

Daniel the Prophet

My approach to these Sunday Bible studies is to take a book from the Old Testament and then one from the New Testament alternating as we move through the entire Bible. There was a slight diversion as we just completed a survey of the New Testament; briefly considering each book of the New Testament.

Today we will embark on a study of the Book of Daniel.

My notes tell me that we last studied Daniel in 2007.

Daniel is a book written in apocalyptic style.

Apocalyptic means unveiling or revealing.

What NT book is an apocalyptic writing? [Revelation: Cf. Rev 1:1]

The **revelation** of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. Rev 1:1 **ESV**

NT:602 ἀποκάλυψις **apokalupsis** (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis)

KJV - appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation.

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The two main apocalyptic books in the Bible are Daniel and Revelation.

Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic. Type of biblical literature that emphasizes the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth and the revelation of God and his plan for the world. Apocalyptic writings are marked by distinctive literary features, particularly prediction of future events and accounts of visionary experiences or journeys to heaven, often involving vivid symbolism. Later apocalypses often build upon and elaborate the symbolism employed by earlier ones. This is particularly the case in the Book of Revelation, in which not only earlier apocalypses but the whole Old Testament is plundered for ideas and symbols. Readers need to be alert to discern allusions.

It has often been argued that apocalyptic is a response to distress, enabling suffering people to see that God is in control of their circumstances and that ultimate deliverance is assured. There is certainly truth in this. However, as a total explanation it may be questioned. Apocalyptic is not the only biblical response to suffering, and therefore other factors must prompt it as well. Furthermore, the apocalyptic movement seems to have flourished also at times when particular suffering was not experienced. It is not clear, for instance, that Revelation is a response to suffering, although suffering is predicted in it (2:10; 13:10). Sociologically, it seems better to say that apocalyptic is the product of a prophetic movement, which claims to reveal the way things really are, both in heaven and on earth (the term "apocalypse," the Greek name of the Book of Revelation, means "unveiling").

The biblical apocalyptic writings are characterized by certain distinctive theological ideas, which we will survey below. These concern particularly the relation between heaven and earth, the rule of God over both, and his ultimate victory over evil. However, these ideas are not found only in apocalyptic, but are themes of the whole biblical testimony in different ways. The mere appearance of these themes, therefore, cannot provide us with an adequate definition of apocalyptic. It is their appearance in this distinctive literary form, arising from this distinctive prophetic movement, which makes apocalyptic what it is.

The Bible contains two great examples of apocalyptic: Daniel and Revelation. But just as the distinctive themes of apocalyptic appear throughout the Scriptures, so we find that its literary forms have walk-on parts in many other books (Ezek 1-3; Zech 1:1-6:15; Matt 24:1; Eph 1:15-23; Heb 12:22-24).

Extra biblical apocalyptic works like 1 Enoch (first century B.C. plus later additions) and 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch (both first century A.D.) are matched by apocalyptic passages in many other works. There was a flowering of apocalyptic in the late first century A.D., following the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, as Jews sought revelation from God to explain that horrifying disaster. It is interesting that this is when the Book of Revelation is usually dated -undoubtedly the greatest example of apocalyptic.

Within Judaism apocalyptic faded out, but an apocalyptic visionary tradition has remained alive within Christianity ever since. No subsequent work, however, ancient or modern, attains the grandeur and power of the canonical Book of Revelation.

Apocalyptic and Revelation. The fundamental conviction of apocalyptic is that the world may be understood, but only by revelation that enables understanding. The mode of revelation varies. Daniel usually receives visionary dreams in his sleep (2:19; 7:1), but he also has day-time visions (10:4-5) and is able to pass on words from God like a traditional prophet (5:25-28). John receives his revelation while "in the Spirit" (Rev 1:10), which seems in his case to indicate an out-of-body journey to heaven (4:1 - something claimed in other apocalypses of the period). Apocalyptic is distinguished from other forms of prophecy in that God himself rarely speaks. The revelation is communicated through angels or other heavenly figures. Both Daniel and Revelation are full of speech, but in both books the only occasion on which the voice of God is unequivocally heard is Rev 21:5-8, a passage all the more climactic because of this rarity. In both books a particular angel acts as a guide and instructor (Dan 9:21; Rev 17:1; 22:8).

One interesting difference between Revelation and all other apocalypses is the extent to which it leaves visions unexplained. The usual pattern, both in Daniel and in the extra biblical apocalypses, is that a vision is followed by an explanation of the symbolism (Dan 7:15-27; Zech 1:7-21), rather like the instances in which a parable of Jesus is followed by an interpretation. (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43; Mark 4:1-20)

This is only occasionally the case in Revelation. In 7:13 a heavenly figure actually asks John for an explanation of what he has just seen (but then provides it for him). In most cases the visions are just related, so that the reader is challenged to provide the interpretation, as in the case of the majority of Jesus' parables. It is not by accident that each of the letters to the churches ends with the appeal associated with the parables: "He who has an ear, let him hear." Right interpretation demands spiritual capacity and insight.

The Interconnectedness of Heaven and Earth. This follows as much from the mode of revelation as from the fact of it. John's entry into heaven is a token of the closeness of heaven to earth. Having entered it, he is able from that vantage-point to survey both heaven and earth and to see how, really, earth can only be understood when it is seen as one-half of a much greater reality. The same is true, though less clearly, in Daniel.

This interconnectedness is expressed in various ways. There are heavenly counterparts of earthly realities, like the "angels of the seven churches" (Rev 1:20), and the four living creatures by the throne (Rev 4:6), and the "son of man" of Dan 7:13, who to some extent represents God's people in heaven (Dan 7:18). Similarly there are earthly counterparts of heavenly realities, seen for instance in the ghastly pairing of the two women who are also cities in Rev 17-21: on the one hand the Great Whore, who enslaves the world by war and commerce, and on the other the Bride of Christ, who brings healing to the nations.

There is mutual penetration, expressed both by the presence of the risen Christ in and with his church (Rev 1-3), and also by the way in which earthly powers are seen as nurtured by the power of the beast (Rev 17). Life on earth is determined from heaven: Decrees are issued from the throne that affects the earth (Rev 16:1; cf. Dan 7:26), and events in heaven have a radical effect on earth (such as the ejection of the defeated dragon from heaven, Rev 12:9, 12).

Although earth is the sphere of the dragon and the beast, yet heaven and earth are seen as a single organism. This appears vividly in the compelling vision of universal worship in Rev 5, where John sees (and hears) the worship spreading from the throne in concentric circles outward, from the living creatures to the twenty-four elders, then to the myriads of angels (v. 11), and finally to "every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (v. 13), with this final shout of praise echoed by an "Amen!" back at the center. At the end heaven and earth will be recreated together (Rev 21:1).

God's Rule over a Chaotic World. The basic message of Dan 2-5 is that "the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes" (Dan 5:21). Similarly, but by very different means, the seals visions in Rev 6 teach that the decree of God underlies all the chaotic horrors of human experience, including imperial conquest (6:2), war (6:3), violent and premature death (6:7), and the supreme (inexplicable?) injustice of being murdered for loyalty to the Creator (6:9-11).

As in the Book of Job, no reason is given for the presence of such things in God's world, but a profound answer is provided nonetheless: All these things issue from the scroll that only the slain Lamb is worthy to open (5:1-10). Such evils are permitted to exist in the world only because the Lamb-God himself in Christ has suffered them all firsthand (especially the final one).

Ultimately, God's rule over the world is to be expressed by the overthrow of the powers that produce such evils (Rev 6:15-17-foreshadowing the climactic overthrow of Babylon the Great in chapters 17-19).

The Protection of God's People. The presentation of the "son of man" before God assures the status and security of "the people of the Most High" (Dan 7:13,22). This does not mean that they are preserved from suffering. The great beast, whose power Daniel sees being transferred to the "son of man," will still wage war on the saints and prevail over them (7:21, 25). But because the vision has been given in which the power of the beast has already been destroyed, God's people can be assured that they will be kept safe under its rule.

In Revelation the same idea is conveyed immediately by the vision of the risen Christ patrolling among the lampstands that represent the seven churches (1:20), and by his direct messages of warning and encouragement. He holds their "angels" in his hand. This is also the function of the dramatic interludes that intrude into the structural pattern of repeated "sevens." Between the sixth and seventh seals, John witnesses the "sealing" (play on words) of "the servants of our God" (7:3), so that they will not be harmed by the calamities he has just seen. A mark of ownership is set upon them, not to save them from the experience of war, famine, and disease, but to ensure that they will be among those who "come out of the great tribulation" (7:14), and who will no longer hunger or thirst (7:16).

Similarly between the sixth and seventh trumpets another interlude occurs (Rev 10:8-11:13) that concerns the preaching of the gospel before a hostile world. While they give their testimony, the two witnesses are kept safe, even though they are

defeated by "the beast from the abyss" and follow their Lord through death and resurrection (11:5-12).

The message of the book is that, even though we cannot avoid bearing the mark of the beast as inhabitants of this world-order (13:16), yet, viewed from heaven, we also bear the name of God and of the Lamb on our foreheads, and are secure with him (14:1-5).

The Ultimate Victory of God. This is the theme that unites the biblical apocalypses with all others of the same period. The powers of this world will be overthrown and replaced by the kingdom of God. This means both secular world powers and the power of evil that lie behind them. The vision that energizes apocalyptic is the day when "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev 11:15).

Stephen Motyer

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Now back to the Book of Daniel:

Introduction to Daniel from the ESV:

“Exiled to Babylon in 605 B.C., Daniel was one of several young men chosen to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s court. When Persia conquered Babylon in 539, Daniel was given a position of power. He remained faithful to God in both of these hostile environments. From the interpretation of dreams, to the familiar stories of the fiery furnace, the lions’ den, and the handwriting on the wall, to the prophetic visions, the recurrent theme is God’s sovereignty over human affairs. In the historical sections { chapters 1-6 } God supernaturally rescued Daniel and his friends. The rest of the book consists of visions of future judgment and deliverance by the Messiah. Some of Daniel’s prophetic themes are echoed in the New Testament, especially in Revelation.”

Daniel’s name means “God is my Judge”.

If ever there was a man who lived by that principle it was Daniel. Daniel echoes Job who vowed: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!” [Job 13:15]

Daniel writes in the first person which indicates that he is the author of the book that bears his name. [7:2 ff; 8:1 ff; 9:1 ff; 10:2 ff; Cf. Matt 24:15]

However, much of the book is written in the third person [7:1; 10:1] which alongside first person references may indicate that another inspired writer collected the prophecies of Daniel and wrote the narrative portions of the book. The entire historical section [chapters 1-6] refers to Daniel in the third person.

There are also proclamations by Nebuchadnezzar [3:28-29; 4:34-37]
Also King Darius [6:25-27]

Shortly before the time of Daniel there was the prophet Jeremiah who was called by God to prophesy against Judah. Judah would not heed Jeremiah’s warning and listened to the false prophets who preached a popular message of “peace, peace”. Cf. Jeremiah 8:11

In the year of Jeremiah’s call, Nebopolassar will rebel against Assyria and establish the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Within 15 years Nineveh will fall under the

Medo-Persian alliance, and seven years later Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt will clash at Carchemish, with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon emerging as the victor.

A few years before Daniel, Jeremiah was already warning Judah about her whoredom with idols. Jeremiah ministered from about 627 to 580. Daniel ministered from about 605 to 530. During the time of Daniel there was Ezekiel who ministered from about 593 to 570.

Daniel's era was about 100 years after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, or Israel in Samaria, to Assyria. Since we sinners seem to never learn from history, the Southern Kingdom of Judah is rushing headlong toward being overrun by Babylon.

Daniel was of a princely family of Judah and was carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar about the year 605 B.C. [Dan 1:1; Jer 25:1]. Ezekiel 14:14, 20 refer to Daniel.

Daniel was one of the several captives selected for duty in the king's service. Ordinarily this would be an honor and most young men would think it a "lucky" break. But Daniel and his three friends refuse to eat food or drink wine from Nebuchadnezzar's table. God prepares them with three years of special training and they excel in Nebuchadnezzar's service.

Daniel prophesied until "the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia" [10:1].

The Book of Daniel 2:4b – 7:28 is written in Aramaic and the remainder of the book is written in Hebrew.

Aramaic. Spoken from at least about 2000 BC, Aramaic eventually replaced many of the languages of the ancient world in popularity and usage. Parts of the Book of Daniel were written in Aramaic. Aramaic was the common language spoken in Palestine in the time of Jesus. While the New Testament was written in the Greek language, the language which Jesus spoke was probably Aramaic. "Talitha, cumi" (Mark 5:41) and "Ephphatha" are two Aramaic phrases spoken by Jesus which have been preserved in English versions of the New Testament. Another name for the Aramaic dialect used in the early churches throughout Asia Minor is Syriac.

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A probable explanation for the mixture of languages is that the original text of Daniel was written in Hebrew; then Antiochus Epiphanes, persecutor of the Jews, tried to eradicate the Bible of the Jews entirely, and some sections of the original

was lost; that the lost sections were replaced by corresponding translations in the popular language of the Jews [Aramaic].

“And in like manner Judas also gathered together for us all those writings that had been scattered by reason of the war that befell, and they are still with us.” 2 Maccabees 2:14

That Daniel was a prophet is the teaching of Jesus [Matt 24:15].

Some of the prominent characters in Daniel:

Nebuchadnezzar

[neb you kad NEZ ur] (*O god Nabu, protect my son*) - the king of the NeoBabylonian Empire (ruled 605 B.C. - 562 B.C.) who captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and carried the people of Judah into captivity in Babylon. He plays a prominent role in the books of Jeremiah (21-52) and Daniel (1:1-5:18) and also appears in 2 Kings (24:1-25:22), Ezra (1:7-6:5), and Ezekiel (26:7-30:10).

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Belteshazzar

[bell tuh SHAZ zur] (*may Bel protect his life*) - the Hebrew form of the Babylonian name given to DANIEL by the chief of Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs (Dan 1:7; 5:12). This name should not be confused with BELSHAZZAR.

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Belshazzar

[bell SHAZ zur] (*Bel, protect the king*) - the oldest son of Nabonidus and the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (Dan 5:1-2; 7:1; 8:1). According to Dan 5, Belshazzar was a king given to sensual pleasure. He held a drunken banquet involving his wives, concubines, and a thousand of his lords, or 'nobles' (Dan 5:1, ... At the banquet Belshazzar and his guests drank from the sacred vessels which his "father" (Dan 5:2) - or grandfather-Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the Temple in Jerusalem, thus insulting the captive Jews and their God.

In the midst of the revelry, the fingers of a hand began writing these words on the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" (Dan 5:25). Daniel tells us that upon seeing these words Belshazzar became troubled "so that the joints of his hips loosened and his knees knocked against each other" (Dan 5:6).

At the queen's advice, Belshazzar sent for Daniel, who interpreted the writing as a signal of doom for the Babylonian Empire: "MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan 5:26-28). That very night, the soldiers of DARIUS the Mede-possibly another name for Cyrus the Persian-captured Babylon and Belshazzar was killed.

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Darius

4. Darius the Mede, successor of Belshazzar to the throne of Babylon (Dan 5:31). He is called the "son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes" (Dan 9:1). Darius the Mede has not been identified with certainty; he is not mentioned by Greek historians or in any Persian literature.

Darius the Mede was the Persian king who made Daniel a governor, or ruler, of several provincial leaders (Dan 6:1-2). Daniel's popularity with his subjects caused the other governors and the satraps under them to become jealous of Daniel and to plot against him. It was Darius the Mede who had Daniel thrown into the den of lions (Dan 6:6-9), but who ultimately issued a decree that all in his kingdom "must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (Dan 6:26).

Much confusion and mystery have clouded the identity of Darius the Mede. Some scholars have denied the existence of such a ruler, concluding that the writer of the Book of Daniel was historically inaccurate in saying that Darius the Mede was the person who "received the kingdom" (Dan 5:31) when Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. Persian cuneiform inscriptions show that Cyrus II ("the Great") was the successor of Belshazzar.

One possible answer to this problem is that "Darius the Mede" was an alternative title used by the writer of the Book of Daniel for Cyrus the Persian (Cyrus II, the Great). Indeed in Dan 11:1, the SEPTUAGINT-the Greek translation of the Old Testament-has Cyrus instead of Darius. Thus, a quite legitimate translation of Dan 6:28 might read: "Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (NIV, margin) Such a logical and reasonable interpretation silences the skepticism about this passage in the Book of Daniel.

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OUTLINE OF DANIEL

God’s sovereignty in history: The story of Daniel and his three friends.

- Chapter 1 The four refuse to defile themselves with royal food and are rewarded, Daniel receiving the ability to interpret dreams.
- Chapter 2 Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the image with its four parts, is rewarded, and secures for his friends high political positions.
- Chapter 3 Certain Chaldeans become jealous and this leads to the fiery furnace for the three friends, but their miraculous deliverance causes the king to glorify the Most High God.
- Chapter 4 The king soon forgets, glorifies himself, and in fulfillment of his dream about a tree which was hewn down, is deposed for a season.
- Chapter 5 This divine judgment of Nebuchadnezzar is disregarded by his “son” Belshazzar, who at a feast exalts himself against the God of Heaven and is slain, so that Darius the Mede receives the kingdom and promotes Daniel.
- Chapter 6 As a result to this promotion enemies plot against Daniel so that he is cast into the lion’s den, but God delivers him.

God’s sovereignty in prophecy:

- Chapter 7 Prophetic vision of the four beasts [Cf. chapter 2]: the lion, bear, four-headed leopard, beast with iron teeth.
- Chapter 8 Vision of the ram and the he-goat whose horn was replaced by four others [the four-headed leopard], and the relation of this vision to “the glorious land”.
- Chapter 9 Daniel’s penitent prayer for the glorious land and its people, and the vision of the seventy sevens which he receives.
- Chapters 10-12 Conflicts between Persia and Greece [ram and he-goat] and their significance for “the glorious land”.

* * * *

Daniel covers the period of the Babylonian Captivity [~ 605-536] and he was contemporary with Jeremiah [~ 627-580] and Ezekiel [~ 593-570].

The kings of Judah were Jehoiakim [609-597] and Zedekiah [597-586] until the temple and Jerusalem was destroyed in 586.