



DANIEL

RODGER J. GREDVIG

LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY



LWBS

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

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Thank you for your order! It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to help you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of our God and His Word. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* 2 Peter 3:18

WHO WE ARE

Living Way Bible Study, Inc. is an auxiliary of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). All studies are written and/or edited by LCMS pastors. We have been providing studies to churches throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1982.

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These studies are available by email (pdf-file) or snail-mail (hard copy). For a *suggested* donation of \$1-per-lesson within a study (e.g., 23-lesson study of John is \$23) you receive an original of the study, from which you are then free to make copies for your class. Please honor our copyright of these materials.

All studies have the same basic format, using an effective four-step approach for Bible study. Please see the following pages for additional information on these four steps, as well as helpful hints for facilitating these studies.

As a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that relies solely on freewill donations, *additional donations are much appreciated* and enable us to continue to produce and promote the study of God's Word.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions or comments on this study or any part of it, please contact us. We are always eager to hear from "our students" and appreciate your comments.

May God bless you as you walk in His Living Way!

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LWBS Four-Step Method

Living Way Bible Study suggests this four-step method:

- 1. PERSONAL** – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS** – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE** – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.



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What our Students are Saying...

Lakeside Community Lutheran Church (Webster, WI): “Our Bible Study in Genesis is in full swing and I had to let you know so far it is a great success. We have been struggling for some time attracting people to our studies and finally I think we have hit the jackpot! We have a full house (room) of enthusiastic, constant participants, including MEN! Our lessons are animated to say the least and everyone participates fully. ... We have been using your studies since 2003 and really enjoy them as they are very precise and informative, easy to understand and uplifting.”

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church (Anza, CA): “We will be beginning our fourth year of Living Way Bible Study... It has been such a blessing for our church...nurturing the women of our congregation and as an outreach to our community. The Lord has blessed us with women from the community and brought at least three of them into membership in our church.”

Palisades Lutheran Church (Pacific Palisades, CA): “Our breakfast Prayer Group again finds your studies helpful and rewarding.”

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church (Stryker, OH - Pastor): “Our group leaders are very pleased with the additional background information that is provided with Living Way courses.”

Faith Lutheran Church (Sequim, WA): “Currently in our 10th year ...continue to be blessed... have between 70-90+ men and women... some are non-members of our church... use to plug new members in.”

St. James Lutheran Church (Cleveland, OH): “...we greatly appreciate the ministry of Living Way Bible Study! They're all very good! ...”

Faith Lutheran Church (Sequim, WA): “I'm looking forward to our study that your ministry has blessed us with ... Your study allows one to go as deep as time permits or give the simplest most direct answer ... providing materials for us to become proficient in His living and active Word.”

Holy Cross Lutheran Church (San Diego, CA): “The women...continue to enjoy the lessons you provide. We have had many lively discussions over the questions in the lessons.”

Lakeside Community Lutheran Church (Webster, WI - ELCA): “Your studies are excellent and we look forward to each study we undertake.”

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (Olympia, WA - ELCA): “We're starting into year 12!...We've been enjoying all of the studies and appreciate your service.”

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Tacoma, WA): “Living Way Bible Study has been an excellent study that we have used for almost 30 years.”

Bethany Lutheran Church (Long Beach, CA): “We are going on our 30th year in LWBS. Our group of about 40 really loves it and grows in our faith with each new study.”

Crown of Life Lutheran Church (Sun City, AZ): “I used the Thessalonians study for the Ministry Staff Retreat (7 of us) and will be repeating a small portion of the study for a three week session with approximately 50 adults. The material is excellent and very helpful to me as I prepare to teach.”



Daniel

REVEREND RODGER J. GREDVIG

14 Lessons

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Bibliography
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GROUP DISCUSSION

Group Discussion Questions

INTRODUCTION

The Background
Outline of the Book of Daniel
Personal Application – Daniel 1

DANIEL 1

Personal Application – Daniel 2

DANIEL 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream – Daniel 2:1-30
The Dream and Its Meaning – Daniel 2:31-45
The Maccabean Theory
The Traditional Theory
The Dispensational Theory
Daniel and His Friends Elevated – Daniel 2:46-49
Personal Application – Daniel 3

DANIEL 3

Personal Application – Daniel 4

DANIEL 4

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Tree
Daniel Interprets the Dream
The Dream Is Fulfilled
Personal Application – Daniel 5

DANIEL 5

Belshazzar's Feast
The Fall of Babylon – Daniel 5:29-30
Personal Application – Daniel 6

DANIEL 6

i	The Trap – Daniel 6:1-9	34
ii	The Law of the Medes and Persians – Daniel 6:10-24	34
	Darius' New Edict – Daniel 6:25-27	35
	Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian – Daniel 6:28	35
1	Personal Application – Daniel 7	36

LESSON 7

LESSON 1 DANIEL 7

3	Transition to Apocalyptic Section	39
4	Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts – Daniel 7:1-14	39
5	Interpretation	40
	Son of Man	40
	Ancient of Days	41
9	Little Horn	41
	Personal Application – Daniel 8	42

LESSON 8

LESSON 2 DANIEL 8

12	The Ram and the Goat	47
12	Interpretation	48
13	Hellenization of the Region	48
13	Abomination of Desolation	48
14	The 2300 Days	49
14	Personal Application – Daniel 9:1-19	50

LESSON 9

LESSON 3 DANIEL 9:1-19

21	Confessional Prayer	53
	Excursus on Prayer	54
	Personal Application – Daniel 9:20-27	55

LESSON 10

LESSON 4 DANIEL 9:20-27

24	Seventy 'Sevens'	58
24	Abomination of Desolation	59
25	Typological vs. Traditional Viewpoints	60
26	Key Dates	60

LESSON 11

LESSON 5

29	Summary of Traditional and Typological Theories	61
30	Seventy Weeks	62
31	Personal Application – Daniel 10-11:1	63



DANIEL 10-11:1

Daniel's Vision of the Man	66
Personal Application – Daniel 11:2-11:45	69

LESSON 12**DANIEL 11:2-11:45**

Review	71
Persian Rulers	71
Greek Rulers	72
Antiochus IV Epiphanes	73
The Arrogant King – Daniel 11:36-45	74
Ptolemies & Seleucids	75
Hellenistic (Greek) Rulers	76
Personal Application – Daniel 12	77

LESSON 13**DANIEL 12**

Closing the Scroll – Daniel 12:1-4	80
About the End Times – Daniel 12:5-10	80
Final Cryptic Numbers – Daniel 12:11-13	81
Closing Words	82
Timeline of Millennial Eschatologies	83
The Symbolic Period of Time	84
Count-down Theory of Time	84

LESSON 14



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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Offered by the Leader at the first meeting

The Old Testament Bible in English is divided into 3 categories, subdivided into 5 sections.

1. Who knows what those sections are called? (Wait for answers)
Answer: The Jewish arrangement is by chronology, that is, by date, while the Christian arrangement is systematic, that is, by category. (See the Table of Contents of your Bible.) It might help you to know that the Christian arrangement is in three major categories (History, Poetry, and Prophecy). That is, there are:

17 books of History (Gen. – Esther),

5 books of Poetry (Job – Song of Solomon), and

17 books of Prophecy (Isaiah – Malachi).

Another way to understand the Old Testament canon is:

5 books of Law (Pentateuch or Torah),

12 Histories (Joshua – Esther),

5 books of Poetry (Job – Song of Solomon),

5 Major Prophets (Isaiah – Daniel), and

12 Minor Prophets (Hosea – Malachi).

2. In what category does our study of Daniel fall in this arrangement?
Answer: Technically, it falls into the prophecy category, Major Prophets section. But in the Jewish arrangement it falls into the Wisdom Writings (Kethubim), which include priests, seers, and wise men. In another sense, it could be categorized as history, general prophecy, or apocalyptic in nature.

In some Bible versions the editors have given a synopsis of each book before the first chapter.

Look in your Bible at the beginning of Daniel. What is the basic outline of the book? What two major divisions are indicated?

Answer: You might see that most editors divide the book into two sections, the first part (chapters 1-6) deal with Daniel and his friends' life in Babylon from a historical perspective. The second section (Chapters 7-12) are apocalyptic in nature and describe future kingdoms, the coming of the Messiah, and events of the last days (possibly speaking of the end of Israel as a nation or the world in general).

3. The writer of the book of Daniel seems to be Daniel himself.

What indication is there that it's written by Daniel? Read Daniel 8:1-2,

10:2

Some liberal scholars question whether Daniel or any 6th century contemporary wrote it.

What indication is there that it could be partially written by someone else? Read Daniel 1:6-8; Daniel 7:1; and 11:2

Answer: The arguments for another writer include language that is in the third person, several details about the rise of Greece in the 4th century BC, and allusions to the Maccabean period of the 2nd century BC that suggest a later redactor who lived at that time.

How would a conservative scholar explain that Daniel is written by one writer?

Answer: Moses, Joshua, and Samuel wrote in the third person even when describing their own actions and words. It is not unusual even in ancient writings. Regarding the inclusion of minute details about the future, divine prophecy is just that, divine. It is more convincing when God informs the prophet with details, rather than just vague predictions about the future.

4. The book of Daniel, geographically, is set in Babylon.

What present day country occupies that area? (Show map)

Answer: Iraq

What other present day countries are nearby? To the east and to the south.

Answer: Iran to the east; and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the south.

Name two major rivers and a large body of water in the area.

Answer: Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Persian Gulf

5. Kingdoms and powers generally are motivated by what interests?

Answers: Greed, influence, immortality, survival, expansion, religion, economics, etc.

What economic forces were at play?

Answer: Trade route between the East (India, China), West (Mediterranean) and South (N. Africa)

Besides economics, what religious factors were at work?

Answers: Appeasing the gods of weather, fertility, and power. Personal desire for immortality and glory. (Read Daniel 3:1, 6; Daniel 4:30)

6. In ancient times, Judaism was in conflict with foreign gods because of the bad influence idolatry posed to their trust in God.

What do you think is the major religious theme of Daniel?

Answer: The theme of the book is summarized in 4:17 and 5:21: "The Most High (God) is sovereign over the kingdoms of men." The God of Daniel, the God of Israel, controls kingdoms and history so that God's will may be done in terms of both judgment and eternal redemption.

7. Christians usually study the Bible to understand God's Word and promises, as well as wanting to know the historical roots of what they believe.

What brought you to this study of the book of Daniel?

Are you more interested in historical facts or answering religious questions?

Do you expect this study to impact your faith-life?

How about your faith-response (witnessing)?



OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

4

PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 1

5

THE BACKGROUND

Daniel is one of those books that is both intriguing and provocative. We have engaging stories repeated to children in Sunday School about *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, and his friends surviving *The Fiery Furnace*. Yet other portions are so esoteric and enigmatic they defy scholars to come up with a definitive interpretation. Daniel is not only one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand, but it's also very hard to categorize. Is it a prophetic book or does it belong in the section we consider Wisdom Literature? In the western Christian church we have labeled it as part of the Major Prophets along with Isaiah and Ezekiel. But in the Jewish tradition it is placed in the section called Kethubim (Writings), which are the collected works of seers, wise men and priests. This distinction complicates the way we view or comprehend the contents. Several other factors exacerbate this confusion. So before we examine this fascinating book we need to be at least familiar with some of the issues associated with the controversy.

First of all is the *dating* of the book. On the face of it the book itself declares it is written at the time of the Babylonian Captivity (6th century BC) with some portions written by Daniel himself. This remains the standard for conservative scholars including those of us in the Lutheran Church (LCMS). On the other end of the perspective are liberal scholars who point out that even the name "Daniel" is a late construction, not in use in the sixth century BC. For example the different spellings of his name. Ezekiel refers to *Dani'el*, while the Book of Daniel refers to *Daniyye'*. Liberals also argue that the prophecies describing the emergence of governments like the Greeks, Seleucids, Ptolymies, and Romans are so detailed that they had to be written by a contemporary no earlier than the 2nd century BC. Conservatives argue that this is indeed the very nature of prophecy — foretelling the future with enough accuracy to prove divine intervention.

Another complication is the association of Daniel with three additional books (or stories) that are included in the Catholic Apocrypha but not in protestant versions of the Bible. Namely, the **deuterocanonical** books:

† *The Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Holy Children*: Daniel 3:24-90 inserted between verses 23 and 24 (v. 24 becomes v. 91) in the Protestant canon. It incorporates the Fiery Furnace episode.

† *Susanna and the Elders*: before Daniel 1:1, a prologue in early Greek manuscripts; chapter 13 in the Vulgate

† *Bel and the Dragon*: after Daniel 12:13 in Greek, an epilogue; chapter 14 in the Vulgate

These anomalies and spurious inclusions from the Septuagint (LXX; Greek translation of the Bible) cast a pall on the authenticity and derivation of the Book of Daniel. On the other hand, the Hebrew/Aramaic versions exclude them, so conservative scholars view these additions as later inserts without merit or standing. The Dead Sea Scrolls testify and confirm this conservative view.

A third complication is the very **language** incorporated in Daniel. There seems to be a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic (not counting the Greek influence of later versions). Liberals would argue that this was a later development which shows that Daniel should be dated to at least the Maccabean period. Conservatives counter that the very subject of the book (Daniel's involvement with the Babylonian/Persian hierarchy) demonstrates the necessity of both languages. Aramaic was widely used as the political and commercial language among nations of the Mesopotamian region of the time, while Hebrew is used where Daniel wants to speak to the Jewish nation particularly about portents and prophecies.

To these debates can be added the very **structure** of Daniel. The Book of Daniel naturally falls into two divisions, each consisting of six chapters. The first section (chapters 1-6), written in the third person, is historical, and it details Daniel's exile in Babylon, some of the trials faced by the exiles, and Daniel's role as a seer in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius. The theme in this section is the supremacy of the Hebrew God over pagan potentates (3:28-29; 4:34-37; 6:25-27). The second section (chapters 7-12), mostly written in the first person, is apocalyptic, and it describes Daniel's prophetic visions of the great world empires of the future. Liberals argue that the prophecies in the second section are too detailed for a general prophecy (explained above under "dating"), and the inaccuracies of places, dates, and family connections in the first section prove the writer was not a sixth century contemporary. For example the declaration that Belshazzar was the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar (when in fact, Nabonidus was the father of Belshazzar). They say a contemporary would not make those mistakes. However, it is not unusual for

writers of the period to mean "descendant" when they write "the son of." We see similar examples in the genealogies of Chronicles and Kings, as well as the first chapter of Matthew and Luke.

There are more issues in contention, but we will address them as we go through this study. Suffice it for now that you gain an appreciation for the overall structure and purpose of this important book of history and apocalyptic prophecy.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Historical: Chapters 1-6 (3rd person)

1. Daniel and his friends obey Hebrew Kosher laws in Babylon.
2. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream about world empires.
3. The three Hebrews refuse to participate in pagan worship and are thrown into a furnace of fire.
4. Daniel's prophetic interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of madness.
5. Daniel reads the handwriting on the wall about the fall of Babylon.
6. Daniel continues to pray to his God despite the threat of execution in a lion's den.

Apocalyptic: Chapters 7-12 (1st person)

7. Daniel's dream about future world empires.
8. Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat.
9. Daniel's confession of his nation's sins and the prediction of the seventy weeks.
- 10-12. Daniel's vision of the kings of the north and the south and the time of the end.

The book of Daniel illustrates that the destruction of the kingdom of Judah was not the end of Israel as a people or as a nation. Instead, God had a larger purpose in mind for them and the world. The temporary perception that Yahweh had allowed his temple and land to be destroyed by pagans was not evidence that he was inferior to the Babylonian deities. In fact, God was exhibiting his almighty power in such a way as to show his sovereignty over all history, "gods," and every nation until the end of time. The book of Daniel is a powerful demonstration of his promise to bless the nations of the world through Israel and his promise of a Savior to accomplish his will in specific steps and fulfillments of scripture.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 1

Heavenly Father, in times of trial and tribulation give me the kind of faith and courage exhibited by Daniel and his friends so that I might learn to trust you in all circumstances and to demonstrate faithfulness based on your promises. In Jesus' name. Amen

1. With what tragedy does the book of Daniel begin? (v. 1)

Who allowed this tragedy to occur? (v. 2)

List some additional facts concerning this event. (2 Kings 24:10-17)

2. Why did God punish his people? (2 Kings 24:3-4)

What specifically were those sins? (2 Kings 21:1-6)

3. Most scholars estimate that Daniel and his friends were exiled around 597 B.C. during the first deportation along with the treasury from the Temple. The final deportation and pillaging of the Temple's sacred vessels occurred eleven years later in 586 B.C. What supremely precious item was taken then? (2 Chronicles 35:3, 36:17-21)

4. Who previously had taken it? (1 Samuel 4:1-11)

What happened while it was gone? (1 Samuel 5:1-8)

Summarize how it was returned. (1 Samuel 6)

Who moved it to Jerusalem many years later? (2 Samuel 6:12-15)

5. Only a few scholars think the ark was secretly rescued by Jeremiah and taken to Egypt near Tanis. What popular movie perpetuates that scenario?

What do most scholars believe happened? (2 Chronicles 36:7, 18)

What did Nebuchadnezzar's son do with the sacred vessels? (Daniel 5:2)

Seventy years later when the Jews were set free and returned to Jerusalem, what temple items were returned with them? (Ezra 1:7-11)

What precious item was noticeably missing?

6. Today Jews desire to rebuild the temple, but a Moslem mosque stands in its place. Why do Christians not need to rebuild the temple with its altar, holy place, and ark? (Summarize Hebrews 9:1-28)

7. Why were Daniel and his friends treated nicely? (v. 3-4)

8. What was God's advice (through Jeremiah) to the Jewish exiles? (Jeremiah 29:1, 3-7)

9. We live in a mainly pagan land; how should we act? (1 Peter 2:11-17)

10. Why did Daniel and his friends not want to eat the fine food offered to them? (Daniel 1:5, 8; Deuteronomy. 14:3-21)

11. Daniel proposed a 10-day diet plan. It was not long enough to show results, so what greater power was at work? (v. 9)

12. Daniel's three friends were commended for what attributes? (v. 17a)

13. Daniel had what additional abilities? (v. 17b)

14. The king determined that Daniel and his friends were how much better than his own wise men? (v. 20)

15. Daniel remained in Babylon until the first year of Cyrus the Persian (539 B.C.) when the exiles were freed from Babylonian bondage. Presumably Daniel died that year. For the remnant who survived, what promise of Jeremiah was fulfilled? (Jeremiah 29:10).

What were the conditions of that restoration? (Jeremiah 29:11-14)



PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 2

9

“...from the opening words it is clear that Daniel and his colleagues are Jewish exiles sent to Babylon as captives, not so much as slaves, but rather to be groomed for diplomatic positions.”

While the latter half of Daniel is apocalyptic in nature (as described in the initial background material), the first six chapters are written as a historical account of the life of Daniel and his three friends. It is presented in the third person but the author is not identified. Most liberal scholars would suggest a redactor in the 2nd century BC consulted earlier manuscripts and compiled them into what we label as the book of Daniel. Traditional scholars maintain that it is not unusual for a writer to describe himself in the third person when he is relating events that involve others as well. Thus, while Daniel is plainly the self-described author in several places, he could be the author of the whole book as well. In any case, from the opening words it is clear that Daniel and his colleagues are Jewish exiles sent to Babylon as captives, not so much as slaves, but rather to be groomed for diplomatic positions.

It will be helpful if we back up to get the bigger picture of what led to this story about Daniel in order to see the context. For generations there had been a series of wicked kings in the northern kingdom of Israel (also called Samaria). However, in 722 BC it was destroyed completely by Shalmaneser king of Assyria (2 Kings 17). Meanwhile the southern kingdom (Judah) was hanging on by a thread paying tribute alternately to both Egypt and Assyria. Judah, too, had a series of wicked kings who allowed the worship of pagan gods and the desecration of the holy temple, most notably under the evil King Manasseh during the 7th century BC. However, one of the last, good, and effective kings of the southern kingdom of Judah, in the line of David, was Josiah (641-609 BC). He made a number of religious reforms including the removal of temple prostitutes and the banning of Baal and Asherah worship. Josiah began a renovation of the temple, and while clearing the treasury, the priest Hilkiah, discovered a lost copy of one of the books of Moses (2 Kings 22:8). Josiah immediately reinstated many of the Jewish laws including the celebration of the Passover which had not been practiced since the time of the judges (2 Kings 23:21-23).

During this time, Judah had been mostly under the vassalage of Egypt. After the Assyrians had destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel they tried to make inroads into Judah, but were thwarted by a series of miracles, at least for a while (Isaiah 35-36, 2 Kings 18, 2 Chronicles 32). Then a new

power from the east, the Babylonians, began attacking the disintegrating Assyrian empire. Since Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II had a treaty with the Assyrians, he led an expedition north to help. Josiah mistakenly felt he could thwart that advancement and free Judah.

Instead, Josiah was killed at Megiddo (2 Chronicles 35:20-24) and many of his reforms were halted. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, succeeded him but was deposed by Necho II three months later returning from his unsuccessful campaign against the Babylonians at the famous Battle of Carchemish in 609 BC. Josiah's grandson, Jehoiakim, was installed as a replacement swearing allegiance to Egypt. But as a wicked king, Jehoiakim soon let Judah descend into idol worship once again. The stage was now set for the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel to be fulfilled — namely, the complete destruction of Judah (the remnant of Israel) along with Jerusalem and the Temple.

When the Babylonian king's forces (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar's army) reached Judah, they discovered a new king had been installed who had pledged fealty to Egypt, but Jehoiakim quickly changed allegiance to Babylonia when faced with overwhelming odds and the abandonment of Egypt's backing (597 BC). During the 3 year period of his reign many officials were exiled to Babylon, including Daniel and his friends. This is often called the first deportation. Eleven years later, when a puppet king, Zedekiah, rebelled (586 BC), Nebuchadnezzar ordered the annihilation of most of the inhabitants, besieged Jerusalem, and eventually sacked the city confiscating all the treasures and vessels of the temple (presumably, the Ark of the Covenant too). Thus, 586 BC is the most common date given for the final destruction of Judah, the southern kingdom.

Jewish noblemen, craftsmen, and artisans were put to work in the magnificent city of Babylon with its famous "Hanging Gardens," one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Daniel and his three friends were singled out for their exceptional learning abilities and were assigned food from Nebuchadnezzar's own table and enrolled in a three-year education program to prepare them for diplomatic service (1:5). Their names were changed according to Babylonian practices:

Daniel (God is my judge) to: Belteshazzar

(protects the king, cf. 4:8)

Hananiah (The LORD has been gracious) to: Shadrach (I am very fearful [of a god])

Mishael (Who is what God is) to: Meshach (I am of no account)

Azariah (The LORD has helped) to: Abednego (Servant of the shining one)

While a name change may have been distasteful, it was not as serious as the dietary changes which violated Kosher laws. The Torah bound them to certain dietary restrictions, forbidding them to eat fat, blood, pork, horse, camel, rabbit, coney, dog, cat, lizard, snake, shellfish and various fowl (Leviticus 3:17; 11:1-47). The greater significance was the tacit acceptance of Babylonian gods and meal practices if they partook of foreign foods. As a means to keep Kosher and avoid any taint of fellowship with idols, Daniel proposed a test to demonstrate his dietary choices were healthier and would serve the king better. The ten-day test on a vegetarian diet proved successful (1:8-15) and allowed them to keep the faith. This was not so much an endorsement of vegetarianism as proof that God can work visible miracles in a short time when we are faithful to his instructions and commandments.

Because of their faithfulness God blessed these four young men with extraordinary abilities. They were able to learn and understand the Babylonian language, literature and other knowledge with such outstanding alacrity that when Nebuchadnezzar questioned them he discovered that they were "ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom" (1:20). What would become even more impressive and significant was Daniel's ability to understand and interpret dreams and visions (1:17). This would prove to underscore the main theme of the book of Daniel summarized in 4:17 and 5:21: "...the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men..."

Daniel would serve during the reigns of several Babylonian rulers until 539 B.C., the year Cyrus, the Persian, assumed control of Babylon (1:21), thus, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 180 years earlier (Isaiah 45:13) that the Jews would be freed from slavery, and not only that, return to their homeland to restore their temple and nation.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 2

Heavenly Father, your wisdom and power are beyond comprehension. You led prophets like Daniel to predict vast and complicated events of the future with astounding clarity and vision. Lead us to understand the events and circumstances of our time so that we can be faithful proclaimers of your word of salvation to a world desperate to see your hand of grace impacting all history. In Jesus' name. Amen

1. What troubled Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king? (v. 1)

Have you ever suffered the same malady and what was your explanation?

Was Nebuchadnezzar's insomnia the result of something he ate, his life-style, or what? (Numbers 12:6)

2. Who did Nebuchadnezzar think would help? (v. 2)

Explain what job each type of counselor performed (check a dictionary if needed)

Some Bibles translate 'Chaldeans' for astrologer. What does Matthew call them? (Matthew 2:1, 7)

What is the difference between an astronomer and an astrologer?

What does Scripture have to say about such metaphysical occupations? Summarize passages: Isaiah 47:13-14

Deuteronomy 4:19

Deuteronomy 18:9-11

Acts 16:16-18

3. Why was any attempt at an interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream unrealistic? (vv. 4-9)

What was the conclusion of his advisors? (v. 10-11)

4. Who was included in the execution order? (v. 12-13)
What three steps did Daniel take to resolve the situation?

vv. 14-15

v. 16

vv. 17-18

5. List the directives we should follow according to these passages:
Luke 18:1

Luke 21:36

Ephesians 6:18

Philippians 4:6

6. Through what means did God reveal a solution for Daniel? (v. 19)

Notice the verbs in Daniel's litany of praise (vv. 20-23). List the verbs that apply to God's action, that is, what does God do? (vv. 21-22)

What words refer to Daniel's response? (v. 23)

7. What altruistic request does Daniel ask on behalf of his enemies? (v. 24)

8. To whom does Daniel give credit for interpretation of dreams? (v. 28)

What does Daniel say about his own abilities? (v. 30)

Who should never get credit? (vv. 26-27)

Yet what daily column in the newspaper do we find next to crosswords/games?

9. Daniel proceeds to describe and then interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

According to Daniel the gold head of the statue represents whom? (vv. 37-38)

The rolling stone which becomes an unbreakable mountain represents what? (v. 44)

More specifically the stone represents whom? (Psalm 118:22 , Matthew 21:41-43, 1 Peter 2:4)

10. In between these first and last kingdoms, Daniel doesn't specify exact names here, but he does later in chapter 5. What kingdom does he mention next? (5:28)

With the hindsight of history scholars can easily deduce the kingdoms predicted by him. Babylon was superseded by Cyrus the Persian, collectively called the Medo-Persian empire, followed by the Greeks and in turn by the Romans. Looking at the statue as an obvious metaphor, what can you say about the *value* of the minerals in each succeeding empire going from top to bottom?

Yet what can you say about the *strength* of the minerals going from top to bottom?

What does that contrast say to you about expanding empires? (2 Samuel. 3:1)

11. David, an empire builder, was aware of God's plans. What did he say about kingdoms? (Psalm 2)

What, again, is the theme of Daniel expressed in 4:17 and 5:21?

What does Jesus say about his Kingdom?

John 3:5

John 18:36

Luke 17:21



THE DREAM AND ITS MEANING – DANIEL 2:31-45	13
THE MACCABEAN THEORY	13
THE TRADITIONAL THEORY	13
THE DISPENSATIONAL THEORY	14
DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS ELEVATED – DANIEL 2:46-49	14
PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 3	15

“After being granted a brief reprieve, Daniel called his three Hebrew friends to prayer, and that night in a vision, God gave Daniel both the dream and the meaning”

NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM – DANIEL 2:1-30

The second test of Daniel’s fitness and superior abilities occurred perhaps within a year of starting his educational program. Nebuchadnezzar had experienced a disturbing dream which he couldn’t understand.* In order to ascertain its meaning and to test his magicians’ genuine ability to interpret his dream, he demanded not only an interpretation, but a recounting of the dream without any hints as to its substance. He threatened execution if they could not recover the dream and its meaning (2:1-9). Without Nebuchadnezzar’s description any attempt was humanly impossible, so they failed (2:10-11). As threatened, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the executions, which included the execution of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (2:12-13). When Daniel was summoned for execution, he requested an audience with Nebuchadnezzar (2:14-16). After being granted a brief reprieve, Daniel called his three Hebrew friends to prayer, and that night in a vision, God gave Daniel both the dream and the meaning (2:17-23). The execution order was stayed, and Daniel was brought before Nebuchadnezzar to recount both the substance and the interpretation of the dream (2:24-30). Critical to the interpretation was that the dream foretold “what will happen in days to come” (2:28-29). The expression “days to come” or “the last days” had, by the time of Daniel, become a common expression of the prophets, since it was used by Isaiah (2:2), Micah (4:1), Hosea (3:5), Jeremiah (23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39) and Ezekiel (38:8, 16). The phrase could refer to events as close as the return of the Jews from exile or, further into the future, it could refer to universal peace to be established by the Messiah.

** In 2:5 older versions of the Bible translate “The thing is gone from me,” meaning Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream. While more modern versions translate: “My mind is firm on this” or “my command has gone out,” meaning he knows his dream, but expects them to guess it or suffer the consequences. The Hebrew and Greek Septuagint are not unequivocal.*

THE DREAM AND ITS MEANING – DANIEL 2:31-45

The central object of the dream was a huge statue constructed out of precious, semi-precious, base metals and clay. The head was gold, the chest and arms silver, the belly and loins bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet a mixture of iron and clay (2:31-33). The obvious character of the statue is that the value of the metals decrease as one moves downward while the strengths of the metal increase (except for the feet). The clay feet were shattered by a huge rock cut out by a power greater than human strength with the result that the entire statue crumbled. The wind swept away all the pieces, but the rock became a great mountain filling the whole world (2:34-35).

Daniel interpreted the dream as representing future kingdoms beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and extending to the time God would set up a kingdom that would endure forever (2:36-45). The easiest two interpretations are Daniel's direct assertion to Nebuchadnezzar, "You are that head of gold," and his description of the eternal kingdom set up by God. However, the identities of the intermediate kingdoms have been much debated. The interpretations hinge on whether it is based on a conservative traditional view or a critical one. Liberal scholars debate whether or not Daniel is a genuine prophet. Those who deny a context in the sixth century B.C. are often skeptical of prophecy. In their view, the "prophecy" is offered after the fact, and such interpreters look backward from the Maccabean Period to find historical parallels of which the unknown author is already aware. Those of us who accept a context in the sixth century B.C., and more particularly, who accept Jesus' assessment that Daniel was a prophet (Matthew 24:15), have no restrictions on what God plans for the future, or how far it extends, perhaps to the second coming of Christ.

Crucial to the debate is defining the various political entities that arose in the ancient Near East after the time of Daniel. After Babylon there is the Medo-Persian Empire, (though some try to separate Media from Persia). After the Medo-Persian period is Alexander's Empire, then the division of his empire among his generals. The two most prominent parts of Alexander's divided empire, at least as far as Palestine was concerned, were Egypt and Syria, and both attempted to control the land bridge that lay between them. Then comes Rome, and during the time of Rome,

Jesus Christ and the beginnings of the Christian church.

So the critical factor is the question of how many kingdoms Daniel intended to describe. He identifies four kingdoms, naming Babylon as the first, making only a cursory reference to the second, and labeling the others only "third" and "fourth." However, this raises the question, are the mixed materials of the feet and toes intended to represent yet a fifth kingdom prior to the establishment of a kingdom by God, or do the iron and clay simply indicate that the later period of the fourth kingdom will be fragmentary and weak?

In summary, there are at least *three interpretive schemes* for Nebuchadnezzar's dream which interpret the above factors differently. They all have a common starting point, taken from the specific identification of Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold (2:38b). Then, they all attempt to identify the last kingdom prior to the one set up by God. This, in turn, determines the interpretation of the intermediate kingdoms. For those accepting predictive prophecy, the kingdom set up by God refers to the messianic kingdom inaugurated by Christ. For those rejecting predictive prophecy, the kingdom set up by God is the independent Jewish state established by the Maccabees. Here, then, are the three theories:

THE MACCABEAN THEORY

(Generally accepted by critical scholars) holds that there are four successive empires, Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece. The fourth one extends into the branch of the Greek Empire headed up under Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid dynasty in Syria. The stone kingdom that God establishes is the independence won by Judas Maccabeus and his brothers. A primary weakness of this view is the splitting of Media and Persia into two empires, which does not conform to historical and archaeological data.

.....
"...the power of God's kingdom is not merely reserved for the future, for it is already present and active in the world."

THE TRADITIONAL THEORY

(Generally accepted by scholars who accept predictive prophecy and by the historical church at least back to

the time of Jerome in the 4th century) is that the four successive empires are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The stone cut from the mountain is the kingdom of God and/or the church inaugurated by Jesus in his public ministry. Here, the feet and toes represent the later stages of the Roman Empire when it began to fragment. During the time of Rome, the kingdom of God was inaugurated by Jesus, and ultimately, it will destroy all worldly powers when Christ returns the second time. However, the power of God’s kingdom is not merely reserved for the future, for it is already present and active in the world.

THE DISPENSATIONAL THEORY

(Accepted by the dispensational school of eschatology) agrees with the traditional theory that the four successive empires are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. However, dispensationalists argue that the feet and toes are yet a fifth empire, the kingdom of the antichrist, which would arise at the end of the ages. It will be a “revived Rome” composed of a coalition of nations represented by the ten toes. Some dispensationalists argue that this fifth empire is the European Union of the late 20th century. The stone kingdom established by God is the millennial reign of Christ to be established after his second coming. Here is a representative chart of these three interpretations.

	<i>MACCABEAN</i>	<i>TRADITIONAL</i>	<i>DISPENSATION</i>
Head of Gold	Babylon	Babylon	Babylon
Chest of Silver	Media	Medo-Persia	Medo-Persia
Belly of Bronze	Persia	Greece	Greece
Legs of Iron	Greece	Rome	Rome
Feet & Toes	–	–	Antichrist
Stone Kingdom	Maccabees	Church	Millennium

The traditional view seems to have the fewest problems historically and theologically. Everyone agrees that Babylon is the first kingdom. The historical successor to Babylon was Cyrus and the Persians, while Alexander the Great and the Greeks followed them with a kingdom that ruled “over the whole earth” (2:39). The iron empire well suits the character of Rome, and the fragmentation of the feet and toes well suits the latter stages of Rome before its fall. The eternal kingdom established supernaturally that will never be destroyed and that ultimately will crush all worldly kingdoms is an apt description of the kingdom

of God as preached by Jesus and the apostles. This conclusion is the more plausible, since the stone kingdom arises “in the days of those kings” (2:44a), that is, the time of the rulers of the Roman Empire.

The Maccabean theory, on the other hand, depends upon splitting Media and Persia into two empires, a conclusion that (according to Roland Harrison, and others) seems historically unjustified. Maccabean proponents frequently embrace an assessment of Scripture which is incompatible with inspiration and infallibility.

The dispensational theory is less believable, since it depends too much on the system it has constructed, and not enough on exegesis of the biblical texts. For example, some dispensationalists have related Daniel 2 to the events of late 20th century politics, a conclusion that seems forced and unsupported.

DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS ELEVATED – DANIEL 2:46-49

When Nebuchadnezzar had heard Daniel’s explanation, he was rightfully overwhelmed. This was certainly the dream he had dreamed, and the fact that Daniel had recounted the dream by God’s revelation confirmed his interpretation (2:46-47). As a result, Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel as the provincial ruler of the capital and administrator over all the other court advisors (2:48). He even granted Daniel’s request to elevate his friends as provincial administrators (2:49).

This account not only gives Daniel credence as a prophet of God, but illustrates again the theme of the book summarized in 4:17 and 5:21: “...the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men...”

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