

## **Daniel: Predictor of the Future**

Intro: An interesting thing about predictions is that they are often wrong. Consider, for example, Jean Dixon, acclaimed the best known psychic-predictor of modern times. Ms. Dixon rose to fame in 1956 by predicting that the winner of the 1960 presidential election would die in office. When President Kennedy was assassinated, her popularity soared. Of course, what is often overlooked is the fact that she had also predicted that Richard Nixon would win the presidency in 1960, not JFK. Undaunted, Ms. Dixon convinced herself and the rest of America that she was a modern-day prophet. Every year until her death in 1997 she would issue her list of predictions for the coming year. Most people assume that most of her predictions came true. The reality is that most didn't. Yet she is regarded as the greatest of the modern psychics.

This raises the question, where is information about the future to be found? USA Today took a poll back in 1999 to see where Americans turned for information about the future.

<b>The Magic 8 Ball</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>The Ouija Board</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Pollsters</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Psychics</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Astrologers</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>The Farmer's Almanac</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Biblical Prophecies</b>	<b>49%</b>

Most Americans, a whopping 49%, reported that they gathered their information about the future from the biblical prophets. Standing in stark contrast to modern psychics like Jean Dixon are the prophets of the Bible. As we shall see, the only reliable source of information about the future comes from the Bible. Time after time the prophets of God predicted that something would occur and it occurred, exactly as they said. This fact lends great weight to the argument that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and as such, it is reliable and trustworthy.

Last Sunday we looked at ten Old Testament Messianic prophecies that predicted the coming of Emmanuel, the virgin-born Messiah that God had promised to send to redeem mankind. This morning, we are going to begin a study of Daniel and Revelation. These two books describe God's eschatological program for His people Israel, and for mankind in general.

Eschatology is the study of future things. So, if you want to know God's plan for the future, you have to study Daniel and Revelation.

We begin our study in Daniel because the prophecies in his book serve as the foundation for the Book of Revelation, which is actually an expansion and the culmination of Daniel's prophetic panorama of human history. The prophet Daniel out of all the prophetic writings is absolutely crucial to a proper understanding of end-time prophecy.

Daniel is indispensable to the development of biblical prophetic revelation and provides the key to the overall interpretation of prophecy.

Dr. Walvoord explains: "In many respects, the book of Daniel is the most comprehensive prophetic revelation of the Old Testament, giving the only total view of world history from Babylon to the second advent of Christ and interrelating Gentile history and prophecy 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 the interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Its revelation of the sovereignty and power of God has brought assurance to Jew and Gentile alike that God will fulfill His sovereign purposes in time and eternity."<sup>1</sup>

Of the three prophetic programs revealed in Scripture, outlining the course of the Gentile nations, Israel, and the church, Daniel alone reveals the details of God's plan for both the [Gentile] nations and Israel. Although other prophets like Jeremiah had much to say to the nations and Israel, Daniel brings together and interrelates these great themes of prophecy as does no other portion of Scripture. For this reason, the Book of Daniel is essential to the structure of prophecy and is the key to the entire Old Testament prophetic revelation.

We will discuss these and several additional introductory issues in greater detail during our upcoming Wednesday evening Bible study. ***I encourage you to attend if at all possible.*** I will be passing out detailed notes and charts to assist you in your personal study of these two phenomenal books, Daniel and Revelation. If for any reason you are unable to attend our Wednesday evening discussion session, let me or someone else know and we will get a copy of the study notes to you.

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<sup>1</sup>John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 27.

I would like to spend the remainder of our time together this morning by introducing the Book of Daniel, and reviewing chapter 1.

The prophet Daniel, whose name means “God is my judge,” composed this book around 537 B.C. His primary purpose for writing was to reveal that God is sovereign over all events of human history, and to shed light on the future of Israel throughout the course of Gentile world history, better known as “the times of the Gentiles.” Daniel provides a blueprint on Gentile world history by showing that four Gentile kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) will dominate Israel throughout the course of world history, until Messiah, the Son of Man, comes to destroy all the Gentile kingdoms of this world and establish His own glorious kingdom in Jerusalem.

The book may be divided into three sections according to the movement from Hebrew (chapter 1) to Aramaic (chapters 2 through 7), and back to Hebrew (chapters 8–12).

### **Chapter 1 describes Daniel’s Early Life in the Babylonian Court 1:1-21**

The first chapter introduces Daniel’s deportation to Babylon (vv. 1-7), His steadfast dedication to God (vv. 8-16), which results in his rise to prominence (vv. 17-21)

#### **I. Daniel’s Deportation 1:1-7**

##### A. Historical setting 1:1-2

**1** In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. began an important prophetic time period known as “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). The times of the Gentiles is defined as that extended period of time in which the land given in covenant by God to Abraham and his descendants is occupied by Gentile powers and the Davidic throne is empty of any rightful heir in the Davidic line. The times of the Gentiles, which began here in 605 B.C. will continue until the Messiah returns. When He

returns Christ will subdue all Gentile nations, deliver the land of Israel from its Gentile occupants, and bring the nation Israel into her promised covenanted blessings in His Millennial Kingdom.

B. His selection 1:3-4

C. His diet 1:5

D. His new Babylonian name 1:6-7

6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned *new* names to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach, and to Azariah Abed-nego.

Nebuchadnezzar changed these Jewish youth's names, but he couldn't change their natures.

## II. Daniel's Dedication To God 1:8-16

A. Daniel's request 1:8

8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

B. The overseer response 1:9-14

9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, 10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." 11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants

according to what you see.” **14** So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

### C. The result 1:15-16

**15** And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food. **16** So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

## III. Daniel’s Rise To Prominence 1:17-21

### A. God’s provision 1:17-18

**17** And as for these four youths, **God gave them** knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams. **18** Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

### B. Daniel appointment to the king’s service 1:19

**19** And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s personal service.

### C. The Hebrew youths’ wisdom 1:20

**20** And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm

### D. The duration of Daniel’s service to Nebuchadnezzar 1:21

**21** And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

Daniel lived to see Cyrus, the King of Persia, conquer Babylon in October of 539 B.C. This was nearly sixty-years after his deportation to Babylon. It is estimated that Daniel was over eighty years old by this time.

Conclusion:

God gave Daniel a long and prosperous ministry. He served faithfully in two Gentile kingdoms, Babylon and Medo-Persia. His devotion to God, and unbending convictions earned him the friendship and respect of both Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and Cyrus, king of Persia. Daniel provides us with a model of how to live in our collapsing moral culture. May God grant us the courage and conviction to stand for Him in the face of rising opposition to Christ and our Christian values.

Like Daniel, we need to find friends or family members to pray with. Daniel had three friends who he could share his life with. Take the lead in finding others to pray with. God honors prayer, so get busy praying.

In every situation, no matter how dire, Daniel and his three friends trusted themselves to God. God promises to give us His peace, which surpasses human comprehension, if we will but ask Him for His help (Phil 4:6-7).

Join me in a word of prayer, after which we will begin our New Year by celebrating the Lord's Supper together.

**The Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

**Closing song: Write Your Story**