

**40 DAYS
THROUGH
DANIEL**

40 DAYS STUDYING DANIEL

Thank you for joining me in this exciting journey through the book of Daniel. You are in for a spiritually uplifting time! My hope and prayer is that as you read *40 Days Through Daniel*, you will experience several significant blessings:

- an awareness that God is a personal being who personally interacts with His people
- a conviction that God blesses righteous living
- an understanding of the need for God's people to maintain faith in Him regardless of the outward circumstances
- an understanding of God's sovereignty and control over the events of human history, including not only kings and nations but also the specifics of each of our individual lives
- an awareness that God will one day providentially cause good to triumph over evil
- an awareness that God is now providentially guiding human history toward its prophetic culmination
- an exalted view of the true majesty and glory of Jesus Christ, the divine Messiah
- an increased conviction of the trustworthiness of the Bible in general and the prophecies in the Bible in particular

As we begin our journey together, I want to address a few things that will lay a foundation for better understanding the book of Daniel. In this introduction, I will briefly look at the big picture. Then, in the chapters that follow, I will zero in on the details.

THE PROPHET DANIEL

Daniel was born into a royal family (Daniel 1:3, 6) and was apparently physically attractive (1:4). He became one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. His name means “God is my judge.” He was uncompromising in his faithfulness to God. His contemporaries acknowledged both his righteousness and his wisdom (see Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3).

Daniel was taken captive as a youth to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. He was likely 15 or 16 years old when this happened. As providence had it, he spent the rest of his life there—perhaps 85 years or more. He was assigned to be a governmental official in charge of assisting with the imported Jews.

There were actually three deportations involved in Babylon’s victory over Judah. The first took place in 605 BC and included Daniel and his friends. The second took place in 597 BC and included Ezekiel. The third took place in 586 BC, when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Daniel wrote the biblical book that bears his name (see Daniel 8:15, 27; 9:2; 10:2, 7; 12:4-5). His book was titled Daniel not only because he was one of the chief characters in the book but also because it was customary in Bible times to affix the author’s name to the book he wrote. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself identified Daniel as a prophet of God (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14).

CAPTIVITY AND EXILE

In the book of Deuteronomy, God, through Moses, promised great blessings if the nation lived in obedience to the Sinai covenant. God also warned that if the nation disobeyed His commands, it would experience the punishments listed in the covenant—including exile from the land (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

Old Testament history is replete with illustrations of Israel’s unfaithfulness to the covenant. The two most significant periods of exile for the Jewish people began with the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC and the

collapse of Judah to the Babylonians in 605 BC. Just as God promised, disobedience brought exile for God's people.

As a backdrop, it is interesting to observe that the first chapter of Isaiah takes the form of a lawsuit against Judah. Judah was indicted by the Lord (through Isaiah) because of Judah's "breach of contract" in breaking the Sinai covenant, which had been given to the nation at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. In this courtroom scene, the Lord called on heaven and earth to act as witnesses as He leveled accusations against the nation (Isaiah 1:2). The whole universe was to bear witness that God's judgments are just.

The Lord indicted Judah for rebelling against Him. It is noteworthy that the Hebrew word translated "rebelled" in Isaiah 1:2 often referred to a subordinate state's violation of a treaty with a sovereign nation. In Isaiah 1, the word points to Judah's blatant violation of God's covenant. Therefore, Judah went into captivity.

The Babylonian captivity was God's means of chastening Judah. This punishment, of course, was intended as a corrective. Both the Old and New Testaments demonstrate that just as an earthly father disciplines his children, so God the Father disciplines His children. His goal is to purify, train, and educate them (Hebrews 12:1-5; see also Job 5:17; 33:19; Psalm 118:18; Proverbs 3:11-12). The prophet Daniel indicates that God yet has a future for His people.

DANIEL'S BOOK

The book of Daniel is categorized as apocalyptic literature. It was written in about 537 BC and contains history as well as prophecy of the end times.

Scholars tell us that apocalyptic literature is a special kind of writing that arose among the Jews and Christians to reveal certain mysteries about heaven and earth, especially regarding the world to come. This type of literature is often characterized by visions—and there are plenty in the book of Daniel. Certain themes are common to apocalyptic literature:

- a growing sense of hopelessness as wicked powers grow in strength
- the promise that the sovereign God will intervene
- visions with a heavenly perspective that help the faithful endure present suffering

- God's intervention in overcoming and destroying evil
- the call to believers to live righteously
- the call to persevere under trial
- God's final deliverance and restoration, with the promise to dwell with His people

We see all of this in the book of Daniel.

AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel's Personal History (1)

Daniel was deported with other young men and placed in a training program in Nebuchadnezzar's court in Babylon. Their names were changed, as were their diets. Daniel, however, refused to eat food dedicated to idols, and the Lord rewarded him for his faithfulness.

God's Prophetic Plan for the Gentiles (2-7)

Daniel was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's disturbing dream of a great statue (2). By God's power, Daniel revealed that the dream indicated that God would raise up and then bring down four Gentile empires—the fourth being a revived Roman Empire over which the antichrist would rule. The times of the Gentiles would finally end at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image and decreed that all bow to it (3:1-7). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel's three Hebrew friends) refused and were subsequently tossed into a fiery furnace as punishment. (Daniel was engaged in official business at the time, but had he been there, he too would have refused!) God delivered the three Hebrew youths, after which they were all promoted (3:8-30).

The self-inflated, prideful Nebuchadnezzar then had a dream indicating that God was going to bring him down and humiliate him for a time, causing him to dwell with animals. Nebuchadnezzar was eventually restored and afterward offered praises to God (4).

We then read of Belshazzar, the next Babylonian king mentioned in Scripture. He arrogantly defied God. Soon enough, he saw handwriting on the wall

signifying that his kingdom had been numbered, weighed, and divided. That very night, the kingdom of the Babylonians fell to Darius and the Medes (5).

While Darius was king, he banned prayer to any god other than himself. Daniel ignored the decree and was thrown into a den of lions overnight. But God delivered Daniel, and Daniel was further exalted (6).

Daniel then had a vision of four strange beasts, representing four kingdoms that play an important role in biblical prophecy. These were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece under Alexander the Great, and a revived Roman Empire, which is yet future (7). It is over this latter empire that the antichrist will rule during the future tribulation period.

God's Prophetic Plan for Israel (8-12)

God yet has a plan for Israel. Daniel spoke of 70 weeks of years that constitute a prophetic timetable for Israel (9). Israel's timetable was divided into 70 groups of 7 years, totaling 490 years. The first 69 groups of 7 years, or 483 years, counted the years from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Jesus the Messiah came (Daniel 9:25). After that, God's prophetic clock stopped. Daniel said there would be a gap between these years and the final 7 years of Israel's prophetic timetable.

The final "week" of 7 years will begin for Israel when the antichrist confirms a covenant for 7 years (Daniel 9:27). The signing of this peace pact will signal the beginning of the tribulation period. Daniel became frightened at this momentous vision. He prayed to the Lord for strength, and an angel eventually arrived in answer to the prayer. The angel promised to show Daniel further things to come in the prophetic future (10).

Daniel revealed that the antichrist will emerge in the end times and will "go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction" (11:44). The tribulation period "shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" (12:1). Daniel was instructed to "shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (12:4).

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As you begin each chapter, consider using this prayer:

Lord, I ask You to open my eyes and enhance my understanding so I can grasp what You want me to learn today [Psalm 119:18]. I also ask You to enable me, by Your Spirit, to apply the truths I learn to my daily life and to be guided moment by moment by Your Word [Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:15-17]. I thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Following this short prayer, you can read the assigned section of the book of Daniel using your favorite Bible. With your Bible still in hand, you can then work your way through the insights, where I provide some fascinating contextual background information. I suggest you go verse by verse through your Bible again, but this time, after reading each verse, also read the appropriate notes in the book.

After the insights on each verse in the passage, I provide four brief summaries:

- *Major Themes.* These topical summaries will help you learn how to think theologically as you study the Bible.
- *Digging Deeper with Cross-References.* These will help you discover relevant insights from other books of the Bible.
- *Life Lessons.* This is where you learn to apply what you have read to your everyday life. You will discover that the book of Daniel is rich in transforming truths!
- *Questions for Reflection and Discussion.* Use these for your personal journaling or for lively group interactions.

Lord, by the power of Your Spirit, please enable my readers to understand and apply truth from the book of Daniel. Please excite them with Your Word and instill in them a sense of awe for You—our wondrous and majestic God. I thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.