

# THE BOOK OF DANIEL

What's the first thing to pop into your mind when you hear the name *Daniel*? The fiery furnace. Lion's den. Visions. Prophecies. Angels. Demons. Handwriting on the wall. Listen to O.S. Hawkins's take on Daniel. . .

**“The story of Daniel is the story of a man who understands our challenges. It is the story of someone who was confronted with the same difficulties and hard decisions that we are called upon to make every day.... God took Daniel out of a comfortable culture where he had been all his life and placed him in a godless environment. There's a sense in which the same thing has happened in our world today. We no longer live in the midst of a culture that shares our convictions. We have lost the home court advantage.... Daniel speaks to us from the pages of Scripture. He has a lot to say to us today. He provides a lot of do's and don'ts for not simply surviving in an anti-Christian culture but succeeding and truly engaging it to make a long-term difference.”** O.S. Hawkins, Culture Shock: Advice From Daniel For Addressing Today's Culture, pp. 18-19.

It shouldn't surprise us that among persecuted believers around the world two of the most favored books in the Bible are Daniel and Revelation. This is because both teach that in the end our God wins and that the best is yet to come for the believer.<sup>1</sup>

## Why study the book of Daniel?

First, Daniel's circumstances parallel our own. This is what Hawkins alluded to in his book. Think about it. From the time he was a teenager until he died around the age of 90, he served under a series of pagan kings. He never had

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 4.

the luxury of living in a country surrounded by people who believed as he did. From this book we can draw some helpful principles for how to live for the Lord when the pressure to compromise is unrelenting.

*Second, Daniel's prophecies concerning the end times may soon be fulfilled.* One thing is for sure. We are approximately 2600 years closer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom than when Daniel wrote his book.

*Third, Daniel highlights the fact that God is sovereign.* He's sovereign over nations. He's sovereign over kings and rulers. He's sovereign over families and individuals. He is in charge of the past, the present, and the future. He never makes a mistake! It's important for us to remember this.

## **The Setting for the Book of Daniel**

I'm indebted to Ray Pritchard for the following concise depiction of some important contextual facts.

- Daniel lived approximately 400 years after David and 600 years before Jesus.
- When the book opens, we find Daniel and his friends being forcibly taken from their homes in Jerusalem and deported to Babylon.
- Babylon in the Bible is always a symbol for evil and a world system of paganism. What starts with the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 comes to a climax in Revelation 17-18 as the entire world system is finally destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ.
- The book of Daniel covers the period 605 BC to about 530 BC.
- In the beginning Daniel is a teenager, approximately 15 years old. When the book closes, he is about 90 years old.
- During his life God allowed him to serve under a succession of Babylonian and Persian rulers.

- From being an imported hostage, he becomes a trusted prime minister and counselor to some of the mightiest rulers in world history.



Listen to these words—***“The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.” (2 Chronicles 16:9)*** Does the Lord bless some people more than others?

I believe there are people whom God literally pours out His blessings upon. He does this not because these individuals are more gifted, more prosperous, better looking, or more deserving. No, God’s standard is the heart. The heart refers to the center of one’s physical, mental, emotional, volitional, and spiritual life. Listen to the Word on this matter...

**Proverbs 4:23**—“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

**1 Samuel 13:14**—“...The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart.”

**Matthew 5:8**—“Blessed are the pure in heart.”

**Matthew 22:37**—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

We serve a great and awesome God! He knows our hearts and searches them to see if we are worthy of His overflowing blessing. Let me ask you, are you worthy? Is your heart completely His?

The southern kingdom of Judah had rebelled against the one, true God. Idolatry and immorality were rampant among God’s covenant people. Through the prophets, God had repeatedly warned His people of severe judgment. By the sovereign hand of the Lord, the nation of Babylon was raised up to be the instrument of God’s judgment.

In 605 BC, their army took captives from the Israel and carried them to the great city that Nebuchadnezzar had built, of course I'm referring to the city of *Babylon*. This was the first of three invasions/deportations. The others occurred in 597 BC and 586 BC.

As part of Nebuchadnezzar's policy for dealing with conquered nations, he took some of the brightest and wisest Hebrew young people and included them in that first deportation. Among that group were 4 especially committed and gifted Jewish teenagers. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Think about it. They were ripped away from their families, from their culture, from their religion, and transported to a strange new land with a new language, new customs, a new political system, new laws, and a new religion. It must have been absolutely overwhelming. John Lennox observed:

***“What would become of that vision (that God had embedded in His covenant people) if Jerusalem were to be sacked and the lineage of David eliminated? Would the promise of Messiah have to be relegated to the bulging dustbin of failed utopian ideas? What about God Himself? Could He, so to speak, survive such a failure? How could Daniel and his friends any longer believe that there was a God who had revealed Himself to their nation in a special way? If God is real, how could a pagan emperor like Nebuchadnezzar violate the sanctity of God's unique temple and get away with it? Why did God do nothing?”***

**Why did God do nothing?”** John Lennox, *Against The Flow: The Inspiration Of Daniel In An Age Of Relativism*, p. 8.

I want you to pay close attention to the opening lines of Daniel's inspired book:

**Daniel 1:1–2... In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to**

the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

The first thing Daniel reveals about God is that He is sovereign. It's the Lord who gave Jehoiakim into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. It's the Lord who allowed this pagan king to take some of the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem and to deposit them in the temple of his false god. What a startling claim this is.

**To say that God is intimately involved in history, even sovereign over it, was a radical, in-your-face challenge to the secularists of Daniel's day and our day also.**

In these verses, Daniel establishes the clear theme for his Spirit-inspired book and that is the universal sovereignty of God. We will see it in several passages:

**Daniel 2:20...** Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him.

**Daniel 2:37...** "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory.

**Daniel 4:17...** "This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men."

**Daniel 5:18...** "O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father."

David Jeremiah wrote:

**"All the ancient kingdoms of the world are passing away, and the kingdom of heaven is coming to pass. Throughout the world, the Most High reigns.**

As this old world reels and rocks on its axis, it is good to remember that it only does so because the God of heaven lets it happen. All the ancient kingdoms of the world are mere illustrations of the frailty of mankind and fickleness of human government. They demonstrate that there is only one King who can ever rule, and that is King Jesus. One day He is coming back to this messed-up world, and He is going to set up His kingdom. It will never again be like it is now. Jesus shall rule and reign forever and forever! That's the message of Daniel. David Jeremiah, The Handwriting on the Wall, Volume 1, p. 14.

**Daniel 2:44...** "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."

**Daniel 7:13–14...** "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. **14** "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed."