

Brief Summary of Daniel

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Chapter 1 describes the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Along with many others, Daniel and his three friends are deported to Babylon and because of their courage and the obvious blessings of God upon them, they are “promoted” in the king’s service.

Chapters 2-7 record Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that only Daniel could recount and interpret. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great statue represents a succession of four great kingdoms, three of which would arise in after Babylon. Next, Nebuchadnezzar makes a great statue and forces everyone to worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse and are miraculously spared by God despite being thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is judged by God for his pride and humbled for 7 years, but he is later restored once he recognizes God’s sovereignty.

Daniel chapter 5 records the downfall of Babylon and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar’s son Belshazzar misuses the items taken from the temple in Jerusalem. In response to his sacrilege, he receives a message from God written into the wall by a mysterious hand. Only Daniel could interpret the writing, which was a message of coming judgment from God.

Under the subsequent Medo-Persian Empire, Daniel, serving under King Darius, is thrown into the den of lions for refusing to obey a law which forbade him from praying to God, but he was miraculously spared and the remorseful king glorified the God of Daniel. God gives Daniel a vision of four beasts. The four beasts represent the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, respectively.

Chapters 8-12 contain a vision involving a ram, a goat, and several horns – also referring to future kingdoms and their rulers. Daniel chapter 9 records Daniel’s “seventy weeks” prophecy. God gave Daniel the precise timeline of when the Messiah would come and die for the sins of the world. The prophecy also mentions a future ruler who will make a seven-year covenant with Israel and break it after three and a half years, followed shortly thereafter by the great judgment and consummation of all things. Daniel is visited and strengthened by an angel after this great vision, and the angel explains the vision to Daniel in detail.