (fiery furnace, lion's den, etc.): Chs. 1-6, 11:33-35; 12:10
 - They can expect to be deeply troubled & disturbed 7:15, 28; 8:27; 9:3; 10:8, 10, 16-17
2. Yahweh is in control of our lives and of human history no matter how bad the circumstances look.
 - He controls the reigns of the earth's kings: 2:20; 4:17; 9:4-19
 - He protects and prospers his people: 1:19; 2:48-49; 3:30; 4:36; 5:29; 6:28
3. Daniel's visions (chs. 7-12) were written to offer hope to God's people waiting in exile, encouraging faithfulness to Yahweh and hope in his promises.
 - Although Daniel has great wisdom (mentioned 24x) and understanding (18x), Yahweh's plans lay beyond his ability to understand: 8:27; 12:8
 - The visions are symbolic stories about the passing of human kingdoms (chs. 2, 7, 8, 11): the animals are symbols of human kings and kingdoms (7:17)
 - When human kingdoms exalt themselves they oppose God and will face his humbling judgment: ch.2, 7:23-27
 - God will one day bring his kingdom to earth, which will challenge all human kingdoms (2:44-45); God will send a deliverer (the "son of man") to bring the kingdom (7:26-27; 9:25-27).
 - The content of visions is explained, while the timing is "sealed up": 8:14, 26; 12:4, 7-9
 - The detailed vision of ch. 11 is linked to the historical events of Israel in the years of 200-100 BC. They are described to give an illustration of the larger pattern set out in the book: no matter how bad things get, God will bring deliverance.
 - Daniel 9 sets out a prophecy of hope: The exile in Babylon will last longer than the 70yrs Jeremiah spoke of (Jeremiah 25:8-14); eventually God will send an "anointed one" (= messiah) who will be put to death, resulting in a time of great suffering (see Daniel 9:25-27, a very complex passage).
4. Because of our hope, the response of God's people in the midst of trial, should be praise and worship
 - See the "worship poems" in 2:20-23, 4:3, 4:34-35, 6:26-27