

GOD'S PROPHETIC
BLUEPRINT IN

DANIEL & REVELATION

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE END TIMES

RON RHODES

Author of The End Times in Chronological Order

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God's Prophetic Blueprint in Daniel and Revelation

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To my beloved wife, Kerri

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After I became a Christian, I read one prophecy book after another. I could not get enough.

At the time, I seemed to gravitate toward prophecy books written by professors at Dallas Theological Seminary—especially John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, and Charles Ryrie. I found their books to be intelligently and persuasively written. Their words about the prophetic future, based on the Bible, resonated with me.

Little did I know then that in the not-too-distant future, I would actually enroll at Dallas Theological Seminary and take courses under these men, obtaining both a master of theology degree and a doctor of theology degree. As I now write about the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation, I want to acknowledge my personal indebtedness to these godly teachers of the Word. Their work continues to bear fruit in my life.

I also want to offer continued praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonderful family He has blessed me with—my wife, Kerri, and my two grown children, David and Kylie. With each year that passes (*much too quickly!*), I grow in affection and appreciation for these three.

Thank You, Lord! I am grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROPHETIC CONNECTION BETWEEN DANIEL AND REVELATION

The books of Daniel and Revelation occupy a distinctive place in the Bible as apocalyptic books. Both are filled with prophetic imagery and visions that offer profound insights into God's sovereign plan for humankind and the ultimate victory of good over evil.

Written during a time of great turmoil for the Jewish people, Daniel offered hope and guidance in the midst of their captivity in Babylon. Revelation, written by the apostle John, speaks to the early Christian communities under Roman oppression, offering a vision of hope and ultimate triumph. Although separated by centuries, these two books echo similar themes of divine sovereignty, judgment, and redemption.

Bible scholars have long recognized the value of studying these two books together. Each illuminates aspects of the other, deepening our understanding of the end times. Together, they offer a comprehensive and unified vision of what lies ahead.

It is no surprise that these books align because both are inspired by God, who does not contradict Himself (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus plays a central role in the prophecies of both books. Revelation is described as “the revelation of Jesus Christ” and concerns “things that must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1). Similarly, Jesus is central to the prophecies of Daniel (and the other biblical prophets). As noted in 1 Peter 1:10-11, “the prophets who prophesied” conveyed messages from “the Spirit of Christ in them.”

Many, including myself, interpret 1 Peter 1:11 as a reference to Jesus Christ, while others understand “the Spirit of Christ” as the Holy Spirit. Both interpretations are valid. If “the Spirit of Christ” refers to the Holy Spirit, it’s important to remember that the role of the Holy Spirit is to uphold and expound the teachings of Jesus Christ (John 14:26). Therefore, whether “the Spirit of Christ” refers to Jesus Himself or to the Holy Spirit, the prophetic messages given to Daniel and other prophets are fundamentally rooted in the teachings of Jesus, whether delivered directly by Him or through the Holy Spirit.

The prophecies of Jesus are trustworthy because He is omniscient—He knows everything. The apostle John observed that Jesus didn’t need anyone to tell Him about people because He already knew their innermost thoughts (John 2:25). The disciples acknowledged, “Now we know that you know all things” (John 16:30). After His resurrection, when Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, Peter replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you” (John 21:17). Jesus demonstrated His omniscience by knowing the exact location of fish in the water (Luke 5:4-6; John 21:6-11) and identifying the specific fish with a coin in its mouth (Matthew 17:27). He also has intimate knowledge of the Father, just as the Father knows Him (Matthew 11:27; John 7:29; 8:55; 10:15; 17:25). Because of Jesus’ complete knowledge, we can have confidence in the prophecies that come from Him.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHURCH HISTORY

Since the early centuries of Christianity, the connection between Daniel and Revelation has captivated biblical interpreters. Here is a sampling of key historical figures who explored this relationship:¹

- **Irenaeus (AD 130–202)**, in *Against Heresies*, drew parallels between the visions of Daniel and Revelation, especially concerning the anti-christ and the end times.
- **Hippolytus (AD 170–235)**, in his *Commentary on Daniel and Treatise on Christ and the Antichrist*, was among the first to link these two books explicitly. He emphasized their complementary messages about the end times, linking the beasts and kingdoms of Daniel with the apocalyptic imagery of Revelation.

- **Jerome (AD 342–420)** wrote extensive biblical commentaries that reflected a deep engagement with Daniel and Revelation, using one to illuminate the other.
- In his commentary on Revelation, **Victorinus of Pettau (died AD 303)** frequently referred to Daniel, highlighting the intertwined nature of these prophetic visions.
- **Augustine (AD 354–430)**, in his magnum opus *The City of God*, took a more allegorical approach, interpreting Daniel and Revelation as depictions of the spiritual struggle between good and evil.
- In his commentary on Revelation, **Bede the Venerable (AD 672–735)** incorporated Daniel’s insights and demonstrated their thematic connections.
- **Joachim of Fiore (AD 1135–1202)**, a medieval theologian, developed a theory of history heavily influenced by the apocalyptic visions of Daniel and Revelation, predicting an age of spiritual renewal.
- **Martin Luther (AD 1483–1546)**, a key figure in the Reformation, viewed Daniel and Revelation as prophetic critiques of the Roman Catholic Church, identifying the papacy as the antichrist.
- **Philip Melancthon (AD 1497–1560)**, a close associate of Luther, explored Daniel and Revelation in his theological works, seeing them as offering insights into the church’s struggle and eventual triumph over its adversaries.
- **John Knox (AD 1514–1572)**, a Scottish reformer, believed that Daniel and Revelation contained prophecies about the church’s struggle with the antichrist, which he identified with the Roman Catholic papacy.
- **Jonathan Edwards (AD 1703–1758)**, an American theologian, wrote extensively, including on eschatology. He referred to Daniel and Revelation to discuss the end times and the second coming of Christ.

The tradition of studying Daniel and Revelation in parallel spans the history of the church. As countless scholars and theologians have discovered,

studying these two scriptural books together offers profound spiritual insights. We, too, can expect great rewards as we explore their intertwined messages.

YOU CAN TRUST DANIEL AND JOHN

You can trust Daniel and John (the author of Revelation) because Jesus Himself validated both. In Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus spoke prophetically to His disciples: “When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Here, Jesus confirms Daniel as a true and trustworthy prophet.

Similarly, Revelation 1:1-2 states: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.” In this passage, Jesus recognizes John as a faithful and reliable witness to the truth.

A SURVEY OF PARALLELS BETWEEN DANIEL AND REVELATION

Because Daniel and Revelation are the only apocalyptic books in the Bible, it is natural to expect numerous similarities between them. And indeed, the parallels abound! Here's a look at some of these striking connections:

- Both Daniel and Revelation present apocalyptic visions that reveal future events and God's ultimate plan for humanity.
- Scrolls and books appear in both Daniel and Revelation. Daniel 12:4 mentions a sealed book to be kept until the end times. Similarly, in Revelation 5, John sees a scroll with seven seals, which only the Lamb (Jesus) is worthy to open, revealing the events of the end times.
- God's complete and supreme authority over the universe is evident in both Daniel (chapters 3 and 6) and Revelation (1:5; 19:6).
- Daniel 7:9-10 depicts the Ancient of Days (God) seated on a throne,

accompanied by a host of angels. Likewise, in Revelation 4–5, John is transported to heaven, where he witnesses God’s throne surrounded by living creatures and elders in worship.

- The theme of repentance is central in Daniel (for example, 4:27) and is echoed in Revelation (2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19; 9:20-21; 16:9, 11).
- God’s discipline of His children is a recurring theme. According to Daniel, Israel faces severe punishment when the Jews are taken into captivity in Babylon (1:1-2). Similarly, Revelation shows the Lord disciplining those He loves (3:19).
- The archangel Michael plays a pivotal role in God’s prophetic plan, as seen in Daniel 10:13 and Revelation 12:7.
- Angels are instrumental in delivering God’s end-time revelations to humankind in both Daniel (8:15-27) and Revelation (1:1).
- A cosmic struggle between good and evil angels for control of the nations is portrayed in Daniel 10:13, 20 and Revelation 12:7; 20:3.
- God’s power to protect His people from danger is displayed in Daniel 3:19-25; 6:18-23 and Revelation 3:7.
- The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented trouble, as described in Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 3:10; 6; 8–9; 16.
- Daniel saw a vision of four beasts coming up out of the sea, representing successive world empires (Daniel 7:1-8). John saw one beast coming out of the sea and another out of the earth, symbolizing the rise of the antichrist and the false prophet (Revelation 13:1-5, 11-18).
- In the end times, a Roman Empire will arise with ten principal rulers (Daniel 7:7, 20, 24; Revelation 13:1-2).
- The antichrist will lead the Roman Empire, as described in Daniel 7:8, 20 and Revelation 13:1-10.
- The antichrist is characterized by arrogance and conceit (Daniel 7:8, 25; Revelation 13:5-6).

- The antichrist will speak against God, exalting himself above all gods and blaspheming the Supreme God (Daniel 11:36; Revelation 13:5-8).
- The antichrist will wage war against the saints and prevail over them (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7).
- The antichrist's reign will bring great destruction upon the earth during the tribulation period (Daniel 7:23; Revelation 4-18).
- God humbles the rulers of the world, as seen in Daniel 4:28-33 and Revelation 18:9-20.
- Jesus will return in glory, fulfilling the prophetic visions of Daniel 7:13 and Revelation 19:11-16.
- God's everlasting kingdom will triumph (Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45; 4:34-35; Revelation 20:1-6; 21-22).
- Good will ultimately prevail over evil (Daniel 2:44-45; Revelation 19:20; 20:11-15; 21:1).
- God's people will enter Christ's millennial kingdom (Daniel 7:27; Revelation 20:4-5; 21:1-4).
- Jesus Christ, the divine Messiah, will reign forever (Daniel 7:14; Revelation 19:16; 20:4, 6).
- Some will be resurrected to eternal life, while others will rise to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:5-6).

Such parallels reveal the deep interconnectedness of Daniel and Revelation, with both books offering a complementary prophetic vision of the culmination of God's plan for the world.

THE WISDOM OF STUDYING DANIEL AND REVELATION TOGETHER

It is wise to study the books of Daniel and Revelation together. Here's why:

- *Two Apocalyptic Books.* Daniel and Revelation are the only apocalyptic

texts in the Bible, and both are rich in end-times prophecy. Studying them side by side makes perfect sense.

- *Comprehensive Understanding.* Studying these books together provides a more complete understanding of Bible prophecy. Daniel's visions lay a foundation that Revelation expands upon, offering detailed insights into world empires, the rise of the antichrist, and the last days.
- *Same Source.* Although written 500 years apart, Daniel and Revelation share parallel teachings, underscoring their divine origin in God (or Jesus Christ).
- *Enhanced Understanding of Prophetic Imagery.* Both books employ similar symbols and imagery. By comparing these elements, readers can more accurately interpret the prophetic messages they contain.
- *Scripture Interprets Scripture.* Analyzing these texts together conforms to the timeless principle that "Scripture interprets Scripture," providing deeper clarity.
- *Chronological Sequence.* Studying Daniel and Revelation together helps clarify the sequence of end-time events. For instance, both books affirm that God's everlasting kingdom will triumph after the fall of the antichrist's kingdom (Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45; 4:34-35; Revelation 20:1-6; 21-22).
- *Key Prophetic Themes.* Together, Daniel and Revelation clarify the major components of prophecy—the tribulation period, the person and work of the antichrist, and the persecution of the saints, to name a few.
- *A Core Framework.* The combined study of these books provides a core framework for understanding end-time prophecies found in other books of the Bible (for example, in Matthew, John, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians).
- *Strengthened Faith.* Daniel's stories of unwavering faith—such as Daniel in the lion's den and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in

the fiery furnace—combined with Revelation's promises to those who persevere, inspire faith and commitment in believers of all ages.

- *Deepening Confidence in God's Sovereignty.* Daniel highlights God's control over history, empires, and their leaders, while Revelation reveals His ultimate victory over evil and His sovereign rule over all creation. Together, these books strengthen our confidence in God's sovereign plan.
- *Increased Awareness of Spiritual Warfare.* Daniel highlights the conflict between God's people and demonic powers (Daniel 10:13-14). Revelation describes the cosmic battle between good and evil, including the efforts of Satan and demons against believers (Revelation 11:7; 12:17; 20:8-9). Therefore, a study of Daniel and Revelation helps to increase our awareness of the spiritual battles we may face and the assurance of God's triumph over all evil.
- *Increased Devotion.* Daniel's example of prayer and fasting (Daniel 9) and Revelation's portrayal of heavenly worship (Revelation 4-5) inspire deeper personal devotion to Christ.
- *Call to Holiness.* Daniel models holy living in a corrupt world (Daniel 1:8-21), and Revelation calls believers to purity and readiness for Christ's return (Revelation 2-3; 19:7-8). Studying these texts together encourages a life of holiness and sanctification.
- *Longing for the Kingdom.* Daniel foretells the establishment of God's everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44), while Revelation describes its ultimate fulfillment with the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22). Together, these books deepen our longing for God's kingdom.

In conclusion, the combined study of Daniel and Revelation is wise because it provides a rich and rewarding experience that deepens our understanding of Bible prophecy, strengthens our faith, and provides practical insights for daily living.

HOW TO READ THIS TWO-IN-ONE BOOK

I recommend starting with *40 Days Through Daniel* while making a few detours into key verses in Revelation along the way. Throughout *40 Days Through Daniel*, I provide some key cross-references that show important parallels between Daniel and Revelation. Throughout *40 Days Through Revelation*, I provide helpful Scripture quotes from Daniel. Be sure to consider these references.

Once you've finished Daniel, continue with *40 Days Through Revelation*. You will find that Daniel provides a prophetic foundation, and Revelation expands on that foundation.

Between the two books, you'll find a chapter entitled "Bridging Daniel and Revelation." This chapter offers additional insights into studying these prophetic books together.

Whether you are studying Daniel or Revelation, be sure to pray:

Lord, open my eyes to see the wonderful spiritual truths in the prophetic Scriptures. And please transform my life through this study of Your Word.

40 DAYS THROUGH DANIEL

40 DAYS STUDYING DANIEL

Thank you for joining me in this exciting journey through the book of Daniel. You are in for a spiritually uplifting time! My hope and prayer is that as you read *40 Days Through Daniel*, you will experience several significant blessings:

- an awareness that God is a personal being who personally interacts with His people
- a conviction that God blesses righteous living
- an understanding of the need for God's people to maintain faith in Him regardless of the outward circumstances
- an understanding of God's sovereignty and control over the events of human history, including not only kings and nations but also the specifics of each of our individual lives
- an awareness that God will one day providentially cause good to triumph over evil
- an awareness that God is now providentially guiding human history toward its prophetic culmination
- an exalted view of the true majesty and glory of Jesus Christ, the divine Messiah
- an increased conviction of the trustworthiness of the Bible in general and the prophecies in the Bible in particular

As we begin our journey together, I want to address a few things that will lay a foundation for better understanding the book of Daniel. In this introduction, I will briefly look at the big picture. Then, in the chapters that follow, I will zero in on the details.

THE PROPHET DANIEL

Daniel was born into a royal family (Daniel 1:3, 6) and was apparently physically attractive (1:4). He became one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. His name means “God is my judge.” He was uncompromising in his faithfulness to God. His contemporaries acknowledged both his righteousness and his wisdom (see Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3).

Daniel was taken captive as a youth to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. He was likely 15 or 16 years old when this happened. As providence had it, he spent the rest of his life there—perhaps 85 years or more. He was assigned to be a governmental official in charge of assisting with the imported Jews.

There were actually three deportations involved in Babylon's victory over Judah. The first took place in 605 BC and included Daniel and his friends. The second took place in 597 BC and included Ezekiel. The third took place in 586 BC, when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Daniel wrote the biblical book that bears his name (see Daniel 8:15, 27; 9:2; 10:2, 7; 12:4-5). His book was titled Daniel not only because he was one of the chief characters in the book but also because it was customary in Bible times to affix the author's name to the book he wrote. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself identified Daniel as a prophet of God (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14).

CAPTIVITY AND EXILE

In the book of Deuteronomy, God, through Moses, promised great blessings if the nation lived in obedience to the Sinai covenant. God also warned that if the nation disobeyed His commands, it would experience the punishments listed in the covenant—including exile from the land (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

Old Testament history is replete with illustrations of Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant. The two most significant periods of exile for the Jewish people began with the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC and the

collapse of Judah to the Babylonians in 605 BC. Just as God promised, disobedience brought exile for God's people.

As a backdrop, it is interesting to observe that the first chapter of Isaiah takes the form of a lawsuit against Judah. Judah was indicted by the Lord (through Isaiah) because of Judah's "breach of contract" in breaking the Sinai covenant, which had been given to the nation at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. In this courtroom scene, the Lord called on heaven and earth to act as witnesses as He leveled accusations against the nation (Isaiah 1:2). The whole universe was to bear witness that God's judgments are just.

The Lord indicted Judah for rebelling against Him. It is noteworthy that the Hebrew word translated "rebelled" in Isaiah 1:2 often referred to a subordinate state's violation of a treaty with a sovereign nation. In Isaiah 1, the word points to Judah's blatant violation of God's covenant. Therefore, Judah went into captivity.

The Babylonian captivity was God's means of chastening Judah. This punishment, of course, was intended as a corrective. Both the Old and New Testaments demonstrate that just as an earthly father disciplines his children, so God the Father disciplines His children. His goal is to purify, train, and educate them (Hebrews 12:1-5; see also Job 5:17; 33:19; Psalm 118:18; Proverbs 3:11-12). The prophet Daniel indicates that God yet has a future for His people.

DANIEL'S BOOK

The book of Daniel is categorized as apocalyptic literature. It was written in about 537 BC and contains history as well as prophecy of the end times.

Scholars tell us that apocalyptic literature is a special kind of writing that arose among the Jews and Christians to reveal certain mysteries about heaven and earth, especially regarding the world to come. This type of literature is often characterized by visions—and there are plenty in the book of Daniel. Certain themes are common to apocalyptic literature:

- a growing sense of hopelessness as wicked powers grow in strength
- the promise that the sovereign God will intervene
- visions with a heavenly perspective that help the faithful endure present suffering

- God's intervention in overcoming and destroying evil
- the call to believers to live righteously
- the call to persevere under trial
- God's final deliverance and restoration, with the promise to dwell with His people

We see all of this in the book of Daniel.

AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel's Personal History (1)

Daniel was deported with other young men and placed in a training program in Nebuchadnezzar's court in Babylon. Their names were changed, as were their diets. Daniel, however, refused to eat food dedicated to idols, and the Lord rewarded him for his faithfulness.

God's Prophetic Plan for the Gentiles (2-7)

Daniel was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's disturbing dream of a great statue (2). By God's power, Daniel revealed that the dream indicated that God would raise up and then bring down four Gentile empires—the fourth being a revived Roman Empire over which the antichrist would rule. The times of the Gentiles would finally end at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image and decreed that all bow to it (3:1-7). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel's three Hebrew friends) refused and were subsequently tossed into a fiery furnace as punishment. (Daniel was engaged in official business at the time, but had he been there, he too would have refused!) God delivered the three Hebrew youths, after which they were all promoted (3:8-30).

The self-inflated, prideful Nebuchadnezzar then had a dream indicating that God was going to bring him down and humiliate him for a time, causing him to dwell with animals. Nebuchadnezzar was eventually restored and afterward offered praises to God (4).

We then read of Belshazzar, the next Babylonian king mentioned in Scripture. He arrogantly defied God. Soon enough, he saw handwriting on the wall

signifying that his kingdom had been numbered, weighed, and divided. That very night, the kingdom of the Babylonians fell to Darius and the Medes (5).

While Darius was king, he banned prayer to any god other than himself. Daniel ignored the decree and was thrown into a den of lions overnight. But God delivered Daniel, and Daniel was further exalted (6).

Daniel then had a vision of four strange beasts, representing four kingdoms that play an important role in biblical prophecy. These were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece under Alexander the Great, and a revived Roman Empire, which is yet future (7). It is over this latter empire that the antichrist will rule during the future tribulation period.

God's Prophetic Plan for Israel (8-12)

God yet has a plan for Israel. Daniel spoke of 70 weeks of years that constitute a prophetic timetable for Israel (9). Israel's timetable was divided into 70 groups of 7 years, totaling 490 years. The first 69 groups of 7 years, or 483 years, counted the years from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Jesus the Messiah came (Daniel 9:25). After that, God's prophetic clock stopped. Daniel said there would be a gap between these years and the final 7 years of Israel's prophetic timetable.

The final "week" of 7 years will begin for Israel when the antichrist confirms a covenant for 7 years (Daniel 9:27). The signing of this peace pact will signal the beginning of the tribulation period. Daniel became frightened at this momentous vision. He prayed to the Lord for strength, and an angel eventually arrived in answer to the prayer. The angel promised to show Daniel further things to come in the prophetic future (10).

Daniel revealed that the antichrist will emerge in the end times and will "go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction" (11:44). The tribulation period "shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" (12:1). Daniel was instructed to "shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (12:4).

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As you begin each chapter, consider using this prayer:

Lord, I ask You to open my eyes and enhance my understanding so I can grasp what You want me to learn today [Psalm 119:18]. I also ask You to enable me, by Your Spirit, to apply the truths I learn to my daily life and to be guided moment by moment by Your Word [Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:15-17]. I thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Following this short prayer, you can read the assigned section of the book of Daniel using your favorite Bible. With your Bible still in hand, you can then work your way through the insights, where I provide some fascinating contextual background information. I suggest you go verse by verse through your Bible again, but this time, after reading each verse, also read the appropriate notes in the book.

After the insights on each verse in the passage, I provide four brief summaries:

- *Major Themes.* These topical summaries will help you learn how to think theologically as you study the Bible.
- *Digging Deeper with Cross-References.* These will help you discover relevant insights from other books of the Bible.
- *Life Lessons.* This is where you learn to apply what you have read to your everyday life. You will discover that the book of Daniel is rich in transforming truths!
- *Questions for Reflection and Discussion.* Use these for your personal journaling or for lively group interactions.

Lord, by the power of Your Spirit, please enable my readers to understand and apply truth from the book of Daniel. Please excite them with Your Word and instill in them a sense of awe for You—our wondrous and majestic God. I thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

DANIEL'S HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

DANIEL 1:1-7

SCRIPTURE READING AND INSIGHTS

Begin by reading Daniel 1:1-7 in your favorite Bible. Read with the anticipation that the Holy Spirit has something important to teach you today (see Psalm 119:105).

In today's lesson, we will focus our attention on the historical circumstances of Daniel and his friends. With your Bible still accessible, consider the following insights on the biblical text, verse by verse.

Daniel 1:1-2

Third year (1:1): This would have been 605 BC.

Jehoiakim (1:1): See Major Themes.

Judah (1:1): Judah was one of the 12 sons of Jacob. (His mother was Leah.) The tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom, also known as Judah (see Genesis 29:35; 37:26; 44:14; 49:8-10; Numbers 1:27; Judges 1:8; 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 12:20, 23).

Nebuchadnezzar (1:1): See Major Themes.

Babylon (1:1): Babylon was situated on the banks of the Euphrates River, a little more than 50 miles south of modern Baghdad. Because of its ideal location, Babylon was an important commercial and trade center in the ancient world. The nation was also brimming with paganism.

Jerusalem (1:1): This city rests in the Judean hills at about 2,640 feet above sea level. King David of Israel captured the city in the tenth century BC and built his palace there. His son Solomon eventually became king and built a magnificent temple, making Jerusalem the center of Israel's religious life. Jerusalem would later become famous worldwide because it was the scene of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand (1:2): The Lord used the Babylonians as His whipping rod to chastise the people of Judah for their unrepentant sins (see Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6).

Vessels of the house of God (1:2): The house of God was the Jewish temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem. The temple was rectangular, running east and west, and was about 87 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 43 feet high. The walls of the temple were made of cedar, and carved into the wood were cherubim (angels), flowers, and palm trees. The walls were overlaid with gold. The floor was made of cypress.

Solomon's temple had a Holy Place and a Most Holy Place. The Holy Place (the main outer room) housed the golden incense altar, the table of showbread, and five pairs of lampstands, as well as utensils used for sacrifice. Double doors led into the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant was placed. The ark rested between two wooden cherubim, each standing ten feet tall. God manifested Himself in the Most Holy Place in a cloud of glory (1 Kings 8:10-11). This temple—the heart and center of Jewish worship for the kingdom of Judah—was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.

The “vessels” were sacred objects in the temple. The Babylonians seized these sacred objects as spoils, believing this represented the victory of Babylon's gods over the God of Israel. Little did the Babylonians know that it was actually the one true God of Judah who handed His own people over to the Babylonians for chastisement (see Deuteronomy 28:64; Jeremiah 25:8-14).

In any event, the sacred objects of the temple would have included “the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, the lampstands of pure gold...the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and fire pans, of pure gold; and the sockets of gold, for the doors of the innermost part of the house” (1 Kings 7:48-51).

Shinar (1:2): Another term for Babylon.

House of his god...treasury of his god (1:2): Like other pagan nations of the Ancient Near East, the Babylonians believed in many false gods and goddesses. These gods were thought to control the entire world of nature, so being successful in life required placating the gods. The Babylonians also believed that their military victories indicated that their gods were more powerful than any other nation's gods. However, in the Babylonian religious system, the gods' behavior was considered unpredictable at best.

Each city in Babylon had a patron god with an accompanying temple. Several small shrines were also scattered about each city, and people often met there to worship various other deities. The chief of the Babylonian gods was Anu, considered the king of heaven, and the patron god of Babylon was Marduk. "His god" (1:2) is likely a reference to Marduk.

Daniel 1:3-5

Chief eunuch (1:3): This term does not necessarily refer to a man who was castrated. The Hebrew term *saris* can simply refer to a government official (see 2 Kings 8:6).

Bring some of the people of Israel (1:3): In one section of the Mosaic Law, recorded in Leviticus 26:33, 39, God threatened His people with exile if they chose to be unfaithful to the terms of the covenant established at Mount Sinai (see also Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:64). As it happened, the people of Judah disobeyed the Lord for an extended time. The resulting exile did not occur all at once. Initially, only "some of the people of Israel" were brought to Babylon, including Daniel and his friends. This would have been in 605 BC. The exile came to full fruition in 597 BC when Babylon destroyed both Jerusalem and its temple, and at that time countless Jews were exiled to Babylon.

Youths (1:4): Young teenagers—probably between 14 and 17 years old.

Teach them (1:4): The Babylonian literature they were required to study probably included writings on agriculture, architecture, astrology, astronomy, law, mathematics, and the difficult Akkadian language. (One recalls that Moses was likewise trained in Egyptian literature—Acts 7:22.) Nebuchadnezzar wanted these young men to be enculturated and assimilated into Babylonian society (see Major Themes). As we will see throughout the rest of the

book, however, Babylon influenced Daniel and his friends very little. Instead, they greatly influenced Babylon by remaining faithful to the one true God.

Food...wine (1:5): That the king allowed the youths the food and wine he partook of was likely designed to foster dependence, gratitude, and loyalty to the king.

Educated (1:5): The youths were educated for three years, not quite as long as it would take a person to get a college degree today.

Daniel 1:6-7

Daniel (1:6): In the ancient world, a name was not a mere label, as it is today. A name was equivalent to whomever or whatever bore it. A person's name could indicate his or her character, personality, or allegiance. Knowing a person's name therefore amounted to knowing a great deal about him or her.

We see this illustrated in the names of major Bible characters. The name Abraham, for instance, means "father of a multitude," which was fitting because Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation. The name David means "beloved," and of course, David was a king specially loved by God. The name Solomon comes from a word meaning "peace"—and Solomon's reign was characterized by peace. In each case, we learn something about the individual from his name.

The same is true regarding the names given to the four Hebrew youths mentioned in Daniel 1:6: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel's name, for example, means "God has judged," or perhaps "God is my Judge." Note that the ending of Daniel's name, *el*, is a Hebrew term for God. Daniel's parents were apparently God-fearing people.

Hananiah (1:6): This name means "Yahweh has been gracious." Note that the *iah* ending (or *yah*) is an abbreviation for God's name, Yahweh.

Mishael (1:6): This name means "Who is what God is?" Again we see the *el* ending, a Hebrew name for God.

Azariah (1:6): Azariah's name means "Yahweh has helped." Again, the *iah* ending (or *yah*) is an abbreviation for God's name, Yahweh.

Tribe of Judah (1:6): The Israelites were divided into 12 tribes, each descended from one of the 12 sons of Jacob: Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Asher, Naphtali, Zebulon, Issachar, Ephraim, Benjamin, Judah, Simeon, and Dan. The tribe

of Judah is particularly significant, for Genesis 49:10 prophesied that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah and reign as King. Judah is therefore a royal tribe.

Belteshazzar (1:7): Daniel and his friends all had Hebrew names that honored the one true God of Israel. The Babylonians believed their gods were superior to the God of Israel. The young men's names were therefore changed to honor Babylonian deities instead of the God of Israel. Daniel was renamed Belteshazzar, meaning "Bel, protect his life," or "Bel, protect the king's life." (Bel was a Babylonian deity.)

Shadrach (1:7): Hananiah's name was changed to Shadrach, apparently meaning "Command of Aku." (Aku was another Babylonian deity.)

Meshach (1:7): Mishael's name was changed to Meshach, meaning "Who is Aku?"

Abednego (1:7): Azariah's name was changed to Abednego, meaning "Servant of Nebo." (Nebo, also known as Nabu, was yet another Babylonian deity.)

MAJOR THEMES

1. *King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon*. Nebuchadnezzar's name means "Nabu has protected my inheritance." Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful of the Babylonian kings. He is famous for taking multitudes of Jews into captivity from 605 to 597 BC, among whom were Daniel and his companions (Jeremiah 27:19; 40:1; Daniel 1:1-7). After Daniel's companions were thrown into the fiery furnace and miraculously delivered (Daniel 3), the king became afflicted with a strange mental disease as a punishment for his pride and vanity. He was eventually restored.
2. *King Jehoiakim of Judah*. Jehoiakim was the second son of Josiah and became the eighteenth king of Judah (2 Kings 23:33-34; 2 Chronicles 36:6-7). He was born about 633 BC. He was a vicious, cruel, selfish, rebellious, and irreligious man who encouraged idolatry (see Jeremiah 19). He flaunted his impiety when he destroyed a prophetic scroll written by the prophet Jeremiah. He died a violent death (2 Kings 24:3-4; Jeremiah 22:18-19; 36:30).
3. *The enculturation of exiles*. Daniel and his Jewish friends were enculturated in Babylon. They were trained in Babylonian language and literature and

instructed to eat Babylonian food (though Daniel was able to make other arrangements). They were given Babylonian names that honored Babylonian gods. The idea was to make them suitable for service in the king's palace.

DIGGING DEEPER WITH CROSS-REFERENCES

Exile as the consequence of disobedience—Genesis 15:13-14; Exodus 1:11-14; Deuteronomy 28:36; Judges 2:14; 2 Kings 17:6-7; Isaiah 39:6; Amos 5:27

Sacred objects of the temple—Exodus 25:29; 37:16; 40:9; 1 Kings 7:51; 2 Kings 14:14; 24:13; 25:14; 2 Chronicles 36:18; Ezra 1:7; 5:14; Jeremiah 28:3

LIFE LESSONS

1. *A failure to repent brings God's discipline.* A failure to repent of sin always brings God's discipline in the life of a believer. Recall that this is what happened to David following his sin with Bathsheba (Psalms 32:3-5; 51). This can happen to us today too (Hebrews 12:5-11). Never forget, "If we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way" (1 Corinthians 11:31 NLT).
2. *God is sovereign over human affairs.* Daniel 1:2 reveals that God sovereignly allowed Judah's captivity. Scripture reveals that God is absolutely sovereign—He rules the universe, controls all things, and is Lord over all. He may utilize various means to accomplish His ends, but He is always in control. You might want to meditate for a few minutes on Psalms 50:1; 66:7; Proverbs 16:9; 19:21; 21:30; Isaiah 14:24; 40:15, 17; 46:10.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does the reality of God's sovereignty mean to you personally? Does this doctrine comfort you, frighten you, or maybe a little of both?
2. If you were forced to live in a part of the world brimming with paganism, do you think you'd still be able to effectively serve God with a good attitude?
3. Has God ever moved you outside of your comfort zone? If so, how did you adapt?