

The Book of Daniel¹

Lesson 1

Daniel Chapter 1 who
606 BC to 605 BC

The Book of Daniel can be divided into two sections. Chapters 1 – 6 represent Daniel's interaction in the lives of three rulers throughout a period of 70 years.²

Section One

Daniel's Interaction with Kings

Chapter 1	Daniel's Service	606 BC
Chapter 2	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Statue	604 BC
Chapter 3	Nebuchadnezzar's Image of Gold	585 BC
Chapter 4	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree	After 585 BC
	<i>Fulfilled 12 months after dream and lasted 7 years</i>	
Chapter 5	Belshazzar's Feast	536 BC
Chapter 6	Darius' Lion's Den	536 BC

Chapter 7 -12 represent Daniel's interaction with God over a period of 18 years.

Section Two

Daniel's Interaction with God

Chapter 7	Daniel's Vision – Four Great Beasts	539 BC
Chapter 8	Daniel's Vision – Ram and Goat	536 BC
Chapter 9	Daniel's Study – Seventy Years	536 BC
Chapter 10	Daniel's Vision –The Lord and Israel's Future	533 BC
Chapter 11	Daniel's Prophecy – Future Rulers	521 BC
Chapter 12	Continuation of Chapter 11	521 BC

How do we know the dates for each chapter? The opening lines of some of the chapters give enough information to determine the date.

Chapter 1	"the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim"	606 BC
Chapter 2	"in the second year of ... Nebuchadnezzar"	604 BC
Chapter 7	"In the first year of Belshazzar"	539 BC
Chapter 8	"In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar"	536 BC
Chapter 9	"In the first year of Darius"	536 BC
Chapter 10	"In the third year of Cyrus"	533 BC
Chapter 11	"in the first year of Darius the Mede"	521 BC

World history documents and confirms all of the dates given above. How do we date chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 12?

Chapter 3	Nebuchadnezzar's Image of Gold	585 BC
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² Daniel actually serves with the kings of Babylon and Persia from 606 BC to 531 BC, 85 years.

The footnoted passages indicate that after Nebuchadnezzar places Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in charge of the Babylonian Kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar leaves Babylon to capture more land for his empire.³ It takes until his 23 year as king to bring all the surrounding nations under his control. Nebuchadnezzar is not in Babylon long enough to have the image of gold built under his leadership, nor the famous hanging gardens, until after the total destruction of Jerusalem on Sunday Morning, August IV, 586 BC. He, with his army and all the last exiles, will not return to Babylon until the turn of the year, 585 BC. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar settles down to live in the kingdom under his control.

Chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree After 585/584 BC

The dream of the tree occurs some time after 585 BC when Nebuchadnezzar is back at home. The golden image fiasco with the three Hebrew men in the fire is over in 585 or 584. The fulfillment of the tree dream will not start until 12 months after the prophecy and it will last for seven years at which point Nebuchadnezzar will be reinstated as kings over Babylon. However, Nebuchadnezzar dies in 562 BC, indicating that the dream of a tree cannot occur before 571 BC or he will have died before the eight-year process is over. The Scripture says in Daniel 4:36,

"At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me."

Surely his surpassing greatness is not added to him in just a year or two. Most likely, the eight-year incident occurs between 585 BC and 567 BC.

Chapter 5 Belshazzar's Feast 536 BC

World history substantiates the fact that the date of Cyrus' overthrow of the Babylonian Empire that occurs on the day of Belshazzar's feast in 536 BC.

Chapter 6 Darius' Lion's Den After 536 BC

Several Darius' appear in the record. This Darius is Cyrus' second in command, his administrator. Cyrus is a Persian and Darius is a Mede. It is Darius, at age 62, that breaks into Belshazzar's Feast and captures the Babylonian Empire for Cyrus. Darius shares great power with Cyrus and is placed over the Babylonian area where Daniel lives. Why do we believe it is this Darius instead of "Darius, the son of Ahasuerus," mentioned in Daniel 9:1? It is because the end of chapter 6 mentions this Darius and Cyrus together when it says,

"So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." World history does not tell us the exact person associated with this Darius although he is mentioned in the pages of the Jewish historian, Josephus."⁴

Chapter 12 Continuation of Chapter 11 521 BC

³ 2 Kings 24 – 25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah, Chapters 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 37, 39, 43, 44, 46, 49, 50, 51, and 52

⁴ Daniel 6:28

Chapter 11 is dated as "in the first year of Darius the Mede," or 521 BC. With the chapter break, the opening of chapter 12 says, "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise." It is an indication that it is a continuation of chapter 11 and represents a poor chapter break that is inserted in the Scriptures in the 1450's AD. Therefore, chapter 12 is given to Daniel at the same time as chapter 11, in 521 BC.

Most studies start with Daniel chapter 1 and proceeds through to Daniel chapter 12. In this study, we will discover the message of Daniel in chronological order according to when the event or initial prophecy occurs or given. Therefore, we will study the Book of Daniel in the following order.

Chronological Order of Events and Initial Prophecies in the Book of Daniel

Chapter 1	Daniel's Service	606 BC
Chapter 2	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Statue	604 BC
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Chapter 4	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree	After 585 BC
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Because history has fulfilled most of Daniel's, within each chapter study we will discover the historical timing of the fulfillment of each point given in Daniel's Scripture.

Biblical Background

Leading up to Daniel Chapter 1

Josiah, Southern King - 640 BC

With King Amon's murder in 640 BC, they place his six-year-old son, Josiah, on the throne in the Southern Kingdom. He is a good king and he rules 31 years.⁵

Nebuchadnezzar Destroys Nineveh – 612 BC

In 612 BC, the Babylon, Mede and Persian areas are still under the control of the Assyrian Empire. The King of Babylon rebels, sending his son, Nebuchadnezzar, to destroy Nineveh. The town of Mosul, Iraq, has built up around the ruins of Babylon, leaving it essentially as Nebuchadnezzar left. The king of Assyria escaped to the west and Nebuchadnezzar followed, slowly and carefully conquering the land as he followed.

Pharaoh Necho and Josiah - 609 BC

In Josiah's 31 year as king, Pharaoh Necho is traveling to visit the king of Assyria at the Euphrates River. Necho plans on joining forces with the Assyrian king to defeat Nebuchadnezzar's assault. He sees Josiah at Megiddo and kills him. He takes him

⁵ 2 Kings 21:25 - 22:2; 2 Chronicles 34:1 - 2

back to be buried in Jerusalem.⁶ Josiah is the last Southern King to reign with complete autonomous authority over his kingdom. With Josiah's death, Egypt now controls the Southern Kingdom and the rest of her kings will be subservient to Egypt, for a few months, and then Babylon in starting in 606 BC.

Jehoahaz, Southern King - 609 BC

With Josiah's death, Pharaoh Necho makes Jehoahaz king over the Southern Kingdom. He is evil and he reigns three months before Pharaoh Necho puts him in prison in Riblah because he is not loyal to the Egyptian Pharaoh. Later Necho takes him to Egypt where he dies.⁷

Eliakim, (Jehoiakim) Southern King - 609 BC

Pharaoh Necho places a fine on the Southern Kingdom of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold. He also makes Eliakim, Josiah's other son, king, and he changes his name to Jehoiakim. He is evil, and rules under Pharaoh Necho's thumb for most of 30 days.⁸ Pharaoh Necho is defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish and the Southern Kingdom, and Jehoiakim switches from being controlled by Egypt to the Babylonians.⁹

Daniel's Service 606 BC - 605 BC

Nebuchadnezzar's Besiege

Daniel ^{1:1} In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ^{1:2} And 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.

Jehoiakim begins his reign in 609 BC. In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar invades and conquers him, taking him as prisoner and carrying him off into captivity to Babylon.¹⁰ Daniel and his three companions, as well as many others are swept away into captivity in Babylon at the same time. While in captivity in Babylon, Jehoiakim is still the king of Judah; no one takes his place on the throne. With Jehoiakim in prison in Babylon for three years, the Southern Kingdom returns to the old idolatry and corruption of the days of Manasseh.

Nebuchadnezzar reinstates Jehoiakim as a figurehead king back in Jerusalem in 603 BC. After three years of subjection, Jehoiakim rebels, hoping to make himself an independent king again. When Nebuchadnezzar does not receive Jehoiakim's tributes, Nebuchadnezzar knows Jehoiakim is in rebellion. In 599 BC, Nebuchadnezzar sends a band of Chaldeans, Syrians, and Ammonites to chastise Jehoiakim.¹¹ They harass the whole country. Jehoiakim comes to a violent death having his body cast over the wall of Jerusalem. He is drug away and buried beyond the gates of Jerusalem with the "burial of a donkey" in 599 BC.¹² Nebuchadnezzar

⁶ 2 Kings 23:28 - 30; 2 Chronicles 35:20 - 36:1

⁷ 2 Kings 23:31 - 32; 2 Chronicles 36:2 - 4

⁸ 2 Kings 23:33 - 37; 2 Chronicles 36:5 - 8; Jeremiah 35 - 36

⁹ 2 Kings 24:7; Jeremiah 46:2

¹⁰ 2 Chronicles 36:6-7

¹¹ 2 Kings 24

¹² Jeremiah 22:19

replaces Jehoiakim with his son Jehoiachin, wishing to keep Judah as a tributary country.

Jehoiakim's defeat is part of the Lord's plan, Who uses Nebuchadnezzar to chastise Judah's king. He also uses Nebuchadnezzar to place Daniel and his three Hebrew friends in Babylon where God can use them in a miraculous way.

The Lord also gives Nebuchadnezzar some of the vessels from the house of God. This point is important because God needs these vessels in Babylon in the future to bring down a haughty ruler by the name of Belshazzar when he throws a great feast.¹³

In 606 BC, Neuchadnezzar brings both Jehoiakim and the Temple vessels to Shinar. Shinar is a plain in Babylon where Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, attempted to build the tower of Babel. The land was controlled by the Turanians before the flood, then Semites after the flood, then the Elamites, and finally the Chaldean nation founder of about 1792 BC, under the great Hammurabi.

"The house of his god," Nebuchadnezzar's god was probably the noted Temple of Belus, which was a pyramid about 480 feet high. After the political rise of Babylon, Marduk is considered the chief god and is given the epithet *Bel* (equivalent to the Canaanite term Baal), meaning "lord."¹⁴ The *Enuma elish*, or Babylonian Creation Epic, tells of a cosmic struggle in which, while other gods are powerless, Marduk slays Tiamat, the sea goddess and representative of chaos. From the blood of another slain god, Ea creates mankind. Marduk's son Nebu (Nebo in Isaiah 46:1) is the god of nearby Borsippa and of scribes, who becomes exalted in the neo-Babylonian period as seen in the name Nebu – chad – nezzar, giving him the name of a god.

For some reason Nebuchadnezzar wants the vessels of the Lord's Temple secure in the treasury of his god, not the empire's treasury. The treasury in the Temple of Belus is built for the safe-keeping of valuable articles of any kind. God has given these vessels to Nebuchadnezzar who must think they are extremely valuable to place them in the Temple treasury of Belus.

King's Order

Daniel ^{1:3} Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ^{1:4} youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding, and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, is the chief eunuch guarding the family of Nebuchadnezzar. He administers the diet and lifestyle of Daniel and his three friends; and Daniel develops a close, loving relationship with him. All of those young men taken from the Southern Kingdom's royal family and nobles are call the "Sons of Israel", meaning they are direct descendants of Jacob. Additionally, those from the royal family are direct descendants of David, because all the Southern Kings are his descendants. Other youth that are not royalty or nobles are brought to Babylon also, but they have to be without defect, meaning without spot or stain on they bodies,

¹³ Daniel 5

¹⁴ Isaiah 46:1; Jeremiah 50:2; Jeremiah 51:44

good looking, skillful in wisdom, cunning in their knowledge, and able to stand and serve in the court of the king and represent him well. Ashpenaz is to teach the "Son of Israel" the literature and language of the Chaldeans, the language in use by the magicians and professional astrologers.

King's Appointment

Daniel ^{1:5} And the king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed* that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

The appointment Nebuchadnezzar makes for the young "Sons of Israel" is nothing short of the absolute best he has to offer, compared to the normal public in Babylon. They are to eat the very same food that the king eats. He plans to provide three years of education under Babylon's finest instructors with the understanding that after the three years they will enter into the king's personal service. However, the king will test the "Sons of Israel" first to determine those that will serve him. Evidently, not all will willingly serve the king. They will all have to prove themselves to Nebuchadnezzar.

Commander's Assignment

Daniel ^{1:6} Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ^{1:7} Then the commander of the officials assigned *new* names to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach, and to Azariah Abed-nego.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are the Hebrew names of the principle four in this part of the story. Like all Hebrew names, their names have a specific meaning as follows.

Hebrew Name	Meaning
• Daniel	Judge of God
• Hananiah	Jah has favor
• Mishael	Who is God
• Azariah	Jah has helped

We will forever know Daniel by his Hebrew name, but for his three friends we will always know them by the Chaldean names, which also have a specific meaning.

Hebrew Name	Chaldean Name	Meaning
• Daniel	Beltshazzar	Beltis protect the king
• Hananiah	Shadrach	Aku's command
• Mishael	Meshach	That draws with force
• Azariah	Abed-nego	Servant of Nego (Nebo)

Daniel's Decision

Daniel ^{1:8} But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

Even though Daniel is in a new land, he is still devoted to the Lord and His commandments. For some reason, unknown to us, Daniel feels that eating the food

of the king will defile himself. Probably the king is providing animals not allowed by the Mosaic Law, or meat and wine offered to Nebuchadnezzar's god in a ritual ceremony.

In keeping with the nature of Daniel, he seeks permission not to eat the food from the king's table. Daniel does not just refuse the food of the king. He knows there is a proper way to conduct all business. Refusal is hardly ever the answer, and God rewards proper conduct.

God's Intervention

Daniel ^{1:9} Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, ^{1:10} and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

God rewards Daniel with great favor and compassion, controlling the sight of the commander who explains his concerns about letting Daniel forgo the king's food. If Daniel's plan does not work, the commander can be executed for not taking good care of the four.

Daniel's Reply

Daniel ^{1:11} But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ^{1:12} "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. ^{1:13} "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

Daniel proposes a ten-day test, and the commander agrees. The four will eat only vegetables and water, while the other youth will eat the king's food and drink wine.

Commander's Test

Daniel ^{1:14} So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. ^{1:15} And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. ^{1:16} So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

Listening to Daniel's proposal, the commander decides to allow the ten-day trial. He makes two observations at the end of the ten days. First, their appearance is better and, second they are fatter. The favor of the Lord is on Daniel and his friends, and the commander makes the decision to allow them to continue their diet.

Nebuchadnezzar's Impression

Daniel ^{1:17} And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of literature and wisdom*; Daniel even understood all *kinds of visions and dreams*. ^{1:18} Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. ^{1:19} And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and

Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. ^{1:20} And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who were in all his realm.¹

The author of Daniel's record speeds ahead beginning in verse 17 to summarize the ultimate results of the Lord's favor on the four Hebrew boys. The four are among the top students in everything Ashpenaz teaches them, but the Lord shows more favor on Daniel, giving him the ability to interpret visions and dreams. Nebuchadnezzar notices the difference between these four and how they are head and shoulders above the others, ten times better, than all the other "Sons of Israel."

Until this point in the story, the "Sons of Israel" are in the beginning months of their three years of training. Daniel and his three friends have impressed the officials, and will soon impress Nebuchadnezzar, but not to the point that he will pull them out of the specified training program yet, that will occur at the end of two years in their training and all the other "Sons of Israel" will have to complete the three years of training.

Daniel's Service

Daniel ^{1:21} And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

The unknown author who pens the events of Daniel's life, visions and dreams places an interesting statement at the end of Chapter 1, recording the length of Daniel's service in the courts of the kings. He begins his training in the court of Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC and continues until the first year of Cyrus in 536 BC, 70 years. Daniel is probably in his late teens in 606 BC, and by 536 BC, he is nearing 90 years of age. But the Lord is not through with Daniel in the first year of Cyrus. He gives him the vision of Chapter 10 in the "third year of Cyrus," in 533 BC; and the vision of Chapters 11 and 12 in "the first year of Darius the Mede," in 521 BC, making Daniel almost 100 years of age when the last vision arrives. Therefore, Daniel 1:21 is simply an indication of the length of Daniel's service to the Babylonian and Persian kings.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

Although this lesson includes historical information dating from 640 BC to 521 BC, the events that transpire in Daniel 1:1-16 occur during part of 606 BC and continuing through much of 605 BC. Daniel 1:17 - 21 is an addendum to the story, allowing the reader to grasp the length of the Lord's favor on Daniel's life, and his service to the appointed foreign kings that are God's instruments of chastisement and grace on the Southern Kingdom.

Chapter 1 leaves Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, Abednego and all the remaining "Sons of Israel" near the end of the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's three year training program. Nebuchadnezzar's important dream of the statue will launch Daniel and his three friends out of the three-year program at the end of the second year.