**Old Testament Survey**

**Book of Daniel**

**I. The Personal History of Daniel (1–6)**

A. Maintaining his godly walk (1)

B. Interpreting the “image dream” (2)

C. The golden image—Daniel not present here (3)

D. Interpreting the “tree dream” (4)

E. Interpreting the handwriting on the wall (5)

F. Maintaining his godly devotion—the lions’ den (6)

**II. The Prophetic Ministry of Daniel (7–12)**

A. His vision of the four beasts (7)

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D. His final vision of the future (10–12)

**The Kingdoms in Daniel:**

You must keep in mind that six different kingdoms are identified in the Book of Daniel.

1. **Babylon** (606–539 B.C.)

2. **Media-Persia** (539–330 B.C.)

3. **Greece** (330–ca. 150 B.C.)

4. **Rome** (ca. 150 B.C.–ca. A.D. 500)

The head of gold (2:36–38)

Legs of iron (2:33, 40)

The lion with eagle’s wings (7:4)

The “dreadful beast” (7:7)

5. **Antichrist’s kingdom**

Arms and chest of silver (2:32, 39)

Ten toes of iron and clay (2:41–43)

Bear with three ribs (7:5)

Little horn (7:8)

6. **Christ’s kingdom**

Thigh of brass (2:32, 39)

The stone that smites the image (2:34–35, 44–45)

Leopard with four heads (7:6)

The Ancient of Days (7:9–14)

Daniel stands out as one of the greatest men in Jewish history. He was a in the year 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and began his conquest of Judah. There were several “deportations” of Jews to Babylon, and Daniel was in the first group because he was of the princely line. It was the practice of Babylon to deport the finest of the citizens and train them for service in their own government. In fact, he lived through the reigns of four rulers (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus) and three different kingdoms (Babylon, Media, Persia). His name means “God is my judge.” He held several important positions and was promoted greatly because of his character and wisdom, and because the blessing of God was upon him. For at least seventy-five years, Daniel was God’s faithful \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in a wicked and idolatrous kingdom.

In the personal history of Daniel (chapters 1–6), we find three different times of difficulty: the testing of the four Hebrews when they arrived at Babylon (chap. 1); the fiery furnace (chap. 3); and the lions’ den (chap. 6). In each of these experiences, Daniel and his friends won the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but the very first victory was the foundation for the other victories.

**Daniel 1 A Difficult Trial**

1. Imagine four Hebrew teenagers, being snatched from their homes in Jerusalem and moved to Babylon (1678 miles). Since all of them were princes, belonging to the royal family, they were probably not accustomed to this kind of treatment. It is too bad when the youth of the land must suffer because of the of the parents.
2. But a difficult trial lay ahead of them: the king wanted to force them to to the ways of Babylon. Christians today face the same trial: Satan wants us to become “conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:1–2). Sad to say, too many Christians give in to the world and lose their power, their joy, and their testimony.
3. No longer were they surrounded by the things of God in Jerusalem, and no longer would they have the influence of their godly parents and teachers. They had to learn the wisdom and the language of their captors. The king hoped that this “ ” would make better servants out of them.
4. For the next three years, the four youths were supposed to eat the king’s , which, of course, was contrary to the dietary laws of the Jews. No doubt the food was also offered to the idols of the land, and for the Hebrew youths to eat it would be blasphemy.
5. The world does not like to recognize the name of God, yet each of the four boys had God’s name in his own name. Daniel (“God is my judge”) was changed to Belteshazzar (“Bel protect his life”). Bel was the name of a Babylonian god. Hananiah (“Jehovah is gracious”) became Shadrach (“the command of the moon god”); Mishael (“Who is like God?”) became Meshach (“who is like Aku,” one of the heathen gods); and Azariah (“Jehovah is my helper”) became Abed-nego (“the servant of Nego,” another heathen god). The Babylonians hoped that these new names would help the youths their God and gradually become more like the heathen people with whom they were living and studying.
6. The Babylonians could change Daniel’s home, textbooks, menu, and name, but they could not change his . He and his friends purposed in their hearts that they would obey God’s Word; they refused to become conformed to the world. They dared to believe God’s Word and trust God for victory. They had surrendered their bodies and minds to the Lord, as Rom. 12:1–2 instructs, and they were willing to let God do the rest.
7. Daniel asked for a ten-day test, which was not very long considering that they had three years of training ahead of them; the head servant agreed with their plan. The servant was afraid to change the king’s orders, lest anything happen to the youths, so Daniel’s proposed was a good solution to the problem. The boys were fed vegetables and water for ten days, thus avoiding the defiled food of the Babylonians. At the end of the test, the four lads were healthier and more handsome than the other students who ate from the king’s table.
8. A test for ten days is one thing, but what about the three-year course at the University of Babylon? The answer is in v. 17: “God gave them …” all that they needed! He enabled them to learn their lessons better than the other students, and He added to this knowledge His own spiritual wisdom. The king himself had to admit that the four Hebrew lads were times smarter than his best advisers.

**Daniel 2 This chapter is the outline of world history.**

1. An understanding of this chapter, and chapter 7, will assist you in your study of Revelation and other Bible prophecies.
2. The king was concerned about his future (see v. 29) and whether or not his kingdom would last. God gave him a describing the future, but he could not understand it. The “fake” magicians and wise men were really on the spot, for the king wanted not only an interpretation of the dream, but also a description of it! Any man could “invent” an interpretation, but it was impossible for them to describe a dream they had never seen.
3. The king ordered all the wise men to be slain, and that included Daniel and his three friends. We must admire the of Daniel, for he faced the chief executioner boldly. Daniel and his three friends knew what to do; they spent the next hours in fervent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God. God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel in the hours of the night.
4. Daniel told the king the contents of his dream. He saw a huge statue of a : the head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thigh of copper or bronze (but not brass, which was not known at that time), the legs of iron, and the feet of iron and clay. He also saw a come down upon the feet and crush the entire image into powder. Then the stone grew and filled the whole earth like a great mountain.
5. Verse 28 tells us that the full meaning is for the “latter days.” Each metal represented a different kingdom: Babylon was the head of gold (v. 38); it would be followed by the Medo-Persian kingdom, the breast and arms of silver; then would come Greece, the belly and thigh of bronze; Rome would follow as the two legs of iron (and the Roman Empire did divide into Eastern and Western parts). The feet of iron and clay (a brittle mixture) represented the kingdoms at the end times, a continuation of the Roman Empire divided into ten kingdoms (the ten toes). Of course, the final “human kingdom” on earth will be that of the Antichrist during the last part of the Tribulation. How will it all end? , the Stone (Matt. 21:44), will suddenly appear and smite the nations of the world, setting up His own worldwide kingdom of power and glory. This image is a picture of world history.

**Daniel 3 The Blazing Furnace**

1. There is a twenty-year interval between this chapter and the events in chapter 2. As you can see, Nebuchadnezzar’s has not changed one bit. He admitted in 2:46–47 that Jehovah God was a great God, but this truth never really got to his heart. As a result, the king tried to force the entire empire to be idol-worshipers, which, in the long run, actually meant worshiping the king. After all, was he not the “head of gold” in the image he saw in his dream? (2:38)
2. It was not easy for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to stand their ground as everybody else bowed down when the music played, but they refused to budge. Knowing that the three men were good men (and friends of Daniel), he gave them another chance, but they remained firm. They would rather burn than ! So, into the furnace they went, bound with their own clothing.
3. Of course, the three Jews could have made excuses and gone along with the crowd. Instead, they stood with one another and with the Lord, trusting God to glorify Himself either by their life or by their death. God will never His own when they go through the fiery trial. He may not keep us out of the furnace, but He will go with us and bring us through for His glory.
4. These men were actually better off for having gone through the fire. For one thing, it gave them the opportunity to with Christ and suffer with Him. It is worth danger and trial to know how near the Lord can be to us. The fire set them from their bonds, just as suffering for Christ today gives us joyful liberty from sin and the world.

**Daniel 4 Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream about a Tree**

This chapter is an official Babylonian document, written by the king himself. It is the story of his conversion, and what a story it is. Keep in mind that it was written seven years after the experience itself, so that vv. 1–3 and 37 are Nebuchadnezzar’s public testimony of what God did to him and for him.

1. It was at a time of peace and prosperity that God sent this dream to the king, for this dream was really a divine to him that his sins were going to catch up with him at last.
2. The dream was this: he saw a huge that overshadowed the entire earth, with the birds and animals taking refuge under it, and he heard an angelic voice say, “Cut down the tree.” The tree was cut down, but the stump was left in the wet grass, with a band of iron about it. Needless to say, the king was greatly disturbed by this dream.
3. The king summoned his wise men, but they were unable to explain the dream. The king knew that only one man could solve the problem—Daniel, the man of . So he called Daniel to his throne and related to him the dream that had perplexed him.
4. Daniel revealed to the king the meaning of the dream. But the revelation struck the prophet dumb for an hour. The represented Nebuchadnezzar and his great kingdom (vv. 20–22). The other nations that looked to Babylon for protection and provision are pictured by the beasts and birds lodging in and under the tree.
5. The angel announced, “Cut down the tree—get King Nebuchadnezzar off the throne.” What an experience the king would have! He would actually cease to live like a man and would live like a beast for years. The tree would be cut down, and the iron band would restrain its growth, but the judgment would not be permanent. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar would become human again, his reason would return, and he would ascend to his throne in great glory.
6. Why was God working this way in the king’s life? To teach him humility. Daniel warned the king to and change his ways. “Break off your sins,” he begged, “and perhaps the Lord will give you forgiveness and time to serve Him.”
7. It happened as Daniel said. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a whole year to consider the warning and turn from his sins, but the king paid no heed. In fact, he became more and more of his achievements. But there came a day when judgment fell and the true beastly nature of the king was revealed for all to see. Men drove him from his palace and he lived for seven years like a beast of the field, eating grass like the oxen.
8. This did not last forever. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was converted. The first step (the king tells us) was, “I lifted my eyes to heaven”. That certainly sounds like a man whose life has been changed by faith in the Lord. The king had learned his lesson: he was nothing and God was everything.

**Daniel 5 The Writing on the Wall**

1. Some twenty years passed between chapters 4 and 5. Nebuchadnezzar moved off the scene, succeeded by a grandson Belshazzar.
2. This feast was in honor of one of the great Babylonian , and it took place in the autumn of 539 B.C. Archaeologists have unearthed palaces at Babylon containing great halls large enough to entertain a thousand guests.
3. The king was not content to drink wine to his gods, he wanted to blaspheme the God of the Jews as well. So he had the sacred temple brought in to be used at this idolatrous, blasphemous feast (see Dan. 1:2). Please keep in mind that the Medes and Persians were already outside the gates of the city when this feast was in progress. So confident was the king that his fortress city was impregnable that he laughed at the invading armies. Babylon was a strong city with walls 350 feet high and eighty-seven feet thick. The Euphrates River ran through the city, and great brass gates controlled the city entrances. How could any invading army capture such a city?
4. The guests apparently did not immediately see the mysterious hand appear, but the king looked over their heads and saw it on the opposite wall. Imagine how shocked the guests were when they saw their king trembling, his knees knocking together. Wine could not give him courage now; he was face-to-face with a from God. He had to know the meaning of the hand and the handwriting.
5. As usual, none of the king’s “experts” could explain the on the wall, and this made the king even more concerned. How strange that he did not know Daniel, the man who had counseled his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. But Belshazzar was a careless youth (he was about thirty-five years old at this time) who was more interested in power and pleasure than in spiritual matters. The Queen Mother solved the problem. At any rate, she heard of the commotion in the banquet hall and came to advise the king. Then she told him about Daniel and how he had advised Belshazzar’s grandfather.
6. Before explaining the handwriting, Daniel preached a to the king, using the king’s grandfather as his illustration. He warned the king about his pride and sin and reminded him that God judged Nebuchadnezzar severely. “And you knew all this,” Daniel exclaimed, “yet you persist in living such a wicked life. Now God has sent you a message of judgment and it is too late.” God gave Nebuchadnezzar a year to repent (4:28–33), but there was no year for Belshazzar to repent. He was doomed.
7. When the Babylonian magicians saw these words on the wall, they could not understand what they meant. But God gave Daniel the interpretation: “Numbered—weighed—divided.” Belshazzar’s days had been numbered and time was up; he had been weighed on God’s scales and found wanting; now his kingdom would be taken from him and divided by the Medes and Persians. And keep in mind that Darius was at the gates at that very hour. Did Belshazzar believe the message from God, even after all his fear and shaking? No. We find no evidence of .
8. Had Belshazzar studied the Prophet Isaiah, he would have known just how the city of Babylon would be taken, and by whom it would be taken. Cyrus the Persian conqueror would dig a canal that would reroute the Euphrates River and then smuggle his army into the city under the gates. Why was the city taken unawares? Because most of the people were drunk. It was a great religious feast day, and the people were too involved in to think about defense. The enemy came right into the banquet hall, and the king was slain.