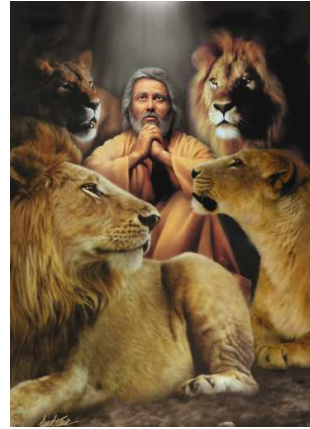


Daniel

by Ross Callaghan

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Daniel is the first of the Minor Prophets.

Author

Daniel was a prince of Judah. He was captured by King Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon so he could be trained as a servant for the king. Later he became ruler over the entire province of Babylon and served under several kings.

Daniel was more of a statesman than a prophet, although he did bring forth many significant prophesies (which is why he is described as *the prophet Daniel* in Matthew 24:15).

Daniel had a consistently strong relationship with the Lord and would not compromise this to serve the false Babylonian gods. He trusted in God and was willing to give up his life rather than serve or worship any other god. Daniel 3:18. Daniel was still alive when Babylon fell and must have been at least 90 years old when he died. Tradition holds that his tomb is located in Susa in modern day Iran.

'Daniel' means *God is my judge*. In Babylon he was given the name 'Belteshazzar' which means *Preserve his life, O Bel*. (Bel or Baal was the chief god of Babylon).

Date

The Book of Daniel covers the period between Judah being taken into captivity to Babylon and the fall of the Babylonian Empire. This is approximately 606 – 538 BC. The Book also prophesies what would happen after this time, through to the first and second comings of Christ.

Background

The people of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, were following false gods and rejecting the Lord. God had spoken to them many times through His prophets, calling on them to forsake their sins and return to Him. They would not listen. Finally Jeremiah prophesied that the nation would experience God's wrath and be judged for their sins. They would be defeated by King Nebuchadnezzar and taken into captivity in Babylon for seventy years. See Jeremiah Chapter 25.

This was fulfilled in 606 BC, in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim. Daniel and three other princes were among those taken into captivity. They were *without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the King's palace*. 1:4. As a result they were specially chosen *to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service*. 1:5

Babylon was the centre of the Babylonian Empire in Mesopotamia (in modern day Iraq). 'Babylon' means *confusion*. The nation began very early in human history with Nimrod (whose name means *we will rebel*) Genesis 10:9,10. At that time *The whole world had one language and a common speech*. Genesis 11:1. In an attempt *to make a name for ourselves* (apart from God) men built the Tower of Babel. God came and confused their language, scattering them abroad over all the face of the earth. See Genesis 11:1-9. This was the beginning of confusion in world systems.

By Daniel's time Babylon had become a great Empire and ruled the world. It was destined to fall, though, and this was prophesied by Daniel and described in his book. Babylon fell in 538 BC when it was overtaken by the Medo-Persian Empire.

The spirit of Babylon (*confusion*) continues and is very much at work today. There is confusion in most world systems. e.g. economies, commerce, governments, transport, education, sport, economies, religions, terrorism ...

Babylon will finally be judged and defeated at the Second Coming of Christ. See Revelation 17:18,19.

Daniel was concerned with the bringing out from captivity of God's people. And so am I!



Purpose

- To reveal God's plan for the future, through to the Second Coming of Christ.
- To prophesy the downfall of the Babylonian Empire.
- To encourage the Jews while they were in exile in Babylon.
- To show how God blesses leaders with faithfulness and integrity.

Key verses

There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. 2:28

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 2:44

The Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes. 5:21

But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever - yes, for ever and ever. 7:18

Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place. 9:24

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. 12:1-3.

Outline

Historical Section

Chapter 1.	Daniel raised to power.
Chapter 2.	Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
Chapter 3.	The fiery furnace.
Chapter 4.	Nebuchadnezzar's madness.
Chapter 5.	Belshazzar's feast.
Chapter 6.	Daniel in the lion's den.

Prophetic Section

Chapter 7.	Vision of the four beasts.
Chapter 8.	Vision of the ram and the goat.
Chapter 9.	The seventy weeks.
Chapter 10.	The vision of God.
Chapter 11.	Revelation of the future.
Chapter 12.	Conclusion.

A note about prophecy

Prophecies must be interpreted for them to have meaning. Unfortunately interpretation of prophecy is not easy and we can never be certain that our interpretation is 'correct' (especially when there can be lots of quite different interpretations, all claiming to be correct!). Interpretations can be affected by accuracy of dates, knowledge of later history, understanding of imagery, fit with our theory of end time events, theological perspectives, etc.

The interpretations given below for Daniel's prophecies are thus tentative. You may have quite different understandings as you read the prophetic words he was given. It's always best to be open to the Lord and seek for His revelation of the meaning of prophecy.

Historical Section

Chapter 1. Daniel raised to power

1:1-5 Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, attacked and overcame Jerusalem and began carrying items from the temple back to Babylon. Daniel and his three friends were princes of Israel and were chosen by Nebuchadnezzar to go to Babylon to be trained to serve in his court. They must have been very special young men as they were *without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the King's palace.* 1:4.

1:6,7 Daniel and his three friends were given new names:

Daniel (*God is my judge*) was changed to **Beltshazzar** (*preserve his life, O Bel*).

Hananiah (*The Lord is gracious*) was changed to **Shadrach** (could mean *inspired by the sun god Ra*).

Mishael (*who is like God*) was changed to **Meshach** (could mean *who is like Shak*, the earth god, the goddess of Babylon).

Azariah (*the Lord helps*) was changed to **Abednego** (*the servant of Nego* - the god of science, Bel's son)

Obviously Daniel didn't like his new name as he refers to himself as Daniel throughout the book.

1:8-16 Daniel would not defile himself with the king's food and drink because it had probably been offered to idols. Also it had little nutritional value. He requested a 10 day trial in which he and his friends were given only vegetables and water. At the end of the 10 days the value of a good diet was apparent *so the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.* 1:16.

1:17-21 Daniel and his friends were clearly superior to the magicians and enchanters in the whole of the kingdom. This is because *To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.* 1:17.

Daniel continued in office right through the 70 year captivity, until the first year of King Cyrus (538BC).

Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar's dream

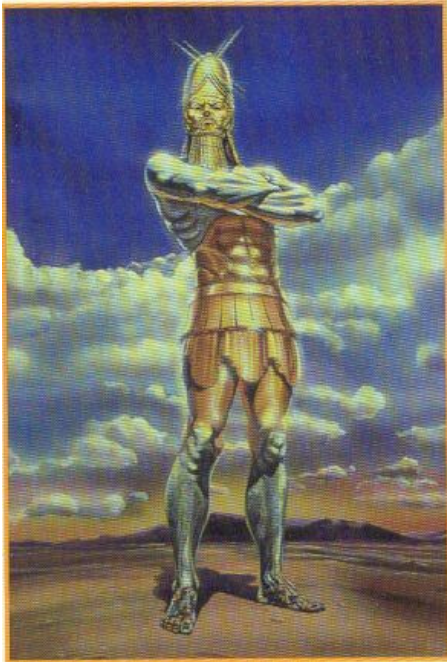
2:1-11 The King had a disturbing dream and demanded that his "wise men" tell him the dream and its Interpretation. He would know that their interpretation was genuine by telling him the dream first. If they couldn't interpret the dream they would be severely punished. The "wise men" replied that no-one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men. V11. (But the true God did come to live among men in His Son, Jesus Christ! *The Word became flesh.* John 1:14. *He was manifested in the flesh.* 1 Timothy 3:16 *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.* 1 John 4:2,3

Satan doesn't know the future so the *magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers* could not tell the King what his dream was. Fortune telling brings a great curse on those who engage in it because demonic spirits attempt to bring whatever is said to pass.

2:12-23 Because they could not meet his demands the King ordered the execution of all the wise men in Babylon. Daniel asked the King for time saying (in faith) that he would bring the interpretation. With his three friends he sought the Lord and God did not fail them in their desperate situation. *During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.* 2:19. God does know the future, and the secrets of men. (2:21-23.)

2:24-30 Daniel was brought before the King and immediately testified to him that *There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.* 2:28 The dream was concerned with *what is going to happen.* 2:29. Its interpretation is very important for understanding the rest of the Book of Daniel as it describes history from that time right up to the present, and then things which are yet to come.

2:31-45 Daniel told the king's that he had seen a great statue which was broken to pieces and then became a huge mountain that filled the earth. Daniel then interpreted the dream:



The **head of gold** was the Babylonian empire which had begun under Nebuchadnezzar (608BC).

The **chest and arms of silver** was the Medo-Persian Empire that would overtake Babylon, but be inferior to it. (538BC).

The **belly and thighs of bronze** was the Greek Empire beginning under Alexander the Great which would *rule the whole earth*. (330BC).

The **legs of iron and feet of iron and clay** was the Roman Empire (East and West) which would crush and break all the others. (63BC).

The **ten toes** would be a confederate to be revealed in the last days in the area of the Roman Empire. The nations in the confederate will mix with each other but it will not hold together.

Then in the last days *The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.* 2:44

A rock that was *cut out, but not by human hands* will come and destroy all parts of the image and the pieces will become a huge mountain that fills the earth. The Rock is Jesus Christ! *The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.* Psalm 118:22. *Behold I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation. He who believes in Him will not be put to shame.* Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6.

When Jesus comes again He will bring history to a close by setting up a new Kingdom which can never be destroyed. This will be the great mountain that fills the whole earth. *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.* Habakkuk 2:14.

So the image gives an outline of history up to the Second coming of Christ.

Note that the metals in the image decrease in value and weight. History is becoming increasingly unbalanced and top heavy!

2:46-49 Nebuchadnezzar realised that only God could reveal the mystery. *Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.* 2:47 Daniel was promoted to become *ruler over the entire province of Babylon* and his three friends administrators of the province.

This was King Nebuchadnezzar's first revelation of God, and he specifically acknowledges Him as God. (for the time being!).

Chapter 3. The fiery furnace

3:1-18 Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image and ordered all of his officials to bow down and worship it. If they didn't they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. (The golden image fits with Nebuchadnezzar being the 'head of gold' in his dream. See 2:38). Some astrologers denounced Shadrach, Meshach and Ebednego because they wouldn't bow down to the idol. *They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold that you have set up.* 3:12. (Where was Daniel? Perhaps he was away on business or was so powerful that the edict didn't affect him?).

The King was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Ebednego and directly challenged their God. If they would not bow down to the image they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. *Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?* 3:15. The three young Jews trusted God saying *The God we serve is able to rescue us from your hand, O King.* 3:17.

3:19-30 The King super-heated the furnace and cast Shadrach, Meshach and Ebednego into it. The fire was so hot that the soldiers were killed, but God worked wonderfully on behalf of the three Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar saw four men in the furnace! *Look, I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.* Jesus, the Son of God, came and protected Shadrach, Meshach and Ebednego! They were in the furnace through obedience to God, and He got them out. He always promises to be with us during times of trouble. See Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 28:20.



Nebuchadnezzar was convinced when he saw that they had not been harmed in way by the fire. He said *Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Ebednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants. They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god but their own God.* 3:28. This is the second time he acknowledged the living God, but was he converted?

As a result the three Jews were promoted as Daniel had been. Maybe fiery furnaces aren't so bad after all - if Jesus is in there with you!

Chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar's madness

4:1-37 In this chapter King Nebuchadnezzar testifies of how God dealt with him. *It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.* 4:2. He describes how Daniel was able to interpret a dream *because the spirit of the holy gods is in him.* 4:8.

In the dream he saw an large tree that provided food and shelter for all. A messenger from heaven called for the tree to be cut down and its fruit scattered. The stump would remain in the ground and be bound with iron and bronze. His mind would be like an animals for seven years. The purpose of this is so *the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to whoever he wishes, and sets them over the lowliest of men.* 4:17.

Daniel was alarmed because he saw how terrible this would be for the King. The king was the tree. His great kingdom would be cut down and he would become mentally deranged, living as an animal for seven years, until he acknowledged that God was sovereign over all. When he did this his kingdom would be restored. Daniel counselled the King to repent so that, if possible, this judgement could be delayed. *Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.* 4:27

Twelve months later the dream was fulfilled. If God says something will happen it comes to pass! The king was puffed up with pride, and God's judgment fell on him. He lost his mind and became like an animal for seven years. At the end of that time his sanity was restored and he praised and honoured God.

Nebuchadnezzar had learned:

- God's Lordship. He is the *Most High.* 4:34.
- God's Sovereignty. He does as He pleases. 4:35.
- to praise God.
- that God's ways are best. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble. 4:37.

King Nebuchadnezzar returned to his kingdom, and was succeeded by Nabonidus, and then Belshazzar. See Jeremiah 27:6.7

If you want to be effective in serving the Lord be humble. Pride always goes before a fall! *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.* Proverbs 16:18, *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* James 4:6. *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's might hand, that in due time He may exalt you.* 1 Peter 5:6. Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson the hard way!

Chapter 5. Belshazzar's feast

5:1-30 King Belshazzar had a feast for a thousand of his nobles. They used gold and silver goblets that had been brought from the Temple in Jerusalem for drinking wine, and at the same time praised their false gods, thus desecrating the temple vessels. In Jeremiah 27:21 (God said these vessels would be brought back to the Temple. They are listed in Jeremiah 52:17-19). Note the order in verse 4: gold, silver, bronze, iron wood and stone. This is the same order as in Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel 2:32-34.

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall. 5:5. This was the judgement of God and it frightened the king. He called for his wise men to interpret the writing on the wall but they couldn't. The Queen remembered that Daniel could interpret it because *he has the spirit of the holy gods on him.* 5:11. She described Daniel in glowing terms. 5:11,12. What a testimony!

See other scriptures on "the finger of God" at Psalm 8:3, Exodus 8:19, 31:18, Deuteronomy 9:10, Luke 11:20 compared with Matthew 12:28.

Daniel interpreted the dream, but didn't want any reward from the King for doing so. He began by recounting the judgement of God on Nebuchadnezzar (5:18-21) and then rebuked the King for his pride and idolatry. *You did not honour the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways.* 5:23.

Mene means numbered.

Tekel means weighed.

Upharsin (and *parsin*) is the plural of *peres* meaning divided.

The King's days were numbered. His kingdom had been weighed up and was now going to be divided. *That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty two.* 5:30



This was the final judgement of God on Babylon and was fulfilled when the Medes and the Persians overcame Babylon in 538BC. (The Medo-Persian Empire was the silver breast and arms of Nebuchadnezzar's image. See 2:32). The downfall of Babylon is prophesied many times in Scripture e.g: Jeremiah Chapters 50,51, Isaiah Chapters 13,14, and 21. Its final end is described in Revelation 18.

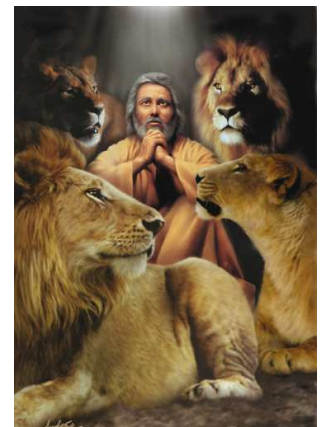
Chapter 6. Daniel in the lion's den

6:1-18 Under Darius the Mede, Daniel was further promoted and came to control the whole empire. This was because he had *exceptional qualities* including *no corruption... trustworthy... not negligent... faithful.* See 6:3-5. What a testimony to his character! Would that all the leaders of nations were like this. The other leaders were jealous of Daniel and realised they could not find any way of attacking him *unless it has something to do with the law of his God* 6:5. They got Darius to issue a decree that everyone had to pray to the king for thirty days. Anyone not doing so would be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel deliberately continued his prayer time, even though he knew the consequences. *Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.* 6:10. The king stood by his edict and reluctantly threw Daniel into the lion's den. He must have respected Daniel greatly because he fasted and prayed that God would deliver him. *May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you.* 6:16.

6:19-24. God sent an angel (Ps 34:7, 91:11) and delivered Daniel because he was blameless before Him. *My God sent his angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight.*

6:22. The king was overjoyed and recognised that Daniel was not hurt because he had trusted in his God. 6:23. This must have been a very convincing experience for the King. Josephus recounts that Daniel's enemies said the lions weren't hungry! The king threw them in to the lion's den and they found they were hungry after all! Daniel had stopped the mouths of the lions "by faith". Hebrews 11:33.

6:25-28 Darius then issued a decree that everyone in the kingdom *must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end. He rescues and He saves; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.* 6:26,27.



Daniel stood firm for the Lord and God protected him. The historical section of the book concludes with the decree that the whole empire should honour the true and living God. God had worked mightily during the time of the captivity: revealing Himself to the different Kings and to their people, and honouring his own people as they stood firm and honoured Him.

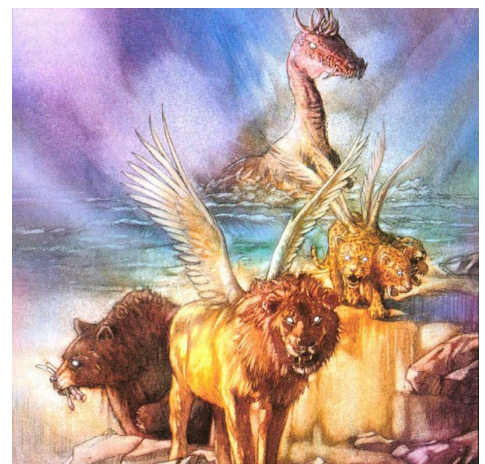
Prophetic section

Chapter 7. Vision of the four beasts

7:1-28. Daniel received a vision in the first year of Darius' reign. In effect, the vision is the same as the revelation that was given to Daniel when he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's image in Chapter 2. It is a prophecy covering the rest of history from the Babylonian era through to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Daniel saw four beasts coming up out of the sea. *The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. 7:17.*

- The **Lion** is Babylon centred on the man, Nebuchadnezzar.
- The **Bear** is Medo-Persia. Persia was greater than Media hence *raised up on one of its sides. 7:5* It conquered Babylon, Lydia and Egypt hence the *three ribs*.
- The **Leopard** is Greece which was divided into four kingdoms (Egypt, Macedonia, Thrace, Syria) hence the four wings and heads. This further explained in Chapter 8.
- The fourth **beast with iron teeth** is Rome, which conquered the then known world. It was *terrifying and frightening and very powerful. 7:7*. The fourth beast had 10 horns. This is a coalition that will arise in the last days in area of the Roman Empire. See Revelation 17:12-14.
- The **little horn** is the Antichrist who:
 - is a man 7:8.
 - will put down three kings 7:8, 24.
 - speaks against God 7:8, 25.
 - resists the Lord Jesus Christ and oppress His saints
 - attempts to control the world 7:25.
 - reigns for 3½ years (the tribulation) 7:25, See Revelation 13:5-8.
 - will be judged by God 7:v9,10,26.
 - will lose his power and be destroyed when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. 7:11-13, 27.

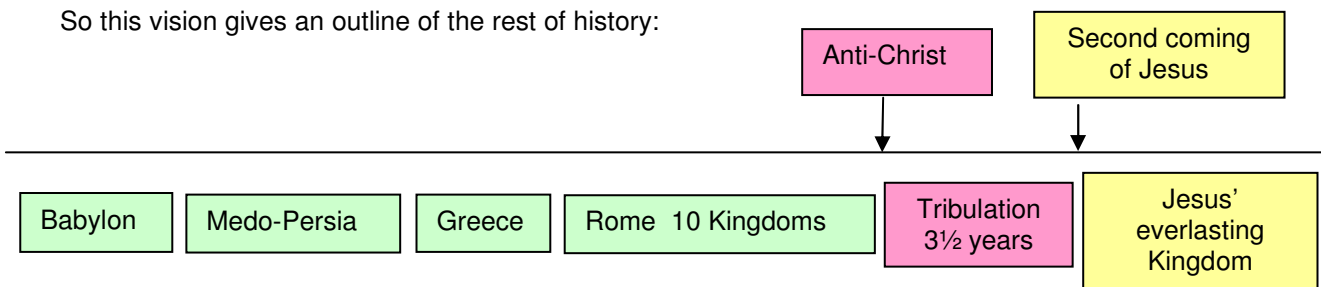


Ultimately, Jesus will be given dominion over everything! He will get all the glory, and all will serve Him when He sets up His everlasting Kingdom.

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. 7:13,14

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. 7:27

So this vision gives an outline of the rest of history:



In the vision Daniel was given a glimpse of the judgement that all will face when Jesus comes again:

As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. 7:9,10.

No wonder he was *deeply troubled* and his *face turned pale!* 7:28.

Chapter 8. Vision of the ram and the goat

8:1-27 Daniel was given this vision in the last year of the Babylonian Empire. It concerns the immediate future and, once again, its details were accurately fulfilled.

The vision was interpreted by the angel Gabriel (meaning *man of God*). The vision is for the *time of the end*. 8:17. Even though most of the prophecy was fulfilled soon afterwards there are aspects that relate to the Antichrist of the last days.

The **ram** is Medo-Persia. 8:20. One horn (Persia) was greater than the other one. *He did as he pleased and became great.* 8:4

The **goat** is Greece. 8:21. and the conspicuous horn is its first king: Alexander the Great (v21). He overran the known world in 12 years and became *very great*. 8:8. *But at the height of his power* 8:8 he died suddenly (at the age of just 33) and the Greek empire was divided into four:

- Egypt under Ptolemy 1.
- Macedonia under Antipater
- Thrace under Seleucus
- Syria under Antigonus



These are *four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.* 8:22

The **little horn** is Antiochus Epiphanes. *A stern-faced king, a master of intrigue will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does.* 8:23,24. Antiochus Epiphanes marched into Palestine (the *Beautiful Land* 8:9) and plundered and ravaged Jerusalem with terrible cruelty in 170 BC. For 3½ years the Jews were deprived of civil and religious liberty and were violently mistreated. On the 25th December 168 BC he offered a sow on the altar and sprinkled liquor throughout the temple. Jesus described this as being an abomination of desolation similar to that which will take place during the 3½ year reign of the Antichrist during the end times. *So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation', spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..... for then there will be great distress.* Matthew 24:15, 21. After this Jesus comes again! See Matthew 24:1-51.

A holy one asked how long it would take for the vision to be fulfilled – *the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot.* 8:13. *It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings, then the sanctuary will be re-consecrated.* 8:14. This is 3½ years. The same time period that is mentioned in Revelation as a *time and times and half a time* 12:14, or *1260 days.* 12:6.

The prophecy of the ram and the goat was accurately fulfilled through Medo-Persia, Greece, Alexander the Great, and Antiochus Epiphanes. Daniel received it by revelation but did not understand it (because that comes by inspiration). He was *exhausted and lay ill for several days.* He was *appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.* 8:27.

Chapter 9. The seventy weeks prophecy

9:1-3. In the first year of Darius' reign, Daniel realised that the captivity in Babylon was only to last for 70 years. See Jeremiah 25:8-14. This time was completed so Daniel *turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sack-cloth and ashes.* 9:3.

9:4-19. Daniel confessed his sin and the sin of his people in a model prayer of repentance. See 9:4-19.

The prayer included:

- acknowledgement of God's greatness and that He keeps His covenants. 9:4
- confession of specific sins (wickedness, rebellion, not listening to prophets, disobedience, lawlessness, turning from God, not seeking God, not paying attention to truth). 9:5,6,8-11,15.
- recognition that God is righteous, merciful and forgiving, but justified in punishing His people. 9:7-9, 11-14.
- asking God to hear, forgive, turn away His wrath, and move on behalf of His people. 9:15-18.
- recognition that God will only respond according to His mercy, and for the upholding of His name. 9:18,19.

This is the type of prayer that God hears and answers!

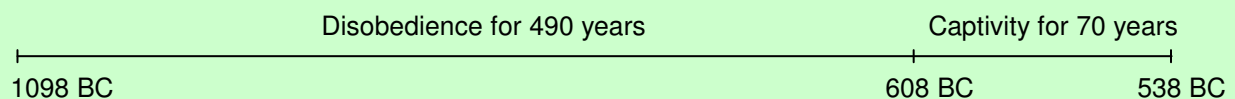
9:20-23. In response to the prayer the angel Gabriel was sent to give Daniel *insight and understanding*. 9:22. As soon as Daniel prayed an answer was given and it was the seventy weeks prophecy. God used this to explain to Daniel (and us!) what was about to happen immediately, and right through to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why were the Jews in captivity for 70 years?

The obvious reason is that the Jews were being punished for their sin in rejecting the Lord. See Jeremiah 25:8-14. Another reason is so that the land could have the sabbath rests that it had missed.

Every 7 years there was supposed to be a sabbatical in which the land was rested. See Leviticus 26:32-35. Israel had failed to do this and had missed 70 of these Sabbath rests. This must have been over a period of 490 years. (70x7). The disobedience started in 1098 BC when Israel rejected the Lord and chose Saul as King. They were taken into captivity in 608 BC, 490 years later. 70 years after this in 538 BC the captivity was due to end. By then the land would have rested for its required number of 70 sabbaths.

The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of the its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfilment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah. 2 Chronicles 36:21.



They will be taken to Babylon and there they will remain until the day I come for them, declares the Lord. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place. Jeremiah 27:22.

And that's exactly what happened!

9:24-27. The seventy weeks prophecy contains some of the most detailed and important prophecies in the whole Bible so we shall look at it in some detail and try to make sense of its interpretation. Remember that this is just one way of interpreting the prophecy. There are lots of other interpretations linked to various theories of end-time events!

The length of time that the prophecy is concerned with is *seventy 'sevens'* 9:24a (or '*seventy weeks of years*' RSV) i.e. 490 years. (Many times in Scripture a day is used to represent a year e.g. Leviticus 25:8, Genesis 29:2,7,28, Ezekiel 4:5,6, Numbers 14:31).

The period of 490 years is *decreed*. God has set His timing for history.

The prophecy relates to *your people and your holy city*. 9:24a. The prophecy is for God's people and for the Holy City, Jerusalem.

The purpose is for six important things to happen. 9:24b.

- *to finish transgression*. (unfulfilled)
- *to put an end to sin*. (unfulfilled)
- *to atone for wickedness*. (fulfilled at the Cross)
- *to bring in everlasting righteousness*. (unfulfilled)

Jesus died on the Cross to make atonement for sin, to put an end to sin, and to bring in righteousness. Because of the atonement Christians are now righteous in God's sight. (2 Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 1:22). Those outside of Christ, however, continue in their sinful ways. Sin will be finally judged and a *new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness* 2 Peter 3:13 will be established when Jesus comes again.

- *to seal up vision and prophecy.* (unfulfilled. Visions and prophecy will continue through till Jesus comes again. See 1 Corinthians 13:8-10).
- *to anoint the most holy.* (unfulfilled. The most holy place in the tabernacle measured 10 x 10 x 10 cubits. i.e. 1000 cubic cubits. When Jesus returns there will be a 1000 year period of peace on earth - the millennium – after which He will set up the New Jerusalem. See Revelation Chapters 20-22). This will bring in a most holy place.

So one of the six events that were prophesied was fulfilled at the Cross (atonement for sin), some were partially fulfilled at the Cross (dealing with sin and bringing in of righteousness), and all will be completely fulfilled when Jesus returns at the Second Coming.

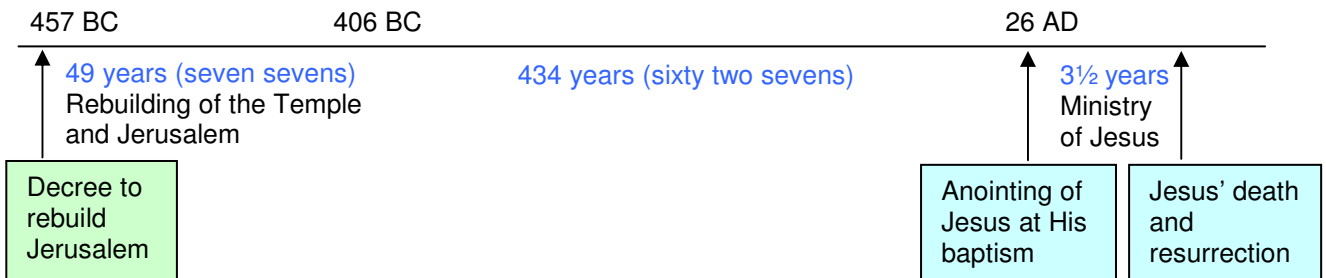
The timing of the prophecy is important and is spelled out clearly. It covers a *period from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven sevens, and sixty two sevens.* 9:25.

The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given under Artaxerxes, King of Persia in 457 BC. See Ezra 7:11-28 and 9:9. The rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem took 46 years. See John 2:20. With another 3 years for the walls it took a total of 49 years to rebuild Jerusalem. i.e. *seven sevens*. It was *rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.* See the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah for a description of the rebuilding programme. The Temple in Jerusalem had to be re-built before Messiah came. See Malachi 3:1.

From the time of the rebuilding of the Temple till the coming of the Anointed One (or Messiah) would be another *sixty two sevens* i.e. 434 years. This means that Messiah would be anointed in 26 AD.

So here we have a remarkable prophecy giving the exact date of the anointing of Jesus as Messiah, at the beginning of His 3½ year ministry. We know that Jesus was born in 4 BC (The calendar is about 4 years out) so in 26 AD Jesus would have been 30 years old.

The word *Messiah* means Anointed One (Hebrew). In Greek it is *Christ*, from the word for oil *chrism*. Jesus of Nazareth was anointed as Messiah/Christ at His baptism when the Holy Spirit came upon Him as a dove. See John 1:32,33,40,41, Acts 10:38. Jesus then began His 3½ year period of ministry on earth. He was aged 30. Luke 3:23.



Prophecy of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The seventieth week is concerned with the ministry of Jesus Christ, particularly to the Jews. *He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'.* 9:27. God's special covenant with the Jews was partly fulfilled when He sent Jesus as Messiah to be the Saviour of the world, partly fulfilled when Jesus died and rose again as the way of salvation, and will be completely fulfilled in the end times when Jesus returns. See Romans 15:8, Hebrews 13:20.

In the end times God will restore Israel so she will acknowledge Jesus as her Messiah. See Isaiah 62; Jeremiah Chapters 30 and 31; Ezekiel 37:26-28, Matthew 24, Romans 9-11. When Jesus returns He will return to Israel and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. Zechariah 14:4. This will be during a time of great tribulation as many nations attack Jerusalem, but the Lord will fight for her and triumph so that He will be King over the whole earth. On that day there will be only one Lord, and His name the only name. See Zechariah Chapter 14.

The full purpose of God is to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ. This includes all of God's people: Jews, Gentiles, males, females, slaves and free. All are *one in Christ Jesus*. Ephesians 1:9,10, Galatians 3:26-28. This will take place in a *new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* 2 Peter 3:13. See Revelation Chapter 21.

After the sixty two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. 9:26a. Messiah (Jesus) would be *cut off*. i.e. crucified. (See Isaiah 53:8 where the death of Messiah is described as *cut off from the land of the living*). This took place after the sixty two 'sevens', in other words during the seventieth week.

In the middle of the 'seven' He will put an end to sacrifice and offering. Jesus died on the Cross 3½ years after He was anointed for ministry. His death on the Cross caused sacrifice and offering to cease because He was the perfect sacrifice. See Hebrew 7:27, 9:26, 10:12, John 1:29.

So the first half of Daniel's seventieth week is concerned with the anointing, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. He is the way of salvation for the Jews and for all peoples.

Prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood. War will continue to the end, and desolations have been decreed. 9:26. The ruler who will come is the Antichrist who will be on the earth during the second half of the seventieth week i.e. during the 3½ year "Tribulation". The *people of the ruler who is to come* are the Romans and they will *destroy the city and the sanctuary*. This was fulfilled in AD 70 when Titus attacked Jerusalem during the Passover, destroying the whole city and pulling the Temple down, stone by stone. A million Jews were killed and 95,000 were taken captive. Their house was left *desolate*. See Luke 19:41-45, Matthew 23:38.

The second half of Daniel's seventieth week is concerned with events just before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will be a time of great tribulation.

Prophecy of abominations

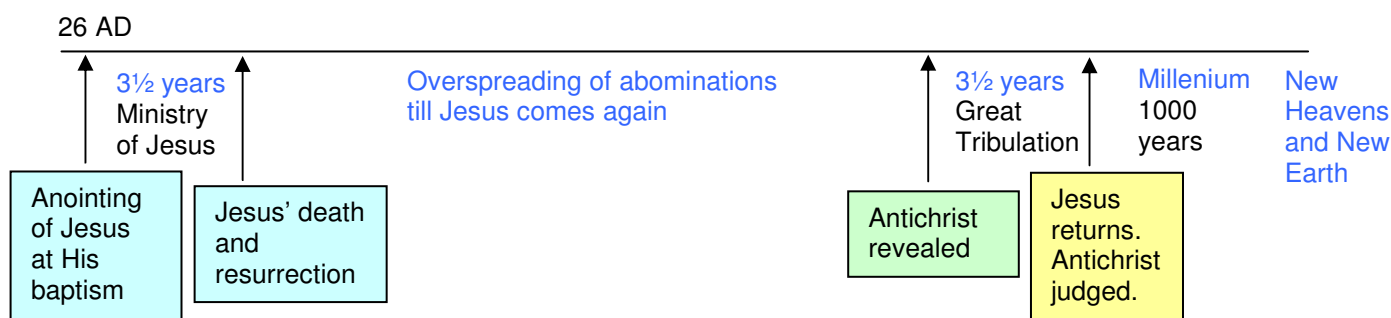
And on the wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that cause desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. 9:27b (The original translated here *on the wing of the temple* is not clear and is translated differently in other versions eg. *overspreading of abominations* (KJV), *on the wing of abominations*. (NKJV).

The abomination was caused by the Jew's rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah. They repaired the veil of the Temple and continued to make sacrifices. This is an abomination to God because He has gave His Son to be the one sacrifice for sins. See Hebrews 7:27, 9:26, Psalm 51:16,17. This abomination has continued (overspread) and will continue till the *consummation* (KJV) or the end of the Tribulation. At this time the one that *causes desolation* (i.e. the Antichrist) will be revealed.

Jesus said that when we see this happening there will be a time of great tribulation. *So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation', spoken of by the prophet Daniel - then there will times of great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equalled again.* And then after this will be *the coming of the Son of Man*. See Matthew 24:15-51.

The Book of Revelation also describes it as a period of great tribulation lasting for a *42 months* 11:2, *1260 days* 12:6, *a time and times and half a time*,12:14. i.e. a 3½ year period. This period of great tribulation is the second half of the seventieth week. During this time God will speak to Israel and seek to bring her back to Himself. It will culminate in the judgement of the Antichrist, and of all sinners when *the end that is decreed is poured out*. 9:27. See Revelation Chapters 4-20.

After this God will bring in the New Jerusalem. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.* Revelation 21:1-3.



Chapter 10. The Vision of God

10:1-3. Daniel received a revelation in the third year of King Cyrus. *It concerned a great war.* 10:1. The revelation was so significant Daniel *mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.* This kind of fasting has come to be known as a 'Daniels fast'. It was not a total fast. Daniel simply went without certain delicacies. His basic needs of food and water were met, but he went without the extras, as he waited on God. This is a kind of fast that all can do!

10:4-9. Daniel saw a vision of *a man.* 10:5. The man is very similar to the One (Jesus) seen in John's vision in Revelation 1:12-18 so may well have been a vision of Christ. What a privilege to have a personal vision of the glory of God! The effect on Daniel was so great that he lost all his strength (just as Ezekiel did in a similar vision of God. See Ezekiel 1:28).

10:10-21. An angel touched Daniel and enabled him to kneel and then to stand and regain his strength. The angel could have been Gabriel, who has a ministry similar to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in helping God's people today. The angel was sent to:

- strengthen Daniel in his physical body
- bring God's words to him v12.
- help him understand the things to come v14.
- enable him to speak v18
- encourage and strengthen him v19
- fight against the Princes of Persia and Greece.

Note how Daniel's experience of God developed throughout his life. As he matured God was able to reveal more of His glory to him:

- In Chapter 2 and 4 Daniel was an interpreter of dreams.
- In Chapter 7 he received a vision in a dream.
- In Chapter 8 he received a vision while awake.
- In Chapter 9 Gabriel brought him a direct revelation.
- In Chapter 10 the Lord reveals Himself to him.

This is a good example of spiritual warfare in which there is "wrestling against principalities and powers". See Ephesians 6:4. When Daniel prayed God heard immediately v12 and the angel was sent in response, *but the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me for twenty-one days.* v13. Gabriel had to fight to get through with the answer and Michael was sent to help. This shows there was serious spiritual opposition in place, just as there is significant opposition to the work of God today. We need to pray that principalities and powers over our country would be put down (through prayer, intercession, ministry of the Holy Spirit, angels, praise, etc.) so that God's anointed authority can rule. Only then shall we see real spiritual revival in the land. See 2 Chronicles 7:14.

The angel explained that he would return to fight against the prince of Persia, and after that the prince of Greece would come. This happened exactly as was prophesied when Persia fell and the Greek Empire began. v20.

Chapter 11. Revelation of the future

11:1-20. These verses are a very specific and detailed prophecy concerning the history of Persia and Greece. Three Persian Kings will arise followed by a wealthy fourth King. The Persian Kings were Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and the rich Xerxes. After this a *mighty king* of Greece would arise who will *rule with great power and do as he pleases*, but his kingdom would be divided into four. This was Alexander the Great. His kingdom was divided into Egypt, Macedonia, Thrace and Syria.

Next there is a specific description of battles between the King of the South and the King of the North. Initially they will be allies, but the relationship will break down and the South will attack the North and carry its gods off to Egypt. Some years later the North will invade the South but be defeated. The North will re-group and come with a huge army to overcome the South. *The invader will do as he pleases; no-one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have then power to destroy it.* 11:16. After this there will be a shaky alliance and then he will turn his attention

The King of the South was Ptolemy Lagidae, who seized Egypt, and the King of the North was Seleucus I, who seized Syria, Babylon and Media. The alliance between the North and the South came through the marriage of Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus to Antiochus Theos, the third king of Syria. The South attacked the North when Berenice's brother Ptolemy Euergetes invaded Syria to avenge her murder. Later, Antiochus the Great, from the North, attacked the South but was defeated by Ptolemy III of Egypt. He tried again fourteen years later and defeated Ptolemy V. There was a weak alliance when Antiochus' daughter married Ptolemy, but this soon fell apart.

to the coast lands, but will ultimately die out. 11:21-45. At verse 21 the prophecy begins to describe one of the most infamous characters of history: Antiochus Epiphanes, *a contemptible person who has not been given the honour of royalty*. 11:21. Verses 21-34 describe Antiochus' rise to power from the North, his campaigns against Egypt and then his attack upon Israel where he *will vent his fury against the holy covenant*. v30. He will desecrate the temple, abolish the daily sacrifice and set up the *abomination that causes desolation*. v31. In the midst of such terrible persecution we read *but the people who know their God will firmly resist him (or be strong and do exploits*. KJV). v32. Some will resist him and be purified; others will be corrupted.

Antiochus will *do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods*. v36. That's a recipe for disaster as *pride goes before destruction*. Proverbs: 16:18. He will take over nations from the North and South in violence but ultimately *he will come to his end, and no-one will help him*. v45.

The people of God did stand firm against Antiochus and with help from the Maccabees were able to rededicate the temple after 2300 days. See Daniel 8:14.

Chapter 12. Conclusion.

12:1-4. These verses describe what will happen in the end times when Michael, the great prince of Israel, arises on her behalf.

- *There will be a time of great distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then*. v1. This is the great tribulation that Jesus described in Matthew 24:15-51.
- *But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered*. V1. See Revelation 20:11-15. There will be salvation for Jews and Gentiles: all who have called on the name of the Lord. See Romans 10:13.
- *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt*. v2. This is the resurrection from the dead when all who have lived will be raised to life and stand before God to be judged. See 1 Corinthians 15: 12-57 and Revelation Chapter 20.
- *Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever*. v3. This is the reward that those who have lived for Jesus will receive in the New Heavens and the New Earth. See Revelation Chapters 21 and 22. We will shine as stars forever! Hallelujah! Amen!

Notice the similarity between what is stated here and previous prophecies that Daniel received about what was to happen in the end times. Also notice the similarity between what is described here and the prophecies in Joel, the Book of Revelation, Jesus' discourses, and the writings in the Epistles. The Bible gives a consistent eschatological message that Jesus is coming again, and will set up a new Kingdom in which righteousness dwells. *In keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness*. 2 Peter 3:13.



Antiochus Epiphanes is very like the Antichrist who will emerge just before Jesus returns.

The Antichrist will:

- arise from nations which were part of the Greek and Roman empires. See Daniel 8:8-12.
- persecute the saints of God. See Revelation Chapters 6-19.
- create a time of great tribulation and set up the abomination that causes desolation. See Matthew 24:15-51.
- use force to set himself up as God. See 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4.
- be judged by God and come to an end. See Revelation Chapter 20.

Do we need to fear the Antichrist and what will happen in the time of tribulation before Jesus returns? No! Antiochus Epiphanes was ultimately defeated and so will the Antichrist. Jesus will come again in power and will overcome him, setting up the New Heavens and the New Earth in which *the old order of things has passed away*. Revelation 21:4.

But we will need to be like the faithful saints of old under persecution: *but the people who know their God will firmly resist him (or be strong and do exploits*. KJV).

Daniel was to close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge. v4. The Book of Daniel has remained a misunderstood and closed book for centuries. But in these last days God is opening it up to His people so they can understand it. Knowledge (through the internet) is increasing rapidly, (including knowledge of God's Word) so the things that Daniel writes about are close at hand. We must be prepared!

12:5-12. Daniel saw two others and one asked *How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?* 12:6. The answer was *It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.* 12:7. Daniel didn't understand and was told *Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.* 12:9-10. The timing was then clarified further: *From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1335 days.* 12:11,12.

So from the time that the Antichrist sets up the abomination of desolation there will be a 3½ year period (the great tribulation) in which God will deal with His holy people, the Jews. Some will accept Christ and some won't, but this will be their final opportunity to come to God. 3½ years is 1260 days but the prophecy describes 1290 days (3½ years plus one month) till all this is completed. This is because much will have to be done: the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth, burying of the dead, judgement of the nations, casting of satan into the pit, cleaning up, etc. Those who wait till 1335 days (3½ years plus 2½ months) will be blessed. This extra time will be due to a complete reorganisation of the earth and its inhabitants as the millennium gets under way.

Jesus Christ brought the first half of Daniel's 70th week to a close when He died on the Cross. This happened at the time of the Passover on the 14th day of Nissan in the Jewish calendar. *Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.* 1 Corinthians 5:7. Through His death on the Cross Jesus brought in the new covenant whereby anyone could be saved – Jews or Gentiles – and have eternal life. *We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.* Hebrews 10:10. *Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* Acts 2:21.

If the second half of Daniel's 70th week were to continue on from the 15th day of Nissan the 3½ year tribulation would end in the seventh month, Tishri, during Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. This Feast celebrates the harvest and it would be appropriate for Jesus to return at this time of the year as He brings in the harvest of people from all times who have been saved.

12:13 The Book of Daniel finishes with a note of assurance for Daniel, and for us. *As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.*

Knowing all these things are to come to pass and knowing that we belong to Jesus Christ we can rest assured that one day (soon?) we will receive our allotted inheritance along with God's people from throughout the ages in eternity with Jesus!



But for now. Will you “dare to be a Daniel”?

Discussion questions

1. The meaning of names was much more significant in Bible times than it is today. What were the meanings of the names of the characters in the Book of Daniel, and what was the significance of changes to these names? Why did Daniel and his three friends resist the changes made to their names?
2. Why were God's people taken into captivity in Babylon? How did this affect the people of the Northern and Southern kingdoms? What was God's purpose in sending them into captivity? What did the captivity achieve for the God's people? Does God still do this kind of thing today?
3. In Babylon Daniel found himself in many extreme circumstances. At different times he was specially chosen as an adviser to Kings, thrown into jail, persecuted, raised up into positions of leadership and power, thrown into a fiery furnace, had revelations of God etc. At all times he *acted* with integrity and *reacted* in a way that was true to his relationship with God. Review the Book of Daniel in terms of Daniel's actions and reactions. What lessons can we learn from this when we are raised up and put down in the course of our lives?

4. One of the important messages that the Book of Daniel communicates is that *The Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes*. 5:21 i.e. the sovereignty of God. Identify all passages in the Book that demonstrate God's sovereignty from Daniel's time right through to today. What are the implications of God's sovereignty on how we live our lives today?
5. King Nebuchadnezzar had a number of extraordinary revelations of God in which he acknowledged the true God. In each situation he soon fell back into his normal idolatrous state. Why do you think this happened? What is there about being in power that makes people so vulnerable to rejecting of God and building up of themselves in importance? How can we guard against this so that God has His rightful place in our lives?
6. Draw a timeline from 700 BC through to the time of the great tribulation, millennium and the New Heavens and the New Earth. Record each of the prophecies in the Book of Daniel on this timeline in terms of what it says will happen, who it will apply to, and its purpose. Use this to create a statement of what the Book of Daniel (as a whole) says will happen in future history. What do you learn from this:
 - about God's purposes for mankind?
 - about prophecy and its interpretation?
 - about what is likely to happen in the future?
 - about how we should live knowing what is going to happen in the future?
7. The seventy weeks prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 is one of the most specific and important prophecies in the Bible. Its interpretation has influenced many of the theories that different Christians hold about events that will take place in the end times before Jesus comes again. (especially about the 70th week, where many theories suggest that there will be a 7 year tribulation rather than the 3½ years as described in the theory above). Research a different interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this theory, and of the theory given above? What do you learn from this about principles for interpretation of prophecy.
8. What do you learn about the nature, character and heart of God from the Book of Daniel?