

Introduction to the Book of Daniel

As we begin our study of the Book of Daniel, I want you to know that this book stands among the most remarkable and compelling writings in all of Scripture. It is unique for many reasons. For example, Sir Robert Anderson—head of Scotland Yard, later knighted, and author of the classic *The Coming Prince* (1894)—conducted research on Daniel that remains astonishing. His careful analysis of Daniel's prophetic timelines demonstrates not only the miraculous precision of Scripture but also the undeniable reliability of Jesus Christ's claims.

Daniel is both apologetic and prophetic. It stands like an immovable pillar in biblical revelation, showing that those who honestly examine its contents cannot disprove the Bible's accuracy. This makes Daniel one of the most rewarding studies in the entire Word of God.

Why Read and Study Daniel?

There are several compelling reasons.

First, because Daniel reveals, with unmatched clarity, the entire sweep of Gentile world history—before it occurs. Scripture usually presents world events through the lens of God's covenant people, Israel. But Daniel offers a rare and panoramic view of God's purposes for the nations.

Second, because Daniel contains sections written not only in Hebrew but also in Aramaic—the international Gentile language of that era. One entire chapter was written by Nebuchadnezzar himself, the most powerful ruler of his day. He wrote it, published it, and circulated it throughout his empire.

Third, because Daniel is one of the most thoroughly authenticated books of Scripture. As we read through Daniel we will be spared countless pages of textual criticism and archaeological debate, we will discover information that confirm Daniel's reliability. And when we reach Daniel chapter nine, we will read one passage so precise, so mathematically exact, and so staggering in its implications that it stands as an unanswerable demonstration that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. His resurrection proves Him to be God, Savior, and Lord.

The Nature of the Bible Itself

Before we go further, we must recognize something foundational. The Bible is a collection of 66 books, written by more than 40 authors, over thousands of years, yet it forms one unified message. This unity goes far beyond a shared theme. It is visible in the structure, patterns, numbers, place names, and even the linguistic details.

Once we recognize Scripture's integrated design, we realize that the Bible's origin must be outside the limitations of our physical universe—outside of time itself. There is no other religious text on earth capable of demonstrating that.

Background: Languages and Textual Transmission

The Old Testament was originally written primarily in Hebrew, with significant sections—including parts of Daniel—written in Aramaic.

By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Hebrew Scriptures were already being organized into a recognized body of sacred writings.

A vital historical fact must be remembered:

Around 285 B.C., the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek—the Septuagint—under Ptolemy Philadelphus. Seventy-two Jewish scholars in Alexandria, the literary center of the ancient world, spent roughly fifteen years producing this translation because Greek had become the universal language following Alexander the Great's conquests.

The Septuagint predates the later standardized Hebrew Masoretic Text. In fact, most Old Testament quotations in the New Testament come from the Septuagint, not the Masoretic tradition.

This is especially important for Daniel because:

- Daniel was already translated into Greek three centuries before Christ.
- The Jewish community at that time accepted Daniel as canonical Scripture.

These facts make it impossible for honest historians to claim that Daniel was written after the events it predicts—unless they set aside history altogether.

No other biblical book has been verified as extensively by history.

When Alexander the Great entered Jerusalem in 332 B.C., the high priest Jaddua (Joshua) showed him the prophecies about him recorded in Daniel. Josephus reports that Alexander spared Jerusalem because of this.

Archaeologically, the German scholar Robert Koldewey excavated Babylon before World War I and identified the very banquet hall described in Daniel chapter 5—the room where the mysterious handwriting appeared on the wall. Saddam Hussein would later rebuild large parts of ancient Babylon, including areas connected to Daniel's account.

Many details that critics once declared inaccurate have been verified repeatedly through archaeology. In several cases, Daniel's descriptions were so exact that they could only have come from someone who witnessed these events firsthand.

Jesus and Daniel

If you trust Jesus Christ—who shed His blood on the cross for your salvation and rose again as undeniable proof of His deity—then Daniel's authenticity follows naturally. Jesus quoted from Daniel, affirmed his prophecies, and called him "Daniel the prophet."

The Structure of the Book

Daniel divides clearly into two major sections:

1. Chapters 1–6 — Historical Narrative
2. Chapters 7–12 — Prophetic Visions

Though the book is sequential, the visions in chapters 7 and 8 occur chronologically between chapters 4 and 5, while chapter 9 belongs between chapters 5 and 6. The final visions (chapters 10–12) complete the book.

Historical Background Leading to the Exile

After Solomon's death, Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. The Assyrian Empire eventually collapsed when Nineveh fell in 612 B.C., and the rising powers of Babylon and Media filled the vacuum.

In 609 B.C., Pharaoh Necho marched north against Assyria. King Josiah of Judah inexplicably tried to oppose him and was killed. Scripture hints that the Ark of the Covenant may already have been removed for safeguarding, possibly to Egypt's Elephantine Island. Later Ethiopian history and tradition suggest that it eventually traveled to Lake Tana and then Aksum, where many believe it remains today.

Three years later, in 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho at the Battle of Carchemish, marking the beginning of the Babylonian Empire.

On his return home, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem—the first of three invasions. Daniel and three other teenagers, probably twelve to fifteen years old and all of royal lineage, were taken captive. These were not ordinary boys; they were exceptionally gifted young men.

This first siege began the seventy years of the servitude of the nation, a judgment foretold in Second Chronicles 36 because Israel had failed to observe the sabbatical years for 490 years.

Judah's repeated rebellion against Babylon led to a second siege and ultimately a third, which resulted in the destruction of the temple and the beginning of the desolations of Jerusalem—another seventy-year period, distinct from the servitude of the nation.