

# Introduction to Daniel

📖 Various Passages

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

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📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

We're starting a new study today, the Book of Daniel. You should have some handouts that will help you through our study. As always, if you have questions write them down and put them in the little church in the back of the church.

Why are we studying an OT book during this hour? As far as I'm aware the OT has never been taught during this hour. This hour has always been reserved for the NT. However, the NT authors presuppose that you already know the OT as evidenced by their repeatedly quoting the OT. If you start by studying the NT you realize that since so much of the NT depends upon understanding the OT that you might as well study the OT first. According to progressive revelation this has always been the proper procedure. You read the NT in light of the OT, not the NT back into the OT.

In the area of prophetic studies, it is especially important since following Daniel we will be teaching the Book of Revelation and the Book of Revelation presupposes you know the Book of Daniel. Dr Walvoord, who was noted by friend and foe to be the ablest teacher of Bible prophecy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sub-titled his commentary on Daniel, "The Key to Prophetic Revelation." That is what I have subtitled this series. He did that because He recognized that Daniel is the key that not only unlocks the Book of Revelation but all prophetic revelation. Without Daniel you can't unlock Zech 12-14, Matt 24-25, 2 Thess 2 and, of course, the entire Book of Revelation. These are major prophetic sections of Scripture, but they all find their proper interpretation when understood in the larger frame of reference laid out in Daniel. Daniel frames the future of world kingdoms from the beginning of the times of the Gentiles in 606BC until all Gentile kingdoms are destroyed and the kingdom of God fills the earth. So the way to get into trouble studying prophecy, and why there is so much disagreement on prophecy, is because prophecy studies do not respect the place of Daniel as the key that establishes the larger frame of reference for interpreting all other prophecies. For example, one of the recent disagreements, which is not really recent but ongoing, is whether the anti-Christ is an individual, a force or a national entity or organization. They're looking at Rev 13 and 17 and trying to resolve this problem. There are many symbols involved; a beast, seven heads, ten horns, etc....but the issue is resolved not in Revelation but in Daniel 8 which predicts the forerunner of the anti-Christ to be an individual who turned out in history to be Antiochus Epiphanes IV, a Greek ruler of the

Seleucid dynasty. And since the forerunner of the anti-Christ is an individual then, of course, the anti-Christ himself is an individual, not a force or a national entity or organization. So the way to resolve these problems is to go back to Daniel. The point is it is the key to prophetic revelation and that while there are many pieces to fit together in the prophetic puzzle the only way to put the pieces together is to start with the frame of that puzzle which is the Book of Daniel.

The good thing about our study is there is a great amount of interest in prophecy. The bad thing is there is an equally great amount of error and sensationalism. My purpose is not to address every error or sensational point of view but to give a positive exposition.

As far as an introduction to the book, I'm not going to deal with all the introductory issues, just those that you should be alert to. First, the place of Daniel in the Hebrew canon. The Hebrew canon is known as the Tanakh. This is an acronym which stands for the three divisions of the Hebrew OT; Torah, the Law, Nabiim, the Prophets and Kethubim, the Writings. This is the proper way to divide the OT. Jesus understood the OT to have these three divisions. In Luke 24:44 He said, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." You say, I don't see the Writings? Psalms was the largest book in the Writings and so was sometimes used as a synonym for the Writings. What was Jesus saying? Jesus was saying that every prophecy about Messiah in the Hebrew OT spoke about Him and had to be fulfilled in Him. The three-fold reference to Law, Prophets and Psalms was His way of referring to the entire OT canon.

Each of the 22 books in their OT, which correspond to our 39, were placed in one of these three divisions. Which division do you think Daniel was placed? Most Gentiles say the prophets. Why do they say the prophets? Because Jesus referred to him as a prophet. Matt 24:15, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (let the reader understand)." So Daniel was a prophet but guess what? The Jews didn't place Daniel among the prophets but among the Writings. Why not? There are two reasons. First, not because they didn't view Daniel as a prophet, but simply because they viewed him primarily as a wise guy. The Writings are full of wisdom literature. That's why you see Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Most people recognize those books as wisdom literature but they don't usually recognize Daniel as being full of wisdom. But notice there are three other people who are listed under the writings who are also not thought of as being full of wisdom; Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. What did all four of these people after whom these books were named have in common? They were all Jews who served in Gentile governments, places of political administration. So why were they placed in the Writings? Because they ruled wisely. All four of these Jews were wise political rulers in Gentile governments. So what these books are teaching us is the nature of Gentile kingdoms and their incessant power lust and idolatry and how Jews can survive Gentile kingdoms, whether you are serving in the government or you are one of the governed. Gentile kingdoms are not nice places to live. Gentiles have been given sovereignty by God as a disciplinary

measure for Israel but they are not godly places. But they can be lived in by godly people. Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther are giving principles for people who live in or serve in Gentile kingdoms. So that's the first reason the Jews placed Daniel in the Writings. Second, the classical prophets wrote with a distinct writing style. They all used poetry extensively. Books like Joshua, Judges, Isaiah, all classic prophets, some give prophetic analysis of history, others give prophecy of the future, but all classic writing prophets used poetry. You can't see it in the English, it's Hebrew poetry, but the publishers of English bible's typically show you it is poetry by indenting the paragraphs and dividing them into lines. Daniel doesn't do that. Oh, a few places he does, but he doesn't do that much. The Jews recognized that Daniel was not like the classical writing prophets. Instead he wrote in two other styles; narrative and apocalyptic.

What are narrative and apocalyptic? Narrative, that's just telling a story. For example, Dan 1 is the story of how Daniel and his friends got down to Babylon and the kind of training they went through and how they came out superior to all the other young men. Dan 3 is the story of what happened to Daniels' three friends when they wouldn't fall down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Dan 5 is the story of why Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. All of these are stories and so a lot of the material in Daniel is what is classed as narrative and that sets him apart from the classical prophets which are typically poetic.

The other style of writing Daniel employs is apocalyptic and let's camp on this one for few minutes. Apocalyptic is misused in our day as referring to a genre where the symbols used in the book don't have a literal referent, meaning you can't identify them. That's why most people say, "Well, we can't know for sure what Daniel is talking about because it's symbolic." Well, these symbols are usually interpreted for us in the context. And if they are not then the symbols are found elsewhere in the Bible and we can bring those passages in to help. So understand that most of what is out there about Daniel and Revelation is always going to say, "We can't interpret that literally because it's symbolic." My point is all symbols have a literal referent. It doesn't mean someone can't assign one of these symbols a wrong referent, but that they do have a referent.

The real meaning of apocalyptic is that it comes from the Greek word *αποκαλυψις* and means "to unveil" "to reveal." The first word in the Book of Revelation is this word *αποκαλυψις* and is the reason Joseph Seiss titled his famous commentary on Revelation, *The Apocalypse*. It refers to an unveiling, a removal of a veil that was hiding information so that we could now see it. These books were meant to be understood. That is the point of apocalyptic literature in its true sense. It's different from prophetic in that prophetic books do unveil things about the future but we don't call Isaiah or Jeremiah or Habakkuk apocalyptic. Why don't we? Because apocalyptic literature has certain characteristics that distinguish it from prophetic literature. What are these? I've already mentioned the first; apocalyptic is written in prose, not poetry, meaning there's no Hebraic rhythm, it's just more the way you would talk to someone. The second characteristic of apocalyptic is it is highly visionary. The author will see lots of visions and in those visions are very vivid depictions of an unfolding drama and the author will record what he saw unfolding. In the Book of Daniel Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, Belshazzar has an

enigma and Daniel has to interpret both. Daniel has several visions himself and angels interpret them. So apocalyptic is highly visionary. The third characteristic of apocalyptic is it's highly symbolic. In the visions you will see all kinds of symbols used to convey characteristics of things. Nebuchadnezzar sees a statue with a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, waist of bronze and legs of iron and feet and toes partly of iron and partly of clay. Daniel sees a ram with two horns and one growing up larger than the other and a buck-goat with one horn colliding and shattering the ram's horns. These are all symbolic elements and they are a common feature of apocalyptic literature but not prophecy. A fourth characteristic of apocalyptic is angelic interpreters. You'll find as we get into it that the symbols are not left up to Daniel or us to interpret, angels show up to interpret them for us. In the cases where they don't show up we still don't have to resort to our imagination to figure them out because if you compare it with other Scripture you'll find that other passages will shed light on how to interpret the symbols. So we're not going to resort to allegorization to interpret the symbols, we'll let the Scriptures be their own best interpreter. A fifth characteristic of apocalyptic is that it addresses Israel in difficult times. When they're in dire need of God's help then God reveals in apocalyptic format and He does that for two purposes. These two purposes are sub-points under this fifth characteristic. First, apocalyptic literature is used to give hope to Israel. Israel goes into difficult times and when you face difficult times you need hope, you have to know that there is an end to the difficulty and better days lay ahead. The problem is that in difficult times you are very scatter-brained, it is very difficult to focus and think. What apocalyptic literature does to overcome this is capture your minds-eye. If you think about apocalyptic literature, it's always very intriguing. It's able to grab your attention and hold it so that you are able to come out of despondency and get to hope. For Israel these books were written to give Israel hope, help them pull out of despondency. Second, apocalyptic literature is used to give humility to the nations. The nations tend toward arrogance since they have been granted sovereignty at this time. But they tend to forget that the sovereignty was given to them by the God of Israel. As a consequence, they tend to exploit their sovereignty autonomously and use it to persecute or destroy Israel. But Israel is still the apple of God's eye. And so apocalyptic literature is given to cut Gentile nations down to size, to keep them humble; first of all because the literature requires a Jewish interpreter to explain what God said to them, and also because once the interpretation is made known, namely that Gentiles are going to be given a period of world dominance over Israel, they better recognize that the God of Israel gave them their sovereignty and therefore not get arrogant with their treatment of Israel. The way to blessing for a Gentile kingdom is always to bless Israel, and that requires that they not allow their sovereignty to go to their head. So those are five characteristics of apocalyptic literature over and against just prophecy; apocalyptic is prose not poetry, it's highly visionary, has lots of symbols, includes angelic interpreters, gives hope to Israel and humility to Gentile nations.

Now with that said let's make two more observations about apocalyptic. One, observe where the apocalyptic sections of your Bible are. What books are apocalyptic? In the OT Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. In the NT Revelation. Knowing that, where are they located with respect to the two testaments? They're slammed toward the end of each testament. The OT ends with books like Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah, all apocalyptic, and the NT

ends with Revelation, also apocalyptic. Why are they slammed at the end of both testaments? Because God is about to go silent; after the OT for ~400 years and after the NT for 1900 years now. So right when God is about to go silent He speaks apocalyptically. What does this do for Israel? It generates hope for the future. It's the theme of hope again. What does it do for Gentile nations? It's supposed to generate humility. It's the theme of humility again. And two, what does apocalyptic literature deal heavily with? God's covenant program for Israel. It's not dealing with the Church. The Church doesn't have any apocalyptic literature. Obviously Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah have nothing to do directly with the Church. And even Revelation 2 and 3 are the only two chapters that deal directly with the Church and they're not even written in apocalyptic format, they're epistles. The apocalyptic section follows in Revelation 4-19 and deals exclusively with God's covenant program for Israel and the nations.<sup>1</sup> That's why you don't find the Church in Rev 4-19. So a principle to remember when you come to the end of both testaments is that God is about to go silent and this material is written primarily to address God's covenant program for Israel and the nations for their treatment of Israel. God loves Israel. He made covenants with Israel. He keeps covenants with Israel. He never made one covenant with the Church. We can enjoy spiritual blessings from the covenants as we bless Israel and as we come into a relationship with the Jewish Messiah, but no covenants are made with the Church. So apocalyptic literature deals especially with God's covenant program for Israel and the nations and their treatment of Israel.

Now, a little bit about the original languages in Daniel. Daniel was originally written in two languages. Isn't that interesting? Hebrew from 1:1-2:4a and 8:1-12:13 but Aramaic from 2:4b-7:28. The largest section of the OT written in Aramaic is found in Daniel. There are a few other places in Ezra and Nehemiah, but most of it is here in Daniel. Why is this? A couple of reasons. First, Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the day, meaning it was the international language, the language of business and commerce. You had to know it to do business with other nations. What's the *lingua franca* today? English, at least for right now. That's significant because whatever nation's language is the *lingua franca* is the nation who controls the world. It's the principle of he who controls the ideas controls the world and is the world superpower. We have that right now. We're on top. But in Daniel's day Babylon was on top, they were the superpower, they controlled the world and everyone had to learn their language, Aramaic. Why was a large portion of this book written in their language? Because it was addressed to them, to humble them, to cut their power down to size. So it's interesting that the first book that addresses Gentile sovereignty and kingdoms was written in the international language of the first great Gentile kingdom in the times of the Gentiles. This means that the material could be read by them and transported to all the nations around Babylon which spoke the same language and read and understood. That is highly significant.

The second thing this shows us; some have taken it that the two languages indicate two different authors. I think it's much better to interpret this indicating two different audiences. As I said, the Aramaic portion is geared toward Gentile nations, to get them to read Dan 2:4b-7:28. What about the rest of the book? It's written in Hebrew. The Hebrew portion is primarily geared toward whom? The nation Israel. So Jews were to primarily read 1:1-2:4a and chapters 8-12. They could read Aramaic too, of course. But my point is that just because these

sections are written in two languages to two different audiences doesn't mean they are disjointed, they both share a basic unifying theme. What is the unifying theme? God is sovereign over all nations, both Israel and Gentile. God is controlling history and the direction history is going and He does so in accordance with human responsibility. So in Hebrew chapters God's sovereignty is revealed to Israel because even while she's under Gentile kingdoms God is sovereign over those Gentile kingdoms and will ultimately fulfill His covenant program to Israel. This means nobody can destroy the Jewish people. The Spanish couldn't destroy the Jewish people, the Crusaders couldn't destroy them, the Nazi's couldn't destroy them, nobody can destroy the Jewish people. Why? Because God is sovereign. He made covenants with them and He is a covenant making and covenant keeping God. In the Aramaic chapters God's sovereignty is revealed to Gentiles because even though they have sovereignty over Israel it is God who gave them that sovereignty and therefore they should not get arrogant against Israel. Every time they do their power gets cut down to size. Their dominion gets taken away. So the unifying theme is the sovereignty of God over all nations on earth and there are aspects to this theme throughout the book that we will elaborate as we work our way through.

Now the date of the book is a bone of contention. When was it written? The traditional date is 605-536BC and that would be based on the internal evidence of 1:1 and 10:1. 1:1 being the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation of Israel's as 606-605BC and 10:1 being the reign of Cyrus the Persian in 536BC. But in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD a man named Porphyry claimed it wasn't written until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Why did he say that? His basic argument was that Daniel reveals too many details about the Medo-Persian and Greek kingdoms that were beyond his time and that is simply impossible. When we get into some of the details of chapter 11, the battles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, the negotiations, the intermarriages, the conflicts, it is extremely detailed, there are over 130 prophecies in that one chapter, and Porphyry's point was this is far too detailed to have been written beforehand, it had to have been written afterward. Where was Porphyry coming from? From the standpoint that prophecy is impossible, no one can know the future. So he had a presuppositional bias against the God of the Bible. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the higher critics of the Bible resurrected this same type of argument. They started with a bias against the God of the Bible and from there denied the early date of Daniel's book, slammed it down in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century like Porphyry, between 168-164BC. They came up with several arguments supporting a late date that basically destroyed the Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries leaving the church today very weak. I'll just mention a few of their arguments. One is that there are Greek loan words in Daniel and the Greeks didn't come along till 330BC with Alexander the Great so it couldn't have been written until after Alexander. The problem with that argument is that the Babylonians engaged in commerce with the Greeks long before Alexander and so it's not surprising to find some Greek loan words in Daniel. Furthermore, if Daniel was written after 330BC then we would expect a far greater number of Greek loan words than we actually find. A second argument they made was that there are no clear references to Daniel as the author and so it must have been written by a later forger, someone who claimed to be Daniel. But Dan 12:4 seems to be direct evidence that Daniel authored the book where the angel said, "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words..."

And the Lord Himself in Matt 24:15 ascribed the book to Daniel saying, "when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet..." He was referring to Dan 9 and 12 and so we come to the text accepting it on Jesus' authority. I think Jesus knows more than the critics. There are other arguments they make but suffice it to say that they've all been answered sufficiently in various books that deal with Bible difficulties. The basic problem with critics of Daniel is they come to the text from the standpoint of unbelief. They do not accept the Scriptures or the God of the Scriptures and so they reject all prophecy and miracles. They are not actually trying to understand what is going on but are trying to tear it to pieces. And this is always the stuff you get on the History Channel and PBS. That stuff is garbage. Our view is that this book is projecting out from within the Babylonian kingdom what the times of Gentile kingdoms will look like and the great detail is there to show Jews that God still has a plan for them to hope and to Gentile rulers that God gave them their sovereignty and they better use it humbly to bless Israel, not try to destroy them. One argument to the contrary of this late date, and there are many, but one interesting one is that among the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran there were eight copies of Daniel. That is a lot of copies for one book. They evidently were very interested in Daniel. Why this is evidence for a date much earlier than 168-164BC is because these scrolls date around 150BC and it is simply not conceivable that Daniel would have been accepted that quickly as part of the Hebrew canon and be evidenced by so many manuscripts. So it is quite evident that it was already accepted as part of the Hebrew canon in 150BC and that points decisively back to the traditional date of the book as being written over a period of time beginning in Dan 1:1, which was 605BC, the first incursion of Nebuchadnezzar, and ending in Dan 10:1, which was 536BC, the third year of Cyrus the Persian.

Now if you'll look at these two charts - Chart 1 I'm indebted to Andy Woods for. He included this in his notes on Daniel and he got it from his class notes at Dallas Seminary under Charlie Dyer. You'll notice on Chart 1 that the chapters in Daniel are not chronological, there is actually a different structure and we'll go through that. But this chart helps you keep track of what kingdom was dominant and what king was ruling in the various chapters of Daniel. So you want to keep this chart handy.

<b>Kingdoms and Kings in Daniel</b>		
<b>Chapter(s) in Daniel</b>	<b>Kingdom</b>	<b>King</b>
1-4	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar
5	Babylon	Belshazzar
6	Medo-Persia	Darius (Gubaru)
7-8	Babylon	Belshazzar
9	Medo-Persia	Darius (Gubaru)
10-12	Medo-Persia	Cyrus

**Chart 1.** The Chapters in Daniel are not chronological, so this chart helps you keep track of what kingdom was dominant and what king was ruling.

The other chart, Chart 2 gives you Daniel's age when certain events happened. This is interesting. If you'll keep these charts with you through our study, get a Daniel notebook or something, you can put these handouts in it and I'll be giving you more, but these two will help you keep track of *what kingdom and king were ruling* at the time and *how old Daniel was* at the time.

Daniel's Age		
Chapter(s) in Daniel	Event	Age
1	Taken Exile to Babylon	15
2	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of Metal Statue	17
3	Daniel's 3 Friends in the Fiery Furnace	19-20
4	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of Tree	45-50
5	Belshazzar's Handwriting on Wall	early 80's
6	Daniel in the Lion's Den	c 83
7-8	Daniel's Vision of Animals	mid-60's
9	Daniel's 70 Sevens	early 80's
10-12	Daniel's Dreams of Latter Days	mid-80's

**Chart 2.** The chapters in Daniel are not chronological, so this chart helps you keep track of Daniel's age when certain events occurred.

As for the introductory material. First, Daniel is the key to prophetic revelation. Without it you can't get it together. With it you can get it all together. Second, Daniel is placed in the Writings portion of the Hebrew. The Writings contained wisdom. Daniel was viewed primarily as an example of a Jew who ruled wisely in Gentile governments. So the book has a lot to say about Gentile governments, the corruption and how to survive them and actually thrive in them. Third, Daniel is written in narrative and apocalyptic. Narrative is telling stories. Apocalyptic is highly visionary and symbolic, has angelic interpreters and is designed to give Israel hope and Gentile nations humility. This kind of literature was always given when God was about to go silent. Fourth, Daniel was written in two languages; Hebrew to address the Jewish exiles on how to live in Gentile kingdoms and to give them hope. Aramaic to address Gentile nations in the lingua franca of the day on how to use their sovereignty and to remain humble. Fifth, the unifying theme of the book is the sovereignty of God over Israel and the nations. Sixth, Daniel wrote it between 606BC and 536BC contrary to every liberal scholar who approaches the text from the standpoint of unbelief. Next time we'll look closer at five purposes of the Book of Daniel and get into the historical background of chapter 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The Book of Revelation is classified in Revelation 1:3 as prophecy.