

# DANIEL

## REVEALER OF MYSTERIES

### Introduction



The Old Testament book of Daniel is an amazing piece of literature. Simply constructed and yet incredibly complex, full of human-interest stories as well as mind-boggling prophecies, suitable for children's bed-time reading and still challenging for the graduate student of history, it seems almost too good to be true. Scorned by liberal Bible critics

and defended by conservatives who hold to Biblical inerrancy, it is a watershed book for many. It flushes out our real beliefs: Did this stuff really happen? Can I trust the prophetic calendar it offers? Will I submit to the God whose sovereignty leaps out from every page?

For a document that is literally “ancient history” (it’s over two-and-a-half millennia old), a surprising amount of Daniel’s content has crept into our language, culture and thoughts. Have you ever heard the familiar phrase, “the handwriting’s on the wall”? What comes to your mind when you hear about a “lions’ den” or a “fiery furnace”? Images of battling angels and answered prayers, prophetic predictions of future world empires and despotic rulers who embody evil, themes of good underdogs taking a stand against overpowering odds—all these are found within the pages of this book. Even the now-familiar patterns of exciting adventure stories find their roots in Daniel; the “cliff-hanger” motif we see in 21st-century movies comes straight from the plot-lines of this 26th-century (BC) volume.

The book of Daniel is a literary gift to the world, and a special gift to those who are willing to listen to its call to know and worship the true God, to stand firm in the midst of a contrary culture, to watch world events with a sense of anticipation, and to live with an urgency that comes from knowing that a sovereign Creator may bring history to a startling conclusion at any moment!

As to the date of the composition of Daniel, the first chapter refers to Daniel's capture in 605 B.C., and Daniel continued his public service until the first year of Cyrus (1:21), i.e., about 537 B.C. Daniel probably completed his memoirs c. 532 B.C., when he was about ninety years old. The appearance of Persian-derived governmental terms in Daniel strongly suggests that it was given its final form after Persian had become the official language of the government. **Actually, the text of Daniel is in two languages:** Hebrew (chs. 1, 8-12) and Aramaic (chs. 2-7). The Aramaic chapters pertain to the Babylonian and Persian empires, whereas the other six chapters relate to God's special plans for his covenant people.

- NIV Bible Commentary

**T**aken captive as a youth, Daniel is used by God as “the prophet in the palace” during the 70-year period of Judah’s exile in Babylon. Confronting pagan kings with God’s worldwide rule, Daniel sets forth dreams and interpretations of dreams that unfold the world’s history from Daniel’s day far into the future—from here to eternity. But Daniel is more than a man of the future. He is also a man of faith, taking a courageous stand for God in the face of fiery furnaces and roaring lions.”

- Walk-Thru the Bible Ministries

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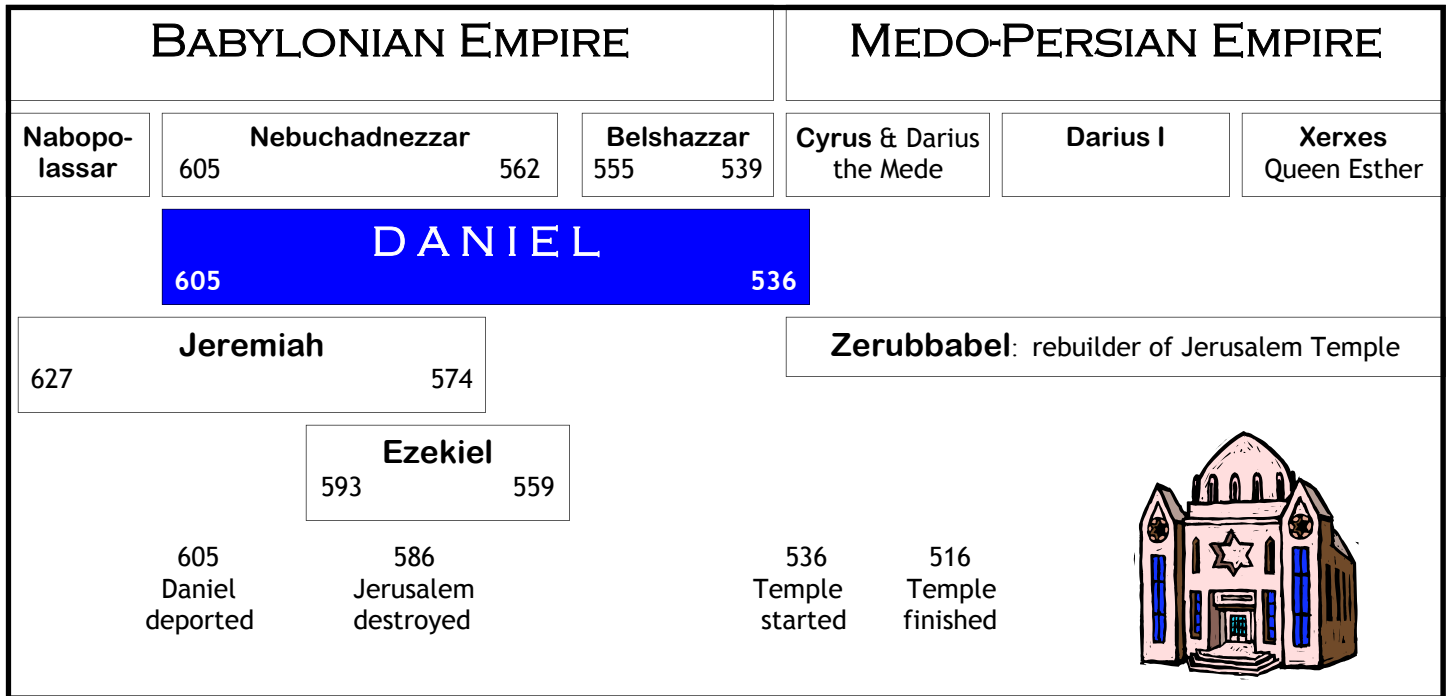
<b>Daniel chapter</b>	<b>Study Guide Lesson</b>	<b>Sermon Title</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>King in Power</b>	<b>Date (approx.) &amp; Language</b>
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# HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DANIEL'S LIFETIME

Sometimes it helps to see what else is going on around a historical figure, to provide the context.

Daniel's long life spanned the lives and reigns of several kings and two major world empires.

His stay in the city of Babylon was almost exactly 70 years - the time prophesied in Jeremiah 29:10 as the period of Israel's captivity - and Daniel saw the first return of Jews to Jerusalem.



## JEREMIAH (Heb. *yirmeyahu*, *Jehovah founds*, or perhaps, *exalts*).

Jeremiah was one of the greatest Hebrew prophets, born into a priestly family of Anathoth, a Benjamite town two and a half miles (four km.) NE of Jerusalem. Because of the autobiographical nature of his book, it is possible to understand his life, character, and times better than those of any other Hebrew prophet. Jeremiah was called to prophesy in the 13th year of King Josiah (626 B.C.), five years after the last great revival before Judah's captivity ([2 Kings 23](#)). This was a time of decision, a time filled with both hope and foreboding, the time of the revival of the Babylonian Empire. Jeremiah's ministry continued through the reigns of five successive Judean kings; Jeremiah saw the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587 and died in Egypt, probably a few years later.

**EZEKIEL** (Heb. *yehezqel*, *God strengthens*). A Hebrew prophet of the Exile. Of a priestly family ([1:3](#)), Ezekiel grew up in Judea during the last years of Hebrew independence and was deported to Babylon with Jehoiachin in 597 B.C., probably early in life. He was thus a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel. Ezekiel was married ([24:18](#)) and lived with the Jewish exiles by the irrigation canal Kebar ([1:1](#), [3](#); [3:15](#)) which connected the Tigris River with the Euphrates above Babylon; Daniel carried out his quite different work in the Babylonian court.

**ZERUBBABEL** (Hebrew *zerubbavel*, *shoot of Babylon*). The son of Shealtiel and the grandson of King Jehoiachin (Ezra 3:2; Hag 1:1; Matt 1:13).

When Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their own land, he appointed Zerubbabel governor of the colony (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14). Joshua the high priest was the religious leader. When they reached Jerusalem, they first set up the altar of burnt offering, then they proceeded to lay the foundation of the new temple. Soon, however, opposition arose. The adversaries of the Jews made an apparently friendly offer of assistance (Ezra 4), but Zerubbabel and the other leaders rebuffed them; therefore they wrote to the king and succeeded in stopping the work. In 520 B.C. the work was resumed and was completed four years later. A great celebration was held at the dedication of the new temple (6:16-22).

- NIV Bible Dictionary



## Chronological Flow of Chapters in Daniel

Nebuchadnezzar				Belshazzar*		Darius / Cyrus		
605 BC				*co-regent while Nabonidus was away		536 BC		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
chapters				7 8		10-11-12		





## Map of the Middle East



**BABYLON** This is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Babel, which means "confusion" (Gen.11v9). It was one of the oldest cities in the world (Gen.10v10). Hammurabi, the great lawgiver, became its ruler in the 18th century B.C. Babylon later reached its zenith of power under King Nebuchadnezzar II (circa 605-562 B.C.), capturing Jerusalem and its leading people in the process and deporting them all to Babylonia. However, according to God's prophecy through Daniel (Dn.5v1-30), it was conquered by the Persian, King Cyrus in 539 B.C. through Darius the Mede. The Medo-Persian empire adopted a benign policy regarding the repatriation of its various peoples and encouraged some of them to return to their homeland. About 50,000 Jews availed themselves of this providential opportunity. Babylon is often mentioned in prophecy (Mic.4v10; Am.5v25-27; Isa.13v1, Isa.13v19; Isa.14v22; Isa.21v; Isa.46v; Isa.47v; Jer.50v; Jer.51v; Eze.17v12, Eze.17v16, Eze.17v20; Eze.19v9 et al.; Zech.2v7). Babylon was famous for its "hanging gardens," one of the eight wonders of the world. But today only ruins remain, according to prophecies from God. In the N.T. Babylon was a symbol of strong, organized opposition to God's purpose (1Pet.5v13; Rev.14v8; Rev.16v19; Rev.18v2, Rev.18v10, Rev.18v21).

# OVERVIEW OF THE PROPHECIES IN DANIEL

While the book of Daniel contains an abundance of prophecies (135 alone in chapter 11!), many of them overlap each other in the predicting of major world kingdoms which lead up to the time of Christ's 1st and 2nd Comings. Chapter 9 is an exception in that it supplies us with a timeline of "weeks" (periods of 7 years) from the rebuilding of the temple until the end of time.

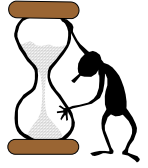
	DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7	DANIEL 8	DANIEL 9	DANIEL 11, 12
	<i>Nebuchadnezzar's Statue Dream</i>	<i>Daniel's Dream of 4 beasts</i>	<i>Daniel's Vision from Gabriel</i>	<i>Gabriel's 2nd message to Daniel</i>	<i>Angel's message to Daniel</i>
<b>BABYLON</b> 626-539 BC	Gold Head	Lion 			
<b>MEDOPERSIA</b> 539-331 BC	Silver Chest & Arms	Bear 	2-Horned Ram One horn longer than the other	7 x 7 = 49 years	4th Persian king (Xerxes) invades Greece
<b>GREECE</b> 331-63 BC	Bronze Belly & Thighs	Leopard 	Shaggy Goat One horn breaks off, 4 take its place	62 x 7 = 434 years  until AD 33 Jesus' Triumphal Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander</li> <li>• 4 Kings</li> <li>• Antiochus IV foreshadows antiChrist</li> </ul>
<b>ROME</b> 63BC-AD 476	Iron Legs	Beast 			
<b>Church Age—Undetermined Period of Time—Age of the Spirit</b>					
<b>REVIVED FORM OF ROME</b>	Feet of Iron & Clay  10 Kings	10 Horns—Little Horn  "time, times, half a time"		70th "Seven"  3 1/2 yrs—Great Tribulation	antiChrist exalts himself... ...comes to his end
<b>KINGDOM OF GOD</b>	Rock	Son & saints rule			Kingdom of God

# A WORD ABOUT PROPHECY

## Daniel and things to come

- ***The Purpose of Prophecy***

Why does God give us hints about the future, especially when he doesn't reveal exactly when it will all happen? It seems like he just whets our appetite, and then withholds the crucial information we crave. We can identify with the disciples who asked Jesus just before His ascension, "*Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?*" His somewhat disappointing answer told them to focus on the present and on how they could serve God's kingdom today:



He told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world."

- Acts 1:6-8, The Message

It seems that God provides glimpses of what's to come for a number of reasons. **First**, he wants to remind us who's "on the throne". God is in charge of history; he alone is sovereign. He doesn't have to consult anyone in order to make a decision. He brings empires to power and he deposes them when he sees fit, and he has chosen mankind's final day. So even when things seem chaotic, he is in control, although he is never the author of evil. He may allow evil men to have power temporarily, but it won't last.

**Second**, he wants to encourage us to "hang in there". Ask yourself, what is the most common setting for prophetic literature? Times of crisis. Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied during Israel's Babylonian captivity, when the nation was "lower than a snake's belly in a wagon rut"! And again, at the end of the first century when Christians were being used as lion bait in Roman sporting events, God gave the book of Revelation. These were times when believers could easily feel that God had abandoned them, that he was unable or unwilling to intervene.



**Thirdly**, he wants us to "*long for his appearing*" (2 Timothy 2:14). The followers of Jesus "*wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*" (Titus 2:13) While we may not be able to predict who the antichrist is, or what day the Great Tribulation will begin, we live with the urgency that it could be today.



- ***Limited Old Testament Perspective***

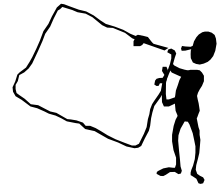
Not all prophecy gives us the entire story. Three things are important to keep in mind. **First**, God gives us "progressive revelation" in the Bible. What this means is that things tend to get clearer the farther along in the Bible that they appear. For instance, we have a very fuzzy picture of the Messiah as far back as Genesis 3. We see hints throughout the Old Testament (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Malachi 3), but when Jesus is born in the gospels, we hear his name for the first time, and by the book of Revelation we see him as the glorified Son of God. Likewise, prophecy "adds up" throughout the Scriptures.

**Second**, one of the most difficult things for Old Testament believers to foresee was the Church Age, in which we now live. To them, it looked as though the Messiah would come and immediately vanquish all his foes and bring in an era of peace and tranquility. When Jesus died and thousands of his followers suffered, it was hard to reconcile these seemingly inconsistent facts. However, the "mountain range" illustration is helpful: a person looking along a mountain range from one of the mountains simply sees the biggest peak in the distance, and the ridge between is foreshortened in his view. However, if that same person looks at the entire range from the plains, he can see the different peaks and valleys in between clearly. In the Old Testament, the prophets looked ahead and saw two events as one "mountain", although there was an invisible (to them) valley in between. The two events were the first and second coming of Christ; he came initially to die for us, he will come again to judge the world. That is clear to us now, but it wasn't clear to those living before the first century.





**Third**, in a similar way, the book of Daniel uses a technique known as “foreshadowing” wherein a “type” of the ultimate person to come appears on the scene and exhibits some, but not all, of their characteristics. For example, Joseph in the book of Genesis, is a “type” of Jesus in that he is taken to Egypt, appears sinless, is misunderstood and persecuted unjustly, and in the end provides physical “salvation” (in the form of food during a drought) for his own people. In the same way, the historical person of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (see the Special Focus study later in this introduction) is so evil and bent on the destruction and humiliation of Israel that he (in Daniel 11:21-35) “prefigures” the antichrist (Daniel 11:36-45).



- ***What information does Daniel supply?***

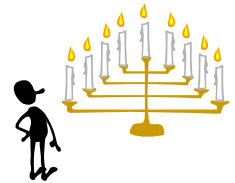
We are told many things related to the future in this book. Here are just a few:

**First**, Daniel lived during a time when pagan nations pretty much had their way with Israel, to the point of destroying Jerusalem and the Temple and banishing its people. The hard-fought “Promised Land” had been taken away. Israel, which had been strong and influential in its “Golden Age” of David and Solomon, suddenly felt puny and inconsequential.

In Daniel, however, we see a different perspective. God knows what’s ahead. He brings down the Babylonian empire in Daniel’s lifetime and gives power to the Medo-Persians, but he reveals that their time, too, will be limited. Greece will come, but their days as world rulers are numbered as well. The only kingdom that will not end is the final kingdom of God’s own Messiah:

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

(Daniel 7:13,14)



**Second**, God shows that he deals not only with the “big picture” of whole empires, but he deals with their leaders as well. Daniel watches in amazement as Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful man of earth, is repeatedly brought to his knees by God’s awesome power. God wants the king to personally grasp the fact that God of Israel is the one true ruler of the earth.

**Third**, while God cares about pagan nations, he focuses especially on Israel. The book of Daniel outlines inter-testamental Middle Eastern history, as it related to Israel, in a way that is so precise that liberal scholars claim it must have been written after the fact.

**Fourth**, Daniel portrays the figure of the “antichrist” repeatedly and in great detail; he is an evil person who will be further described in the book of Revelation.

- ***When will the world end?***

Many people who study prophecy do so assuming that if they spend enough time and buy enough books, they will be able to generate kind of “crystal ball” that will tell them when something is about to happen. But God has purposely hidden that information from man. He has not told us what day, what year or even in what millennium He will return; He only promised His followers that he will come back. When Jesus spoke to his disciple on the Mount of Olives shortly before his death (Matthew 24-25), he said, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father...Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come... So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”



# DANIEL IN THE CRITIC'S DEN

## why this book is so controversial

Few books of the Bible have been as harshly criticized as the book of Daniel. The primary reason for this is that the book of Daniel claims to have been written hundreds of years before the events it describes in its prophetic sections.

Daniel describes the adventures of a Jewish exile who was born in Jerusalem, deported to Babylon in 605 B.C. and spent the rest of his life serving in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. This much is not a problem for the secular historian or the Biblical critic.

However, two things bother those who, as Francis Schaeffer described, subscribe to the worldview which limits events to “the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, those with an a priori assumption that (1) miracles by definition cannot happen, and (2) it is impossible for God to break into human history and predict future events, find it hard to accept much of the contents of the book. For example, two stories describe miraculous events: Daniel’s three friends are thrown into a fiery furnace and emerge unscathed, and later Daniel himself is cast into a den of hungry lions and lives to tell about it. It is much easier for the critic to assume these are merely “nice stories” without basis in historical fact, and that they are simply meant to encourage virtues such as bravery, faith and integrity, much as Aesop’s Fables do for children today.

The other major problem for critics has to do with the extremely detailed prophecies which dominate the entire second half of the book. The content of those chapters is clearly an accurate portrayal of inter-testamental (4th through 2nd-century B.C.) Near-Eastern history. If Daniel was really the author, and he wrote the book in the 6th century B.C., it would have to be supernatural predictive literature. However, this is impossible for someone with a rationalistic worldview to accept. Therefore, most liberal scholars today subscribe to the theory that Daniel was written by someone else (a “pious forger”) in the 2nd century B.C. who was simply looking back upon historical events and recording them after they had already happened.

Listen to how the Oxford History of the Biblical World, (a supposedly reputable but actually very

liberal source), comments upon the miraculous spiritual awakening of King Nebuchadnezzar, whom Daniel says, in chapter 4, professed to believe in the God of Israel:

*“The sudden changes of heart, through which foreign rulers acknowledged the sovereignty of God, did not really happen...”*

The same supposedly reputable volume also dismisses Daniel’s predictions:

*“All but the most conservative interpreters agree that these chapters date from the time of the Maccabean revolt (167-163 BC). Today we understand them as prophecies after the fact...”*

As we study the Bible, we are constantly challenged with the question: Is this really the word of God, or is it just another fallible human book? The answer to that question determines what place we will give it in our lives and hearts. Is it merely a great collection of heart-warming stories to guide us in our values, or is it much more than that—indeed, the only document on the planet that accurately describes the character of God, the nature of man, and the history and destiny of the world? It claims to be “God-breathed”, the absolute truth given to us by man’s Creator.

“Many today deny that the prophet Daniel wrote this book, particularly the last six chapters. The most common argument is that the remarkably accurate “predictions” in Daniel (esp. ch. 11) were the result of a pious fraud, perpetrated by some zealous propagandist of the Maccabean movement, who wished to encourage a spirit of heroism among the Jewish patriots resisting Antiochus IV. Many modern scholars claim that every accurate prediction in Daniel was written after it had already been fulfilled, i.e., in the period of the Maccabean revolt (168-65 BC).

The clear testimony of the book itself, however, is that Daniel was the author (cf. 8:1; 9:2, 20; 10:2). Nor is there any question that Jesus also accepted Daniel as the author of this book (Mt 24:15; cf. Dan. 9:27). Furthermore, careful linguistic and historical analysis of the book supports a date much earlier than the second century BC.”

- NIV Bible Commentary

<sup>1</sup> Example: Rudolph Bultmann, (1884-1976) liberal German theologian and proponent of Form Criticism, said “it follows that there never has been and never will be an event within history of which God has been the effective cause.” He added, “an historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable.”



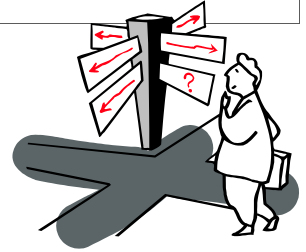
# “IT’S A MYSTERY!”

## Biblical mysteries and the Book of Daniel

A "mystery" is an insight into some present-day Christian experience or future expectation not unveiled as clearly in the Old Testament." (Larry Richards)

One of the most stunning moments in the book of Daniel comes in the second chapter, where Daniel speaks to King Nebuchadnezzar, who has had a disturbing dream that no one seems able to interpret:

*"Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."*



**The Hebrew word** for mystery, (“raz”) is used seven times in Daniel chapter 2; it is used once in chapter 4, and nowhere else in the entire Old testament. “It relates specifically to God’s revelation through Daniel of dreams and visions whose meanings were hidden to others.” (NIV Bible Dictionary) Daniel is astounded by the revelation of things to come. He acknowledges that it is not because he is smarter than everyone else, but that the source is a gracious God, whom he calls “the revealer of Mysteries”. Daniel worships Him and says,

*“He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.” (2:22)*

**In the New Testament** the Greek word for mystery is “mysterion”. It occurs 28 times; 21 of those are found in Paul’s writings. Among the Greeks, *mystery* did not mean something obscure or incomprehensible, but a secret imparted only to the initiated, what is unknown until it is revealed. This word is connected with the Greek mystery religions. The mysteries appealed to the emotions rather than the intellect and offered to their devotees a mystical union with the deity. Great symbolism characterized their secret ritual, climaxing in the initiation into the full secret of the cult.

The chief use of “mystery” in the NT is by Paul. He, as an educated man of his day, knew well the thought world of the pagans and accepted this term to indicate the fact that the gospel had been revealed to him by the risen Christ. This fact could best be made clear to his contemporaries by adopting the pagan term they all understood, pouring into it a special Christian meaning.

The more common meaning of mystery in the NT, Paul’s usual use of the word, is that of **a divine truth once hidden but now revealed in the gospel** (Rom 16:25-26; cf. Col 1:26; Eph 3:3-6). A mystery is thus *now* a revelation: Christian mysteries are revealed doctrines (Rom 16:26; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 5, 10; 6:19; Col 4:3-4; 1 Tim 3:16). Christianity, therefore, has no secret doctrines, as did the ancient mystery religions. The Christian mystery, then, is God’s world-embracing purpose of redemption through Christ (Rom 16:25).

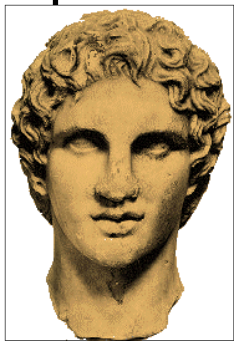
- NIV Bible Dictionary

Merrill Unger writes: “The term **mystery** comprehends not only a previously hidden truth, presently divulged, but one that contains a supernatural element which still remains in spite of the revelation.” The more important Biblical mysteries are the following:

1. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:3-50).
2. The mystery of the “rapture” (1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 Thessalonians 4:14,17).
3. The mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ, including Jews and Gentiles together (Eph. 3:1-11, 6:19, Colossians 4:3).
4. The mystery of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:28-32).
5. The mystery of “Christ in us the hope of glory” (Gal 2:20, Col. 1:26,27).
6. The “mystery of Christ being the fullness of God in bodily form (Col. 2:2,9, 1 Cor. 2:7).
7. The mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7, Matthew 13:33).
8. The mystery of the operation by which people are restored to godliness (1 Tim 3:16).
9. The mystery of Israel’s blindness during the gospel age (Romans 11:25).
10. The mystery of the seven stars (Revelation 1:20).
11. The mystery of Babylon, the harlot (Revelation 7:5,7).

- Unger’s Bible Dictionary

“The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.”  
- Daniel 8:21,22 - written c. 539 B.C.



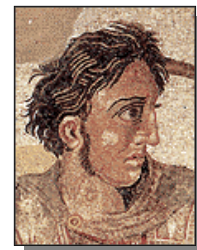
## All students of ancient history read about Alexander of Macedon.

Here's what they learn:

The child of Philip and Olympias, Alexander was born in 356 B.C. and grew up in Macedonia, north of Greece. (Philippi, the city to which Paul wrote Philippians, was named for his father.) His tutor was none other than Aristotle, the famous philosopher; he taught him rhetoric, literature, science, medicine and philosophy. Like many students today (2,300 years later!) Alexander was told to read Homer's Iliad; he even took the book with him on military campaigns. In 336 BC, his father was assassinated, sending Alexander to the throne at the age of twenty. In two years he subjugated all rebelling states nearby and brought a unity to Greece that had been lacking for years.

The Greeks harbored tremendous anger at Persia for recent military intrusions; Alexander's father had planned to attack the Persians but was never able to begin. With an army of only 35,000 Greeks and Macedonians (including Generals Seleucus and Ptolemy, who would later take over the kingdom), Alexander began his campaign against Persia (formerly Medo-Persia) by destroying the enemy in a battle near Troy in which the Greeks lost only 110 men. Passing through Phrygia, Alexander was said to have cut through the famous Gordian knot, adding to his legendary reputation. Alexander met and defeated the huge Persian army of Darius III in Syria. Marching south, he subjugated one area after another: Tyre, Gaza, and Egypt, where he visited the temple of Amon-Ra and began to think of himself as a son of the gods. After defeating Darius again at the battle of Gaugamela, 331 BC, Alexander took Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. He continued eastward until 327, when, having almost reached modern India, he had no more enemies. Tradition says that he wept because there was no one left to conquer. His men were tired and wanted to go home, so Alexander constructed a fleet, sailed down the Indus River, into the Persian Gulf, and returned to Babylon. In the spring of 323, during a drunken feast, Alexander fell suddenly ill, developed a fever, and died a few days later at the age of 33. Shortly before his death he had issued a “deification decree” whereby all cities in his kingdom were required to acknowledge and worship him as a god. He was one of the most ruthless, egotistical, and yet brilliant military commanders of all time.

There was no worthy charismatic leader to follow Alexander. His kingdom fell into chaos until it was finally divided into four distinct realms: Ptolemy took Egypt, Cassander took Greece, Lysimachus took Asia Minor, and Seleucus ruled Israel, Syria and Mesopotamia.



**NOW, what the average student does not usually learn** is that Alexander's life and exploits were accurately predicted 200 years before his birth by the prophet Daniel.

Alexander, conqueror of Medo-Persia, is prophesied as the ruler of the kingdom of Greece numerous times throughout Daniel. He is variously referred to as ...

- ◆ the bronze belly and thighs of the great statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2)
- ◆ the four-winged leopard in Daniel's dream (Daniel 7)
- ◆ the enraged, charging, “shaggy” goat in Daniel's vision (Daniel 8)
- ◆ the “mighty king” who conquers Persia and whose kingdom is then “parceled out” (Daniel 11)

In each of these vivid prophecies, Alexander is portrayed as the ruler who conquers Persia and then his kingdom splits into four. Furthermore, the history of his “replacements” is also recorded in detail in Daniel 11:21-35. Ptolemy's Egypt became the “kingdom of the south” and Seleucus' descendants became the “king of the north” referred to in Daniel 11.

**Judge for yourself.** Does history matter to God? And who is the sovereign God of history?

"... a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue."

- Daniel 11:21 - written c. 536 B.C.



Antiochus' Coin. Reverse side shows Zeus holding Nike. Inscription reads: "King Antiochus, God manifest, bearing victory."

### While all students of ancient history read about Alexander of Macedon, many never hear of a ruler named Antiochus IV..

In 605 BC, Daniel (then a teen-ager) was taken captive from his home in Jerusalem to Babylon, ruled at the time by Nebuchadnezzar. He lived there for the rest of his life, watching a procession of rulers, and witnessing the fall of Babylon and the ascension of Medo-Persia. Daniel's Babylonian sojourn spanned 70 years, the precise amount of time Jeremiah had prophesied that Israel would be held captive. During that time Daniel had numerous visions of the future, where God showed him a succession of empires leading to the very end of the world's history. One startling

factor in these revelations was the appearance of a future evil ruler who would focus much of his fury upon the Jews. As further Scripture progressed over the centuries, this ruler became known as the "anti-Christ" (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 John 2:18,22 and 4:3, Revelation 17:8).

In Daniel chapters 7, 8 and 11, this person and his exploits are described in detail. However, scholars have noted that while these passages include many similar traits, they actually seem to be describing two different people: one is a ruler in the end-times, and one is a king whose lifetime occurs much sooner, and who pre-figures the anti-Christ. Historians agree that this ruler whose character and actions foreshadow the ultimate evil one is Antiochus IV.

After Alexander the Great's death, his kingdom was divided among four rulers: north, south, east and west. The northern kingdom was ruled by the "Seleucids" and the southern or Egyptian realm was the "Ptolemies". The Seleucid succession included a number of kings named Antiochus. Antiochus IV was born in 215 and became king of Syria in 175 through an unlawful seizure of the throne, which rightly belonged to Demetrius Soter, son of Seleucus IV Philopator. Ruthless, arrogant and ambitious, he was called "the Illustrious One" ("Epiphanes") by his friends; his enemies referred to him behind his back as "Epimanes" ("madman"). His campaigns are documented in precise detail 400 years before his time in Daniel chapter 11:21-35.

Israel happened to lie exactly between Antiochus and Egypt, his main target, therefore incurring his wrath after every defeat. When Antiochus rode into Egypt in 168 B.C., he was met by the Romans, who gave him a letter from the Senate forbidding him to attack. When he asked for time to consider, the emissary drew a circle around the king and told him he must make a decision before moving. Furious, Antiochus stormed northward, heading into Israel. There he vented his wrath upon the Jews, stopping the daily sacrifices, robbing and desecrating the Temple. Sending 22,000 soldiers into Jerusalem on a "peace mission", they slaughtered the Jews, eliminated festivals, forbade circumcision, and burned copies of the Law. Antiochus encouraged Jews to forsake their allegiance to Jehovah and bow to the culture and religion of Greece. On December 16, 167 B.C. he installed a statue of Zeus, the god of Greece, on the altar of burnt offering outside the Temple, and sacrificed a pig on it. From this date until December 14, 164 B.C., when the temple was cleansed and re-consecrated by Judas Maccabeus, was 1150 days ("2300 evenings and mornings" - Daniel 8:14). Hanukkah is the eight-day festival celebrating this event.

**Note what Daniel wrote** nearly 400 years before these events:

"At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation." (Daniel 11:29-31)

**The Maccabean revolt** (176-160 B.C.), led by Mattathias the priest and his sons, drove Antiochus from Jerusalem. He died insane in Persia in 163. His place in history is marked well; his pathetic "legacy" is that he was more like the antichrist than anyone else.