

Daniel Review

OVERVIEW

- The book of Daniel is considered the most explicit prophecy of end times parallel to Revelation
- It provides a panoramic view of world history up to the Return of Jesus Christ known as “the time of the gentiles”—when Israel under Gentile domination and is without a king of the house of David on the throne (586 B.C. to Return of Christ)
- It contains four major prophecies given to Daniel as recorded in chapters 7, 8, 9, 10-12
- The twelve chapters in the book are essentially divided into two sections: History (1-6), Prophecy (7-12)
- The book is unique in the Old Testament in having an extensive section written in Aramaic (less than half written in Hebrew): Hebrew (1 to 2:3), Aramaic (2:4 to 7:28), Hebrew (8 thru 12)

ELEMENTS

- Commitment to God; God’s care for Israel; Comfort to the Jews (hope for future); How world will end

AUTHORSHIP

- Daniel is the author. Written in about 536-530 B.C. Jesus ascribes the book to Daniel (Matt. 24:15)

KEY-NOTE EVENTS (listed in chronological order, B.C.)

- Daniel’s captivity (605 B.C., chapter 1)
- Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream (603 B.C., chapter 2)
- Miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace (599 B.C., chapter 3)
- Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream (570 B.C., chapter 4)
- Daniel’s first major prophecy (553 B.C., chapter 7)
- Daniel’s second major prophecy (551 B.C., chapter 8)
- The writing on the wall (539 B.C., chapter 5)
- Daniel’s third major prophecy (538 B.C., chapter 9)
- Miraculous deliverance from the lion’s den (537 B.C., chapter 6)
- Daniel’s fourth major prophecy (536 B.C., chapters 10-12)

HISTORICAL SETTING

1) Judah

- The southern two tribes of Israel (Judah, Benjamin) that remained in Jerusalem following the division of the nation (1 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 10); Capital city, Jerusalem

2) The captivity of Judah by Babylon at the hand of God

- A punishment foretold by God (Isa.39:6-7); Due to forsaking God (Jer.7:23-24; 8)

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3) The Jewish captivity by Babylon was made in three waves

- 605 BC (a few select young men including Daniel taken)
- 597 BC (about 10,000 others including Ezekiel taken)
- 586 BC (all remaining Jews taken and Jerusalem destroyed)

Chapter One

Daniel is taken to Babylon (1: 1-21)

This is the first assault of King Nebuchadnezzar against Judah (605 B.C.) and taking his first wave of Jewish captives after defeating the Assyrian and Egyptian armies and making Babylon the new world empire.

1) Captives taken (1: 3-6)

- Hand-picked young men (probably between 14-17 years) from amongst the Jews that had no physical handicap ("no blemish"), good looking, intelligent ("gifted in all wisdom"), well educated ("possessing knowledge"), good students ("quick to understand"), good socially ("ability to serve"), and capable of learning the language and literature of the Chaldeans (or Babylonians)

2) Hebrew Names to Babylonian (1: 7)

- Daniel ("God is my judge") to Belteshazzar ("Bael provides")
- Hananiah ("Yahweh is gracious") to Shadrach (a perversion of Marduk)
- Mishael ("Who is what God is") to Meshach (uncertain)
- Azariah ("Yahweh has helped") to Abed-nego ("servant of Nego")

3) Refusal to Eat the King's Food (1: 8-14)

- Some meats declared unclean by the law of Moses (Lev. 11; Deut. 14:3-20)
- Food was regularly first offered to idols before presented to the king
- [Daniel accepted the three-year Babylonian training and names but drew the line on the Word of God]

4) The Result (1: 15-23)

- At the end of ten days Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah "appeared better and fatter in the flesh than all the young men" (v.15)
- The four successfully presented to the king (v.19)
- Daniel would continue would continue in the king's service "until the first year of King Cyrus" (the Persian, 538 B.C.)

About the Captivity of Daniel

God clearly arranged the captivity of Daniel in 605 B.C. to precede the captivity of the entire nation of Judah in 586 B.C. in order to have him in a place of influence that would help the nation.

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Chapter Two

Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream (2: 1-49)

In view here is a disturbing dream given to king Nebuchadnezzar that only Daniel could interpret for God had given him understanding of all visions and dreams (1:17).

1) Nebuchadnezzar Demands Answers (2: 1-13)

- Unable to remember dream
- Pagan priests and wise men unable to reveal the dream
- Decree to kill all wise men in the city
- [The stage is set for Daniel and the One True God]

2) God Reveals the Dream to Daniel (2: 14-30)

- Daniel assures the king he can interpret (v.16)
- Daniel and his three friends pray (vv.17-18)
- The secret is revealed in a night vision (v.19)
- God is praised (vv.20-23)

3) The Dream Interpreted (2: 31-45)

- [In view here are four Gentile world empires that will exist and ultimately be destroyed when Christ Returns to establish His kingdom]
- Head of gold (v.38), Babylon
- Chest and arms of silver (v.39), Medo-Persia
- Belly and thighs of bronze (v.39), Greece
- Legs of iron (v.40), Rome
- Feet and toes partly of iron and partly of clay (vv.41-43), the final form of the revived Roman empire led by Antichrist (see also Rev. 17:12-13)
- Stone cut without hands (vv.44-45), Jesus Christ (see also Rev. 19:19-21)

4) Daniel and His Three Friends Promoted (2: 46-49)

- Daniel was given a position of high responsibility, power, and authority at the palace
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were appointed as his assistants apparently served in some lesser office building
- [Daniel did not have to figure out how to attain the promotions; he simply obeyed God and it happened]

Chapter Three

Protection from the Furnace (3: 1-30)

In view here is the remarkable courage and faith Shadrach, Meshach, and

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Abed-nego displayed in the face of certain death along with God's ability to protect them. Daniel is not present in this narrative possibly due to official business or perhaps arranged by God to highlight the excellent quality of his three friends.

1) Nebuchadnezzar Erects an Idol (3: 1-7)

- Undoubtedly an egotistic response to being told that he is the "head of gold" earlier by Daniel in the second chapter (2:38)
- "An image of gold" (v.1) probably means that it was some human form made of wood and overlaid with gold otherwise too heavy and expensive
- "Sixty cubits high and six cubits wide" (v.1) means that the idol was 90' x 9' (though possibly includes a base)
- "The plain of Dura" (v.1) is believed located six miles south of ancient Babylon
- Nebuchadnezzar demands that the idol be worshipped when the music sounds (vv.4-7)

2) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are accused for not worshipping (3: 8-12)

- God strictly prohibits idolatry (Ex.20:4-5)
- Accusers undoubtedly jealous of their promotion in second chapter (2:49) and the fact that the three are referred to as "Jews" seems to imply that their nationality was held against them (v.12)
- Claim that they "have not paid due regard to you" (v.12) was not true; these three were loyal servants

3) Nebuchadnezzar Sends them to the Furnace (3: 13-23)

4) The Miracle in the Furnace (3: 24-30)

- Nebuchadnezzar sees them in the fire unhurt and accompanied by a fourth person "like the Son of God" (v.25). Likely Jesus Christ
- They emerge unharmed without even a hint of smoke (v.27)
- Nebuchadnezzar indicates a respect for and defeat to God (v.28), issues a decree forbidding anyone to say anything "erroneous" against the Judean God (v.29), then honors them by causing them to prosper (v.30)

Chapter Four

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream (4: 1-37)

In view here is Nebuchadnezzar's account of a second dream. He attributes the interpretation to Daniel and then recounts his seven years of insanity and eventual recovery. This is the most unusual chapter in the Bible because it was written by a gentile King.

1) Nebuchadnezzar Addresses the Entire Kingdom (4: 1-3)

- Probably written to explain his seven-year absence to the people
- He does acknowledge God and the fact that the result was for his benefit (v.2)

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2) The Dream Recounted (4: 4-18)

3) Daniel's Interpretation of the Dream (4: 19-27)

- Tree identified as Nebuchadnezzar (vv.20-22)
- Nebuchadnezzar would be cut down, driven from men, and become like an animal for seven years. His kingdom would be preserved and he will return to it after acknowledging the supremacy of the Most High (vv.23-26)
- Daniel urges the king to repent (v.27)

4) The Insanity of Nebuchadnezzar (4: 28-33)

- Occurs one year following Daniel's interpretation
- Happens instantly upon the command of a voice from heaven
- Probably disease known as "Boanthropy" (curable, victim maintains consciousness of self and God so able to pray)
- [He undoubtedly was kept somewhere out of site of the citizens and his political enemies]

5) Nebuchadnezzar is Restored (4: 34-37)

- After seven years he acknowledges and honors God, is cured, and returns to his throne
- [It could be an indication that Nebuchadnezzar did come to a saving knowledge of God and we will see him in heaven]

Chapter Five

The Miraculous Writing (5: 1-31)

In view here, is the judgment of God upon an evil king and his Babylonia kingdom at the hands of the Medes and Persians. Medo-Persia overthrows Babylon and becomes the new world empire.

1) Belshazzar Defiles the Temple Vessels (5: 1-4)

- Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar (who died twenty-three years earlier) and reigned as king when his father Nabonidus (true king married to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter Nitrocris) was away on official business
- Holds a great feast, gets drunk, and defiles the temple vessels confiscated from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar sixty-six years earlier
- The occasion for the feast is uncertain given that Babylon was surrounded by the Medes and Persians (perhaps they considered the city safe from invasion and the gathering was build morale)

2) The Fingers of a Man's Hand Appear (5: 5-23)

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- Belshazzar is terrified (vv.6,9), Mother of Belshazzar urges him to summon Daniel (vv.10-12), Daniel recounts how God admonished his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar for pride (about thirty years earlier) and now will admonish him (vv.13-23)

3) Daniel Interprets the Handwriting (5: 24-31)

- MENE ('God has numbered your kingdom and finished it'), TEHEL ("you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting"), PERES ("your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians")
- That very night the Medes and Persians entered the city, killed Belshazzar, overthrew Babylon and became the new ruling world empire

Chapter Six

Daniel in the Den of Lions (6: 1-28)

In view here is the absolute ability of God to accomplish His purposes despite the efforts of man to prevent it. Daniel is delivered because his service to God is not yet complete.

1) Darius Signs the Foolish Decree (6: 1-9)

- Darius is persuaded by his officials to make it law that anyone caught praying to any god but Darius for a period of thirty days would be cast into the den of lions (v.7). This is clearly a plot executed by the officials who were looking for a charge to bring against Daniel (v.5)

2) Daniel Continues to Pray Faithfully (6: 10-13)

- Daniel ignores the law and openly prays to God anyway, and then is immediately accused before the king by these officials

3) Daniel Prospers (6: 14-28)

- Darius knew he had been trapped by his own ego and tried to find a loophole in the law to spare Daniel (v.14), so was glad that Daniel survived (v.23)
- Darius orders Daniel's accusers and their families cast into the lion's den and they are consumed by the lions before even hitting the ground (v.24)
- Darius makes a decree that all citizens must "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (vv.25-27)
- Daniel prospers in the Medo-Persian empire (v.38)
- [Daniel's true commitment to God even in the face of certain death affected an entire empire]

About the Lions in the Den

They were plentiful, ferocious, and hungry (made clear by the fact that they devoured all the accusers and their families without hesitation).

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Chapter Seven

Daniel's First Major Prophecy (7: 1-28)

In view here are four great empires—the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. It is consistent with the four kingdoms revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in the second chapter but uniquely different. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar saw them as glorious and beautiful, Daniel (given God's perspective) sees the kingdoms as bloody, vicious, and murderous beasts. Also consistent is their ultimately destruction at the return of Jesus Christ. This begins the Prophetic division of the book.

1) The Vision of Four Beasts Revealed (7: 1-8)

- Daniel sees “the great sea” (probably the Mediterranean Sea) being stirred up by four winds and made turbulent (v.2). The sea implies humanity (see Rev.17:15) and four winds various forces of strife and trouble. The idea is that of a troubled and turbulent humanity wherein four great (but diverse) beasts come up from that sea (v.3)
- The first is “like a lion and had eagle's wings” (v.4). This is the Babylonian Empire.
- The second is “like a bear” (v.5). This is the Medo-Persian Empire.
- The third is “like a leopard” (v.6). This is the Greek Empire. The “four heads” predicts the fourfold division of the empire to Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy following Alexander's death
- The fourth is a beast “dreadful and terrible and exceedingly strong” (v.7). This is the Roman Empire. “It had ten horns.” This is later interpreted to be ten kings (v.24), corresponds with the toes of the feet envisioned by Nebuchadnezzar (2:42), and exactly corresponds to the beast with ten horns that John saw (Rev.13:1; 17:7, 12). In view here is the yet future government that will arise from the ancient Roman empire during the tribulation
- Finally, there is “another little horn” (v.8). This is the antichrist. Though he will start small, he will slowly emerge among the kings, and then become the greatest of all (see also Rev.17:13, 17)

2) The Coronation of the King (7: 9-14)

- This reveals the Return of Jesus Christ, the destruction of antichrist and his forces (see also Rev.19:11-21), and the presentation of the world kingdom from the Father to the Son. Christ alone is worthy to receive it (see Rev.5) and is what will cause Heaven to rejoice “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev.11:15) in anticipation of that great event

3) The Vision Interpreted (7: 15-28)

- The four great beasts are four kings that arise out of the earth (v.17)

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- The fourth beast shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth (v.23). In view here might be the fact that Rome was never overthrown and will surface again in the future to rule as a global empire
- The ten horns are ten kings that arise from this kingdom (v.24)
- Antichrist will rise up from amongst (but after) them with pompous words against God (he will elevate himself equal with God), persecutions of His saints, the intent to change times and law (moral and natural), and will continue to do so for a period of three and one half years (vv.24-25)
- Antichrist will have his kingdom taken away and Christ will establish His everlasting kingdom (vv.26-27)

Chapter Eight

Daniel's Second Major Prophecy (8: 1-27)

In view here is a portion of the overall period of time symbolized in the first vision regarding Medo-Persia and Greece. Particular focus is upon a "large horn" (Alexander the Great), the "little horn" (Antiochus Epiphanes) that succeeds him, and the final horn (Antichrist). The book returns to Hebrew because the emphasis from this point forward is on Israel and how, "the times of the gentiles" relates to them. It is both hopeful for Israel because it is made clear that Christ will return and restore them, yet a forewarning to the nation not to lose hope because it will become worse for them before it gets better.

1) The Ram (8: 3-4)

- Interpreted as Medo-Persia (v.20)
- The two horns signify the two nations and the phrase "one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last" (v.3) is made clear from Medo-Persian history. That Media was a major power before Cyrus took rule of Persia (they helped Babylon defeat Assyria in 612 B.C.) and that he eventually succeeded in gaining control over Media in 550 B.C.
- "But he did according to his will and became great" (v.4) predicts what history supports. That Cyrus was able to move across northern Mesopotamia to Asia Minor almost unopposed and created the greatest empire in amount of territory controlled of all empires until its day. [This was also predicted through Isaiah (45:1-3) about 150 years earlier]

2) The Male Goat (8: 5-8)

- Interpreted as Greece (v.21)
- The "notable horn between his eyes" is interpreted as the "first king" (v.21), namely Alexander the Great
- In view here is the defeat of the Persians by Alexander and the establishment of Greece as the new world empire. "The large horn was broken" speaks of Alexander's death at the height of his career (he had conquered the world in

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just ten years and was only thirty-three years old at the time of his death). “In place of it four notable ones came up” speaks of the dividing of Alexander’s vast empire between four of his generals: Cassander (Macedonia and Greece), Lysimachus (Thrace and Asia Minor), Seleucus (Syria and regions to the east), and Ptolemy (Egypt); (see also v.22)

4) The Little Horn (8: 9-14)

- This can only represent a man named Antiochus Epiphanes
- “A little horn which grew exceedingly great” (v.9) speaks of the fact that Antiochus had no rightful claim to the throne but seized it by intrigue (see also 11:21)
- He shall exalt himself equal with God, prevent the Jews from worshipping in the Temple, make desolate the Temple, and persecute the Jews (vv.11-13)
- The angel responds that this shall continue for “two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (v.14).

About the Temple Cleansing

History records that under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus the people revolted and cleansed the Temple on December 25, 165 B.C. which, counting back 2,300 days, sets the date that the atrocities began to Sept. 6, 171 B.C. Though history records nothing for that particular date, it does record that the vile activities of Antiochus Epiphanes did indeed begin in 171 B.C.

About Antiochus Epiphanes

Antiochus Epiphanes became the eight ruler over the domain of Seleucus (175-164 B.C.) which included Israel. He enters the vision because his vile exploits against the Jews in Palestine are a foreshadowing of the Antichrist to come. During his reign he magnified himself equal to God, horribly persecuted the Jews (murdering 80,000 and deporting 40,000 to other regions as slaves), and utterly desecrated their Temple with the sacrifice of swine’s flesh and erection of false idols.

5) The Interpretation of the Vision (8: 15-22)

- Delivered by the angel Gabriel given the appearance of a man (vv.15-16) [Gabriel regularly delivers important information from God to man; the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19) and the birth of Christ (Luke 1:26)]
- The ram is Medo-Persia (v.20)
- The male goat is Greece and the large horn between its eyes is the first king (v.21)
- The broken horn replaced by four are four kingdoms that arise out of Greece “but not with its power” (v.22)

6) The Interpretation of the Little Horn (8: 23-25)

- This is the Antichrist (see below)

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- “A king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes” (v.23). The Antichrist will exhibit strength and be capable of solving difficult problems.
- “His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power” (v.24). The Antichrist will be given the power, throne, and great authority from Satan (Rev.13:2)
- “He shall destroy fearfully, and prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people” (v.24). Antichrist will be granted to make war with the saints and to overcome them (Rev.13:7)
- “He shall even rise against the Prince of princes” (v.25). Antichrist will speak blasphemy against God, His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven (Rev.13:6). He will receive worship and demand worship (Rev.13:4, 8, 15)
- “But he shall be broken without human hand” (v.25). Antichrist will be cast alive into the lake of fire by Jesus Christ upon His Return (Rev.19:20)

About the Little Horn in this Passage

The description fits Antiochus Epiphanes, but only in a limited way. For “the vision refers to the time of the end” (v.17), shall occur “in the latter time” (v.19), and “refers to many days in the future” (v.26). Antiochus Epiphanes is merely a foreshadowing of the person really in view here; namely, the Antichrist who shall appear in the last days.

7) The Conclusion (8: 26-27)

- The vision is true (v.26); Daniel is instructed to “seal up the vision” (v.26) but the meaning is “preservation.” The thought is not for Daniel to keep it a secret, but to make sure a record of the vision would be preserved and not lost
- Daniel faints and is sick for days (v.27). Though he returns to the king’s business [king Belshazzar] he remains astonished as he continues to run the vision through his mind

Chapter Nine

Daniel’s Third Major Prophecy (9: 1-27)

In view here is one of the most technical sections regarding the Nation of Israel’s future found anywhere in the Bible. It is compressed of Daniel’s prayer for his people (vv.1-19) and the angel Gabriel’s response to the prayer (vv.20-27).

1) The Prayer of Daniel (9: 1-19)

- Daniel begins praying because he understood from the prophet Jeremiah (Jer.25:11; 29:10) that the captivity of Israel would only last for seventy years (v.2). As a result, he makes intercession for the people and subsequently calls upon God to deliver the people without delay “for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (v.19)

2) The Intervention of Gabriel (9: 20-23)

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- While still in prayer the angel Gabriel, who had appeared to him in the second vision recorded in the previous chapter (8:16), appears once again to impart skill to understand (v.23) what God's purposes are for Israel

3) The Revelation of the Seventy Weeks (9: 24-27)

- "Seventy weeks (490 years) are determined for your people and for your holy city" (v.24) in order for God to accomplish six prominent events for the nation
- "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (v.25; 69 weeks, or 483 years). This began with the decree of Artaxerxes (the Persian, March 14, 445 B.C.; see Neh.1-2:8) and concluded with Christ's entry into Jerusalem (April 6, 32 A.D.; see Luke 19:28-44)
- Afterward Jesus would be executed and subsequently the city and sanctuary destroyed by the Romans (v.26). Jesus was executed four days later and in 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed the city and sanctuary
- "Then he (Antichrist) shall confirm a covenant with many for one week (7 years); but in the middle of the week" (v.27) he will break that treaty, overthrow Jerusalem, and desolate the Temple (see Matt.24:15). Antichrist will appear during the final seven-year period (the tribulation) and subsequently will rule the world as Satan incarnate (see Rev.6-19)

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