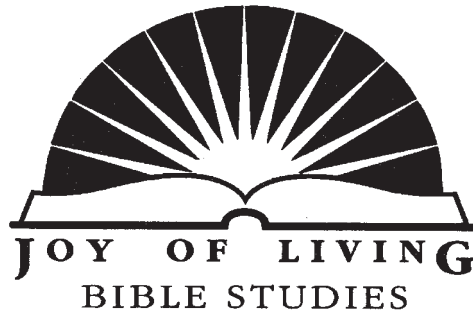


Daniel 1-6

Lesson 1



Introduction to Daniel

This Joy of Living study will cover only the first half of the book of Daniel—the historical portion found in chapters 1-6. The second half of the book is prophetic, and presents four important visions God gave to Daniel. Because they foretell events involving the empires during and following Daniel’s own day, all four visions concern some of the “last day events” before Christ returns for the second time. Although we will not be covering them in this study, we urge you to read carefully the last six chapters of Daniel and let God guide you and bless you through this reading.

Daniel was a man strategically used by God in Israel’s history. Henrietta Mears wrote, “Daniel was the companion of kings. He was a leader of men. He was a pioneer in reform. Daniel was, like Joseph, God’s candle shining in pagan darkness. He was chief statesman in the first empire of the world, chief ad-

visor of a great monarch, and a great protector of his own people.”¹

God’s Call and Promise

Genesis 11-35

Although the story related in the book of Daniel took place in the late seventh and the sixth century B.C., it actually began over a thousand years earlier with one man in the city of Ur of the Chaldees. The descendants of Noah had spread out, multiplied and populated the earth and they had again abandoned the God who created them.

Yet God had not abandoned mankind. He called one man, Abram, and told him that if he would leave his country and go to a land God would show him, He would give Abram that land, make a great nation from his descendants, and bless all the world through him. (It would be through his descendants that the Savior of the world would

1. Henrietta C. Mears. *What the Bible Is All About*. Ventura: Regal, 1997. pp274-275.

come.) In faith Abram (later called Abraham) obeyed God. Abraham had a son, Isaac, to whom the promise was given and he in turn had a son, Jacob, to whom the promise was given.

From a Family to a Nation

Genesis 46—Exodus 18

Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel, had 12 sons. When Jacob was an old man he, his sons and their families (70 people in all) went into Egypt to escape starvation during a great famine. One of the sons, Joseph, was already there and in great power. He was second only to the Pharaoh and because of this the family was well cared for.

However generations passed and the descendants of Israel grew in numbers. A new pharaoh arose and was fearful of this great number of foreigners living within the borders of his land. To protect himself and his country, he placed the Israelites in bondage where they remained for nearly 400 years.

As always God was faithful, and in His time He raised up a man named Moses to lead His people. With great and mighty miracles God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians and led

them to the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

A Covenant Made and Broken

Exodus 19 — 1 Samuel 7

God made a covenant with the Israelites prior to their entering the Promised Land, the general area of the nation of Israel today. At Mount Sinai they agreed to serve the Lord and obey His commands. He gave them His Law and promised to bless them as long as they served Him. But even as God gave them His glorious Law, they were rebelling against Him and worshipping other gods. And so began the cycle of God's blessing, Israel's rebellion, God's disciplining, their repentance, God's deliverance and blessing again.

The Israelites were told to drive the heathen nations from the land. They were to make no covenants with them, but they disobeyed and were led into idolatry by them.

The Kingdom

1 Samuel 8 — 2 Chronicles 36

The people of Israel had the perfect government with the Lord Himself as King, and the Law of the Lord as the law of the land, yet they weren't satis-

fied. They wanted to be like the nations round about them. They wanted a man as their king. God granted their desire.

Saul, their first king, didn't fully obey the Lord so God gave the kingdom to David, a shepherd who loved the Lord. Although David made many mistakes, God said, "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22). God promised David that one of his descendants would have a kingdom without end. He was referring to Jesus Christ, the coming Savior, who would pay the price for the sins of the world and redeem mankind.

David's son Solomon inherited the kingdom from him, but because of Solomon's sin the kingdom was divided in the days of Solomon's son Rehoboam. The northern kingdom was known as Israel with Samaria as the capital. The southern kingdom was known as Judah with Jerusalem as the capital. As long as a godly king was on the throne the kingdoms tended to serve the Lord, but all too often there were ungodly kings and the people followed the practices of the heathen nations, which included burning their children as sacrifices to the demonic god, Molech.

In His love and compassion God sent prophets to warn them to turn from

their wickedness, but with stiff necks and hard hearts they refused. So, after hundreds of years of rebellion and warnings the northern kingdom, Israel, was carried away into captivity (about 722 B.C.) by Assyria (see 2 Kings 17:6-18). As the people of Israel were taken away and settled in other lands, the king of Assyria brought people from other conquered nations and settled them in the land of Israel.

Except for brief periods of revival and despite seeing God's judgment fall upon the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom, Judah, continued in a path toward judgment and destruction, until finally a little over a hundred years later Judah was conquered by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. (see 2 Chronicles 36:6). Daniel was among those taken to Babylon.

The Jewish captives were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon at three different times. The first invasion was in 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, brought King Jehoiakim to his knees and carried out hostages, among them Daniel and his three associates (see Daniel 1:1-6). Again in 597 B.C., on another expedition to Judah after certain rebellious acts of the Judean kings Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin,

Nebuchadnezzar again made Jerusalem submit. This time he carried off ten thousand captives. Among them were King Jehoiachin and the young prophet Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2 Chronicles 36:9-10; 2 Kings 24:8-16). Daniel had already been in Babylon as a captive for eight years by this time. Finally in 587 B.C., after a long siege, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon (see 2 Kings 25). By this time Daniel had been a captive for nineteen years in Babylon.¹

Daniel's Background and Service

Little is known of Daniel's life prior to the time of his captivity. He was of either royal or noble descent since he was chosen as one of the young Israelite men to be educated in the Babylonian court (see Daniel 1:3). Daniel's remarkable dedication to God suggests that his parents must have raised him to love and worship the Lord. He always resolved to live righteously before God.

The prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel who was taken captive

1. Information in the above 3 paragraphs from: Frank E. Gaebelin, editor. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 1*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. p271ff.

in the second invasion of Jerusalem in 597 B.C., discovered when he arrived in Babylon that Daniel had risen to a height of influence yet maintained his true faith in God. He was so impressed by Daniel that he named him, along with Noah and Job, as a great man of righteousness (see Ezekiel 14:14,20).

As Ezekiel recognized, Daniel was used to maintain the honor of the true God in pagan Babylon. Long before, in similar ways, God had used Joseph and later Moses in Egypt to bring honor to His name before the Pharaohs of their day.

The Israelite captives were not treated as cruelly in Babylon as we might expect. In fact there is evidence in historical writings that they lived in good farming areas and had their own homes. They enjoyed freedom of movement and continued their own religious institutions of elders, priests and prophets. They had adequate employment and even carried on correspondence with the people who remained in Israel. God used Daniel to influence kings as he served in a high position in the government, one similar to a prime minister today.

Daniel also may have had much to do with the return of the captives to Ju-

dah in due time. He was still alive at that time and held the highest position of his career, serving under King Darius (see Daniel 6:1-3). It is remarkable that he should have held such a prominent place of influence in the government considering the fact that he was more than eighty years old! It was unmistakably God's hand that brought this about. Daniel undoubtedly had a great influence on King Cyrus who issued the decree permitting the Jews to return to their land. (Cyrus was the chief ruler with Darius serving under him and both began their reigns the same year.)

The Book of Daniel

An interesting fact about the book of Daniel is that it is one of the three books in the Old Testament which has a section written in Aramaic. Daniel 2:4—7:28 is the longest Aramaic passage in the Old Testament. (The others are Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12-26; and Jeremiah 10:11.) The principle language of the Old Testament is Hebrew. The reason for the use of Aramaic in Daniel seems to be because of the terms and subject matter of the section where it is found. The material deals with matters concerning the Gentile world and therefore God communicated through

Aramaic, the language of the Gentile world of that day. Some people refer to the Aramaic section as the “Gentile section” of Daniel and to the Hebrew language section as the “Jewish section” of the book of Daniel.

As a result of their exile, the Jewish people not only had religious changes but cultural changes in their lives. Because the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and they no longer lived in Israel, they worshipped in synagogues rather than in the Temple. They adopted Aramaic, which was the language of commerce and really was very similar to Hebrew, as their second language. Many of the Jews were bilingual at this time.

As in several other books of prophecy, such as Jeremiah and Hosea, the author of the Book of Daniel is also the chief actor in the events recorded. Jesus referred to the prophecies of this book as “spoken of through the prophet Daniel” (Matthew 24:15). Our Lord's testimony is not simply that the book was named after Daniel, but that he spoke its prophecies. The book itself clearly presents Daniel as the author of at least the last half of the book.

Modern critical scholarship denies the authorship of the book to its main

character, Daniel. The main reason for their denial is that the book presents remarkably detailed history until the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (Syrian ruler 175-164 B.C.), and liberal thinkers believe that such information could only have been written after the events had occurred. However, conservative Bible students who accept the fact of supernatural predictive prophecy given by God do not have this problem.

It is this author's opinion that Daniel wrote the entire book given the title of "Daniel." The unity of the book of Daniel indicates that Daniel must have written the first half as well as the second. The two halves of the book are interdependent, as can be seen from the comparison of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of chapter 2 with the revelations given directly through him in the visions of chapters 7 through 12. Also the terminology used in Daniel 2:28 and 4:2,7,10 is so similar to that of Daniel 7:1,2 and 15. Above all, both halves of the book combine in the purpose of showing the supreme God of heaven who rules over all nations and is above all their man-made gods.

Why Study Daniel 1-6?

What is the purpose of studying the first six chapters of the book of Daniel? As Henrietta Mears wrote, "This book reveals the power of God and His universal sovereignty. God's power is contrasted with world power." Mears goes on to list what we learn about characteristics of God in the first half of Daniel:

God the Keeper (Daniel 1)

In this chapter we will see "God's power in keeping Daniel and his companions. They were given understanding and wisdom above all the wise men of Babylon."

God the Revealer of Secrets (Daniel 2)

Next we see "God's power in revealing the dream of Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel. None of the wise men of Babylon could do this."

God the Deliverer (Daniel 3)

This chapter testifies to "God's power in delivering Daniel's three companions from the fiery furnace. These young men stood up alone, against a nation, with the calm assurance that God would deliver them, yet adding, ['But even if he does not, we want you

to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up' (Daniel 3:18)]. This occurred after they had been in Babylon about twenty years, and God was demonstrating in this most dramatic way His power over all of the gods of this country."

God the Potentate (Daniel 4)

Now we witness "God's power in dealing with the mighty Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar. God struck him while the proud king was boasting of his power as he was strolling on the roof of his magnificent palace. He was driven from his kingdom to dwell among beasts—victim of a strange form of insanity."

God the Judge (Daniel 5)

"God's power is shown in the awful judgment revealed to Belshazzar, son of Nabonidus, by the handwriting on the wall. That night the king was slain by the Persian army and his city taken."

God the All Powerful (Daniel 6)

Finally, we see "God's power revealed in the deliverance of Daniel from the lion's den. Remember, Daniel was an old man. When he was a young man of about twenty he was honored by the highest office in the whole em-

pire. Now at ninety he was thrown into the den of lions. It seems that even the lions honored him."¹

Today, perhaps more than in any other age, we need to be reminded of the power of God and His sovereignty. God's power is greater than any world power. God is our keeper and deliverer. Today many feel that they are imprisoned in a fiery furnace, or a lion's den. As we see that God gave Daniel and his companions great victory we will realize that God can do the same thing for us!

A Daily Appointment with God

Make a daily appointment with God. Find a quiet spot. Take your Bible, pencil or pen and your lesson with you. If you have a busy phone, you may have to remove it from the hook, turn off the ringer or hide the phone under a blanket to muffle the ringing! Remember how very important your appointment with God is and *make time to be with Him daily*. Ask yourself the following things:

1. Quotations in the above section are from *What the Bible Is All About*. p276. Scripture quotations within quoted sections changed from KJV to NIV.

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Joy of Living Bible Studies

1. How much time will I spend with the Lord each day?

2. What do I need to put aside in order to spend this time with the Lord? (Examples: sleep, television, casual telephone conversations, window shopping, etc. Each person will have to decide what his or her priorities are and what can be removed from the daily schedule to make time to spend with God.)

3. What is the *best time* for my appointment with God?

4. Where is the *quietest* place for me to pray and study?

5. Do I really want to spend time with God? (If your last answer is "yes," God will bless you as you work out the time. If your last answer is "no," pray that God will give you a desire, a hunger to spend this time with Him. He will do this for you!)

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Introduction to Daniel.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Introduction to Daniel, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down, carry it with you, or post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Daniel 1, concentrating on verses 1-2.

1. a. Who besieged Jerusalem, and who was king of Judah at this time? (Daniel 1:1) [Note: the city of Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Israel, called Judah, and the city of Babylon was the capital of the kingdom of Babylonia.]

b. What do you learn about this king of Judah in 2 Chronicles 36:5?

2. According to Daniel 1:2, why was Jehoiakim defeated?

3. a. Read Leviticus 26:1-2. What did God require of his people, Israel?
 - b. Read Exodus 24:3. Did the people agree to follow God's commands?
 - c. Read Leviticus 26:27-33. What would happen if Israel did not do as they had promised?
4. Read 2 Chronicles 36:14-17. What events led up to God's judgment against the southern kingdom of Israel, carried out by the Babylonians?
5. Notice how 2 Chronicles says God sent word to His people again and again, and had pity on them. His desire was for them to repent and return to Him, so He would not have to send judgment upon them. God is the same today towards each one of us. What does 2 Peter 3:9 say about this?
6. Personal: Have you repented of your sin and turned to God for forgiveness? This is not just something we do once to be saved, but is a daily privilege for every believer. What promise do you find in 1 John 1:9?

Third Day: Review Daniel 1, concentrating on verses 3-7.

1. What command did the king of Babylon issue to the chief of his court officials? (Daniel 1:3-4)
2. With what did the king of Babylon plan to nourish these outstanding young men from Judah, and for how long would they be fed this?

3. Among the fine young men taken from Israel to Babylon, what were the Hebrew names of four of them that came from the tribe (the descendants) of Judah? (Daniel 1:6)

4. What new Babylonian name was given to each young man? (Daniel 1:7)

5. The meaning of each Hebrew name referred to a characteristic of the God of Israel, while each Babylonian name referred to one of the Babylonian gods.¹ This action suggests that King Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to destroy every connection of those young men with their people, land and faith in the one true God. They were to be totally immersed in the Babylonian culture and religion. What guidelines do you find in the following Scriptures that will help a person stay true to God in spite of a surrounding secular culture?

Psalm 119:10-11

Philippians 4:8-9

1 Timothy 6:9-11

6. Personal: Just as in Daniel's situation, Satan also uses the culture we each live in today to try and weaken our connection to God and His people. In what ways do you find yourself pulled away from the Lord? How do the guidelines in the above verses help you with this?

1. Kenneth Barker, editor. *The NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985. See notes on Daniel 1:6-7.

Fourth Day: Review Daniel 1, concentrating on verses 8-14.

1. How did Daniel regard the idea of consuming food and wine from the king's table? (Daniel 1:8a)?

2. Israelites considered food and wine from Nebuchadnezzar's table to be contaminated because the first portion of it was offered to idols, and ceremonially unclean animals were used.¹ What did Daniel do because of his convictions? (Daniel 1:8b)

3. Personal: Do you have the courage to stand against a requirement that would cause you to disobey God's Word? This could be a law passed by the government, a policy put in place by your employer or school, or an expectation from your peers. Are you facing a decision like this? What will you do?

4. What was the official concerned about when Daniel asked that they would not have to eat the king's food and drink? (Daniel 1:9-10)

5. What was Daniel's proposal to the guard set over the four young men by the chief official, and what did the guard decide? (Daniel 1:12-14)

6. a. Notice that God caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, and the guard to agree to Daniel's plan. Psalm 106 tells of how God's people continually rebelled against Him, and of the judgment that resulted. In Psalm 106:44-46, how does God respond to His people when they turn to Him in the midst of their trials?

1. *The NIV Study Bible*. See note on Daniel 1:8.

b. Personal: Because Daniel desired to be true to God, God granted him favor with his captors—but He did not remove Daniel from captivity. Are you in a difficult situation today? Can you trust God to be with you and help you in the midst of that situation, even if He does not remove you from it?

Fifth Day: Review Daniel 1, concentrating on verses 15-17.

1. At the end of ten days on their diet of vegetables and water, how did Daniel and his three friends look? (Daniel 1:15)
2. Just as these four young Hebrew men obeyed God and trusted in His care for them, believers today can also do this. How do the following Scripture passages express this?
Psalm 33:20-21

Psalm 34:4-5

Isaiah 12:2
3. What did the guard decide to do about the portion of royal food and wine that Daniel and his friends were supposed to be eating? (Daniel 1:16)
4. What did God do for these four young men? (Daniel 1:17)
5. With God's help, the four young men were able to learn and understand the many areas of Babylonian learning, which would have included astrology and divination by dreams.¹ But Scripture is careful to point out that Daniel's understanding of visions and dreams came only from God's special revelation (see Daniel 2:27-28). What does Isaiah 44:24-25 say about people who claim to foretell the future?

1. *The NIV Study Bible*. See note on Daniel 1:17.

6. Personal: Have you ever been tempted to visit a palm reader, tarot card reader, or fortune-teller, “just for fun”? Or have you read your horoscope and wondered if it could really be true? How do you think God regards these actions?

Sixth Day: Review Daniel 1, concentrating on verses 18-21.

1. Look back at Daniel 1:5b and then read Daniel 1:18. How much time passed before the Israelite young men were presented to the king?

2. As the king observed and talked with all the young men who had finished the training period, who among them impressed him the most? (Daniel 1:19)

3. What do you discover about these four men in Daniel 1:20?

4. a. Read Jeremiah 8:9. What is the true value of worldly wisdom—human wisdom that does not come from God?

b. How can we receive godly wisdom and understanding?

Psalm 119:99

James 1:5

5. How long did Daniel remain in service to the Babylonian empire according to Daniel 1:21?

6. Personal: Do you wish to have wisdom and understanding from God? One way to receive this is to meditate on His Word. Which verse from this lesson did you choose to memorize? Memorizing Scripture is a good way to spend time meditating on (thinking about) it. The verses you memorize will always be with you, even if you are not carrying a Bible.