

September 20, 2020

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Author: The Prophet Daniel, an exile taken from Judea to Babylon

Date: c. 605-536 BC

Part of the Bible: Old Testament, Major Prophet

What is “**prophecy**”? In the Bible, Prophets are people called by God to an office that speaks His Word to the people. So prophecy is the preached and recorded Word of God. This *includes* predictions of future events, but the word “prophecy” itself does **not** mean “predicting the future.” The prophetic books of the Old Testament include many different styles of writing, such as poetic proclamation (most of Isaiah–Malachi), songs (Habakkuk 3, Jonah 2), stories (most of Jonah, Isaiah 6), visions (Ezekiel), action-prophecy (Hosea), and apocalyptic style (Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah)

Daniel’s Style of Writing: Some historical narratives, some **apocalyptic** visions

What is “**apocalyptic**”? It is the Greek word for “revelation.” It’s also an ancient *genre* of literature (or style of writing) that includes dreams and visions, usually filled with unusual symbolic imagery, number symbolism, and a focus towards the End-Times. Other biblical examples of this genre are: Isaiah 24–27; Ezekiel 38–39; Joel 2:28–3:21; Zechariah 9–14; and the Book of the Revelation of Saint John.

So how can we read and understand biblical writings that are intentionally unusual, symbolic, and difficult? Remember our rules for interpretation

- 1- Stick with the Plain and Obvious Meaning of a Text, *unless* something in the text says otherwise
- 2- Scripture interprets Scripture, clear passages shed light on the darker ones
- 3- Context!! Verse → Paragraph → Chapter → Book → Testament → Bible
- 4- Interpret Scripture in Light of “The Rule of Faith”
- 5- Interpret Scripture Christologically (“What does this say about Christ Jesus?”)
- 6- Distinguish Law & Gospel

To take the Bible **literally**, we must understand the **literature**. To hear what the Bible says as **authority**, we must know what the **Author** (and human *authors*) are writing.

Outline of the Book

Chapters 1 – 6: Six Narratives

Chapters 7 – 12: Four Visions

The four visions have “time stamps” in 7:1, 8:1, 9:1, and 10:1

**These ten sections (six stories, four visions) are NOT arranged in chronological order. They are arranged around themes and structures. If they WERE arranged chronologically it would look like:

Chapter 1- Story

Chapter 2- Story

Chapter 3- Story

Chapter 4- Story; Chapter 7- Vision; Chapter 8- Vision

Chapter 5- Story; Chapter 9- Vision; Chapters 10–12- Vision

Chapter 6- Story

Four Major Themes:

- 1) The Messianic Kingdom of God
- 2) God’s superiority over false gods
- 3) God as protector of His people
- 4) Encouragement for God’s people to remain faithful

The common emphasis of these themes: God is in control of all things

This theme is set out in the first two verses- so let's begin our study!!

THE LORD GIVES AND THE LORD TAKES AWAY

Daniel 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord (Adonai) gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

- 1 “third year of the reign of Jehoiakim” – this is 605 B.C.
 “Nebuchadnezzar” is the Hebrew spelling of his Babylonian name- Nabu-kudurri-usur “(the god) Nebo protect my offspring”
- 2 The Lord gives two things to the pagan ruler- His king and His vessels
 “Jehoiakim, king of Judah” - Eliakim the son of Josiah was made king of Judah by Pharaoh Neco and then renamed Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34).
 “land of Shinar”- the biblical name for lower (southern) Mesopotamia
 “to the house of his god”- Jehoiakim is there to swear allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron 36:6-7)

The Main Point: “Yahweh, the God whose temple and king were taken is still in control. Just as he scattered humanity for its arrogance in building a tower in Babylon (Gen 11:1-9), he can and will judge the arrogance of Babylonians again (the accounts of Daniel 3—4).” (A. Steinmann, *Daniel: Concordia Commentary*, p. 84-5)