

Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

Review

The Book of Daniel: General Information

The following are the major individuals mentioned in the book of Daniel:

- *Daniel* (Hebrew) or *Belteshazzar* (Babylonian): Hebrew youth of royal heritage who was captured and carried off to Babylon following the 1st siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C.
- *Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah* (Hebrew) or *Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego* (Babylonian): three other Hebrew teenagers who were carried off with Daniel in 605 B.C. ^{Daniel 1-3}
- *Nebuchadnezzar*: sovereign king of Babylon (605-562 B.C.); captor of Daniel et al. ^{Daniel 1-5}
Nebuchadnezzar carried out three sieges and conquests of Jerusalem (605, 597 and 586 B.C.). He destroyed Jerusalem, including the Temple, at the end of the 3rd siege ^{See details in Chapter 1 notes.}
- *Belshazzar*: Babylonian king when the kingdom was overtaken by Darius the Mede ^{Daniel 5}
- *Cyrus* ^{Daniel 1,6,10} or *Darius* ^{Daniel 5,6,9,11}: king(s) over Persia, possibly the same person
- *Gabriel* ^{Daniel 8:16, 9:21} and *Michael* ^{Daniel 10:13,21, 12:1}: heaven's archangels

Information about the Book of Daniel

The events detailed in the book extend from the first conquest of Nebuchadnezzar (605 B.C.) to the third year of the reign of Persian King Cyrus ^{Daniel 10:1} (536 B.C.). The book spans the entire Hebrew captivity (605-536 B.C., 70 years as Jeremiah prophesied ^{Jeremiah 29:10-11}).

Daniel was likely written in the timeframe 540-530 B.C., during the last decade of Daniel's life.

The book is a record of the life of and prophetic revelations given to Daniel. For example, in the book of Daniel, God provided Daniel with a comprehensive revelation of His plan for the history of mankind (both Gentile and Hebrew) up to the Second Coming. Furthermore, the book of Daniel is key to understanding Jesus' Olivet Discourse ^{Matthew 24-25} and the entire book of Revelation. Also, similar to the book of Esther, Daniel revealed God's continuing work in His people Israel, even in the time of their chastening (disciplining).

The Book of Daniel: Outlines and Review

Several outlines for the book of Daniel have been suggested. This study used the following outline that defines three major divisions: (1) The personal background of Daniel ^{Daniel C.1}, (2) The Prophetic Course of History from Gentile perspective, presented in Aramaic ^{C.2-7} and (3) The Prophetic Course of History from God's viewpoint, presented in Hebrew ^{C.8-12}.

Daniel 13 – Review

The following list contains a synopsis of the twelve chapters in the book of Daniel:

1. *The Captivity of Daniel:* God used General, then King, Nebuchadnezzar to implement His judgement on the Israelites by conquering the Southern Kingdom of Judah (605 B.C.). After Nebuchadnezzar's first of three sieges (605, 597, 586 B.C.) & capture of Jerusalem, he took many Jewish captives back to Babylon. Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) were among a group of the captives who were put in a three-year program of training to prepare them to serve in the king's palace.

There are many similarities in the lives of Daniel and Joseph ^{Genesis 39-41}. Both of these faithful men were used by God in the midst of incredibly difficult challenges/circumstances in their lives.

2. *King Nebuchadnezzar's Dream:* He dreamed (c.602 B.C.) of a large metallic statue with a head of gold, chest & arms of silver, belly & thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet of iron & clay, symbolizing 4 earthly kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Nebuchadnezzar threatened to kill all of his advisors if none of them could tell him both the dream and its interpretation. God gave Daniel the dream and its meaning, thus saving the lives of all of the "magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers". Through the dream, God told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the sovereign "king of kings". Daniel's hymn of praise is a summary of the theme for the entire book: *God's Sovereignty*.

3. *Nebuchadnezzar's Image of Gold:* King Nebuchadnezzar erected a huge golden idol and demanded everyone to worship it (597-585 B.C.). Daniel's friends (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) refused to worship the image and the king threw them into a fiery furnace. While in the furnace, the king saw the men walking around with someone who looked "like a son of the gods". Most believe the fourth man was Jesus (the son of man), who came to save His followers through the trial. After calling the 3 out from the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar worshiped "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego...".

Some scholars have suggested the story in Daniel 3 is a foreshadowing of the End Times: fiery furnace ⇒ Great Tribulation; Nebuchadnezzar ⇒ the Antichrist; Daniel ⇒ the church; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego ⇒ the 144,000 Jews ^{Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1-5}.

4. *Pride, Punishment, Redemption:* Through another dream (570-563 B.C.) interpreted by Daniel, God told King Nebuchadnezzar He would teach the king about His sovereignty. Daniel explained to the king he was the tree in his dream, representing his massive and powerful kingdom. Daniel continued by telling Nebuchadnezzar he would be "cut down", losing his ruling position and become like a "wild animal"; however, after seven years the king would "acknowledge" God as the sovereign God and his empire would be restored. Everything happened just as God told Daniel, who interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Some scholars have suggested these events illustrate the king's (and a general) salvation story.

5. *Babylon's Final Feast and Fall:* Daniel described how the arrogance of the Babylonian King Belshazzar led to Medo-Persian king Darius/Cyrus conquering Babylon (539 B.C.). In spite of the large Medo-Persian army having taken control of the Babylonian empire

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and holding siege outside of the walls of Babylon, King Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar's grandson) held a "great banquet" for his noblemen. During the festivities, Belshazzar had his guests drink from the goblets taken from the Jewish temple. God sent a hand to write a message of the king's demise on the wall of the banquet hall. That very night, the army of King Cyrus was able to overtake the city without a battle.

Man's hands had taken (from the Temple in Jerusalem) and misused (by drinking from) *God's goblets*, and in response to these blasphemous acts, *God sent His hand* of judgement.

6. *Daniel in the Lion's Den*: Being tricked by some of his satraps who were jealous of Daniel, King Darius ordered the entire Medo-Persian kingdom to worship him only (c.539 B.C.). Knowing he would not obey, the satraps observed Daniel as he continued with his routine of praying three times a day and reported this to Darius, who was greatly grieved because of his fondness for Daniel. After attempting to find a way out of it, Darius was forced to throw Daniel into a den of lions. Angels came and kept the lions from harming Daniel. Darius was relieved the next morning when he found Daniel well, and proceeded to have the conspiring satraps and their families thrown to the lions.

A Biblical principle illustrated in both OT ^{Daniel 3,6} and NT ^{1 Corinthians 4:12-13, 2 Timothy 3:10-15} Scripture is that all genuine saints who face persecution are called to remain true regardless of the cost.

7. *Daniel's Dream of Future World History* – God gave Daniel a prophetic dream (c.553 B.C.) and its interpretation concerning future world kingdoms. The visionary dream was of four "beasts", including a "lion" representing Babylon, a "bear" representing Medo-Persia, a "leopard" representing Greece and a "terrifying & frightening beast" representing Rome. The dream continued with a vision of God the Father on His Heavenly throne, the destruction of the Antichrist and the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2 and this chapter contain essentially the same comprehensive prophecy of future events (presented as four kingdoms), and the most detailed to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar saw the four Gentile empires as a stately image of a man/king, but in chapter 7, Daniel's vision presented the same Gentile kingdoms as ravenous, wild beasts. In contrasting the early chapters with the later chapters of Daniel, the different perspectives illustrate that the things most highly esteemed among men are abominations in the sight of God.

8. *A Vision of a Ram and a Goat*: Daniel's 3rd vision ^{Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10-12} was written in Hebrew, signifying the change in perspective of the Daniel messages from Gentile to Jewish. In this vision (c.551 B.C.), Daniel saw the images of a Ram and a Goat, representing two future empires. The angel Gabriel gave Daniel the interpretations of the vision, with the Ram symbolizing the Medo-Persian kingdom and the Goat with a prominent horn symbolized Greece and Alexander the Great, respectively. Gabriel continued with a detailed description of the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his persecution of the Jews & the Jewish way of life, but who was eventually repelled by the Maccabean revolt.

This vision given to Daniel occurred during the reign of Babylon's last king, Belshazzar; therefore, the revelations that named the Medo-Persian and Greek empires had to be supernatural.

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9. *Daniel's Prayer and Prophecy of 70 Weeks:* After having read Scripture ^{Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10} indicating the captivity would last 70 years, Daniel knew his people were near the end, so he decided to pray, fast and put on sackcloth (c.539 B.C.) as he passionately pleaded with God for forgiveness for and mercy on Israel. Gabriel interrupted Daniel's prayer with God's positive response of His plan for the restoration of Israel. The restoration plan was detailed in an incredible four verse prophecy known as the the Seventy Weeks of Daniel.

A real key to understanding the timing of the *Seventy Weeks* is the realization that there is a time break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Proofs include: (1) some of the actions leading to the restoration of Israel are incomplete, (2) the text in Daniel 9:26, (3) an indication resulting from something Jesus did **not** say, (4) the conclusion of week sixty-nine in the past & a future beginning to week seventy and (5) several allusions to the time gap in other Scriptures.

10. *Daniel's Vision of a "Man" Dressed in Linen:* Daniel was introduced to his 5th and last vision (c.536 B.C.) by an unnamed "man dressed in linen" who was described in glorified terms and has been variously assumed to be Jesus, Gabriel or another high ranking angel (there is little doubt he was one of the latter two). Twice Daniel was overwhelmed by being in the presence of the "man", who both times encouraged and strengthened Daniel. The "man" told Daniel he had come to "tell [him] what is written in the Book of Truth".

Daniel 10 is an introduction to the prophecies revealed in Daniel 11-12, which give more detail on God's plan for the restoration of the Jews presented to Daniel by Gabriel in Daniel 9:24-27.

11. *From the Silent Years to the End Times:* Daniel's 5th vision continued with the "man" sharing prophecies describing the future kings of the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. Most of the chapter accurately detailed the battles between the Seleucid (North, Syrian) and Ptolemaic (South, Egyptian) kings and their various attacks on Jerusalem & the Jews. The "man" concluded this part of the prophecy with accurate descriptions of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (a type of Antichrist) and the eventual End Times Antichrist. There are over 130 prophetic statements in this chapter that cover most of the 400 years of the so-called "silent years" between the close of the Old Testament and the life of Jesus Christ.

12. *The End Times:* The 5th vision (the book of Daniel) concluded with prophecies from the "man" concerning specific aspects of the End Times: the Great Tribulation, Resurrections and the Rewards of the Righteous. Two additional angels appeared with the "man" at the Tigris River. One of the other angels and then Daniel requested that the "man" provide clarification and the timing of the prophetic events he had described in the vision. The "man" responded to the angel with an oath sworn in the name of God, stating that the Great Tribulation would last 3½ years ("a time, times and half a time"). His reply to Daniel included two confusing time prophecies (1290 and 1335 days), a directive to "seal" the message and instructions to rest until he received his "allotted inheritance".

Daniel was told to "seal" the prophecies; later, John was told "the time is near" to unseal them.