

# Daniel

## “There Is a God in Heaven”

### I. Introduction to Daniel

Daniel is the twenty-seventh book in the Old Testament and the fifth and final book of the Major Prophets. It has twelve chapters, 357 verses and can be read in less than an hour.

Daniel was originally written in Hebrew, the language of Israel, and Aramaic, the language of Babylon; Hebrew for the Jewish portions, and Aramaic for the gentile parts. It was written shortly after the fall of Babylon to Persia.

The book of Daniel is uniquely apocalyptic (forecasting of the destiny of the world). It outlines the course of human history from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the return of Christ. In many ways, Daniel serves as the key to unlock the mystery of Revelation.

Daniel gets its name from its author and main character. His name, which means, God is judge, is mentioned by name over 60 times in the book. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Three times, Ezekiel mentions Daniel as a man of great faith and righteousness. (Ezekiel 14:14, 14:20, 28:33)

Both Ezekiel and Daniel were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was taken to the capital and trained as an advisor to the king. Ezekiel was taken to the refugees in Tel Abib. Ezekiel's ministry was to the deported people of Israel, and Daniel's ministry was in the royal court. Over of course of his life, Daniel would impact three kings.

Daniel was born into the Jewish royal family. He was taken captive to Babylon in 605 B.C. when only a teenager. He was placed in Babylon's "Royal Academy" to be trained as a high official. He served for seventy years, under the authority of three different kings, in two empires. He survived the lion's den and had a prophetic ministry that would unfold God's future dealings with mankind. While best known for his encounter with hungry lions, Daniel's highest value is found in his example of godly living in a secular society and his prophetic picture of human history. All of his prophetic writings will culminate with the second coming of Christ!

Daniel has been the prime target of Bible critics, mostly because of the miraculous stories recorded, and his detailed prophecies of rising and falling empires. The critics of Daniel claim the book is a forgery, not written by Daniel 500 years before Christ, but instead written about 180 B.C. They assert the purpose of the book is not prophetic, but is a form of encouragement to Jews facing persecution during the Maccabean period.

There accusations against Daniel fall into four categories:

**First** The claim that since Daniel was not placed among prophets in the Hebrew Canon, it must not be prophetic.

*This is erroneous.* Daniel was a statesman who recorded prophecies. His book is as much history as prophesy, which explains why it is found with the likes of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. The writings were considered no less inspired than the prophetic books.

**Second** Daniel uses Greek words not thought to be known in Persia during 500's B.C.

*This is erroneous.* Only three words are in question. All three refer to musical instruments. It has since been found that trade and travel existed between Babylon and Greece; even prior to Daniel's writings. An older book than Daniel would have been flooded with Greek terms since Alexander's conquest.

**Third** They claim Daniel to be filled with historical errors.

*This is erroneous.*

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Not only have the supposed errors been found truthful, Daniel is filled with information only a person living in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. could know. For example, Daniel 5 refers to Belshazzar as king. Until recent discoveries, all records of the time cited Nabonidus as Babylon's final king. However, in 1879 A.D., the world was introduced to the “Nabonidus Chronicle.” This cuneiform tablet tells of Babylon's final days before falling to Cyrus. The Tablet explains that Babylon had two kings at the time: Nabonidus, who lived outside of Babylon in retirement and his son, Belshazzar, who reigned as co-regent in Babylon.

**Fourth** The real problem Daniel is the prophetic picture he paints from the fall of Babylon to the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. They claim only someone living after these events could possibly know these precise details. To which we respond “there is a God in Heaven” (Daniel 2:28)

*This, too, is erroneous.* Daniel prophesize of many things that transpired after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. these prophesies include the rise of Rome, coming of Messiah, and destruction of Jerusalem. The most important reason for accepting Daniel as the inspired Word of God is, this was the position Jesus took. In Matthew 24:15, He states:

“Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand). . .”

## **II. Outline of Daniel**

Daniel divides easily into two equal parts.

### **Section 1-Chapter 1 through 6**

While containing prophesy, it is mostly historical and chronological

### **Section 2-Chapters 7 through 12**

These chapters fit within the timeline of chapters 1 through 6 and are a series of prophetic visions received by Daniel.

### **Section 1**

*Chapter 1* Serves as an introduction to the book of Daniel.

Daniel, along with many other young Hebrew men, was taken captive to Babylon and trained in the royal academy, where they were to become advisors to King Nebuchadnezzar. It is here we learn of the personal commitment that allowed Daniel to remain faithful to the Lord, and impact his world for the Kingdom of God.

First        He *purposed* in his heart. Resolve is not enough, but we must start there.

Second     He was a man of the Word; he knew what pleased God

Third       Daniel was a man of fellowship; he surrounded himself with other godly men.

Fourth     He was a man of faith; despite circumstances, he trusted that God's way was best

Fifth       Daniel was a man of commitment; his purpose, desire to please God, desire for godly fellowship, and faith, remained with him his entire life.

Later, we find prayer playing a large role in his life, too.

### *Chapter 2* Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel elates the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a massive image made of a variety of metals. Daniel, clearly under the guidance of the Spirit explained the dream. Each metal represented a world kingdom.

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Gold – Babylon  
Silver – Persia  
Bronze – Greece  
Iron – Rome

Iron and clay – a future kingdom

This image gives a timeline of what Jesus called “the times of the Gentiles”. The image was struck and destroyed, not in the head, but in the feet. After its collapse, the kingdom of God would arise in its place. Clearly, Daniel explains a time coming when Christ will return to set up His kingdom on earth. In Revelation 11:15 we read of the fulfillment of these prophecies.

“Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”

#### *Chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar’s Image*

In obvious defiance to his inspired dream, Nebuchadnezzar erected a massive golden image representing Babylon. He called all the influential people of the kingdom to a celebration of the empire. The Plains of Dura filled with the enormous crowd, who had come to worship before the image. When the music began, the people were instructed to bow before this colossal idol. One by one, they bowed until a sea of worshippers lay prostrate before the image.

At this point in the story, we again meet the three young men from Chapter 1 who were led captive from Jerusalem with Daniel: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Although, now living in Babylon, they had not become Babylonian thinking or life-style. Instead, they stood confident in the Lord. Their refusal to bow infuriated Nebuchadnezzar, who demanded they be cast into a furnace and burned to death.

Two things stand out in this event:

First, is the faith of these men. In Daniel 3:17 – 18 they tell the king: "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." They truly believed, “our God is able.”

Second is the care of God. One of the major themes of Daniel is the sovereignty of God. He clearly rules the big things, such as the rise and fall of kingdoms, as well as caring for the individual. In Daniel 3:25 we read how He steps into the fire with the three young men and Nebuchadnezzar’s response to the sight.

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

#### *Chapter 4 Another Dream*

God so loves the world He uses many ways to speak to men. When Nebuchadnezzar was alive, God interrupted his world with a dream of an angelic messenger cutting down a beautiful tree. Daniel was called upon to interpret its meaning. He explained that Nebuchadnezzar was the tree and his pride would lead to him being “cut down”. A year later, Nebuchadnezzar’s pride got the best of him and God touched his mind and he went crazy. Thinking he was an animal, he spent seven seasons (an unknown time period) “beside himself” until he realized “the Most High rules the kingdom of men”; after this revelation, he was restored.

As tragic as this event was, it seems to have led Nebuchadnezzar to saving faith. This chapter is a letter sent to the world declaring his testimony.

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### *Chapter 5 A Kingdom Collapses*

Years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, we find Babylon on the eve of destruction. Combined forces from the Medes and Persians have formed a siege around the city. In an act of self-confidence, Belshazzar, King of Babylon throws an elaborate party. As always, drunkenness leads to folly and the nobles begin to drink from the sacred vessels of the Jewish Temple. Their night is interrupted by a message from God written on the wall:

*“Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin”*

Daniel is called to interrupt the message. He declares that God had numbered their days. They had been weighed and were found wanting, and the kingdom would fall. That same night, Persia broke into the city and the king and his nobles were killed.

This same message is true for all of us. Time is running out and we will all give an account to God. The only escape is through the Cross. Don't be like Belshazzar, who ignored the warning.

### *Chapter 6 The Lion's Den*

Chapter 1 ends declaring that Daniel continued in his commitment to the Lord throughout his life. In Chapter 6 we find an aged man still faithfully following and serving the Lord. He exemplifies the truth that we should place the laws of God above the laws of man. When commanded not to pray, he faithfully sought the Lord. He found the safest place to live is in the center of God's will. His faithfulness paid off and Darius was drawn to the Lord.

## **Section 2 Second division of Daniel**

We are no longer in chronological order. These accounts fit within Chapters 1 – 6. The emphasis is on a series of prophetic messages which Daniel receives from the Lord.

### *Chapter 7 Four Beasts*

Each of the four beasts represents a kingdom.

- Lion – Babylon
- Bear – Persia
- Leopard – Greece
- Unnamed beast - history shows it to be Rome.

The fourth beast had 10 horns. Daniel was most interested in a little horn which rose above the others. The little horn is a reference to the anti-Christ, who will rise to power during the Tribulation and will turn against the saints. His reign will end with the return of Christ, who will set up His everlasting kingdom.

### *Chapter 8 A Ram and a Goat*

Much of the value of Daniel is in prophecies that have been fulfilled in history. Chapter 8 includes some very detailed prophecies concerning Persia and Greece.

History tells of a young man from Macedonia in northern Greece, named Alexander. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. he rose to power after the death of his father. His desire was to unite Greece and overthrow Persia. In one of the most amazing military campaigns in history, he overthrew Persia and spread his kingdom from Greece to India, and south to North Africa.

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His reign was cut short when he died at thirty-two years of age from pneumonia. After his death the kingdom was divided into four areas to be ruled by his generals.

Later in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C., one of these rulers, Antiochus Epiphanes, attempted to eradicate the Jewish people. He desecrated the Temple, burned the Holy Scriptures, and murdered thousands of believers. He is a picture of the anti-Christ described in Chapter 7.

It is not difficult to see how Daniel’s clear descriptions line up with the events which took place hundreds of years in the future.

#### *Chapter 9 70 Weeks*

Chapter 9 can be viewed in two parts.

First: Daniel’s prayer is a picture of the kind of heart which will lead to revival. We should be seeking God to bring revival to our communities. This involves confession of personal sin and intercession for others.

Second: This prophesy details the time in which Messiah will come, and the work He will accomplish. It reveals the details for understanding the Tribulation.

#### *Chapter 10 Lessons on Prayer*

Daniel spent three weeks seeking God. He only stopped when his answer came. We see an illustration of perseverance. We see an insight into the spiritual battle that goes on for the souls of men.

#### *Chapter 11 History Told in Advance*

This chapter is the primary cause of the attack of the critics. Daniel’s description of battles between two of the four divisions of the Greek Empires was so accurate, the critics claim it must have been written after the events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C.

#### *Chapter 12 A Look Ahead*

Daniel sees into the last days of man on earth, before Christ’s return. While he is told to seal up what he saw, he does describe the end times as:

Man traveling to and fro  
Knowledge increasing

This is a clear description of the times in which we live.

### **III. Why Study Daniel**

One of the main truths expressed in Daniel is the sovereignty of God. Three times we read, “The Most High rules the kingdom of men.” His sovereignty is seen in:

The rise and fall of empires  
Gifting of Daniel for ministry  
Protection of the three young men in the fiery furnace  
Madness of Nebuchadnezzar  
Daniel in the lion’s den  
The future being written

Another important truth is the example of Daniel’s impact in his world. His commitment kept him from falling and led others to salvation. All evidence points to both Nebuchadnezzar and

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Darius becoming believers. Daniel was not a pastor, prophet or priest, yet he lived to impact others for the kingdom.

Finally, Daniel serves as the key to unlocking prophesy. The dream image of Chapter 2 helps us understand “the times of the Gentiles”. While Daniel, chapter 9 helps us understand the events of Revelation.

#### **IV. Types of Christ**

Daniel 2:45	Jesus is the stone that destroys the image and sets up His kingdom on earth
Daniel 3:25	Jesus is the fourth person in the fiery furnace
Daniel 5:24 -25	Jesus writes on the palace wall
Daniel 7:13-14	Jesus is the Son of Man who comes with the clouds of heaven and reigns
Daniel 9:24-26	Jesus is the one who fulfills prophesies of Chapter 9, by coming in the prescribed time to:

- Finish transgression
- Make an end of sin
- Make reconciliation for iniquity
- Bring everlasting righteousness
- Is cut off on the cross