

## Daniel – Introduction

What most people remember from the book of Daniel is Daniel in the lions' den from chapter 6. Chapter 3 is also very memorable where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace and were joined by a fourth figure. The three came out of the fire unharmed. Others may remember the dreams and visions in Daniel which have had many people puzzling over them. The message of Daniel is similar to the message of Revelation. Earthly kingdoms will rise and fall but in the midst of these earthly kingdoms, God will build his kingdom which will not end. All other kingdoms come and go but only God's kingdom lasts forever. From that, believers should be encouraged to endure when evil kingdoms have temporal success. Daniel was first under the reign of Judah's kings. Then Daniel was under the reign of Babylonian kings. Last, Daniel was under the reign of Medo-Persian kings. Despite all the change, Daniel remained faithful to God and prospered.

Who wrote the book of Daniel? The simple answer is that Daniel wrote the book in the sixth century B.C. Some people argue that the book was written in the second century B.C. by an unnamed author who pretended to be Daniel. Most who argue for a second century date do so based on chapter 11. Chapter 11 gave precise historic information about the battles between Syria and Egypt from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C. Those commentators who do not believe in a God who knows the future are compelled to force the date of the writing of Daniel to a date when the historic events of the book were in the past. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus spoke of "the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel". If Jesus attributed the book to Daniel, then who am I to disagree?

The book of Daniel is interesting in that it was written with a mix of Hebrew and Aramaic. Verses 1:1-2:4a are in Hebrew. 2:4b through chapter 7 is in Aramaic. Chapters 8 through 12 are in Hebrew. The first 6 chapters are historic in nature. They are mostly stories about Daniel, his friends and two Babylonian kings. The last 6 chapters are mostly prophetic.

The name Daniel means "God is my judge". The Hebrew form of the name occurs 23 times in Daniel. The Aramaic form of the name occurs 52 times in Daniel. Belteshazzar, Daniel's Babylonian name, occurs 8 times in Daniel.

It was a great shock when Nebuchadnezzar had a number of Jerusalem's leading youth taken to Babylon in around 605 B.C. The full destruction of Jerusalem and the temple came almost 20 years later in 586 B.C. The book of Daniel covers the time period from about 605 B.C. to about 535 B.C.

The book of Daniel has inspiring examples of how a believer should live in a world which is opposed to the one true God. Some Christians in communist countries or countries under Islamic rule face the decisions that Daniel and his friends had to make. Do we worship the one true God or do we bow down to idols at the threat of death? Daniel and his friends are positive examples who should inspire all of us to follow Jesus no matter the cost. Right now in the United States, I'm not aware of anyone being threatened to worship an idol on pain of death. That can change very quickly. We shouldn't forget that five years ago many people were forbidden to go to church. Some pastors were arrested for leaving their churches open for worship. In Ohio, where people were legally allowed to go to church, the media was saying that you could not go to church. It happened almost overnight. We also

face other issues that are not life and death but may involve losing a job or a friend. What if my job requires me to address someone as she / her even though that person has a heavy beard, a big Adam's apple and a deep voice? Do I side with God's choice of pronouns or with the bearded person's choice of pronouns?

Chapters 2 through 7 form a chiasm – A B C C B A.

Chapter 1: Introduction – Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego were taken from Jerusalem and exiled to Babylon.	
<i>(A) Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about an image made of gold, silver, bronze and iron with feet of iron and clay.</i>	<i>(A) Chapter 7: Daniel had a dream about four beasts which paralleled Nebuchadnezzar's dream found in chapter 2.</i>
<i>(B) Chapter 3: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship an image and were thrown into the fiery furnace but were delivered by God.</i>	<i>(B) Chapter 6: Daniel defied a law and worshiped the one true God rather than an earthly king. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den but was delivered by God.</i>
<i>(C) Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar was warned against arrogance but couldn't help boasting about his great accomplishments in building the Babylonian Empire. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar so that he became like a beast of the field for a time before God restored him.</i>	<i>(C) Chapter 5: Belshazzar exalted himself above God when he used some of the Jerusalem temple vessels for a party. That very night Belshazzar died and the Babylonian Empire came to an end.</i>
Chapter 8: Daniel had a vision, near the end of the Babylonian empire. The vision was about two of the kingdoms from chapters 2 and 7. The two kingdoms were identified as Medo-Persia and Greece.	
Chapter 9: Daniel studied the prophecies of Jeremiah, in the first year after the fall of Babylon, and prayed that God would return his people to Jerusalem and that God would restore Jerusalem.	
Chapter 10: Daniel received a vision, in the third year of Cyrus the Persian. The vision spans chapters 10-12.	
Chapter 11: Daniel was told about the division of the Greek empire after Alexander the Great's death. Alexander's kingdom was divided among four of his generals. The general over Syria and his descendants were described as the king of the North. The general over Egypt and his descendants were described as the king of the South. The war between these two kingly lines spanned three centuries. Judah and Jerusalem were sandwiched between the two kingdoms.	
Chapter 12: The conclusion of the prophecy which began in chapter 10.	

The Bible Project has a pretty good overview of Daniel.

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-daniel>