

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 38: Daniel – Hosea, *A Furnace, a Floating Hand, a Lion's Den, a Prophet, and a Prostitute*

Welcome to Week 38 of the Bible Reading Coach Podcast. My name is Karl Vaters, and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

This week we will be reading two books. We'll read the last of the major prophets, that's Daniel, and we'll read the first of the Minor Prophets, that's Hosea. Now, first thing we need to remember as we move from Major to Minor Prophets, is that major and minor has nothing to do with the importance of their ministry, or even the length of time that the prophets prophesied is simply due to the size of their books. So the major prophets we'll finish up this week are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and the one we'll read this week, Daniel. We will also start the Minor Prophets with the book of Hosea. And then the following two weeks we'll get into Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malikai. Because they're shorter, we will cover all 12 in just two and a half weeks.

So the 12 Minor Prophets are sometimes known as "The 12". We will always refer to them as the minor prophets or the 12 Minor Prophets, because the 12 is also a designation that sometimes given to the disciples of Jesus and to the tribes of Israel, so in order to avoid any confusion between those three, we will always refer to each of them as the 12 disciples, the 12 tribes, and the 12 Minor Prophets. Now, also, before we get into this, you may notice as we move from the last of the major prophets, Daniel, into the first of the Minor Prophets, Hosea, that Hosea is actually longer than Daniel by chapter length, but by word count. And that's what really matters, because remember, the chapters came later, by word count, all of the major prophets are larger than any of the Minor Prophets.

So with that, as an overview, let's take a look at the two books themselves. First of all, we'll be reading through the book of Daniel, this is one of the most well known books in the Bible. It's one of the places where we have these images on nursery walls of Daniel in the lions den of, of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace, we sing songs about the stories. So in Daniel, you're going to see a lot of things very familiar. And then halfway through, there's going to be a switch where things become very unfamiliar and very strange. We'll talk about what happens there in a moment. First of all, Daniel is another apocalyptic books. The three main apocalyptic books in the Bible are Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation. We talked about apocalyptic writing last week, and what that means, so we won't go over it again this week.

If you are starting here, you can go back a week to discover a little bit more about what that means. Like Ezekiel, that we just read, Daniel also lived and wrote while in exile in Babylon. And he has these vivid stories, because the apocalyptic writing is the way that Hebrews communicated to each other, while in a place where they were under the subjection of a foreign power, without the foreign power, knowing what it was that they were saying to each other. It has these bizarre images in addition to the fiery furnace in the lion's den, it also has bizarre images of a mysterious disembodied hand writing a warning, which is where we get the phrase the writing is on the wall. Yes, from the book of Daniel. We also have some dream interpretation like we haven't seen since Joseph and Pharaoh back in Exodus. In week four, we have flying

creatures, we have all kinds of strange and interesting and fascinating stuff coming up in the book of Daniel.

So let's take a look at it piece by piece so you'll see what's coming. First of all, the book of Daniel starts out in Daniel chapter 1 with the exile to Babylon, the fall of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon happens when they get there. Daniel and his friends are asked to eat the king's food, which usually people would jump on, they say no, give us a test, give us simply food basically give us kosher foods so we can honor God the way he's asked us to honor Him as Hebrews. They do so and they pass the test. They're healthier and stronger than the others. Because kosher food tends to be far more nutritious and far more healthy for our bodies than the typical fats and sugars that wealthy people eat, which is what they would have been given at the Kings table.

We then move along to the king having a dream. And Daniel stands out by interpreting the king's dream much as Joseph did, many, many, many centuries before this, and this gains him a great amount of status. He and his friends as very smart people were already being groomed to be among the elite of the Babylonians. But his dream interpretation is especially impressive and especially as an exile Jew in Babylon to have this kind of status immediately put upon him is really extraordinary. So he and his three friends rise above all the others in leadership in Babylon. This then leads to Chapter Three where we get the first of the really famous stories of Daniel, that is the fiery furnace, the kingdoms, a massive statue of himself for the people to worship.

But Daniel's three friends now named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That's their Babylonian names. Their original Hebrew names, as we'll see this week are Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They don't bow to the image, and so they're thrown in the furnace. The furnace is so hot that those who throw them in are killed. They, however, are not killed, but are seen with a fourth person walking among them. The question is, Who is this fourth person? We as Christians believe that this is Jesus in what is called a pre-incarnational epiphany. Yeah, it's a big theological term. What it means is, incarnation means when Jesus was born, pre-incarnation is before Jesus was born. And epiphany means an appearance of Jesus.

So a pre-incarnational epiphany means an appearance of Jesus before he was born. We've already seen a couple of those. Most famously, Melchizedek is potentially a pre-incarnational epiphany. When Abraham talks to the three angels and bows down and calls one of them Lord, that is almost certainly a pre incarnational epiphany and appearance of Jesus before his birth in Bethlehem.

So, the other question that is often asked in this story is okay, the three didn't bow but where was Daniel? Did he bow? Well, obviously, he didn't, because later on, he stood against that kind of idolatry and was thrown into the lion's den, which we'll get into a moment. But the verse right before chapter three, gives us a hint, chapter 2, verse 49, when you get there and you read it, it tells us that they were actually living in different places in the very large region of Babylon. So bottom line is, the statue was erected in the place where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego lived, Daniel lived a long way away. So there was no, there was no idol around him to bow down to and so he wasn't a part of that story. That is the likely reason why he's not in that story.

We then go to the second of Daniel's dream interpretations in Daniel, chapter 4. And this one is about the king going crazy. spending years eating grass like a cow, and then eventually

repenting, which actually happens by the time that chapter is done. There's a long passage of time that happens in Daniel chapter two, we then get the Atari Daniel chapter four, we then get to January chapter five and the famous writing on the wall, we now have a new king, Nebuchadnezzar is gone, and Belshazzar arrives, we are about to see two more kings coming up, Darius and Cyrus as well. Why does the king's name constantly change in the book of Daniel, because, as short as the book of Daniel is, it actually encompasses a very long period of time. And secondly, the stability, Babylon was actually quite unstable. At this time, it was powerful, it was the world power. But because of that, there were all kinds of things happening among those who want it to gain that power. And so you have four different kings who come and go throughout the length of Daniel. So take note of the change of the king's names, as things go along. This is also why policy tends to change from being good to Daniel and his friends, being mean to Daniel and his friends back and forth, because of these power plays.

Okay, so that some of that you'll notice in the writing of the wall chapter in Daniel five, we then come to the most famous image of Daniel, and that is the lion's den and Daniel 6. What happens is the Babylonian leaders are jealous of Daniel, because he is his status before the king is so strong, so they decide we're going to kill him. But the only way to get him killed is to allow the king to pass a law that will kill him, but the king won't do that. So what basically they asked, where's his weakness, and his only weakness is his faithfulness to God. So they have the king pass a law that says you can't pray or ask even any petition to any ruler or any king other than the king. And Daniel, of course, prays regularly to God like he does, he gets thrown in the lion's den. And you get to read that wonderful story in Daniel chapter 6. After Daniel 6, so halfway through the book, 6 to 12 chapters. After that, everything shifts before up through Daniel six, it's story after story after story, all the stuff these images and ideas that we're familiar with.

Then in chapters 7 through 12, everything shifts and the storyline fades away, and the dreams and visions predominate. When you're reading chapter seven through 12, if you've read the book of Revelation before, this will feel really familiar, because a lot of the images and a lot of the visions in Daniel are repeated, or are echoed later on in the book of Revelation is a real big shift. It's apocalyptic writing at its finest. It's the Hebrew speaking to each other about their eventual deliverance, using images that the Babylonians will not not be able to understand okay, at the end of Daniel, then midway through this week we will leave the major prophets. And we will read the first of the Minor Prophets, namely the book of Hosea.

Hosea's story is astonishing, heartbreaking, beautiful, and really hard to grasp. It's not as familiar as the stories in Daniel but it shouldn't be because it's really something else. First of all, Hosea takes place long before Daniel, again, when we get to the major and minor prophets. They are not written primarily in chronological order. They are written in more or less in size or too big, the big chunk and then the small chunk. Okay. So Daniel takes place very close to the end of the Old Testament narrative. But Hosea takes place about 200 years before that, Hosea takes place before the exile before the fall of Jerusalem, and even before the fall of Samaria and the northern kingdom 150 years before the fall of Jerusalem. So it's We go way back in time from Daniel when we get to Hosea, okay. So basically, what you've got is the beginning of the prophecies, one of the first prophecies to say, Hey, you're about to be in trouble, which will eventually end up in the exile in Babylon. And the book of Hosea really goes to the heart of what

we've already talked about what I call the rule of the reluctant Prophet, that is, anybody who wants to be a prophet isn't paying attention to what Prophets have to endure.

Here's Hosea's story. In his story, in chapters 1 and 3, you're going to see, and the rest of it is prophecy. In chapters 1 and 3, you're going to see a story which is this, he is asked to marry a prostitute. This wife after he treats her wonderfully, leaves and goes back into prostitution. He is then asked by God, to go and find her, where she's being sold in the marketplace, like a piece of meat as a prostitute, he is to buy her, bring her back into his home, and treat her as his wife again, and not as the prostitute that she became. This will then become an illustration for the people, that this is how they are behaving towards God. God has loved them and taking them in as his bride. They have gone and prostituted themselves to other gods by worshipping idols, and God says, "I will buy you back again. And I will treat you as my bride again even though you have prostituted yourself with other gods."

This is a story to us but Hosea actually had to do it. Okay. Imagine this in Israel at the time. He's their prophet. It's like, it's like, the pastor of the church, going out marrying a prostitute eroding. Okay, that's weird, but okay, she becomes his wife, maybe, okay, that's great. Then she goes back into prostitution. And what does the pastor do, he doesn't wipe his hands ever, he goes and brings her back again, literally having to buy her off the auction block, and treats her again as his loving wife. This is something they will never forget. And it's about his vivid illustration of how much God loves us, and how badly we have behaved towards him, as we will see anywhere in the Bible. So pay attention to that story this week. And I will say it's an extraordinary one.

So as we conclude, let's take a look at what was to look for this week. First of all, in the book of Daniel, in the Book of Daniel, notice the passage of time, you'll see that with the change of kings for different kings, big passage of time. Remember also that the book of Daniel happens not in Israel or Judah, but in Babylon hundreds of miles away. Note that it is one of the last of the Old Testament books chronologically. And note the faith and the courage of Daniel and his friends, that even when things go bad, they do the right thing. Then when you read Hosea, take note that you are now jumping back in time about 200 years from the book of Daniel.

And note the heartbreak of God over our sin is something we don't often consider. We often consider our own heartbreak and our own loss, we seldom consider what our sin does to the heart of God. And this comes as close to a aside from the crucifixion of Jesus. I don't know that there's a more vivid illustration in Scripture, of the heartbreak of God over our sin. And also note that the rule of the prophets that how challenging it is to actually be a true prophet of God because of what the prophets have to endure in order to get the essential message of God through them to us. All right, it's an amazing week of reading two extraordinary books with four vivid stories, and a whole bunch of amazing prophecies. This is something that will keep you awake, that will keep your reading that will absolutely engage you. I hope you have as great of a time with that as I do when I read these books, and we'll see you next week.

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