

OVERVIEW OF DANIEL

Author & Date: The book is named after the author, the prophet Daniel. Daniel was part of the first deportation from Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and was probably in his mid to late teens at the time. The book covers the life of Daniel and his prophecies from shortly after his arrival in Babylon in 605 through the third year of Cyrus, 536 B.C. a period of 70 years. The book is also unique in that portions are written in Aramaic. Interestingly, that portion which deals with the future Gentile kingdoms is in Aramaic while the prophecies of the end times are in Hebrew.

Purpose: The book of Daniel demonstrates God's sovereignty over human events. In short, God has a plan involving both the gentiles and Israel and it will be carried out. The example of Daniel as well as his three friends cannot be ignored. On a practical level, the book shows us the blessing of a life lived for the Glory of God in spite of external circumstances.

Outline for Daniel

- I. Introducing Daniel's Heart (Hebrew) (ch. 1)
- II. Future World Kingdoms (Aramaic from 2:4b through 7:28) (ch. 2-7)
 - A. The Great Image (ch 2)
 - B. The Fiery Furnace (ch 3)
 - C. The Pride of Nebuchadnezzar (ch 4)
 - D. The Handwriting on the wall (ch 5)
 - E. The Lion's Den (ch 6)
 - F. The Four Beasts (ch 7)
- III. Future of Israel (Hebrew Portion) (ch 8-12)
 - A. The Vision of the Ram and the Goat (ch 8)
 - B. Daniel's Prayer (ch 9)
 - C. The Message of Latter Days (ch. 10-12)

Key/Interesting Passages:

- 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
- 2:28 "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets..."
- 2:30 But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for *our* sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.
- 2:44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.
- 3:17-18 "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. 18 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."
- 4:25b "...till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." (c.f. 4:26, 32, 35; 5:21; 11:1)
- 5:22 "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this."
- 8:11-14 Prophecy of the abomination of desolation (cf. 11:31, 12:11)
- 9:2-17 Daniel's recognition of Jeremiah's prophecy and his prayer
- 9:24-27 Prophecy of the 70 weeks
- 10:12 Spiritual warfare in the face of answered prayer

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Food for Thought

1. In light of his circumstances, what can we learn through the example of Daniel's determination described in 1:8?

2. How does Daniel show courtesy and respect toward the chief of the eunuchs and how might we follow that example?

3. How does God honor the decisions of Daniel and his friends in chapter 1? What encouragement does that provide for us when we need to make a stand for Christ?

4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego provide a wonderful example of standing up for their faith in face of adversity. What unanticipated results did their faithfulness bring? How is this similar to the example of Daniel and the Lion's den in chapter 6?

5. What is the key difference in the heart between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and the judgments they experience in chapters 4 and 5?

6. Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar was so interested in the interpretation of the dream in chapter 2 and in having the interpreter give the dream itself? Why does he handle the dream of chapter 4 differently?

7. Compare the dreams of chapters 2 and 7. What similarities and differences do you note in the dreams and interpretations?

	Feature, ch. 2	Beast, ch 7	Kingdom	Remarks
1	Gold Head	Lion w/ eagle's wings	Babylon	
2			Media & Persia (cf. ch 8)	
3			Greece (cf. ch. 8)	
4			Rome	
5			God	

Note: Some interpret the four kingdoms so that Media is no. 2, Persia no. 3 and Greece no. 4. This is done to make the little horn of Dan. 7:8 correspond with the little horn of 8:9. Clearly the little horn of chapter 8 comes from one of the four horns growing from the kingdom of Greece (8:21). As a result, some conclude that the horn of chapter 7 is also out of Greece. However, Daniel 8 also makes it clear that the kingdom of the Medes and Persians is one kingdom (one goat) that is divided (8:20). As such, Daniel views the kingdom of the Medes and Persians as one kingdom under separate rulers as does secular history.

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8. Chapter 8 returns to Hebrew highlighting the fact that the prophecies focus on fulfillment as it relates to Israel. There are a number of interpretations related to the prophecies of this chapter. Many of the events described have clearly already been fulfilled, yet the reference to “the time of the end” (v. 17) and “in the latter time of their kingdom” (v. 23) appears to be nearer the second coming of Christ. Similarly, the phrase “Prince of princes” (sim. to Rev. 19:16) in v. 25 fits the messiah, but the timing does not seem to fit past events.
- a. Scripture specifically identifies the goat and the ram
 - b. Alexander first defeated the Persians in 341 BC and triumphed in 331 BC (Daniel had this vision around 551 BC)
 - c. Antiochus Epiphanies (175-164 BC) was the 8th ruler of the Seleucid division and sought control the area controlled by the Ptolemy’s. He conquered Judea and performed atrocities against Israel and defiled the temple.

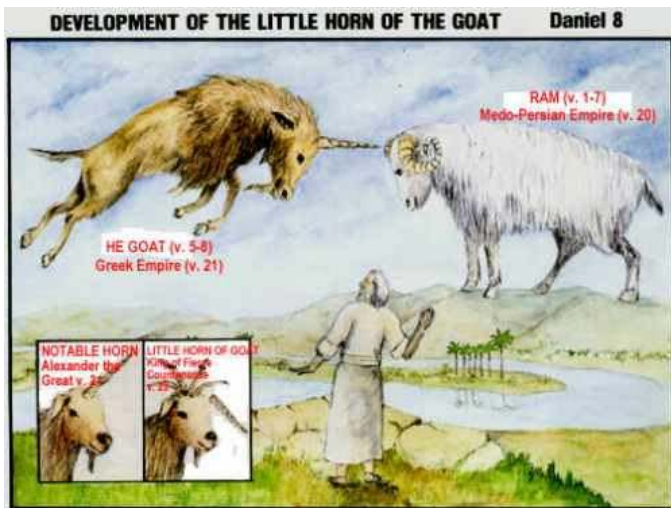


Figure 1 Image from oneyearbibleblog.com



The fulfillment of details in the prophecy (e.g. that Greece defeats the Persians and the subsequent division into four kingdoms) points to a past fulfillment. How would you explain the fact that some elements seem to be future?

9. How does Daniel’s prayer of chapter 9 help us understand how we should respond to and apply prophetic portions of Scripture (see especially 9:2)?

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10. The prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 has received much attention. Understanding that the weeks (lit “sevens”) represent “weeks of years,” the passage provides insight into the timing of prophetic events. Commentator Alva J. McClain says “I am convinced that in the predictions of the Seventy Weeks, we have *the indispensable chronological key to all New Testament prophecy.*”¹ One difficulty is that although we know Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild the temple around 538 B.C. (c.f. Ezra 1:2), the prophecy is based upon rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. A possible date is 445 B.C. when Artaxerxes issued a decree for Nehemiah to build the wall (Neh 2:1). When taking into account the calendar adjustments for a 360 day calendar, this second date correlates well with the timing of the crucifixion of Christ or as proposed by McClain, Christ’s presentation as King on Palm Sunday around A.D. 30 for the 69 weeks. How does this timing fit with the details of the prophecy of 9:25?

According to v. 24, who do the 70 weeks to be applied to? How would this impact our interpretation of these events?

What events needed to occur before the end of the 69th week and how does the coming of Christ fulfill those prophecies? How does the timing described in verse 26 fit with the prophecy?

Daniel separates the 70th week from the other 69 weeks. This week is best understood as a description of the 7 year tribulation period. Accepting this interpretation, what events are described during this period (vv. 26-27)?

11. Perhaps more than any other passage of Scripture, Daniel 10 gives us a picture of Spiritual Warfare that we cannot see with our naked eyes. What insight does this passage give us into spiritual warfare, angels, and nations?
12. Chapter 11 provides additional details concerning the Greek empire and specifically two of the four kingdoms that come from the Greek conquests under Alexander. In short, the events describe in some detail the conflict between the rulers of Egypt and Syria over the land of Israel in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.² These events culminate in the atrocities of Antiochus Epiphanies in 165 B.C. which includes the desecration of the Jewish Temple.³ Although some see these events as complete fulfillment of this prophecy, there is a future aspect that points to an ultimate future fulfillment. Chapter 12 continues with an emphasis on the future fulfillment. How does Matt 24:15 (with Dan. 11:31) support a future fulfillment of these events? What sequence of events do we see in 12:6-13 for the last of the 70 weeks?

¹ McClain, Alva J., *Daniel’s Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*, BMH Books, Winona Lake, IN © Alva J. McClain, 1969, p. 10.

² For a detailed discussion on the fulfillments, see Walvoord’s, *Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, p. 252-280.

³ According to the Apocryphal book of 1 Macabees 1:44-54, Antiochus forbid daily sacrifices and offered pigs on the altar to defile it. Other records indicate that he also set a idol in the temple – all actions foreshadowing the abomination of desolation.