

# THE BOOK OF DANIEL

## Introduction and Overview

### Lesson 1

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#### **What is this class about?**

This lesson is the first in a series of inductive studies on the book of Daniel. The purpose of this series is two fold. The first goal of this study is to discover, learn, and apply the wonderful truths found in the book of Daniel to the glory of God. The second goal is to model, by example and instruction, what it means to prepare and teach an inductive Bible study. An inductive Bible study is a Bible study that attempts to examine the text of Scripture and assemble the many truths and observations into general truths or principles. Induction is the process of reasoning from particular observations to general conclusions. It is the opposite of deduction, which is to reason from general truths to particulars.

Most of us probably have heard of Sherlock Holmes, the fictitious sleuth and detective created by Sir Arthur Canon Doyle. Holmes had a side kick named Dr. Watson and in one story he made a statement which became famous, "Brilliant deduction, Holmes!" Holmes was a detective. He was first introduced to the generalities of the case, a murder, for instance, and then he would try to reason backwards to the particulars that led to the murder. Well, in this study we are doing the exact opposite. We are starting with the particular observations from the text and reasoning to general conclusions. The goal of each study will be to examine the details of the text and arrive at general truths or interpretations. The interpretation is what the original authors, both human and divine, meant by what was written.

#### **What if there are questions you can't find the answers to in the lessons?**

As already mentioned, when doing an inductive Bible study, you try to extract information from the text of Scripture. Certain kinds of information, like historical background, cultural customs, or information from the original languages, cannot always be discovered by observing the English text. Because of this, the teacher of an inductive study provides this information for his students. The teacher encourages the students to find what is observable from the English text and provides what cannot be observed or what is difficult to observe. The great value of inductive Bible study is that students learn how to feed themselves from the text of Scripture rather than always relying on someone else.

#### **What kind of questions will you be asked?**

As we do our inductive study of the book of Daniel, you will be asked several kinds of questions. First, there will be observation questions. These questions are designed to encourage you to look at and observe what the text says. Secondly, there are interpretation questions. These questions will ask you what the text means or meant to the original audience or author. Third, there will be doctrinal development questions. These are questions which encourage you look up cross references and summarize what the Bible teaches, as a whole, on a given doctrine or topic related to the verse or text you are studying in the book of Daniel. Fourth, you will be asked to state the general principle/s or truth/s found in the text. This is done by synthesizing or summarizing what is observed into general statements or truths that can be applied to any Christian in any culture. Finally, you will be asked questions on how the principles can be applied and/or implemented in your life.

### **Do I have to do the homework?**

You will get the most out of inductive study if you do the homework, try to answer the questions for yourself, and come to class ready to share what you have discovered. If you were to teach your own inductive study, you would probably want to require people to do their homework if they want to participate in class discussions. If you do not require people to do this, then those who are lazy will often spend most of the class discussion time asking questions about things they should already know the answer to if they would have done their homework. Remember, the purpose of an inductive Bible study is for you to learn to study the Word of God on your own. If you come wanting to be spoon fed every week, you will never learn how to feed yourself. For this class, doing homework will not be required, but strongly encouraged. Each week you will receive a lesson to work on for the next class. Try to answer all of the questions. This way you will learn how to study the Bible for yourself. You will be encouraged that you can find the same information that most biblical commentators can find. You will also be better able to participate in class discussions.

### **If I want to purchase resources to help me study, which resources should I purchase?**

There are a lot of different resources people can purchase to help them do Bible study. For instance, if you wanted to find the information presented in this study, you can find the information in a variety of resources. Commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, biblical introduction books, and most study Bibles. Below are some resources that you might want to consider.

Study Bibles:        *MacArthur Study Bible* (New King James Version), *NASB Study Bible*, or *NASB The New Open Bible Expanded Edition*.

Introduction book:    *Talk Thru the Bible*, by Wilkinson and Boa (Gives helpful background and overview information of every book in the Bible); *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Gleason Archer (Background information to Old Testament books only)

Commentaries:        (Devotional) *Daniel*, H. A. Ironside; *Daniel*, Donald K. Campbell

Commentaries:        (Expositions) *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, John Walvoord; *Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord*, Charles Feinberg; *A Commentary on Daniel*, Leon J. Wood

Commentaries:        (Special Topic) *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*, Alva J. McClain

Prophecy helps:      *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, Paul Benware; *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy*, Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy; *Things to Come*, J. Dwight Pentecost; *Every Prophecy of the Bible*, John Walvoord.

## I. ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

For those who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the question of the authorship of the book of Daniel may seem overly simplistic. Yet, there are many in the world who do not believe in the authority or inspiration of God's Word. They believe the Bible is a work of man, full of errors, and that it was compiled over many years by different authors or redactors who assembled the Bible piece by piece. Some, because of the incredible prophecies in the book of Daniel, claim that it must have been written after the establishment of the Roman Empire and then written to make it look like a book full of supernatural prophecies.

The name "Daniel" means "God is my judge." The book derives its name from the principle character of the book. Daniel was one of four teenagers of noble birth who were taken captive from Jerusalem, and then chosen to be educated so they could be put in the King's service. Daniel and his three friends were given new names. Daniel's name was changed to the Babylonian name "Belteshazzar" which means "Bel Protect His Life."

The first clear indication of the identity of the book of Daniel is found in Dan. 7:2, where Daniel refers to himself in the first person and says, "*I was looking in my vision by night.*" In addition to that, and even more compelling, is that Daniel himself claimed to write the book that bears his name in Dan. 12:4. Jesus also quoted from Dan. 9:27 in Mt. 24:15 as referring to something that "Daniel the Prophet" said. For those who believe in the authority and inspiration of the Bible, this settles once and for all the identity of the author of the book of Daniel.

## II. HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Israel, after being led out of Egypt by Moses, received the Law of God in the wilderness. Contained in the law were promises of blessings for obedience and cursing for disobedience. Part of the curses included persecution, defeat, and captivity by their enemies (Deut. 28:25-26, 31-37). For hundreds of years Israel disobeyed. After the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel divided into two. There was Israel in the north and Judah in the south. In 722 BC Israel was conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians. But God was gracious to Judah and allowed them to remain in the land for another hundred years. Eventually the wickedness of the people provoked the Lord to anger and the curses of Deuteronomy came upon them. God raised up the Chaldeans, whose king was Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and conquered it in 605 BC. Daniel, along with his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were among the children of royalty taken captive to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. The captivity of Judah to Babylon began what is often referred to as "the times of the Gentiles." The times of the Gentiles refers to the times in which Gentile powers ruled Israel and/or the territories that God promised to give to Abraham.

The book of Daniel covers a time period of about 70 years and records the life and prophetic visions and dreams which Daniel had while living on Babylon. The seventy

years that Judah was in Babylon is often referred to as the Babylonian captivity. Daniel ministered as a wise man in the court of the king during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, his grandson. Finally Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire just as the prophecies in the book of Daniel predicted. Darius and Cyrus ruled Babylon and Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their land, rebuild their temple, and reestablish Judaism, thus putting an end to the Babylonian captivity.

### III. THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

- A. There are many themes in the book of Daniel but the grand theme seems to be the kingdom of God. Throughout the book there are references to the kingdom of God which will be established on earth. It is also clear from the book that God is the sovereign king who establishes and removes kingdoms. While the theme of the book might be described as “God’s prophetic plan for Israel,” it is clear that the end of God’s prophetic plan is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.
- B. The purposes of the book of Daniel are several:
1. First, it is a book of “encouragement for the people of God.” Israel was being judged for their sin but the book of Daniel is encouraging as it presents hope to God’s people. Regardless how bad things may be on earth, the Lord will come again to establish His kingdom on earth where justice and righteousness prevails. Those who are faithful to God will be rewarded and *“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever”* (Dan. 12:3). While we may not be able to figure out all the prophecies contained in the book of Daniel to our satisfaction or curiosity, the hope of God’s sovereign rule and kingdom to come is clearly set forth to give us hope. *“In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever”* (Dan. 2:44).
  2. Second, the book is a book of information, letting us know what the future holds and reminding us that our God is in charge of it all, directing history to His intended purposes.
  3. Third, the book provides many encouraging and helpful examples of godly and wise responses to trials and adversity through the life of Daniel and his friends.

#### IV. FASCINATING TIDBITS ABOUT THE BOOK OF DANIEL

- A. Liberals deny that the book of Daniel was written by the main character of the book who lived during the Babylonian captivity. They do not believe Daniel could have written the book because it contains so many prophecies that have come true. They come to this conclusion because they do not believe in the supernatural inspiration of the book or the ability of God to predict the future. Hence, they argue that it must have been written “after the fact.” They surmise that the book must have been written about 175 to 163 BC during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The number of prophecies in the book of Daniel are staggering. Chapter 11 alone contains over one hundred specific prophetic details that have been literally fulfilled. The late day for the book is also highly unlikely as fragments of the book of Daniel have been found in the Qumran caves dating back to the second century.
- B. Others have argued that the book could not have been written by Daniel because chapters 2-7 are written in Aramaic. Liberals argue that Daniel used Persian and Greek words, which would not be familiar to someone trained and raised in Babylon. Yet recent discoveries have shown that Daniel used a form of Imperial Aramaic. His use of Persian words is easily explained in that he lived until after Babylon was conquered by Persia, and during a time that Persia existed and was becoming a world power. As for the Greek, the only words he uses are those of Greek instruments. Surely Daniel, living in the King’s court and conversant with people from many lands, could have learned about various kinds of Greek instruments.
- C. Others have argued that the book of Daniel cannot be inspired because it contains historical errors. Yet, archeology has proven the historical voracity of the book time and time again.
1. For instance, it was argued that Daniel could not have written the book because he described Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson) as reigning after Nebuchadnezzar instead of Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar’s son. Dan. 5:2, 11, 13, and 18, they like to point out, refer to Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar’s father. Yet inscriptions found in an archeological dig at Haran show that Nabonidus was away fighting the invading Persians and left his son, Belshazzar, to rule Babylon in his stead. This makes Belshazzar Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson and the term often translated “father” in Dan. 5:2, 11, 13, 18 can refer to “forefather” or anyone in the line of someone. We see this frequently in Scripture as Jesus is often referred to as “*the son of David*” though David was not His father, but forefather, and Jesus was in His royal lineage.
  2. It is also argued that Dan. 1:1 says Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim which contradicts Jer. 46:2, which says that Nebuchadnezzar invaded during his fourth year. This apparent discrepancy is easily solved by noting that Jews reckoned that a king’s

reign began at the beginning of the year in which he became king. Babylonians, on the other hand, acknowledged a king's reign to begin at the first of the year following his coronation. Hence Jeremiah uses Jewish reckoning, Daniel Babylonian reckoning.

3. Others have argued that it was Cyrus who ruled the Persian Empire at the time of Babylon's fall, but that Daniel says it was Darius the Mede. It is now generally agreed that Darius the Mede, mentioned in Dan. 5:31 and 6:1, is one and the same as Gubaru, a governor appointed by Cyrus to rule Babylon. Dan. 9:1 says he was "*made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans.*"
- D. About nine of the twelve chapters of the book of Daniel have to do with prophetic dreams and visions describing the future to Daniel.
- E. Daniel is one of the few major characters in the Bible who has nothing negative written about him.
- F. Three places in the book of Daniel, Daniel is described by an angel as "highly esteemed" or "precious" to God.
- G. Dan. 12:2 is one of the few Old Testament texts that clearly speaks of the resurrection of believers and unbelievers.
- H. In the prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24-27), Daniel lays out the entire future plan of God for Israel from the time of Daniel to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. He does this in just four verses! Various men have attempted to calculate these weeks of years mentioned in the prophecy in order to determine Christ's Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Some have convincingly argued that Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey at His Triumphal entry on March 29, AD 33. While certain variables make it impossible to be certain of the exact date, all calculations are within close proximity to one another.
- I. Ezekiel, who was also taken captive to Babylon, refers to Daniel on three separate occasions in his prophecy (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3). In each case the reference is to Daniel's godly character or wisdom.

## V. **STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

### A. **Three part division of the book**

1. Personal life of Daniel (Ch. 1)
2. Prophetic Future of the Gentile Nations (Chs. 2-7)
3. Prophetic Future of Israel (Chs. 8-12)

**B. Two part division of the book**

1. Historical life of Daniel and Dreams of Gentile Rulers (Chs. 1-6)
2. Visions and Dreams of the Last Days (Chs. 7-12)

**VI. CHAPTER OVERVIEWS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

- A. Ch. 1 In the first chapter we are told how Daniel and his friends arrived in Babylon, and how God rewarded them for their faithfulness by giving them knowledge and wisdom.
- B. Ch. 2 Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of the great image which represented the Gentile kingdoms leading up to the kingdom of Christ to come.
- C. Ch. 3 Nebuchadnezzar has people worship an image of gold, Daniel's three friends refuse, God delivers them, and gets glory for Himself.
- D. Ch. 4 Nebuchadnezzar has a vision of the great tree that represented Nebuchadnezzar's rule and kingdom, along with his subsequent humiliation and restoration.
- E. Ch. 5 Belshazzar uses holy items taken from the temple in Jerusalem to party with, God causes handwriting on the wall, Daniel interprets the fall of Babylon, and it happens that night.
- F. Ch. 6 Darius is tricked ,by men who were jealous of Daniel, into making a decree to destroy Daniel. Daniel cast into the lions den but miraculously preserved. His enemies reap what they sow.
- G. Ch. 7 Daniel has a vision of the Ancient of Days, one like the Son of man, and a vision of four beasts.
- H. Ch. 8 Daniel's vision of the ram and male goat, and little horn, both given and interpreted.
- I. Ch. 9 Daniel's prayer, confession, repentance, and intercession for both himself and his people. The revelation of the seventy weeks.
- J. Ch. 10 Daniel is prepared to receive visions by an angelic messenger.
- K. Ch. 11 Daniel's visions relating to the sixty-nine weeks – Persia, Greece, and the beginning of his discussion of the seventieth week or tribulation.
- L. Ch. 12 Daniel prophesies about the resurrection, describes the tribulation, and is told to seal up the book and its prophecies until the end times.

## VII. CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

- A. In Dan. 2:34-35, 44 it seems that the stone, which crushes all the kingdoms of the world and scatters them like dust, represents Christ, who will destroy the wicked kings of the earth and establish His kingdom at His second coming.
- B. In Dan. 2:20-22; 4:17, 25, 32, 5:18, 21 it is stated repeatedly that God, the Most High, *“is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.”*
- C. In Dan. 3:25 when Nebuchadnezzar had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego cast into the fiery furnace, there appeared one *“like a son of the gods.”* It is very probable that this was a Christophany or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.
- D. In Dan. 7:13-14 Jesus is described as “the Son of Man” who is given a kingdom by the Ancient of Days.
- E. In Dan. 9:25-26 it speaks of the “Messiah the Prince” being “cut off,” a reference to the crucifixion of Christ.
- F. When Dan. 10:5-9 is compared with Rev. 1:12-16, it seems that the person Daniel is writing about is the exalted Lord.

## VIII. HOMEWORK

- A. Try to read through the first six chapters of Daniel carefully and thoughtfully at least five times this week.
- B. Using your Bible and whatever resources you have, try to complete next week’s lesson.