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What You Need to Know About The Book of Daniel

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Daniel At A Glance

This book records the prophecies, visions, and public ministry of Daniel who was (along with Ezekiel and many others) carried from Jerusalem to Babylon, eventually to rise and serve as the official political leader for his fellow Jewish captives, serving both faithfully and fearlessly under two Babylonian monarchs and one Persian king.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

THREE PAGAN KINGS AND A JEWISH PRIME MINISTER: A STORY OF DECREES, DETERMINATION, DREAMS, AND DELIVERANCE.

Daniel was a teenager taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar during the first siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. He was of royal blood. While in captivity, without the slightest compromise, he faithfully served under the administration of three kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius.

He was himself ministered to by both of heaven's recorded archangels, Gabriel and Michael (9:21; 10:13). He has more to say about the coming antichrist than any other Old Testament writer. One of his contemporaries, Ezekiel, refers to the righteousness of Daniel, comparing him with Noah and Job (Ezek. 14:14), and the wisdom of Daniel (Ezek. 28:3). Jesus quoted Daniel during his Mount Olivet discourse (Mt. 24:15).

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Daniel.** He was a fearless prophet who also served as a full-time statesman and part-time prophet under Babylonian rulers Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:48) and Darius (Dan. 6:1-3).
2. What? The **Book of Daniel**
3. When and where? 536 B.C., from the city of Shushan in Persia
4. Why? To record the Babylonian Captivity and future events concerning Israel
5. To whom? Israel, especially the returning remnant

KEY EVENTS

1. Daniel's resolve in Nebuchadnezzar's palace
2. He interprets the king's statue dream
3. Three faithful Hebrew men are protected in a fiery furnace by the Son of God
4. The divine punishment of Nebuchadnezzar for his pride
5. Belshazzar is killed by the Persians who take over the city of Babylon
6. Daniel is protected in a lion's den by the Angel of God
7. Daniel receives a vision of the Messiah's reign
8. He predicts the victory of the Greeks over the Persians
9. He receives from the angel Gabriel the prophecy of the seventy weeks
10. His prayer, at first hindered by Satan, is answered by an angel of God

11. He predicts the evil reigns of Antiochus Epiphanes and that of the coming Antichrist
12. He is told of last day conditions by an angel

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Daniel:** prophet and political leader, born in Jerusalem, carried into Babylonian Captivity, who served God faithfully under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius the Mede
2. **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego:** three fearless Hebrew young men who were thrown into a furnace of fire for their faith, but preserved by the Son of God Himself
3. **Nebuchadnezzar:** founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire who cast the three Hebrew men into the fire but later acknowledged their God as the true God
4. **Belshazzar:** evil grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, who witnessed God's message of doom to him as written on a banquet wall during a drunken party
5. **Belshazzar's mother (or possible wife):** Queen who wisely advised the king to seek Daniel's help in interpreting the message on the wall
6. **Darius the Mede:** ruler of Babylon and friend of Daniel who was tricked into casting the prophet in a den of hungry lions but later, to his great relief, found him to be unhurt and well

KEY PLACES

1. **Babylon:** capital city of King Nebuchadnezzar's Neo-Babylonian Empire
2. **Plain of Dura:** where Nebuchadnezzar's golden image was set up
3. **Shushan (also called Susa) Palace:** building located in Susa, one of several capitals of the Persian empire, alongside the Uai River, where Daniel received his vision of the future war between the Persian and the victorious Greeks
4. **Hiddekel River:** ancient name for the Tigris River where Daniel was ministered to by an angel of God

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Daniel is the second of two Old Testament books written in Babylon. The other was Ezekiel (compare Dan. 1:2 with Ezek. 1:3).
2. It is the only Old Testament book using the word Messiah (9:25, 26). The only New Testament book calling Christ Messiah is the Gospel of John (1:41; 4:25).
3. Daniel mentions the word Kingdom more often than any other Old Testament book, some fifty times.
4. He refers to the "desolation of the sanctuary" (Temple) on four occasions, each pointing to a specific event:
 - By Nebuchadnezzar, in 586 B.C. (9:17)
 - By Antiochus Epiphanes, in 171-174 B.C. (8:13)
 - By Titus, in 70 A.D. (9:26)
 - By the coming Antichrist, during the Great Tribulation (9:27)
5. Nowhere else in the Word of God do we find so much significant prophecy in such small compass. While we recognize that all parts of the Bible are equally inspired, we

can see nevertheless that God has given to the book of Daniel a pivotal place in His revelation.

6. In the providence of God, significant new discoveries have been made during this century that shed light on various historical statements in the book of Daniel. Discussions of these discoveries are provided at appropriate places in the commentary: (1) the chronological systems used by Daniel and Jeremiah, at 1:1; (2) Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, at 1:1; (3) Daniel's three-year training period in Babylon, at 1:5; (4) Ezekiel's references to Daniel, at 1:20; (5) the Aramaic section of the book, at 2:4; (6) the three Greek musical instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra, at 3:5; (7) the furnace of fire, at 3:6; (8) Nebuchadnezzar's madness, at 4:32; (9) the historical identification of Belshazzar, at 5:1; (10) the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon, at 5:28 and 6:28; (11) the historical identification of Darius the Mede, at 5:31; (12) the den of lions, at 6:7; and (13) the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians, at 6:7. (John Whitcomb. *Everyman's Bible Commentary*. Daniel. BMH Books, p. 13)
7. Sir Isaac Newton, the great scientist who discovered the law of gravity, wrote in his book, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*, these words: "Whoever rejects the prophecies of Daniel does as much as if he undermined the Christian religion, which, so to speak, is founded on Daniel's prophecies of Christ." A copy of this book, printed in 1773 became one of the prized volumes in Thomas Jefferson's library. It now resides in the Library of Congress.
8. Dr. W. A. Criswell writes the following:

"Tracing the Book of Daniel through the centuries, we find references to it in I Maccabees. I Maccabees 1:54 refers to Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 in its reference to 'the abomination of desolation,' as Jesus does in Matt. 24:15. Again, I Maccabees 2:49-70 comprises one of the most striking, solemn passages in the book, the record of the dying words of the venerable priest Mattathias to his sons, especially to Judas Maccabaeus. In this dying charge the noble patriot turns to the example of Daniel and his three faithful friends, to encourage his sons to be true to the God of their fathers. This is a tremendous witness to the early and authentic date of Daniel.

"Josephus throughout his histories makes much of the Book of Daniel. The Jewish historian was a contemporary of Paul and John. In about A.D. 80 Josephus wrote the story of his people from Abraham down to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. One of the most moving and beautiful narratives in all literature is his story of the sparing of the holy city by Alexander the Great during the latter's conquest of the Persian Empire. It is recounted in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter 8, paragraphs 4, and 5. The conquering Alexander, during his siege of Tyre, had made appeal to the Jews for provisions for his army. Jaddua, the high priest, refused, saying that he had sworn to be faithful to Dairus, the Persian king. This made Alexander furious. After his destruction of Tyre and after his destruction of Gaza, Alexander turned the wrath of his invincible army against Jerusalem. Jaddua, the high priest, was terrified, but God told him in a dream how to save the city. Carrying out the instructions of the Lord, Jaddua dressed his priests in white. He, himself,

put on his glorious garments with scarlet robe, breastplate and golden mitre. Followed by a procession of priests and people in white, he went out to meet Alexander, singing the songs of Zion.

“The Macedonian was overwhelmed, and especially so when Jaddua showed him Dan. 8:1-8 and Dan. 8:15-22, passages that foretold his coming and his victories. The narrative continues, saying that Alexander worshiped God and offered sacrifices in the Temple.

“Whatever we may believe about Josephus being the world’s greatest liar (yet he is one of the most significant historians of all time), the fact remains: namely, that while Alexander destroyed every city in Syria friendly to Darius, the Persian, yet he not only spared Jerusalem but greatly favored it. Why? There must be a reason. It is Josephus who tells us why and that ‘why’ included the prophecies of Daniel.” (*Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel*. Zondervan Publishing, p. 45).

9. The unusual feature of this book is that Daniel wrote the central portion (2:4-7:28) in the Aramaic language.
10. Daniel may be compared to Joseph, for both men had the gift of interpreting dreams (compare Gen. 37:5, 9; 40:8; 41:25 with Dan. 2:24; 4:19).
11. His book marks the third of four great periods of miracles in the Bible. The periods are:
 - The time of Moses and Joshua
 - The time of Elijah and Elisha
 - The time of Daniel and Ezekiel
 - The time of Christ and his disciples
12. Daniel’s life may be characterized by purpose, prayer, and prophecy. In matters of prayer, Daniel offers the first of three great confessional prayers over the sins of Jerusalem. These are:
 - Daniel’s prayer (9:3-19)
 - Ezra’s prayer (Ezra 9:5-15)
 - Nehemiah’s prayer (Neh. 1:4-11)
13. Key prophecies in Daniel would include:
 - The rise and fall of four great Gentile kingdoms, followed by the establishment of Christ’s glorious kingdom (ch. 2)
 - The world-famous battle of Arbela, between the Greeks and Persians and its outcome, some 225 years in advance (8:1-8)
 - The most profound Old Testament prophecy concerning God’s timetable for Israel (9:24-27)
 - The actual number of days between the Rapture and the Millennium, a total of 1,335 (11:11-12)
 - The greatest number of fulfilled prophecies found in a single biblical chapter. Daniel 11 contains over 100 such predictions concerning historical events which have already transpired.
14. Two important statues are described in the book of Daniel:
 - King Nebuchadnezzar was associated with both

- He saw the first in a dream (ch. 2)
 - He built the second on a plain (ch. 3)
 - God was behind the first
 - Satan was behind the second
15. The statue he built on the plains of Dura marked the second of three satanic attempts to unify the world through a false religious system. These are: The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11); the golden statue (3); the antichrist statue (Rev. 13).
16. Finally, the book of Daniel records:
- Two of the Old Testament's greatest examples of divine preservation in times of terrible danger (3, 6)
 - The most dramatic feast in the Bible (ch. 5)
 - The only Old Testament description of the Father (7:9-14)
 - More information on the future antichrist than can be found in any other biblical book (7:24-27; 8:23-25; 9:26; 11:36-45)
 - One of the two most pronounced types of the antichrist in the Old Testament – Antiochus Epiphanes (8:9-14; 11:21-35). Haman was the other. (See Esther 3.)
 - The only biblical book mentioning both Gabriel (9:21) and Michael (10:13; 12:1), heaven's two archangels.
 - An explanation of why our prayers may sometimes be hindered (10:10-13)

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Revelation:

There are so many parallels between Daniel and Revelation that seminaries often include them in the same course:

- Both mention an earthly kingdom becoming God's everlasting kingdom (2:44; Rev. 11:15).
- Both use the word *times* for units of years (7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14).
- Both mention the ministry of the angel Michael (10:21; 12:1; Rev. 12:7).
- Both speak of a book containing the names of the righteous (12:1; Rev. 20:12).
- Both speak of 10 kingdoms (2:41; 7:24; Rev. 17:12).
- Both contain extended passages on the antichrist (7:24-27; 8:23-25; 9:26; 11:36-45; Rev. 6:2; 11:7; 13:1-10; 19:20).
- Both see the Father on His Throne in heaven (7:9; Rev. 4:2, 3).
- Both witness a vast multitude of angels ministering to the Father (7:10; Rev. 5:11).
- Both writers were ministered to by an angel (10:10-15; Rev. 10:8-11; 21:9-11).
- Both describe two pagan statues (3; Rev. 13:11-18).
- Each records an important banquet (5; Rev. 19:7-9).
- One was a sealed book (12:9), the other an open one (Rev. 22:10).

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. God of Heaven (2:18)
2. The Fourth Man (3:25)
3. The Most High God (3:26)
4. The King of Heaven (4:37)
5. The Living God (6:20)
6. The Angel of God (6:22)
7. The Son of Man (7:13)
8. The Prince of Princes (8:25)
9. The Messiah (9:25)
10. The Glorious One from Heaven (10: 5, 6)
11. The God of Gods (11:36)