

The Book of Daniel

The Book of Daniel *Thematically*

The book of Daniel concerns **kings** and **kingdoms**. Note the following analysis of the most frequently occurring words:

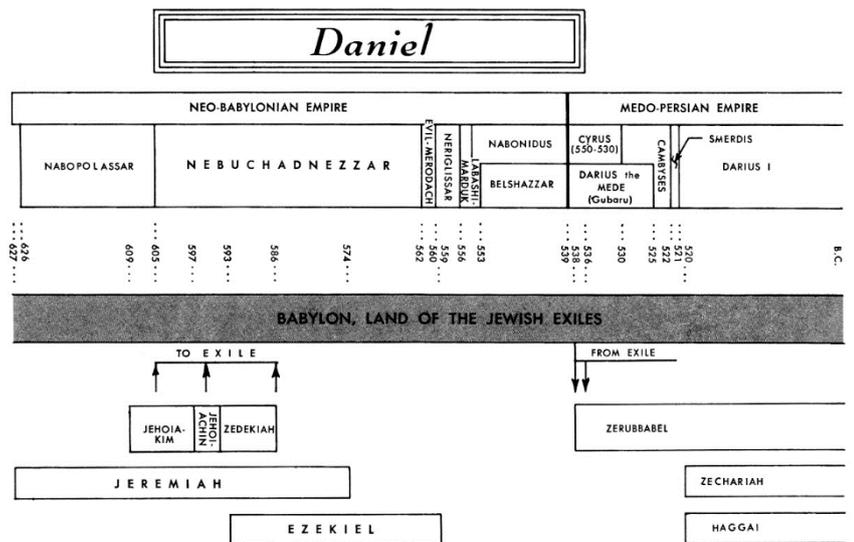
Section	Key Words (KJV English text)
Whole Book	king/kings/kingly (x189); Daniel (x75); kingdom (x59); God (x58); great/greatness (x47); time/times (x47); men (x41); prince/s (x35); heaven/s (x33); interpretation (x32); Nebuchadnezzar (x32); visions (x32); dream (x29)
Daniel 1-6	king (x155); Daniel (x58); God (x39); men (x38); kingdom (x37), Nebuchadnezzar (x32); interpretation (x31); dream/ed/s (x27); heaven/s (x25)
Daniel 7-12	come/came (x46); up (x39); great/ly (x34); king (x34); time/s (x30); vision/s (x25); stand/standing (x23); kingdom/s (x22); God (x19); horn/s (x19); Lord (x19); Daniel (x17)

The key verses in the two major sections of the book are: *Daniel 4.32: The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*; and *Daniel 7.13-14: And there was given him (one like the Son of Man) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*. The lesson is clear. God has never abdicated His throne. He is sovereign in the kingdoms of men and will yet establish a universal and eternal kingdom over which the Man, Christ Jesus, will reign. We can have confidence in the purpose of God and His power to perform it. *Revelation 11.15: The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*. The supreme message of the book of Daniel is therefore that the Son of Man has been appointed by God to rule the world, and all human efforts to attain that honour are doomed to failure.

The Book of Daniel *Historically*

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem three times.

- **606BC**. The beginning of the 70 years captivity. Daniel was exiled at this time during the reign of Jehoiakim (1.1).
- **597BC**. The second invasion took Ezekiel into captivity under the reign of Jehoiachin (Ezekiel 1.1-2; 2 Kings 24.12-16).
- **586BC**. Jerusalem was destroyed under the reign of Zedekiah (son of Josiah and uncle of Jehoiachin), 2 Kings 25. This final invasion signalled the beginning of 70 years of desolations until 516BC and the completion of the temple re-building (Ezra 6).



Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem during this time until the final desolation of 586BC when he went to Egypt (Jeremiah 43.4-8). Thus, Ezekiel and Daniel both heard his ministry, and clearly valued his writings (9.2). Daniel was exiled at the approximate age of *eighteen* and experienced the lions' den in his *eighties*! The kingdom of Babylon fell in 539BC, but Daniel continued into the reign of Cyrus the Persian (1.21; 6.28; 10.1). The book closes in c.536BC, a date which marked the end of the 70 years' captivity by the building of the altar and temple foundation at the beginning of Jerusalem's restoration (Ezra 3). It is likely the book was written by Daniel towards the end of his life (c.530BC, Matthew 24.15).

The Book of Daniel *Critically*

The book of Daniel has received widespread attack from many critics due to the accuracy of its prophecies, some of which have been fulfilled. For example, in Daniel 8, the prophet minutely predicts events in connection with the Greek and Seleucid empires. The vision tells of a *ram* with two horns (8.3) and a *he goat* with a 'notable horn' (8.5). The goat (Greece) smote the ram (Media and Persia) and became 'very great', but 'when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and *in its stead* came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven' (8.8). The 'great horn' represents Alexander the Great who died in 323BC. His kingdom was divided between his four generals. From one of these (the Seleucid Empire) came forth a 'little horn' (8.9) who 'magnified himself' and took away the 'daily sacrifice' (8.11). This was fulfilled by the infamous Antiochus Epiphanes. He defiled the temple in Jerusalem for 2300 days (170-164BC, 8.14)

by placing an idol of Zeus in the holiest and sacrificing a pig on the brazen altar. This was an 'abomination of desolation' which clearly foreshadows tribulation times (Matthew 24.15).

Such is the clarity of such prophecies, critics demanded the book of Daniel must have been written after these events (c.150BC) by a Pseudo-Daniel writing *history* as *prophecy*. The first such critic was a pagan, anti-Christian Syrian philosopher by the name of **Porphyry** (AD232-303). No other questions were raised concerning the date of Daniel until the *seventeenth* century and the rise of higher criticism. And yet, remarkably, Josephus records the story of Alexander the Great sparing the city of Jerusalem after being shown Daniel's prophecy by Jaddua the High Priest (332BC)! *'The real protest against Daniel is prejudice against the supernatural. There are too many miracles, too much precise prediction in Daniel to suit rationalistic criticism. Just as Daniel the prophet escaped unscathed from the lions' den, so does Daniel the prophecy escape from the "critics' den" in the minds and hearts of intelligent believers.'*

The Book of Daniel Biblically

The Bible contains *four* 'major' prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah were written *prior* to the captivity; Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied *during* the captivity.

- Isaiah is the prophet of the *cross* (cf. Isaiah 53) heralding the message of God's redeeming love.
- Jeremiah is the prophet of the new *covenant* (cf. Jeremiah 31) and focusses on the nation's sin and guilt.
- Ezekiel is the prophet of the *city* of Jerusalem, from which the glory departed in stages (Ezekiel 3.23, 10.4, 10.19, 11.23-24), leaving the nation at the mercy of the Gentiles. And yet, there is the hope of returning Glory (43.2)!
- Daniel is the prophet of the *calendar* (or *coming*) of the glorious kingdom of Christ (Daniel 9).

It is interesting to note Daniel's various parallels with 1 Peter. Both Peter and Daniel wrote with the 'dispersed' people of God in mind; Daniel was of the 'dispersed' of Judah, whilst Peter was concerned with the 'strangers' scattered abroad through the persecution of the early church. Peter makes various allusions to events in Daniel's prophecy (cf. 1 Peter 2.12, 17; 4.3, 12; 5.8), perhaps reminded of the same as he wrote from Babylon (1 Peter 5.13).

Daniel's contemporary, Ezekiel, occupied a **low** place among the captives (1.1; 3.15). In contrast, Daniel occupied a **high** place among the kings. Ezekiel unfolds and stresses Israel's doom, which is now history; Daniel tells the glorious news of Israel's restoration and blessing which is still future. God gives His servants different spheres and character of ministry, but they must be *faithful* in the work they are given.

The Book of Daniel Analytically

See chart. The Book of Daniel breaks simply into two sections, the first of which is largely historical and concerns Daniel and his *personal friends* (Daniel 1-6). The second section is largely prophetic and concerns Daniel and his *people's future* (Daniel 7-12). The book is not chronological. The visions of Daniel 7-8 occur before the history of Daniel 5-6, thus there must be some thematic (subject) arrangement. This is also indicated by the language as Daniel was partially written in **Aramaic** (2.4b-7.28), which language is only found elsewhere in *Jeremiah* 10.11 and two short portions in *Ezra* (4.8-6.19; 7.12-27). This is likely because Daniel 2 to 7 emphasises God's dealings with Gentile nations, of which *Aramaic* was the common language at the time. Daniel 7 to 12 largely considers God's dealings with His people Israel and is thus written in *Hebrew*. Chapter 7 is therefore pivotal and concerns a coming *Gentile* king who is destroyed by the *King of kings*.

The Lord Jesus speaks of the 'times of the Gentiles' (Luke 21.24). This is defined as the period of Gentile rule over Jerusalem and began with Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion (606BC) until the Lord Jesus returns to reign. The book of Daniel thus covers, in history and prophecy, the entirety of the Times of the Gentiles.

The Book of Daniel Prophetically

The Book of Daniel provides a broad prophetic framework on which the tapestry of God's dealings with the nations and Israel is woven. *Gaebelein: Daniel is the key to all prophecy; without a knowledge of the great prophecies contained in this book the entire prophetic portion of the word of God must remain a sealed book. The great prophetic portions of the New Testament, the Olivet discourse of our Lord (Matthew 24 and 25), and above all the great New Testament book of prophecy, the book of Revelation, can only be understood through the prophecies of Daniel.*

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a 'great image' is one such foundational prophecy (Daniel 2). The image represents four world empires, universal in extent, but **temporary** in duration. They encompass the whole period of Gentile rule over Israel (and Jerusalem). The 'head of gold' signifies Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon. The inferior kingdom (arms of silver) of the Medes and Persians rises after Babylon (539BC, 2.39) followed by the Grecian empire under Alexander, represented by the belly and thighs of brass (331BC, 2.39). A final, fourth kingdom (depicted in iron) is the Roman

empire which captured Jerusalem in 37BC. However, the **permanent** rule over all nations is ultimately given by God to the Lord Jesus – portrayed in a Stone smiting the image and breaking it to pieces (2.34-35, 44)!

But why must there be such a delay before God establishes His kingdom on earth? The answer is given in the so-called 'back-bone of prophecy', the *Seventy Weeks* (9.24-27). 483 years (69 weeks of *years*) after the decree to restore and build Jerusalem, Messiah would be 'cut-off'. God stopped the prophetic clock at Calvary, paused his dealings with Israel and began calling out a heavenly people for His name (the church). Following the rapture, the prophetic clock will tick again. There is therefore a time break (or prophetic gap) in the image during the rule of the Roman Empire. The prophecy of the image will resume in the tribulation when a future worldwide empire will rule, having two feet and ten toes (2.41). This kingdom will likely be centred in Babylon with ten kings giving allegiance to the man of sin. **Allen:** *Seventy Weeks presents the Divine programme for the time of the end and outlines a distinct period for the consummation – the 70th week.*

Why are these four great Gentile world kingdoms so important?

JE Todd: It was the Babylonian empire that chastened God's people and cured them of idolatry for ever. So they were able, before the Messiah's advent, to plant the knowledge of the true God among the Gentiles in their synagogues across the world. It was the Persian Empire which brought Israel back to their own land, and the worship of God took fresh root under its protection. It was the Greek Empire that filled the world with Greek culture and above all the Greek language, which was to become the universal vehicle for the good news of salvation. Our New Testament was written in Greek. It was the Roman empire which destroyed all political and national barriers and bound the nations together with roads and sea routes. This enabled the gospel to spread unhindered and churches were rapidly established on a worldwide scale, so ensuring the permanence of Christianity.

The Book of Daniel Practically

The book of Daniel abounds with practical lessons. The Jews are largely comfortable in the exile of Babylon and indifferent to the plight of Jerusalem (the place of the name). Yet there were those who remained true to God. They resisted the attractions of its culture and diet (Daniel 1), they stood firm in the fiery trial (Daniel 3) and against the roaring lions (Daniel 6). Here were individuals with real spiritual character. **They had purpose of heart, purity of life and perseverance in prayer.** *In such conditions and under such pressures there are those who will not adopt Babylon's attitudes and will not succumb to its efforts to rob God of his rights. They will not be lured from the pathway of faithfulness. This allows God to take them up and use them in His service.*

