

Daniel: #1

What's in a Name?	The name "Daniel" means "God is <u>my</u> judge." That's a fitting name for a prophet who will be spared from the lion's den and be the voice of the most remarkable prophesies of the <u>full consummation</u> of the Kingdom of God in the whole Bible.
A True Exilic Prophet	Jeremiah and Ezekiel go together in the sense that both of their ministries consisted of (1) being in the land before the fall of Jerusalem and (2) going into exile. Daniel, however, spent the entirety of his ministry in the land of Babylon. The Bible never records a single step of Daniel in the Promised Land. But, yet, he faithfully prophesies to the faithfulness of the God of Israel.
A True Apocalyptic Prophet	Daniel is the type of prophet most people think of when they think of what a prophet was. He's an apocalyptic prophet. An apocalyptic prophet was one who prophesied events concerning how the world will end and how the kingdom of God will consummate. Many prophets have "apocalyptic sections" (Isaiah and Ezekiel, for example). But Daniel's prophesies are a progression of apocalyptic events that ultimately concludes with the end of all things. In that sense, Daniel is very much like John's Revelation and Jesus' Olivet Discourse.
Imagery and Symbolism	Most of Daniel's apocalyptic prophesies are filled with symbols that stand for particular things. Consequently, it's very important to pay attention to the symbolism in those prophesies. For they unlock it's meaning. For example, in the Golden Statue prophesy, the statue of Nebuchadnezzar has four distinguishing parts: (a) a head of gold; (b) chest and arms of silver; (c) belly and thighs of bronze; and (d) legs of iron. These images/symbols represent kingdoms. Therefore, being somewhat familiar with certain parts of ancient history is helpful when reading Daniel's prophesies.
Good News for the Confused	There is good news for those that neither like symbols are history. You can still understand the major theme of Daniel without any knowledge of history or symbols whatsoever. For the theme of Daniel is rather obvious: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven."
Very Important Verses	<i>"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14)</i>
Narrative to Prophecy Connection	The stories that you are familiar with in the Book of Daniel (Lion's Den, etc.), have a very important function. They establish the basis for the prophecies that unfold in the book. God is the judge of Daniel and the only judge. And He is with Daniel and his friends. So listen to Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar. The stories are not just there to having something to read at Vacation Bible School. They serve a purpose!
Outline	The stories in Daniel cease after chapter 6. Chapters 7-12 are entirely prophetic and therefore form the major section in the prophecy. However, chapters 1-6 are interwoven with narrative and prophecy. Think of 1-6 like this: the narratives and the prophecies in 1-6 elevate Daniel to be able to prophesy the "deep things" of the consummation of the Kingdom of God that unfold in chapters 7-12.

The First Qualifier and Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Statue (chs 1-2)

Daniel and his friends politely refuse to eat from the king's table. God honors them by giving them influence in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Consequently, when Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, only Daniel interprets it.

The Qualifier	¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. ¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds (1:11-17)
The Dream	³¹ "Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. (2:31-35)

The Interpretation	You are that head of gold. ³⁹ “After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. ⁴⁴ “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. (2:38-45)
The Explanation	Head of Gold: Babylon Chest and Arms: Medo-Persia Belly and Thighs: Greece/Macedonia Legs: Rome Feet and Toes: Where we are and have been until the kingdom of God consummates. Stone: Christ/Kingdom of God

The Second Qualifier and Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream of a Tree (chs 3-4)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow before Nebuchadnezzar’s statue of gold. As a result, they are thrown into the fiery furnace. God not only spares them, he’s in the furnace with them. This scene qualifies Daniel (by extension) to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s 2 nd dream.	
The Qualifier	²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.” ²⁵ He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” . . . ²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. (3:24-25; 28)
The Dream	¹⁰ These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed. ¹³ “In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven. ¹⁴ He called in a loud voice: ‘Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. “Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.
The Interpretation	²⁴ “This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: ²⁵ You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. ²⁶ The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. (4:24-26)
The Fulfillment	²⁸ All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” ³¹ Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. . . . ³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. ³⁶ At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. (4:28-31, 34, 36)
The Explanation	This prophecy is a good lesson in letting Daniel interpret Daniel. He does a good job of it here. It’s a lesson for Nebuchadnezzar on how pride comes before the fall. And when that fall comes, there is an opportunity for repentance and restoration. (It wouldn’t last though, as we will see next week.)