

Daniel
Intro

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Daniel 1:1–7 (NASB95)

- 1 *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.*
- 2 *The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.*
- 3 *Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,*
- 4 *youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.*
- 5 *The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.*
- 6 *Now among them from the sons of Judah were **Daniel**, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.*
- 7 *Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name **Belteshazzar**, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.*



Belshazzar's Feast by Rembrandt (1606–1669)¹

I. First things-

¹ Michael Rydelnik, “[Daniel](#),” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1321.

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- a. The notes you receive started as my personal study notes, which is why they often contain a lot, whether we use them or not.
- b. I use these notes as my own guide for teaching. I skip over things, add to them, and summarize.
- c. We will slowly walk through this book.
- d. Some of these passages will take a lot more time to study.
- e. Daniel delves into apocalyptic literature, which uses metaphors, symbols, and other devices.
- f. Today, we will do an intro to the minor prophet of Daniel. Today, will have more notes because we are not directly dealing with the book itself.

II. Who was Daniel?

- a. *An Israelite of royal or noble descent (cf. Jos., Ant. 10.188), he was carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadrezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim, and with various companions trained for the king's service (Dn. 1:1–6). Following a custom of the time, he was given (v. 7) the Babylonian name of *BELTESHAZZAR. He gained a reputation first as an interpreter of other men's visions (ch. 2–5), then of his own, in which he predicted the future triumph of the Messianic kingdom (ch. 7–12).*
- b. *Renowned for sagacity [insight/intelligence], he successfully occupied leading governmental posts under Nebuchadrezzar, Belshazzar and Darius. His last recorded vision was on the banks of the Tigris in the third year of Cyrus.*
- c. *There is a brief reference to 'the prophet Daniel' in Mt. 24:15 (= Mk. 13:14).²*
- d. Another source reads:
- e. *We do not know the exact place or year of his birth, but he was probably born in Jerusalem around the year 620 BC. He was about thirteen or fourteen years old when King Nebuchadnezzar captured him at Jerusalem (a city in Judah), along with the other Israelites (the people of Israel and Judah), and carried them off to Babylon (around 605 BC). Even though Daniel was already well-educated, he was selected for additional training in the language and literature of the Babylonians. His name, Daniel, which means "God is my judge," was changed to Belteshazzar, which means "whom Bel favors" or "keeper of the treasures of the prince of Bel." Daniel quickly distinguished himself because of his determination to be faithful to God. He gained the blessings of God and reaped the confidence and favor of those around him. When he interpreted a troubling dream for the hot-tempered Nebuchadnezzar he was promoted to a position of authority over*

Ant. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews

² J. D. Douglas, Whitcomb and J. C., "Daniel," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 254.

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- all the wise men of Babylon. He spent the rest of his life as one of the most powerful men in the world, faithfully served several world leaders, and is widely recognized as one of the greatest men of all time.*³
- f. I checked a few other Bible dictionaries, but it seems there isn't much more to be known about him.
- III. What is Daniel about?
- a. I like what one source shares:
- b. **W**hen we find our feet forcibly planted in the soil of an anti-God, anti-Christian culture, it is absolutely imperative that our hearts be drawn to heaven and our minds be immersed in the Word of God. As Paul wrote in Colossians 3:1–2, “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” As Paul adds in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Thoughts like these were essential for four Hebrew teenagers who had been plucked from their families and their country and taken captive to the evil empire of that day, the empire of Babylon. Their names are Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (1:6).
- c. **The theme** of the book called Daniel is the sovereignty of God in all things. He is sovereign over the big things like international powers, and he is sovereign over small things like the apparently insignificant lives of teenagers. He is sovereign over history and is sovereign concerning the future. Our God is sovereign.⁴
- d. The Moody Bible Commentary is helpful:
- e. The book of Daniel is set during the **Babylonian captivity**. The book opens after King Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Judah (**605 BC**) when he brought Daniel and his friends to Babylon along with other captives of the Judean nobility. **Nebuchadnezzar assaulted Judah again in 597 BC and brought 10,000 captives back to Babylon.** In 586 BC he once again besieged Jerusalem, but this time destroyed the city and the

³ Thomas Nelson. The Book of Daniel (The Smart Guide to the Bible Series) (pp. 19-20). (Function). Kindle Edition.

⁴ Daniel L. Akin, [Exalting Jesus in Daniel](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 3–4.

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holy temple and exiled the people of Judah to Babylon. Daniel's ministry began with the arrival of the first Jewish captives in Babylon (605 BC), extended throughout the Babylonian captivity (539 BC; see Dn 1:21), and concluded sometime after the third year of the Medo-Persian king Cyrus the Great (537/536 BC; see Dn 10:1).⁵

- f. So, notice that Daniel's ministry began sometime around 605 BC and ended sometime around 536 BC.

g. **ESV SB on the theme:**

h. The central theme of the book of Daniel is God's sovereignty over history and empires, setting up and removing kings as he pleases (2:21; 4:34–37). All of the kingdoms of this world will come to an end and will be replaced by the Lord's kingdom, which will never pass away (2:44; 7:27). Though trials and difficulties will continue for the saints up until the end, those who are faithful will be raised to glory, honor, and everlasting life in this final kingdom (12:1–3).⁶

IV. When was Daniel written?

a. **ESB SB:**

b. ***Both Jewish and Christian (cf. Matt. 24:15) tradition have held that the author of this book is Daniel, a Jew who lived during the sixth-century B.C. Babylonian exile.***

Many of the chapters are dated and range from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605 B.C.; Dan. 1:1) to Cyrus's third year (536; 10:1).

- c. *But because of its detailed prophecies of events in the middle of the second century B.C. (see ch. 11) and alleged historical inconsistencies with what scholars know of sixth-century history (see note on 5:30–31), some scholars have argued that the book must be a second-century document, from the time when Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) was oppressing God's people. In that case, it would contain "prophecies after the fact," put into the mouth of a famous historical character rather than being written by Daniel himself. Thus, the visions that "Daniel" saw would attempt to interpret rather than predict history. It has also been argued that*

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⁵ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1279.

⁶ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1582.

- the book must be dated later than the sixth century due to its language, especially the presence of Persian and Greek loanwords.*⁷
- d. VERY IMPORTANT:
 - e. Notice what is being shared: **some are thinking because of the specific prophecies in the book of Daniel, it had to be written later...**
 - f. Why can't God know the future?
 - g. Why did we doubt God's sovereign use of His prophets?
 - h. The ESV Study Bible continues:
 - i. However, **the facts do not require a late date.** In the first place, current knowledge of sixth-century B.C. history is far from complete, and there are plausible harmonizations that explain the alleged discrepancies.
 - j. **Second, the Bible asserts clearly that the Lord announces ahead of time his plans through his prophets as a means of vindicating his sovereignty and encouraging his people (see Isa. 41:21–24; 44:6–7), and there is no reason in principle why such prophecies should not be detailed and precise.** Some scholars, who allow in principle that God can foretell events, nevertheless suggest that such detailed foretelling is unparalleled in the rest of the canonical prophets, and that it cannot be reconciled with the usual purpose of prediction (namely, that the first audience should be faithful to the covenant). In reply, note that Jeremiah did give a specific amount of time for the exile (Jer. 25:11; cf. note on Dan. 9:2). Further, the high degree of specificity in Daniel's prophecies does serve its first audience as well as those to follow: this shows how carefully God has planned events and governs them for his perfect ends; therefore the faithful can recognize that none of their troubles take God by surprise, and none will derail his purpose of vindicating those who steadfastly love him. This is quite relevant to the people of God in Daniel's day, who are on the verge of horrendous devastations and persecutions (see notes on ch. 11); they must be assured that the story will continue to its appointed fulfillment, so that they do not lose heart.
 - k. **Third, there were likely Greeks and Persians present at the Babylonian court as mercenaries and in other capacities, providing a ready explanation for the presence of loanwords.**
 - l. **Fourth, the book of Daniel was accepted as canonical by the community of Qumran (who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls). This is telling because this group emerged as a separate party in Judaism between 171 and 167 B.C., before the proposed late date. They would not have accepted the book if it had appeared after the split.**
 - m. **Fifth, some who favor a later date say that the author of Daniel represented Antiochus IV Epiphanes using the figure of Nebuchadnezzar. Literary studies, however, have shown that the book of Daniel puts Nebuchadnezzar in far too positive a light (e.g., he comes to acknowledge the true God) for him to be an effective image of the relentless persecutor Antiochus IV. Of course the book's lesson, about God's sovereignty over**

⁷ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1581.

- even the imperial forces, would have taken a heightened relevance in the days of Antiochus IV; but that is different from saying that the book was written for that particular occasion.*
- n. *There are therefore no compelling reasons to deny that Daniel wrote this book.*⁸
 - o. Further, the Moody Bible Commentary:
 - p. *The traditional view maintains that Daniel the prophet did indeed write this book. Internal testimony supports this claim. In the text itself, several times Daniel claimed to have written visions (8:2; 9:2, 20; 12:5). Passages containing third-person references to Daniel do not dismiss the fact of his authorship, since other biblical authors at times speak of themselves in the third person (for example, Moses in the Pentateuch). Moreover, God speaks of Himself in the third person (Ex 20:2, 7). Other ancient authors, such as Julius Caesar in *The Gallic Wars* and Xenophon in *Anabasis*, refer to themselves in the third person. The prophet Ezekiel refers to the prophet Daniel (Ezk 14:14, 20; 28:3) as well. Jesus Christ also attributes authorship of the book to Daniel (Mt 24:15).*⁹
 - q. Further:
 - r. ***The traditional understanding is supported by manuscript evidence.*** *Fragments from the book of Daniel were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls—this would be unexpected if the work had just been written. Linguistic evidence also supports the early date. For example, the use of Aramaic in Daniel appears to fit a fifth- to sixth-century BC date because it is parallel to the Aramaic of Ezra, the Elephantine Papyri, and other secular works of that same period. The use of Persian loanwords would not discredit the traditional view since Daniel’s final composition would have taken place in the Persian period. It is not surprising to find Greek words in Daniel since the Greek language had already begun to spread even prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great. Historical evidence also supports the early date. For example, Daniel accurately described Belshazzar as coregent with another king (Nabonidus) (cf. Dn 5:7, 16, 29), a fact that was lost until modern times. It appears that the late date view is driven by a categorical rejection of supernatural prophecy and not by objective evidence.*
 - s. *Some have argued that because the Jewish canon of the Hebrew Bible places Daniel in the Writings, Daniel must have a later date (165 BC). This wrongly assumes that the*

⁸ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1581–1582.

⁹ Michael A. Rydelnik, “Daniel,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1279.

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Hebrew canon developed progressively and that the Writings were the last section. An argument against this assumption is that an early book like Ruth, most likely written in the preexilic period, was also included in the Writings. It is wrong to view the canon as having a haphazard or progressive arrangement. Rather, it was formed with literary purpose and structure. Therefore, Daniel is not in the Writings because of a late date but because of its contents. It follows Esther and precedes Ezra/Nehemiah (in the Jewish canon) because the narratives of Daniel fit within the same time period as the events of these other books. Also, Daniel was one of the wise men of Babylon and Persia, so it made sense for those who ordered the canon to include his book in the section of the Bible that contained wisdom literature. Regardless, the LXX and Josephus (Contra Apion I, 38–39) both place Daniel among the Prophets, which most English versions follow. Since Josephus preceded the Masoretic division of the Bible by several centuries, its placement in the Writings has no bearing on its date.¹⁰

- V. What is the context of Daniel?
- a. Babylon:
 - b. **The City of Babylon**
 - c. *The city of Babylon reached its zenith under **Nebuchadrezzar II (Nebuchadnezzar of Scripture, who reigned 605–562 B.C.)**. He restored and enlarged it, making it the largest city seen in the world up to that time. The Euphrates River flowed through it, with the oldest quarter of the city lying on the east bank of the river. **The city was surrounded by a city wall with fortified gates that were named after the various Babylonian deities.** The Esagila Complex on the east bank of the Euphrates contained the Temple of Marduk with its associated seven-storied ziggurat Etemenanki.*
 - d. *From Esagila, the Processional Way (its walls lined with glazed bricks with representations of lions) led to the Ishtar Gate (which was decorated with glazed brick reliefs of dragons and young bulls). Beside the Ishtar Gate stood two immense fortified palaces. A bridge led over the Euphrates to the western part of the city. No evidence of the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon has been found, but if anything like this was ever constructed here, it would have been during this time, at the height of the city's splendor. The city was captured by Cyrus the Persian in 539 B.C.¹¹*
 - e. See picture on next page.
- VI. Outline
- a. *Literary Features*
 - b. *The book of Daniel is unique in the Bible in falling decisively into two distinct genres in its two halves. The first six chapters are hero stories comprised of six self-contained*

LXX Septuagint

¹⁰ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1279–1280.

¹¹ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1583.

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*ordeals. The last six chapters are a series of visions that employ highly symbolic images to portray vast stretches of political and spiritual history.*¹²

I usually favor the ESV Study Bible outline:

Outline

- I. Daniel and the Three Friends at the Babylonian Court (1:1–6:28)
 - A. Prologue (1:1–21)
 1. Daniel and his friends taken into exile (1:1–7)
 2. Daniel and his friends remain undefiled (1:8–16)
 3. Daniel and his friends promoted and preserved (1:17–21)
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great statue (2:1–49)
 1. The dream and Nebuchadnezzar’s threat (2:1–13)
 2. Daniel’s response and prayer (2:14–24)
 3. Daniel interprets the dream (2:25–45)
 4. Nebuchadnezzar promotes Daniel (2:46–49)
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar builds a great statue (3:1–30)
 1. The nations worship Nebuchadnezzar’s statue (3:1–7)
 2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego preserved in the fiery furnace (3:8–29)
 3. Nebuchadnezzar promotes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (3:30)
 - D. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a toppled tree (4:1–37)
 1. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation (4:1–27)
 2. Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling (4:28–33)
 3. Nebuchadnezzar’s exaltation (4:34–37)
 - E. Belshazzar’s feast (5:1–31)
 1. An idolatrous feast (5:1–4)
 2. An unreadable message (5:5–9)
 3. A forgotten interpreter (5:10–12)
 4. A message of judgment (5:13–31)
 - F. The lions’ den (6:1–28)
 1. Daniel promoted (6:1–3)
 2. The administrators plot to remove Daniel (6:4–15)
 3. Daniel preserved in the lions’ den (6:16–24)
 4. Darius acknowledges the power of Daniel’s God (6:25–27)
 5. Daniel preserved until the end of the exile (6:28)
- II. The Visions of Daniel (7:1–12:13)
 - A. The vision of four great beasts and the heavenly court (7:1–28)
 1. The four great beasts (7:1–8)
 2. The Ancient of Days judges the beasts (7:9–12)

¹² Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1584.

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3. The coming of the Son of Man (7:13–14)
4. The interpretation of the vision (7:15–27)
5. Daniel’s response (7:28)
- B. The vision of the ram, the goat, and the little horn (8:1–27)
 1. The vision of the ram and the goat (8:1–14)
 2. The interpretation of the vision (8:15–26)
 3. Daniel’s response (8:27)
- C. Daniel’s prayer and its answer (9:1–27)
 1. Daniel’s prayer concerning the 70 years (9:1–19)
 2. Gabriel’s answer: 70 sevens before the promised redemption (9:20–27)
- D. Daniel’s vision of the final conflict (10:1–12:13)
 1. A heavenly messenger brings news of heavenly conflict (10:1–11:1)
 2. A detailed vision of future earthly conflicts among nations (11:2–45)
 3. The promise of resurrection to glory or shame (12:1–4)
 4. How long until the end? (12:5–13)¹³

¹³ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1584–1585.

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