

DANIEL

Godless Kingdoms and God's Kingdom



Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Daniel

The Book of Daniel describes the life of a godly teen-age boy who was deported to a foreign pagan land where he spent the rest of his life. It was there that God revealed to Daniel his sovereign control over godless kingdoms and how His Kingdom would come. For that reason, much of the Book of Daniel is like the Book of Revelation in that it is apocalyptic (reveals or uncovers what will happen in the future).

A. WHY STUDY DANIEL?

1. It shows us how we are to live as Christians in today's rapidly changing American culture by seeing how Daniel lived in a Babylonian culture.
2. It reminds us that God is in control of all nations, including America, Israel, Iran, Iraq, China, and all others.
3. It reminds us that God will bless those who belong to him.
4. It gives us real peace and assurance in knowing about the future God has for us.

B. WHY WAS DANIEL WRITTEN?

- It was written to encourage Jews in Babylon (605-538 BC) who were spiritually weary from the exile.
- It was also written to prepare God's people for the terrible ordeal of the Tribulation Period prior the second coming of Jesus Christ.¹
- It reminded them that God is in sovereign control of their destiny.
- It provided an example of Daniel who remained faithful to God while living in a pagan culture.
- The God of Daniel is the sovereign Ruler of the world, who raises up and brings down rulers and determines long beforehand the future of nations.
- He rewards the faithfulness of His devoted Jewish servants and protects them, even when they are far from their homeland.

¹ (MacRae 227)

- His sovereignty is especially apparent in His dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. To him God revealed future history, demonstrated His power to deliver His own, and gave a vivid lesson on the dangers of pride. Nebuchadnezzar was forced to acknowledge the sovereignty of Daniel's God.
- The Lord also displayed His sovereignty to subsequent rulers. He announced in dramatic fashion Belshazzar's downfall for his arrogance and lack of respect for the temple vessels. He demonstrated to the Median king Darius His power to deliver His faithful Jewish servants from even the worst crises.
- Through Daniel's visions the Lord also demonstrates His sovereignty over history.
- Human empires rise and fall, but the Lord ultimately shatters Gentile opposition to His program and establishes His kingdom on earth.

C. WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF DANIEL?

- The Book of Daniel identifies the Prophet Daniel as its author (Daniel 9:2; 10:2). Jesus also mentions Daniel as the author as well (Matthew 24:15).

D. DATE OF WRITING

- The Book of Daniel was likely written toward the end of the exile period.²

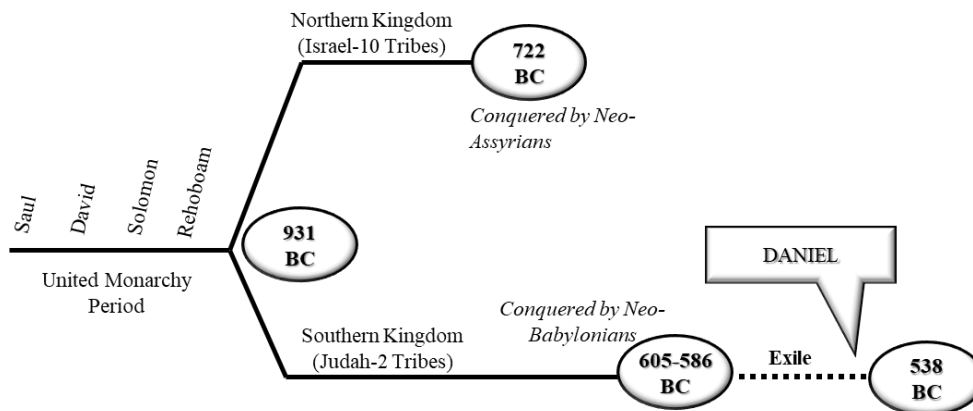


Figure 1: The Date of the Book of Daniel

² There are some who hold to the "Maccabean View" which originated with Porphyry, an anti-Christian writer in the third century A.D. (MacRae 11-12) and resurrected by Klaus Koch in 1890. This view proposes that Daniel was actually written in 164 B.C., (not during the 5th century BC, exile period) probably by several authors, and its background was what was known as the Antiochan persecution of the Jews. These authors ostensibly wrote the book under the guise of the prophet Daniel as though he was prophesying. This view has been found to be spurious by the greater majority of Daniel scholars. See "The Book of Daniel and the Maccabean Thesis" by Arthur J. Ferch, <<https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/AUSS/1983-2/1983-2-02.pdf>>. Accessed August 24, 2020.

E. MAIN CHARACTERS

- Four Hebrews: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego.
- Four kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Cyrus.

F. CHAPTER SUMMARIES

- Chapter 1 describes the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Along with many others, Daniel and his three friends were deported to Babylon and because of their courage and the obvious blessings of God upon them, they were “promoted” in the king’s service.
- Chapters 2-4 record Nebuchadnezzar having a dream that only Daniel could correctly interpret. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great statue represented the kingdoms that would arise in the future. Nebuchadnezzar made a great statue of himself and forced everyone to worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were miraculously spared by God despite being thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is judged by God for his pride, but later restored once he recognized and admitted God’s sovereignty.
- Chapter 5 records Nebuchadnezzar’s son Belshazzar misusing the items taken from the Temple in Jerusalem and receiving a message from God, written into the wall, in response. Only Daniel could interpret the writing, a message of coming judgment from God. In
- Chapter 6 Daniel is thrown into the lions’ den for refusing to pray to the emperor, but was miraculously spared.
- Chapter 7 God gave Daniel a vision of four beasts. The four beasts represented the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
- Chapter 8 contains a vision involving a ram, a goat, and several horns; also referring to future kingdoms and their rulers.
- Chapter 9 records Daniel’s “seventy weeks” prophecy. God gave Daniel the precise timeline of when the Messiah would come and be cut off. The prophecy also mentions a future ruler who will make a seven-year covenant with Israel and break it after three and a half years, followed shortly thereafter by the great judgment and consummation of all things. Daniel is visited and strengthened by an angel after this great vision, and the angel explains the vision to Daniel in

great detail.³

- Chapters 10-12 are all one vision.” This is the last and longest of Daniel’s visions. Chapter 10 is essentially an introduction to the vision. Chapter 11 is the vision itself, and Chapter 12 is an epilog or postscript to the vision.⁴

G. THE TWO MAIN SECTIONS OF DANIEL

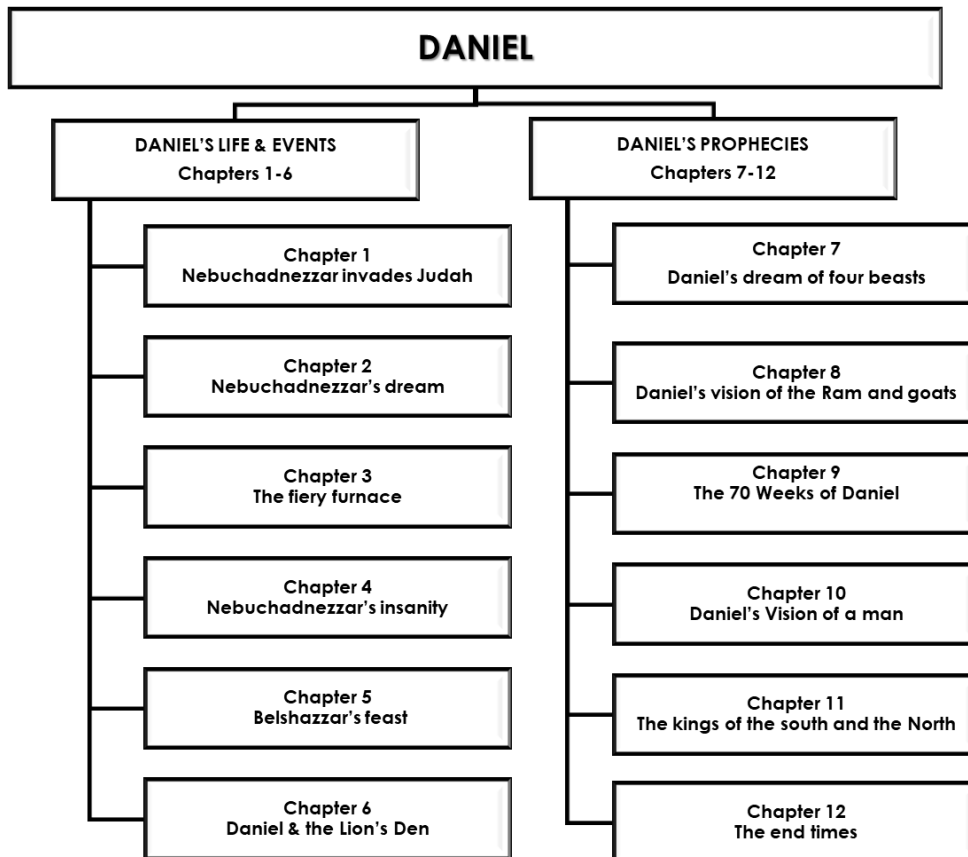


Figure 2: The Two Main Sections of Daniel

³ Adapted from S. Michael Houdman, GotQuestions.Org, Summary of the Book of Daniel <<https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Daniel.html>>. Accessed August 18, 2020.

⁴ (Duck and Richards 259)



Figure 3: The Ancient Near East in Daniel's day