

Outline of Daniel

We hope this outline of Daniel will help you get to know God's Word — His letter to you — better. May you discover the character of God Himself as you study His holy Word.

The name "Daniel" means "God is my judge." According to Josephus, Daniel was of the royal family. He was taken into captivity in 605 B.C. At this time he was probably a teenager, between 13-15 years of age (1:4). He lived into the reign of Darius, being still alive in 536 B.C., around the age of 84. He was a man greatly loved by God (Daniel 10:11, 19).

The book of Daniel demonstrates the consistency and blessing of a life lived to God, ignoring the heights and depths of circumstances. Daniel was raised to an exalted position very early in life. When he was around 17, the king of Babylon bowed down to him and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon (2:1, 24). By the time Ezekiel came to Babylon, Daniel had been ruling over the province some six years. Yet, by the time he was 81, he was forgotten by those in rule in Babylon. Thereafter, he became the chief ruler in the kingdom of Darius the Mede, and was highly honored by Darius according to Josephus. But after this, he was cast to the lions, and then again exalted. Yet, through this all, he maintained a consistent spiritual life.

His life is marked by prayer (2:18; 6:10-11; 9:3-21; 10:12). His spiritual life is all the more remarkable in that from the age of 15 on he was away from his people and raised by pagans. Further, he was a civil servant, not a religious leader. He demonstrates that true spirituality is not a matter of vocation, but of avocation (that which you truly seek). Daniel is set forth by the LORD to his contemporary, Ezekiel, as one of the three famously righteous people.

Stories are found in the apocrypha of Daniel's wisdom. Once when a woman was falsely accused of adultery by two elders, Daniel separated the elders and asked each one under what tree the event took place. Their inconsistent answers freed the woman. Another time, when some priests were deceiving the king and the people concerning sacrifices made to a dragon, Daniel demonstrated that the dragon did not eat the sacrifices by strewing ashes on the floor. In the morning, the floor was covered with the footprints of people, not the dragon.

Daniel teaches about the death of the Messiah (9:26) and about the resurrection of man (12:2, 13). The focus of its prophecies is on the reign of the Gentiles and the ultimate establishment of the eternal kingdom. The book mentions by name both angels that are named in Scripture, Gabriel (8:16; 9:21) and Michael (10:13, 21; 12:1). Interestingly, outside of Daniel, Gabriel is only mentioned twice more in Scripture (Lu. 1:19, 26) as is Michael (Jude 9 and Rev. 12:7).

Date: 605-536 B.C.

Although not readily apparent in English, the book is divided into two sections and an introduction. Chapter 1 is written in Hebrew and forms the introduction to the book. Chapters 2-7 are written in Aramaic, the language of Babylon and form a chiasmic unit. They speak of events in and involving Babylon. Chapters 1-7 are all written in the third person. Chapters 8-12 then are written in Hebrew, narrated in the first person, and concern visions and prophecies relating to Israel and future Gentile kingdoms.

The chiasm of 2-7 is quite distinct. Chapters 2 and 7 contain visions of four coming world kingdoms. Chapters 3 and 6 contain testings and triumphs of Jewish heroes. Chapters 4 and 5 contain stories of the pride and fall of Babylonian kings.

The prophecies of chapters 8-12 are explicit in laying out the future of the world and Jewish nation, including time periods. One of the greatest prayers of intercession is found in chapter 9.

I. Introduction 1 (605 B.C. — age 15)

II. The Aramaic Section 2-7

- A. The Great Image 2 (603 B.C. — age 17)
- B. The Fiery Furnace 3
- C. The Pride of Nebuchadnezzar 4
- D. The Handwriting on the Wall 5 (539 B.C. — age 81)
- E. The Den of Lions 6 (538-536 B.C. — age 82-84)
- F. The Four Beasts 7 (553 B.C. — age 67)

III. The Hebrew Section 8-12

- A. The Vision of the Ram and Goat 8 (551 B.C. — age 69)
- B. The Great Prayer and Gabriel's Response 9 (539 B.C. — age 81)
- C. The Message of Last Things 10-12 (536 B.C. — age 85)

Key Idea:

“The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.” (4:25; 26, 32, 35; 5:21; 11:1)

Key Passage: Daniel 1:8

There is also the vision of God in 7:9-10 and the Son of Man 7:13-14 and Daniel's prayer 9:4-19.

Key Lesson: Man can be pleasing to God.