



# REVEALER OF MYSTERIES

## the book of Daniel



Lesson 1

Daniel 1

“Daniel is composed, in approximately equal parts, of stories and visions—six stories (chapters 1-6) and four visions (chapters 7-12). The stories tell of souls living faithfully in obedience to God in a time of adversity. The visions are wide-screen renditions of God’s sovereignty worked out among nations who couldn’t care less about him. Six soul stories; four sovereignty visions.

The six soul-survival stories nourish a commitment to integrity and perseverance right now. The four visions of God’s history-saving ways nourish hope in God during times when world events seem to put God in eclipse.”

Eugene Peterson, *The Message*

**Author:** Daniel, (means “God is my judge”) - cf. Daniel 12:4-5; affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 24:15; Jewish Talmud. Daniel was born in Judah to a family of nobility, deported to Babylon as a teenager, probably died there in his mid-80’s.

**Date:** 605-536 B.C.

**Location:** Babylon on the Euphrates River.

**Uniqueness:** One of the few Biblical characters about whom nothing negative was written. Cited as an example of righteousness by his contemporary Ezekiel (14:14, 14:20, 28:3).

**Situation:** His ministry spanned the entire period of Judah’s captivity. Daniel served under several kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar (Babylonians), Darius and Cyrus (Medo-Persians).

**Critics:** Many scholars claim the book could not have been written in the 6th century B.C. because it clearly describes events that took place centuries later. This criticism, however, is based upon an a priori assumption that God cannot break into history and reveal the future with certainty.

### • Overview of the book of Daniel

| Focus            | Judgment upon the Gentiles           |   |                                       |   | Hope for the Jews                 |                                      |    |                                   |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Divisions</b> | Daniel’s Friends in the Furnace<br>1 | 3 | Daniel’s Faith in the Lions’ Den<br>4 | 6 | 7                                 | Beasts, Kings and Seventy Weeks<br>9 | 10 | Previews of Israel’s Future<br>12 |
| <b>Topics</b>    | Convincing Gentiles of God’s power   |   |                                       |   | Convincing Jews of God’s Purposes |                                      |    |                                   |
|                  | Daniel Interprets Others’ Dreams     |   |                                       |   | Angels Interpret Daniel’s Dreams  |                                      |    |                                   |
| <b>Time</b>      | at least 70 years                    |   |                                       |   |                                   |                                      |    |                                   |

### • Profile of Three Prophets

charts from “The Daily Walk”, Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, 1986

| WHO          | JEREMIAH, prophet of Tears                       | EZEKIEL, prophet of Visions                 | DANIEL, prophet of Dreams                       |
|--------------|--|---|---|
| <b>WHAT</b>  | Message of Destruction                           | Message of Reconstruction                   | Message of Sovereignty                          |
| <b>WHEN</b>  | Before the Exile (627-575)                       | During the Exile (597-575)                  | During the Exile (605-536)                      |
| <b>WHERE</b> | Jerusalem  | Babylon (to the Jews)                       | Babylon (to the palace)                         |
| <b>WHY</b>   | “I myself (God) will fight against you” (21:4-7) | “I will bring you into the land” (37:11-14) | “(My) kingdom shall not be destroyed” (7:13,14) |

*1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it...*

*3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility...*

*6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names...*

*8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way...*

*11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days..."*

*15 At the end of the ten days ...*

*17 To these four young men God gave ...*

*18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar...*

*21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.*

1-2 What questions come to mind when you read about God "delivering" a Jewish king into the hands of a pagan ruler? Aren't the good guys supposed to win?

Who was Nebuchadnezzar, and who was "his god"? Consult a Bible dictionary or an encyclopedia.

3-5 In addition to "carrying off" some valuable items, we find that the Babylonians will also carry off some valuable people. What were the criteria, and what was to happen to them, and why?

6-7 What would be the purpose of re-naming these people?

What's in a name? See what you can find in a Bible dictionary. In essence, their Hebrew names included one of the names for the God of Israel. Their "new" names reflected one of the gods of Babylon.

8-10 Why did Daniel have a problem with this food? (see Exodus 34:15)

What do you see in this section as evidence of God's sovereignty?

11-14 What is Daniel's suggestion?

Did the Mosaic Law consider any vegetables to be "unclean"?

15-16 How do things turn out?

17 What did God give to these four men?

READ Proverbs 1:1-7 and note how it applies to this situation.

18-20 What does Psalm 119:99 say, and how does it apply here?

21 If this story takes place around 605 B.C. (when Daniel and his friends were deported) and the first year of Cyrus is 539, how long did Daniel "remain there"? We might have thought that Daniel would be rewarded for his faith with a quick trip home, but that doesn't happen. **How do you** tend to respond when God wants you to endure a situation rather than escape it?