

OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

Lecture Notes—Daniel

Daniel

I. Nature of the Book

--Prophecy

—Proclaims the need for faithfulness to God, but without the normal denunciation of sin, injustice, and unrighteousness. In fact, only in Daniel 9 is the covenant type language of the earlier prophets found.

--Apocalyptic—

--Contains the visions, symbolic numbers, interpreting angels, mystical imagery, and eschatological focus that are characteristic of apocalyptic. The focus here is on the end. The process of getting there is tied up in image and symbol, making it difficult to interpret, but the conclusion is never in doubt—God wins.

--Two Parts

--Stories—Daniel 1-6 contains stories about Daniel and his three friends and their experiences in the royal court of Babylonia and then Persia. Certainly visions/dreams are included here, but the focus is on the story. In fact, much of the message is found in the story itself (see below).

--Visions—Daniel 7-12 contains apocalyptic visions (see above).

--Two languages

--2:4b-7:28 are in Aramaic. The change is made with an explanation in 2:4, but then the author does not return to Hebrew until chapter 8.

II. Date of the Book

--605-522 B.C.—These are the dates from Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Daniel until the 1st year of Darius in 9:1. This would have made him very old by the time of Daniel 9, approaching 100 years old. Perhaps there is some confusion between Darius and Cyrus, since 5:31 does show this confusion.

--Many of the visions seem to fit the context of the 2nd century BC. Thus many (most!) scholars would date either the origin or the final composition of the book to this date. But could it not be prophecy? Yes, it could, albeit perhaps with some editorial adaptations during the later periods.

III. Message of the Book

--Faithfulness to God

--Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) are examples of faithfulness to God in any situation. God vindicated them and saved them from the fire and the lions. But what if he had not? They were still faithful. Many are not saved, but should be willing to die if they must.

--The Kingdom of God

--God is at work in the world. He moves people to act. He speaks to people. He punishes and he saves. He uses the righteous and the unrighteous for His purposes.

--God's kingdom will prevail in the end. That is the message of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel 7-12. However we understand the times, the nations, and the earthly kingdoms, the ultimate message is that God's kingdom will prevail. That is also a message of encouragement to His followers to remain faithful. This was, in fact, one of the primary purposes of Apocalyptic literature—to encourage the faithful to persevere.