INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

“… ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION WHICH WAS SPOKEN OF THROUGH DANIEL THE PROPHET …”

(spoken by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14)

The Old Testament book of DANIEL provides the most comprehensive prophetic revelation of the Old Testament. It gives a total view of world history from Babylon to the second advent of Jesus Christ, and interrelating Gentile history and prophecies with that which concerns Israel. Daniel provides the key to the overall interpretation of prophecy, is a major element in premillennialism, and is essential to an understanding of the New Testament book of Revelation. Above all, the revelation of the sovereignty and power of God brought assurance to Jew and Gentile alike in the past and to all believers today.

The PURPOSE of this INTRODUCTION is to provide an overview of the book of Daniel before we study it verse-by-verse. By summarizing the key items in the book we will see the “big picture,” which may be lost if we focused on individual verses from the start. Detailed elements of doctrines, issues, concerns, and applications are essential to each lesson, and will be discussed in detail in relation to the appropriate verses.

AUTHOR: DANIEL is recognized as having written all 12 chapters of the book, despite objections from higher critics (summarized in “GENUINENESS” below).

Daniel identified himself as the writer.

― “… as for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me …” ■ Daniel 7:28
Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing … ■ Daniel 12:5

Jesus Christ called the writer “Daniel the prophet” (his function, not position) in the Olivet Discourse.

― “… ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet …” ■ Matthew 24:15 (& Mark 13:14)

Ezekiel confirmed the historical person of Daniel as a fellow prophet.

― even though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst … ■ Ezekiel 14:14,20
― “… you are wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that is a match for you.” ■ Ezekiel 28:3

DATE: The book was written during the 6th CENTURY B.C. Daniel wrote of the history beginning with his being carried off with others to Babylon in the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC) and ending with the third year of Cyrus’ rule (536 BC) – a period of approximately 70 years. Historians believe Daniel lived until 530 BC, and it is very likely he wrote the whole book in the last 10 years of his life. Higher critics’ questions of the date along with the authorship are summarized in the “GENUINENESS” section below.

PURPOSE: The book of Daniel was written during a dark hour in Israel’s history. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, and most of the people had been taken into captivity to Babylon. There was a desperate need for a new testimony to the mighty and providential power of God. Daniel is not a pure account of history but, like Esther, offers HOPE through the revealed workings of God.

Unless otherwise noted, all Bible verses are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).
LANGUAGE: Daniel is an unusual book, in that major sections are written in 2 different languages, with verses 2:4 - 7:28 in Aramaic and the rest of the 12 chapters in Hebrew. This has contributed to critics claiming Daniel did not write the whole book. But Aramaic was the language spoken at the court of Nebuchadnezzar and was the official language of the whole western section of the Persian Empire. In writing about the Gentiles Daniel used a language that he knew and they would understand.

MAJOR DIVISIONS & UNITY: The 12 chapters of Daniel are easily outlined and can be divided into either 2 or 3 divisions, as shown:

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<th>Chapter(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Daniel’s Early Days</td>
<td>Chapters 1-6 is Historical</td>
<td>Chapter 1 is Introduction</td>
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<td>2-4</td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>Chapters 7-12 is Apocalyptic (unveiling) &amp; Prophetic</td>
<td>Chapters 2-7 (written in Aramaic) describes the Times of the Gentiles</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Belshazzar</td>
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<td>Chapters 8-12 (in Hebrew) describes Israel in relation to the Gentiles</td>
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<td>10-12</td>
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CANONICITY: The book of Daniel has been recognized as part of Scripture throughout history. It was listed in the “Other Writings” of the Jewish 3 divisions of Law, Prophets, and Writings - instead of with the Prophets as it is in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and present Bibles – because Daniel had a prophetic function without the position. Daniel was called a seer (hōzeh) and wise man (hākhām) instead of prophet (nābhī) while he served in a position as a government official instead of a ministering prophet. There were some apocryphal additions (not found in Hebrew or Aramaic texts) to some Greek versions, but they were quickly dispelled.

GENUINENESS: The facts that Daniel wrote the whole book and that he did so during the 6th century were not questioned until the 3rd century A.D. A pagan neo-Platonist named Porphyry claimed it was a 2nd century B.C. forgery. Support came from higher critics as part of their overall approach to the Scriptures, which tended almost without exception to denial of traditional authorships, claiming several authors, and the almost universal denial of biblical inerrancy and verbal, plenary inspiration. Rejections are same as those hurled against Scripture as a whole and against the doctrine of supernatural revelation. By claiming that several people wrote the book of Daniel in the 2nd century B.C. instead of Daniel in the 6th century B.C. the critics could completely ignore fulfilled prophecies and the rest of God’s Word. CRITICAL OBJECTIONS TO PARTICULAR TEXTS WILL BE TREATED WHERE THEY OCCUR IN THE TEXT.


IN CLOSING, Daniel’s conviction and integrity were foundational in God’s response for him and the people. The following is also promised to us:

> But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself … Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials. Daniel 1:8,9