

# Daniel

Daniel, sometimes referred to as the “Apocalypse of the Old Testament,” presents a majestic sweep of prophetic history. The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans will come and go, but God will establish His people forever. Nowhere is this theme more apparent than in the life of Daniel, a young God-fearing Jew transplanted from his homeland and raised in Babylonia. His adventures in the palace, the fiery furnace, and the lion’s den show that no matter the circumstance God has not forgotten His chosen nation. Through Daniel, God provides dreams and interpretations of dreams designed to show that wisdom and power belong to Him alone.

## INTRODUCTION

Daniel’s life and ministry bridge the entire seventy-year period of Babylonian captivity. Deported to Babylon at the age of sixteen, and handpicked for government service, Daniel becomes God’s prophetic mouthpiece to the gentile and Jewish world declaring God’s present and eternal purpose. Nine of the twelve chapters in his book revolve around dreams, including God-given visions involving trees, animals, beasts, and images. In both his personal adventures and prophetic visions, Daniel shows God’s guidance, intervention, and power in the affairs of men.

The name Daniel means “God Is My Judge,” and the book is of course named after the author and principal character.

## AUTHOR

Daniel and his three friends were evidently born into noble Judean families and were “young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking and gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand” (1:4). Daniel was given three years of training in the best of Babylon’s schools (1:5). As part of the reidentification process, he was given a new name that honored one of the Babylonian deities, Belteshazzar, which meant “Bel Protect His Life” (see 1:7; 4:8; Jer. 51:44). Daniel’s wisdom and divinely given interpretive abilities brought him into a position of prominence, especially in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. He is one of the few well-known Bible characters about whom nothing negative is ever written. His life was characterized by faith, prayer, courage, consistency, and lack of compromise.

## DATE & SETTING

Babylon rebelled against the Assyrian Empire in 626 b.c. and overthrew the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 b.c. Babylon became the master of the Middle East when it defeated the Egyptian armies in 605 b.c. Daniel was among those taken captive to Babylon that year when Nebuchadnezzar subdued Jerusalem. He ministered for the full duration of the Babylonian captivity as a prophet and a government official and continued to minister after Babylon was overcome by the Medes and Persians in 539 b.c. His prophetic ministry was directed to the Gentile courts of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar) and Persia (Darius and Cyrus), as well as to his Jewish countrymen. Zerubbabel led a return of the Jews to Jerusalem in the first year of Cyrus, and Daniel lived and ministered at least until the third year of Cyrus (536 b.c.). Daniel’s book was no doubt written by Cyrus’ ninth year (c. 530 b.c.). As predicted, the Persian Empire continued until Alexander the Great (11:2–3), who stretched the Greek Empire as far east as India. The Romans later displaced the Greeks as rulers of the Middle East.