

Reading Through the Bible - Week 31: Daniel

“Yahweh’s Unfolding Plan for the Future”

Contextual Overview

The Book of Daniel is a high-stakes geopolitical thriller about surviving surveillance, state propaganda, and ideological pressure while holding onto your core identity in a hostile global empire. Written for people facing cultural erasure, it proves that integrity can outlast superpowers. Daniel, written during the Babylonian and Persian exiles (6th century BC), is encouraging faithful Jewish exiles to remain loyal to Yahweh while living under hostile foreign rule by showing that God rules over all earthly empires.

The book of Daniel stands as a literary masterpiece of the Old Testament, explicitly written to demonstrate Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over human history. Straddling two worlds, it blends gripping historical narratives in courtly Babylon with profound apocalyptic visions of the end times. Ultimately, the book serves as a timeless survival manual for remaining faithful to God while living in exile.

Geopolitical Timeline and Spiritual Dynamics

Geopolitical Timeline

The narrative opens in the shadow of complete national tragedy for the Jewish people. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem, plundered the temple, and initiated the first wave of Jewish exiles at which time Daniel is a member of the first Judean group of exiles. Babylon deliberately targeted elite, royal Hebrew youth for systematic brainwashing to erase their cultural and spiritual identity.

The Book of Daniel covers a broad geopolitical timeline spanning approximately 70 years of history, tracking the collapse of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire ultimately to eschatological expectations.

The geopolitical environment of the Book of Daniel spans the sixth century BC—moving from the apex of the Neo-Babylonian Empire through its sudden collapse to the rise of Medo-Persia. Biblical commentaries frame this era as a chaotic "jungle" of ruthless imperial beasts yet asserts that Yahweh sovereignly orchestrates these shifting global superpowers to judge, preserve, and ultimately outlast human rule.

Neo-Babylonian Hegemony (Daniel 1–4)

Under King Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon was the undisputed superpower of the Ancient Near East, having crushed Assyria and Egypt. Geopolitically, it practiced forced deportation of elite intellects to assimilate conquered provinces.

Through the narrative and theological lens, we view Nebuchadnezzar’s golden-headed statue and the fiery furnace as a rigid, all-or-nothing secular ideology demanding total allegiance. When Nebuchadnezzar behaves like an arrogant beast, Yahweh humbles him to prove that imperial capitals rise and fall at divine discretion rather than military might.

Fall of Babylon and the Medo-Persian Shift (Daniel 5–6)

The geopolitical reality under the softer, sacrilegious rule of Belshazzar, Babylon failed to read the changing regional tides. In 539 BC, the disciplined coalition of Medo-Persian under Cyrus the Great swiftly breached Babylon’s defenses, establishing a new global administration stretching from India to Greece.

The transition from gold to the silver chest/arms represents a shift in imperial mechanics. The text highlights that even within a vast, bureaucratic Persian empire that allowed exiled peoples to return home, God’s people remained politically vulnerable to lethal bureaucratic plots (the lions’ den), proving that divine protection supersedes imperial edicts.



Clash of Empires and Apocalyptic Horizons (Daniel 7–12)

The later visions of Daniel transition from literal history into rapid succession patterns, foretelling the battering ram of Medo-Persia, the aggressive sweep of Alexander's Greece, and the fractured Hellenistic successor states (the symbolic "King of the North" [Seleucids] and "King of the South" [Ptolemies - Egypt]).

Through a theological lens, human empires are depicted as ravenous beasts from a chaotic sea. The geopolitical instability and severe persecution under figures like Antiochus IV Epiphanes are reframed not as out-of-control historical accidents, but as a divinely timed countdown toward the establishment of an indestructible, eternal kingdom given to the "Son of Man."

Timeline Overview

605 BC (Daniel 1): Babylon defeats Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish. King Nebuchadnezzar II besieges Jerusalem. Daniel and other Judean nobles are taken into Babylonian captivity.

603/602 BC (Daniel 2): Nebuchadnezzar establishes total hegemony over the Ancient Near East. He experiences his vision of the multi-metal statue, outlining a sequence of future world empires.

c. 590–570 BC (Daniel 3–4): Babylon consolidates regional power, crushing local rebellions. Nebuchadnezzar constructs the massive golden image on the Plain of Dura and later experiences temporary madness.

553 BC (Daniel 7–8): Nabonidus rules (553-539 BC) as primary king, but was the last native and independent ruler of ancient Mesopotamia, who leaves governance to his son Belshazzar. Daniel experiences visions of the four beasts and the ram/goat, predicting the violent shift of regional power.

539 BC (Daniel 5): The Persian general Gobryas breaches Babylon during Belshazzar's feast. Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Cyrus the Great assumes control, appointing Darius the Mede over the Babylonian realm.

539/538 BC (Daniel 9): Medo-Persia becomes the dominant superpower. Daniel calculates the end of the 70-year desolation predicted by Jeremiah and receives the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

536 BC (Daniel 10–12): Third year of Cyrus's reign. Persian administration issues the decree allowing Jewish exiles to return. Daniel receives his final apocalyptic vision regarding the geopolitical struggles between future Hellenistic kingdoms (the Kings of the North and South).

Spiritual Dynamics

The empire utilized targeted indoctrination by changing Hebrew names to honor pagan gods, altering diets, and forcing the study of Chaldean occultism. For the exiles, this raised existential questions: Had Yahweh lost to the gods of Babylon? Was the covenant broken forever?

The spiritual state of worship for Israelites in the Book of Daniel reflects a profound transition from external, temple-based rituals in Jerusalem to an internal, resilient devotion lived out in foreign exile. Stripped of their sacred spaces, Daniel presents the spiritual state of Israelite worship not as a vibrant temple ritual, but as a resilient, internal devotion sustained in foreign exile.

Deprived of Jerusalem's altar, this transformed daily prayer, dietary obedience, and public loyalty to God into their true acts of worship, that includes figures like Daniel (Hebrew: *Dāniyyē'l*) meaning "El is my judge" (renamed Belteshazzar meaning "Bel/ Marduk, protect the king" – Daniel 4:8), Hananiah (Hebrew: *Hānanyāh* - *note the dot under the "H") meaning "Yahweh is gracious" (renamed Shadrach meaning "Command of Aku" - the moon god), Mishaël (Hebrew: *Mīšā'ēl* - *note the accent over the "s") meaning "Who is



what God is?" (renamed Meshach meaning "Who is what Aku is?"), and Azariah (Hebrew: 'Āzaryāh - *note the opening " ' ") meaning "Yahweh has helped" (renamed Abednego meaning "Servant of Nego/Nabu" - the god of wisdom/fire).

The highlight in this section is the incredible prophetic links of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Daniel where those prophecies were either fulfilled or expanded by Daniel. The prophetic architecture of Scripture reveals a masterful, synchronized timeline. Isaiah and Jeremiah writing in the 7th and 8th century BC, provides the macroscopic blueprint of God's sovereign plan. Daniel, writing in the 6th century BC from the heart of pagan Babylon, receives a microscopic timeline that expands and fulfills Isaiah's visions.

While the Book of Daniel primarily references the structural outline of history and the future, it explicitly and implicitly intersects with several prophets outside of Isaiah and Jeremiah, most notably Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Haggai, and Zechariah. While Daniel only mentions Jeremiah by name (Daniel 9:2), his narrative, themes, and apocalyptic visions heavily echo and build upon the theological foundations laid by these other prophetic contemporaries and predecessors.

It is notable that Ezekiel and Daniel were both captives in Babylon, but they operated in completely different spheres (Ezekiel among the exiled Judean refugees by the River Chebar, and Daniel within the royal courts of the pagan empire). Ezekiel mentions Daniel by name three times (Ezekiel 14:14, 14:20, 28:3), grouping him with Noah and Job as exemplars of righteousness and wisdom.

And through the shared theme of restoring Jerusalem and the temple. Daniel sets a timeline for the spiritual restoration of the people, but Haggai and Zechariah provide the physical and prophetic push to rebuild the actual temple during that exact historical window.

The point is to bring the previous together to emphasize that these prophets (major and minor) did not write in isolation. They function as progressive architects of the same divine narrative of *Yahweh*, with each prophet expanding on the structural foundations laid by the previous one. In this Babylonian exile period, the prophets that most notably connect are:

Isaiah (Architect of Scope): Writing over a century before the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah looked past his own generation to name the specific Persian king, Cyrus, who would conquer Babylon and free the Jews (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). He established the macro-narrative of judgment, exile, and ultimate global restoration.

Jeremiah (Architect of Time & Watchman Onsite): Living through the actual fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah added a strict chronological boundary to Isaiah's scope. He prophesied that the Babylonian servitude would last exactly 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10).

Ezekiel (Architect of Eschatology & Priest in the Camps): Operating among the exiles along the Chebar River, he sees the Glory of *Yahweh* leave the temple (Ezekiel 10) and promises its future, grand return (Ezekiel 43), while mapping out the geopolitical alignments of the end times (Ezekiel 38-39).

Daniel (Architect of Chronology & Statesman in the Court): Positioned in the courts of Babylon and Persia, Daniel served as the living bridge. He witnessed the literal fulfillment of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies and was granted visions that expanded those timelines into the distant future.

The prophetic matrix reveals a masterfully synchronized timeline. *Yahweh* utilizes these overlapping prophetic writings of these messengers is to demonstrate His absolute sovereignty over human history. And by examining how Daniel lived through the fulfillment of his predecessors' words, we can understand how God is rapidly setting the



stage for the Church today. These ancient prophecies form an urgent narrative for His bride in 2026 because there are prophecies from these prophets that are yet to be fulfilled that will end the Church Age with the great gathering (aka rapture). Fulfilled prophecies of the past demonstrate that Yahweh can instantly shift geopolitical and spiritual landscapes to trigger the sudden, "thief in the night" gathering of the Church, His bride.

Prophecies Fulfilled and Expanded in Daniel's Lifetime

Isaiah explicitly predicted the Babylonian captivity and the exact conqueror who would end it. Daniel lived out the fulfillment of these prophecies, physically bridging the gap between Isaiah's word and Yahweh's his-story.

Captivity and the Eunuchs: Isaiah warned King Hezekiah that his descendants would be taken to Babylon as eunuchs in the palace (Isaiah 39:6-7). Daniel and his three friends were the direct fulfillment of this judgment, serving in Nebuchadnezzar's court (Daniel 1:3-7).

Naming of Cyrus: Isaiah prophesied by name that a ruler named Cyrus would conquer Babylon and decree the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Daniel survived the fall of Babylon and was present in the court when Cyrus the Great took power, likely showing Cyrus the very scrolls of Isaiah that prompted the decree (Daniel 1:21; 6:28).

Expansion of the Timeline: Isaiah spoke of a future restoration and an ultimate Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 11). While Daniel was praying over Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70-year exile (Daniel 9:1-2), the Angel Gabriel expanded this into the "Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks" (Daniel 9:24-27). This expanded Isaiah's broad vision into a precise chronological countdown to the Messiah's first coming, His cutting off (crucifixion), and the final seven-year tribulation

Overlapping Vision: From earthly empires to the Divine Kingdom, Isaiah and Daniel share an identical narrative arc around the rise of human empires, they posture against *Yahweh*, and are then instantly shattered by the sudden arrival of the *Yom Adonai* (Day of the Lord) and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of *El Elyon* - Most High God. Isaiah paints a picture of global chaos, where the "haughty people of the earth languish" and the world is turned upside down in a moment (Isaiah 24). Daniel decodes this through Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue (Daniel 2) and his own vision of the beasts (Daniel 7). The final, fragile global coalition (the feet of iron and clay) is instantly crushed.

Isaiah speaks of Yahweh laying a "tested stone, a precious cornerstone" (Isaiah 28:16). Daniel expands this imagery, showing this same Stone "cut out by no human hand" striking the global empire suddenly, shattering it, and growing into a mountain that fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35).

Isaiah foretold that the pride of oppressive systems would be brought low in an instant, noting that judgment and sudden ruin can come upon a complacent world without lingering delay (Isaiah 13:19-22). Daniel expanded on this by mapping the sequential rise and fall of world kingdoms (Daniel 2 and 7), emphasizing that human empires are temporary and that Yahweh alone establishes an unshakeable kingdom.

Current-day Interconnectedness: The modern reader must recognize that both prophets emphasize **the velocity of God's sovereign hand**. Isaiah notes that Yahweh will execute His word on the earth "thoroughly and quickly" (Isaiah 10:23), while Daniel shows that global dominance can shift overnight—such as the literal night Babylon fell (Daniel 5:30).

Daniel studied the earlier words of prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah to discern God's timing. The transition from Babylonian dominance to Medo-Persian rule happened



overnight (Daniel 5), serving as a historical macrocosm of how God operates outside human pacing.

The present-day application is that Yahweh is unchanging and is fully capable of transferring government political power however He desires. In fact, Jesus describes the gathering of His bride as "Thief in the Night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2; Matthew 24:43, 2 Peter 3:10)

Today's volatile geopolitical, economic, and moral landscape mirrors the brittle feet of Daniel's statue. Yahweh requires no lengthy epochs to realign global conditions; technological and political alignments can pivot in days. Again, scripture uses the "thief in the night" parallel (1 Thessalonians 5:2) to emphasize the sheer unexpected nature of the Day of the Lord – "for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

While the world speaks of "peace and safety" amid modern crises, believers are called to remain awake, recognizing that God's timing is precise, urgent, and designed to inspire holy watchfulness rather than fear. Yahweh can swiftly pivot global realities in 2026, fulfilling Isaiah and Daniel's blueprints of sudden shifting powers. Just as ancient empires fell in a single night, God retains the sovereign power to set the final gathering conditions in an instant, arriving like a thief for an unready world.

Writer Bio and Literary Framework

Writer Bio

The prophet *Dani'el* (דַּנְיֵאֵל / dah-nee-YEHL) stands out as a unique figure in the biblical landscape. He served as both a high-ranking statesman in pagan empires and a visionary prophet of God. His biography bridges the gap between everyday political leadership and deep spiritual devotion. It is notable that the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) places the Book of Daniel in the section of the Writings (***Ketuvim***) rather than the Prophets (***Nevi'im***) because Jewish tradition views Daniel's role as a court advisor who received divine inspiration (*Ruach Ha-Kodesh*), rather than a classical public-ministering prophet.

While the Bible does not record his exact birthdate, historical timelines suggest Daniel was born around 623–621 BC during the righteous reign of King Josiah in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And he was born into a noble or royal Jewish family in Jerusalem. As a child of the Judean aristocracy, he grew up in the capital city, likely receiving an elite education before his life was abruptly uprooted.

Daniel's entire prophetic ministry unfolded in Babylon (modern-day Iraq). In 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar II besieged Jerusalem and took the brightest young minds of the Jewish nobility hostage. Taken as a teenager, Daniel spent the rest of his long life in exile and his location of prophetic visions shifted across different imperial backdrops.

Daniel served as a top advisor and counselor under Babylonian kings like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and after the fall of Babylon, he continued his prophetic work under Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great in the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel never returned to his homeland, meaning his entire public service and prophetic ministry spanned over 70 years entirely on foreign soil.

Unlike other major prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, who experienced dramatic, singular visions of God commissioning them with spoken words, Daniel's call to the prophetic office was gradual and demonstrated through divine empowerment during a crisis. His calling began with a test of devotion (Daniel Ch. 1). Forced into a three-year Babylonian assimilation program, Daniel chose not to defile himself with the king's rich food and wine. God rewarded this faithfulness by giving him exceptional knowledge and specifically granting Daniel the supernatural ability to understand and interpret all visions and dreams.



Daniel's official public activation as a prophet (Daniel Ch. 2) occurred when King Nebuchadnezzar threatened to execute all the wise men of Babylon if they could not recreate and interpret his hidden dream. Daniel turned to prayer, and God revealed the mystery to him in a night vision. And when Daniel stood before the most powerful king on earth and correctly revealed the dream of the multi-metal statue, his prophetic authority was solidified. He did not seek out the role of a prophet; instead, God used his administrative positioning to channel prophetic truths directly to the hearts of pagan rulers.

The Bible does not record the death or burial of the prophet Daniel. His narrative ends abruptly during the third year of King Cyrus of Persia (Daniel 10:1), leaving extra-biblical traditions, rabbinic commentaries, and historical legends to formulate several prominent theories about his final days and resting place. Because the biblical text remains silent, ancient religious texts offer starkly different accounts of how Daniel died.

The most widely accepted theological assumption is that Daniel lived a long life and died peacefully of old age. Given that he was taken captive to Babylon as a youth around 605 BC and was still receiving visions around 536 BC, he would have been at least 80 to 90 years old at the close of his biblical book. However, according to ancient Jewish rabbinic lore found in the *Targum Sheini* (an Aramaic translation and commentary on the Book of Esther), Daniel did not die of old age. This tradition conjectures that Daniel was actually killed by Haman, the villainous Persian prime minister from the Book of Esther.

It is interesting to note that at least six different cities across the Middle East and Central Asia claim to house the true tomb of Daniel. Three locations hold the strongest traditional and historical backing:

Susa (Shush), Iran: The Tomb of Daniel in Susa is the most historically and globally accepted tradition. Daniel explicitly mentions being in Susa in a vision (Daniel 8:2), and the site has been a major pilgrimage destination for Jews, Christians, and Muslims for over a millennium.

The Islamic conquest from 9th-century accounts by chroniclers like al-Baladhuri state that when Arab forces captured Susa in 638 AD/BCE, they discovered a silver sarcophagus containing a mummy wearing a signet ring depicting a boy between two lions. Believing it to be Daniel, Caliph Umar ordered the coffin buried at the bottom of a nearby riverbed to keep it hidden and secure.

The medieval Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela noted in the 1160s that citizens on opposite sides of the river fought over the body because it brought good fortune. To resolve the feud, the Persian King Sanjar allegedly ordered the platform suspended by chains directly over the middle of a bridge.

Babylon, Iraq: The Roman Catholic historical record *Martyrologium Romanum* argues that Daniel never left his primary place of exile and died being buried in the royal vault in Babylon. Since he held an immensely high governmental rank under both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires, it is highly plausible he remained in the administrative capital.

Samarkand, Uzbekistan: A highly unusual and fantastical legend surrounds the Mausoleum of St. Daniel in Samarkand. According to local legend, the 14th-century Central Asian conqueror Tamerlane (Amir Timur) tried to conquer Syria but was magically thwarted by the spirit of Daniel. When he finally succeeded, he uncovered a portion of Daniel's remains (reputedly an arm bone) and brought it back to Samarkand for good luck. Local folklore claims that Daniel's remains continued to grow after death. To keep up with his expanding body, officials continuously lengthened the tomb, which today stretches to a massive 18 meters long.



Literary Framework

The Book of Daniel is a masterclass in biblical literature, renowned for its highly intentional structural design, dramatic genre blending, and unique bilingual composition. Commentators emphasize that its literary style is not merely an aesthetic choice, but a carefully deployed strategy to convey theological comfort, subversive critique, and existential faith to an exiled community.

Dual-Genre Fusion

The most obvious literary feature of Daniel is its clean dissection into two distinct literary genres, which bridges personal history with sovereign destiny. The Historical Court Narratives (Chapters 1–6) are written in a third-person biographical style. These chapters feature heroic "court tales" of Daniel and his companions surviving imperial trials (the fiery furnace, the lions' den). These narratives utilize traditional diaspora images to provide a blueprint for faithful, humble resistance in a hostile culture.

The Apocalyptic Literature (Chapters 7–12) style shifts abruptly to first-person, highly symbolic, visionary prose. This style relies heavily on bizarre zoomorphic (use of animal forms) imagery, angelic messengers, numeric riddles, and heavenly warfare. It functions to pull back the curtain on human history, assuring the reader that human empires are passing, but God's kingdom is permanent.

Aramaic Chiasm: Rather than looking at the book strictly as two separate halves, readers should focus on the complex chiasmic symmetry embedded within the text. Chapters 2 through 7 are arranged in a concentric "ring structure" (A-B-C-C'-B'-A') that beautifully pairs themes across the language divide:

A: Vision of Four Gentile Kingdoms (Chapter 2) – The multi-metal statue crushed by God's kingdom.

B: Faithfulness Amid Imperial Persecution (Chapter 3) – The fiery furnace and divine deliverance.

C: Divine Humbling of a King (Chapter 4) – Nebuchadnezzar's madness and restoration.

C': Fall of a Proud King (Chapter 5) – Belshazzar's feast and sudden judgment.

B': Faithfulness Amid Imperial Persecution (Chapter 6) – The lions' den and divine deliverance.

A': Vision of Four Gentile Kingdoms (Chapter 7) – The four savage beasts judged by the Ancient of Days.

This macro-chiasm serves as a literary anchor, visually mirroring the theological message that history is not chaotic; it is perfectly ordered by God.

Bilingual Composition: Daniel features a rare, highly deliberate linguistic architecture, switching languages mid-sentence at Daniel 2:4 and returning to Hebrew at Chapter 8. In the Hebrew frame (1:1–2:4a & 8:1–12:13), it begins and ends in Hebrew. This language choice intentionally boundaries the book around Israel's particular covenant relationship, focusing on their specific future restoration in the promised land.

The Aramaic core (2:4b–7:28) carries the central chiasm and is written in Imperial Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the ancient Near Eastern diplomatic world. By utilizing the global language of empire to detail the rise and fall of those very empires, Daniel makes a public, ironic declaration to the nations: **human sovereignty is an illusion**.

Irony and Political Satire: In recent decades, literary analysts have highlighted the sharp use of political satire and irony running through the court tales. The incompetence of Imperial Sages is a recurring literary pattern forming the dramatic irony surrounding the "wise men" of Babylon. Emperors consistently throw irrational tempers because their



highly paid, elite astrologers are utterly clueless, forcing the pagan kings to depend on a young Jewish captive for answers.

Rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar are characterized with a touch of literary absurdity, or caricatures of tyranny, building impossibly massive gold statues, shaking with fear over handwriting on a wall, or living like a wild animal eating grass. This stylistic mocking subverts the intimidating power of the empire, reducing terrifying tyrants to fragile human figures easily humbled by the awesomeness of Yahweh.

Echoes of Genesis (Typology and Reversal): The literary style relies heavily on scriptural framing, positioning Daniel as a "New Joseph" figure to evoke historical memory. The parallels between Joseph in Genesis and Daniel in Babylon are deeply woven into the text's narrative fabric. Both are handsome young Hebrew captives exiled to foreign courts, both face pressure to compromise their identity, both possess God-given dream interpretation skills that outshine local magicians, and both are ultimately elevated to ruler status.

The imagery in Daniel explicitly subverts the "creation mandate" (i.e., De-Evolution of Man) of Genesis 1–2. While humanity was created in God's image to rule over the beasts, Daniel's literary imagery shows that when human kings default to self-glorification, they de-evolve, becoming ravenous, chaotic beasts themselves.

It is interesting to note the main core parallels in the royal dreams of Joseph and Daniel include:

Double Witness: Both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar see a two-part vision (seven cows/heads of grain; a giant tree then a divine watcher) to show that the decree is fixed by God and will happen soon.

Failure of Human Wisdom: Egypt's wise men and Babylon's magicians fail completely. They cannot decode the royal visions, which leaves the stage open for God's servants.

Exaltation of God's Servants: Both Joseph and Daniel refuse personal glory. They give all credit to the God of heaven before they speak a single word of interpretation.

Timeline of Seven: Both sets of dreams use the number seven to mark a specific period of trial, judgment, or testing (seven years of famine; seven periods of madness for the king).

The book of Daniel also explicitly invokes foundational outlines and legal prophecies of Moses and his covenant warnings (Daniel 9:11–13). The law and prophecy of Moses in Daniel 9, when Daniel intercedes for Jerusalem, he anchors his repentance in the historical curses foretold centuries prior. In the appeal to the law, Daniel states that *"all this calamity has come upon us, just as it is written in the law of Moses"* (Dan. 9:13).

Daniel treats the Law of Moses (specifically Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26) not merely as an ancient code as the cause of their current state and a living, active prophecy. Moses had prophesied that unfaithfulness would result in ejection from the land and international scattering. Daniel views the Babylonian captivity as the literal, chronological fulfillment of Moses' written warning as given by Yahweh, transforming legal text into predictive doom and subsequent expectation for restoration upon repentance.

Yahweh still speaks to mighty world rulers today through Scripture to reveal the rise and fall of global empires, sovereign control over history, and the urgent need for humility before the Creator.

Narrative Arc

The Book of Daniel is structured around a profound narrative arc that moves from individual faithfulness in a hostile foreign empire to a grand cosmic revelation of God's ultimate sovereignty over human history. Here is a biblical commentary narrative arc of the book, broken down by its structural and theological progression.



Setting of Exile (Daniel 1): Daniel and his three Judean friends are captured by Nebuchadnezzar, taken to Babylon, and subjected to forced assimilation (new names, new language, and royal diet).

This chapter establishes the tension for the entire book as it poses the fundamental question: *How do God's people live faithfully in a pagan culture?*

By refusing the king's food, Daniel establishes a boundary and *Yahweh* honors this faithfulness, granting them wisdom and favor, proving that *Yahweh* is sovereign even in the heart of Babylon.

Rise and Fall of Human Empires (Daniel 2–6): This section uses a chiastic ring structure (an A-B-C-C-B-A pattern) written primarily in Aramaic, the international language of the time, signaling that this message is for all nations.

God's Kingdom Crushes Earthly Empires (Daniel 2): Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a multi-metal statue representing successive world empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome). A supernatural stone smashes the statue and grows into a mountain. This establishes the macro-narrative arc: human kingdoms are temporary, but God's kingdom is eternal.

Faithfulness Under Persecution (Daniel 3): Shadrach (Hebrew: *Hananiah*), Meshach (Hebrew: *Mishael*), and Abednego (Hebrew: *Azariah*) refuse to worship the king's golden idol and are thrown into a fiery furnace. A fourth figure, "like a son of the gods," walks with them. The narrative arc shows God rescuing His people *through* suffering, causing a pagan king to praise *Yahweh*.

The Humbling of the Pridelful King (Daniel 4): Nebuchadnezzar boasts of his greatness, is struck with madness, and lives like a beast until he acknowledges God's supremacy. This serves as a warning to all human rulers who usurp God's glory.

The Doom of the Blasphemous Empire (Daniel 5): Belshazzar uses Jerusalem's sacred temple vessels for a drunken feast. The "writing on the wall" pronounces immediate judgment. Babylon falls that very night, proving that God holds empires accountable.

Faithfulness Under Persecution Repeated (Daniel 6): Under Persian rule, Daniel is thrown into a den of lions for praying to God. His miraculous deliverance echoes Chapter 3, demonstrating that God's power outlasts changing human regimes.

Shift to Prophetic Vision (Daniel 7): Daniel dreams of four terrifying beasts emerging from a chaotic sea, followed by a courtroom scene where the "Ancient of Days" gives everlasting dominion to "one like a son of man." Daniel Chapter 7 is the hinge of the entire book by retelling the narrative of Chapter 2, but from a divine perspective. What human kings see as a glorious statue, *Yahweh* utilizes as destructive, chaotic beasts. The introduction of the "Son of Man" introduces a messianic arc, pointing forward to Jesus Christ (*Yeshua Christos*), who frequently used this title for Himself.

Agony and Ultimate Victory of the Saints (Daniel 8–12): The final chapters shift back to Hebrew and focus deeply on the intense suffering of God's people before the final climax of history.

Trampling of the Sanctuary (Daniel 8): A vision of a ram and a goat predicts the rise of the Greek empire and a blasphemous king (foreshadowing Antiochus Epiphanes IV) who will defile the temple.

Prayer and the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9): Daniel confesses Israel's sins and meditates on Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70-year exile. The angel Gabriel responds with the "Seventy Weeks" prophecy, revealing that true restoration and the wiping away of sin will take much longer, culminating in the Messiah.

Cosmic War and Final Resurrection (Daniel 10–12): A terrifying vision reveals behind-the-scenes spiritual warfare between angelic forces. The book ends with a promise of unparalleled tribulation, followed by the ultimate climax: the resurrection of the dead, final judgment, and the vindication of the righteous.



Summary of the Theological Arc: The narrative arc of Daniel begins in the dirt of a defeated Jerusalem and ends in the glory of resurrection. It teaches that history is not cyclical or meaningless; it is a linear timeline fiercely directed by Elohim. While Yahweh's people will endure profound suffering under brutal political powers, the ultimate victory belongs to the Kingdom of Yeshua (Jesus).

Study Points

Reading and studying the Book of Daniel through a theological lens requires balancing its historical context, complex literary genres, and profound spiritual messages. It is a book that bridges two worlds: the immediate struggles of God's people in exile and the ultimate culmination of cosmic history.

The foundational theological premise of Daniel is that Yahweh rules the kingdoms of men and not necessarily intend to be a chronological roadmap to determine the Day of the Lord like "Indian Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Arc." Whether through the survival of three Hebrew youths in a fiery furnace or the rise and fall of giant beast-like empires, the overriding theme is that human power is temporary, and Yeshua's kingdom is eternal.

A rigorous theological study of the Book of Daniel presents unique obstacles that can derail a spiritual study like the necessity to navigate a deep linguistic labyrinth. The greatest challenge for modern readers is not just the ancient historical context, but the barrier of the English language itself. Reading Daniel strictly in an English translation introduces subtle, systemic distortions. English words often lack the semantic range to capture the original ancient codex, which is famously split between Hebrew and Imperial Aramaic.

For example, the Hebrew word for "week" used in Daniel chapter 9 is *shabua*, which literally means a "period of seven" or a "heptad." Derived from the Hebrew root for seven (*sheba*) simply mean a unit or block of seven just as a "dozen" means a group of 12 regardless of the item. So, *shabua* simply means a unit or block of seven. In the specific prophetic context of Daniel 9, this word does not mean a seven-day week, but rather a heptad of years (a period of seven years). A contextual clue on how we get from weeks to years is at the beginning of chapter 9 when Daniel was praying about the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning 70 literal years of Babylonian exile.

From there we look to standard Hebrew where the plural for week is *shavuot*, which uses a feminine ending. However, throughout the Seventy Weeks Prophecy in Daniel 9, the text intentionally uses the masculine plural form *shavuim*. Scholars noted that this matches the masculine plural ending for "years" (*shanim*), serving as a deliberate grammatical hint that the timeline tracks blocks of seven years rather than standard weeks of days.

The word "week" ended up in English Bibles due to a historic translation choice that prioritized vocal vocabulary alignment over the specific prophetic context. Early translators kept the literal word-for-word meaning of *shabua* (a group of seven), which was also used to reference calendar week in everyday Hebrew speech. So, rather than translating its literal meaning (blocks of years) in this specific chapter, linguistic condensation happened and early English translators locked it into place.

Here's how it evolves:

The original Hebrew text does not possess a unique, standalone noun that means "a block of 7 years," only the word *shabua*. Because human beings naturally track time by 7-day cycles from the Genesis creation narrative, the word However, the Hebrew language still allowed *shabua* to mean a block of seven years if the context demanded it (such as the agricultural cycle of the Sabbatical year in Leviticus 25:8).

Around the 3rd to 2nd century BC, Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. When they reached Daniel 9, they translated *shavuim* into the Greek word



ἑβδομάς (*hebdomas*). Just like the Hebrew word, *hebdomas* literally means "a group of seven." Also, like the Hebrew word, it could be used in everyday Greek to denote a standard calendar week, but that was not the meaning used in the context of translation. In the late 4th century AD/CE, Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. He translated the Greek *hebdomas* and Hebrew *shabua* into the Latin word *septimana*. This is the direct root of modern Romance words for week (like the Spanish *semana* or French *semaine*). While from a mathematical structure it implies a group of "seven," its primary linguistic meaning was a standard week.

So, when early English pioneers like John Wycliffe (1380s) and Miles Coverdale (1535) translated Daniel 9, they faced a choice. They could either 1) translate the exact literal vocabulary word used by everyday speakers, or 2) invent a brand-new English phrase to explain the prophetic context. They chose option one, and in the English language of the 1500s and 1611 (when the King James Bible was printed), the only word that existed to translate a "block of seven" was "week." And because translating Daniel 9:24 as "Seventy sevens are determined" would have sounded grammatically jarring and highly unnatural to an early English listener, they assumed the reader would understand the prophetic context of "years" based on the rest of the text.

Even though translators used the word "weeks," they knew it meant blocks of years and left clues in the early English Bibles. In Wycliffe's Addition, John Wycliffe actually attempted to clarify this in the first English translation by writing, "Seventy weeks of years be abridged on thy people..." As noted previously, the Hebrew text deliberately uses the masculine plural ending (*shavuim*) while Hebrew standard 7-day weeks take a feminine ending (*shavuot*). And early Bible scholars noted this grammatical shift as a clear signal that the text was referring to blocks of years, even though the English vocabulary word "week" was the only matching tool in their chest.

Because the modern English word "week" is strictly locked into meaning "7 days," using it in Daniel 9 causes massive confusion. This is why some major modern translations have attempted to abandon the historic English word "week" in this passage altogether but failed to accurately capture the context of the Hebrew codex. For example, the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) uses "Seventy weeks are decreed..." retaining the historic phrasing but adds an explanatory footnote. The New Living Translation (NLT) uses "A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed..." And the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) uses "Seventy weeks [of years] have been decreed..."

The result, the English word "week" got into the Bible because early English lacked a smooth, single word for "a group of seven items," forcing translators to use their everyday word for a 7-day cycle.

Theological Outline & Commentary

The Theological Study of the Book of Daniel reveals a complex literary and historical narrative designed to answer a central crisis: How do God's people maintain their identity and faith when trapped under the crushing weight of hostile, pagan empires?

The ultimate narrative genius of Daniel is that its symbols are intentionally fluid. Rather than acting as a strict roadmap for a single generation, the book offers a structural pattern for faithfulness throughout history – past, present, and future. It provides comfort whether God's people are facing Antiochus, Rome, or modern totalitarian states, assuring them that the "stone cut out by no human hand" will eventually shatter the proud statues of men. Thus, the primary theological message of Daniel is that *Yahweh* possesses absolute sovereignty over human kingdoms, history, and time, ensuring that the suffering of the faithful will ultimately give way to God's everlasting, just rule.



1. Theology Proper

The Book of Daniel portrays *Yahweh* not merely as a local tribal deity, but as the universal, eternal ruler who actively orchestrates His existing, not developing, architecture of human history for His glory by humbling arrogant empires, and delivering His "faithful" remnant. While the book is famous for its prophecies and dramatic visions, its primary purpose is to reveal God's absolute sovereignty over human kingdoms.

Attributes of God

The Book of Daniel presents one of the most majestic and politically charged views of Theology Proper (the study of God the Father) in the entire Old Testament. Writing against the backdrop of the Babylonian exile, Daniel counters the idea that pagan deities had defeated Israel's God by emphasizing *Yahweh*'s absolute, cosmic authority. Here is a structured overview of how God reveals His nature, attributes, and character in the book of Daniel.

Absolute Sovereignty of God

Yahweh is depicted as the supreme Ruler who actively directs the rise and fall of nations; not a passive observer, but the ultimate authority over human leaders. A recurring phrase emphasizes that "the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32).

Yahweh removes kings and sets up kings according to His divine will (Daniel 2:21). Acknowledge that *Yahweh* limits human power because earthly empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome) are constrained by the power and sovereignty of *Yahweh* to operate within the boundaries and timeframes set by *Adonai Yahweh*.

Transcendent and Eternal Nature of God

Daniel contrasts the fragile, temporary nature of human kingdoms with the permanent, unshakeable nature of God. Unlike human empires that crumble, God's kingdom is everlasting and will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44, 7:14).

Yahweh is envisioned as the "Ancient of Days" sitting on a fiery throne in Daniel 7:9. This title highlights His eternal, timeless, and role as the ultimate Judge. Even King Darius testifies that *Elohim* is "the living God, enduring forever" (Daniel 6:26).

Omniscience and the Revelation of Mysteries

God possesses all knowledge, including the absolute certainty of the future. He chooses to reveal this hidden knowledge to His servants. Daniel explicitly praises God because "he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him" (Daniel 2:22).

In addition, true wisdom belongs to God alone, and human insight is purely a gift granted by Him (Daniel 2:20-21). And the highly specific visions of future empires through prophets who attribute their prophetic message to almighty *Yahweh* proves that the omniscient God knows the end from the beginning.

Omnipotence and Miraculous Deliverance

God possesses supreme power (omnipotence) over the laws of nature, physical elements, and spiritual forces. God demonstrates His power by shutting the mouths of lions (Daniel 6:22) and rendering fire harmless to His faithful servants (Daniel 3:25-27) as evidence of *Yahweh*'s power over not only human (*adam*) kingdoms, but also the animal and physical (matter & energy) domain. King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that "none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Daniel 4:35).

Justice (*tsidqah*), Righteousness (*tsedaqah*), and Mercy (*rachamim*)

Daniel contains sections written in both Hebrew and Aramaic, and these concepts appear across both languages in the book. God's character balances perfect justice



toward the proud with covenant faithfulness and mercy toward the humble. God actively judges human arrogance, and this is seen in the striking down of Nebuchadnezzar's sanity (Daniel 4) and the judgment written on the wall for Belshazzar (Daniel 5).

In Daniel's prayer of confession, he acknowledges that God is perfectly righteous in punishing Israel's disobedience (Daniel 9:7, 14). God listens to the prayers of the repentant and acts out of His own great mercy, not because of human merit (Daniel 9:18).

Names & Titles of God

Through the lens of Theology Proper (study of the nature, attributes, and character of God) the Book of Daniel uses both Hebrew and Aramaic (the sister language to Hebrew) titles to paint a meticulous picture of God's supreme authority, absolute power over history, and deep covenantal commitment. Because the book shifts languages (with chapters 1 and 8–12 written in Hebrew, and chapters 2:4b through 7 written in Aramaic) examining both sets of names reveals how Yahweh presented Himself both to His covenant people in exile and to the pagan empires ruling over them.

Hebrew Names (Chapters 1, 8–12)

The Hebrew names focus on God's internal relationship with Israel, His self-existence, and His absolute universal dominance:

Yahweh ("He is" or "He will be" - translated in scripture as *I AM*): The usage of *Yahweh* in the Book of Daniel is highly distinct. This name reveals God's immutability and faithfulness even though Israel is in exile due to their sins, God's personal, covenant-keeping nature remains unchanged. While general terms for God (such as *Elohim*, *Adonai*, and *El Elyon*) are used throughout the book, the covenantal name *Yahweh* appears exclusively in Chapter 9 (specifically in verses 2, 4, 10, 13, 14, and 20). *Yahweh* is entirely absent from the Aramaic sections as well as the narrative court accounts. It only emerges when Daniel engages in a deeply personal, distressed prayer for the Nation of Israel. Within this specific context, the name carries three vital layers of theological meaning:

Invocation of the Mosaic Covenant: In Daniel 9, Daniel is reading the prophecies of Jeremiah regarding the 70-year desolation of Jerusalem. By utilizing the name *Yahweh*, Daniel intentionally pivots away from addressing God merely as a distant ruler (*Elohim*) and invokes the specific, personal name of God who bound Himself by oath to Abraham (Abrahamic Covenant), Moses (Mosaic Covenant), and Israel (Deuteronomic Covenant).

A Reminder of Divine Faithfulness Amid Exile: The name *Yahweh* represents the God who "keeps covenant and steadfast love" (Daniel 9:4). For an exiled people living under pagan Babylonian and Persian rulers, the name serves as a theological anchor: despite Israel's rebellion and subsequent punishment, *Yahweh* remains unchangeably committed to his historical promises.

Contrast of Sovereignty: Throughout the surrounding chapters, earthly monarchs (like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar) boast of their own power. When Daniel utilizes *Yahweh* in Chapter 9, it functions as a strict reminder of true authority. It underscores that the God of Israel is the absolute source of history, who actively "brings disaster" as a matter of justice and promises ultimate restoration.

Adonai ("Sovereign" - translated in scripture as *Lord / Master*): This points to God's absolute ownership and sovereign mastership over His servants. Daniel repeatedly appeals to sovereign God acknowledging that Israel's destiny rests entirely in His hands, not Babylon's (Daniel 1:2, 9:3, 9:4, 9:7, 9:8, 9:9, 9:15, 9:16, 9:17, 9:19).



While *Adonai* appears hundreds of times across the Old Testament, its usage within the Book of Daniel is highly concentrated and carries a distinct theological weight. In the Book of Daniel, *Adonai* occurs exactly 10 times. Its distribution reveals that Daniel relies on this specific title almost exclusively during a moment of intense personal and corporate distress (**Daniel 1:2** – 1 occurrence regarding the fall of Jerusalem; **Daniel 9** – 9 occurrences woven entirely throughout Daniel's famous prayer of confession and intercession). Within this prayer, Daniel strategically shifts between God's personal covenant name (*YHWH*) and His title of absolute lordship (*Adonai*) to emphasize the specific attributes of Sovereignty (*Adonai*) and Authority (*YHWH*).

El (Mighty One - translated in scripture as God): The name *El* is a foundational Semitic root as a shortened form of *Elohim* and fundamentally translates to "might, strength, or power" that is used as a generic term for any deity (including false idols). But when applied to the God of Israel, it highlights His omnipotent strength and absolute sovereignty as well as raw, unmatched power (Daniel 9:4, 11:36).

When Babylon conquered Jerusalem, King Nebuchadnezzar attempted to strip the Jewish youths of their identities by changing their names from those honoring *El* to names honoring Babylonian deities. The root *El* is central to the identity of the book's characters through "theophoric" names (names that embed a title for God), many of which are used by Daniel in the following names for *Yahweh*.

El Elyon (Most High God): *El Elyon* asserts God's supreme position and sovereignty over all cosmic and earthly structures. It reminds the reader that no human empire possesses ultimate authority. *El Elyon* is a combination of **El** (see above) and **Elyon** (a superlative derived from a root meaning "to go up" or "be elevated"). Combined, the title describes God as the absolute sovereign ruler who is unrivaled, transcendent, and elevated far above all earthly or spiritual powers.

The context of *El Elyon* in Daniel is a direct confrontation between the ultimate superpower of the known world (Babylon, and later Persia) and the exiled, apparently defeated people of *Yahweh*. In this setting, the title *Most High* serves a specific, subversive theological purpose.

While the classic Hebrew form *El Elyon* is used in earlier scriptures like Genesis, the Book of Daniel is largely written in Aramaic, the diplomatic and administrative language of the Babylonian and Persian Empires, and shifts to using the Aramaic equivalents, *Ilaya* or *Hilay* (see under Aramaic Names section below), which carries the exact same linguistic force and theological meaning as in Hebrew. The usage of this title in Daniel highlights several distinct narrative and prophetic truths:

Sovereignty Over Earthly Empires: The central conflict in Daniel is who holds ultimate power. Pagan kings like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar viewed themselves as absolute deities or representatives of the highest gods. The title "Most High" strips them of this illusion. As Daniel explicitly states, the purpose of God's intervention is *"that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will"* (Daniel 4:17).

Humbling of Pagan Monarchs: In Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar is driven mad until he acknowledges that his power is merely on loan from a superior authority. Upon his restoration, he praises the *"Most High,"* acknowledging that human empires rise and fall entirely at His command.

Ultimate Vindication of His People: In the prophetic, apocalyptic second half of the book, the title appears repeatedly in the plural-intensive Aramaic form (*Elyonin* - "Highest Ones" or "Supreme Supreme"). In Daniel 7, when terrifying beast-like empires wage war against God's people, the text promises that judgment will ultimately be passed in favor of the *"saints of the Most High,"* and they will receive an everlasting kingdom.



El Elim (God of gods): Emphasizes God's singularity and infinity. *El Elyon* is a combination of *El* (a shortened form of *Elohim*, which emphasizes raw strength, power, and might) and *Elim* (a plural, masculine, noun literally translated as "gods, heavenly beings, powers"). This title declares that God sits incomparably above any earthly ruler or spiritual power in the face of a self-exalting, blasphemous tyrant. And in biblical Hebrew, the phrase transliterated as *El Elim* appearing directly in Daniel 11:36 as a superlative construction used to designate the supreme deity of the one true God.

The combined construct-state style of *El Elim* literally translates to "God of gods" or "The Almighty of almighties." This grammatical structure mimics phrases like *King of kings* (*Melech Melachim*) or *Holy of holies* (*Kodesh Kodashim*), amplifying the singular noun to indicate the absolute highest tier, ultimate supremacy, and sovereignty over all other spiritual or earthly powers.

Elohim ("Supreme Creator" - translated in scripture as God): This represents God as the all-powerful Creator, Governor, and Supreme Judge of the universe. Daniel contrasts the ultimate power of *Elohim* with the powerless idols of Babylon and Persia. Thus, the name highlights the transcendent Creator who rescues Daniel from the lions and reveals hidden mysteries, and foreign rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius ultimately acknowledge that Daniel's *Elohim* possesses unmatched divine authority (Daniel 1:9, 1:17, 9:3, 9:11, 9:12, 9:14, 11:38).

Elohim is a grammatically plural noun derived from the root *El* (meaning "mighty" or "strong"). While its plural suffix (-*im*) literally translates to "gods", it functions as a concretized abstract plural (signifying supreme divinity or majesty) when paired with singular verbs and paints God as the all-powerful Creator, Sustainer, and Supreme Judge. And the Aramaic equivalent is *Elahin* (see under Aramaic Names section below).

Because Daniel features a unique linguistic structure that transitions between Hebrew and Aramaic, the view of *Elohim* operates through specific thematic lenses and linguistic shifts:

Sovereignty Over Foreign Deities (The Clash of Powers): The Book of Daniel is set during the Babylonian exile, a time when Israel's God appeared defeated by pagan deities. The use of *Elohim* reasserts that Israel's God is the ultimate power.

When the narrative addresses pagan gods, the word is used in its literal plural sense ("gods") or explicitly attached to a human king's personal deity. For example, in Daniel 1:2, Nebuchadnezzar carries the vessels of the temple into the house of "his god" (*elohaw*). By using the same root word for both the true Creator and the pagan statues, the text sets up a stark contrast: Israel's *Elohim* rules over all earthly kingdoms, regardless of the temporary triumph of foreign empires.

Cryptic Shift to the Aramaic 'Elahin': In the Aramaic chapters of Daniel (Chapters 2–7), the Hebrew *Elohim* shifts to its Aramaic equivalent, *Elahin* (see under Aramaic Names section below). This linguistic translation adapts the concept for a Gentile, imperial audience:

- **Pagan Perception:** Characters like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar use *Elahin* polytheistically to describe spiritual beings. When Daniel interprets dreams by divine revelation, the Babylonian king exclaims that Daniel possesses the "spirit of the holy gods" (*elahin*) (Daniel 4:8).
- **Monotheistic Correction:** Daniel mirrors their vocabulary but redirects its focus, asserting that *Elahin* represents the supreme "God of heaven," who humbles earthly kings and sets up an everlasting kingdom.

Implicit Characterization via Personal Names: Even when the narrative doesn't explicitly speak the name *Elohim*, its meaning is woven directly into the identities of



the protagonists. In Daniel 1, the Babylonians attempt to strip the Hebrew youths of their identities by changing their names.

The presence of *Elohim* embedded in their original names serves as a literary reminder that despite their captivity under a foreign regime, their true allegiance belongs to the supreme judge and standard of reality.

Judicial Majesty and Covenant Vindication: When Daniel returns to Hebrew in chapter 9, he delivers a profound prayer concerning the desolation of Jerusalem.

Here, *Elohim* is intentionally combined with *Adonai* and *Yahweh*.

In Daniel 9:3-4, Daniel addresses "*Yahweh my Elohim*." In this context, *Elohim* represents the absolute judicial authority of God, the one who executed the righteous curse and judgment written in the Law of Moses because of Israel's sins. Yet, by calling Him *Elohim*, Daniel appeals to the cosmic power capable of reversing the exile and restoring His people, proving that His supreme authority operates in tandem with His covenant faithfulness.

It is notable that *Elohim*, in the Book of Daniel, is not just a generic title for a deity. It acts as a theological assertion of celestial sovereignty, absolute judgment, and ultimate authority over the rise and fall of pagan empires, the spiritual realm, and the ultimate destiny of His people.

Sar Ha-Tsaba / Sar Hatsava (Prince of the Host / Commander of the Host): The primary occurrence of this exact phrase is found in Daniel 8:11 and it highlights God's providential protection and role as the ultimate Ruler of both the heavenly angelic armies and His earthly sanctuary.

To understand the core meaning of the name, it can be broken down into its two linguistic components: *Sar* (Prince, Captain, Chief, Ruler, Commander), which denotes a leader with high governing or military authority, often used for military captains or ruling angels combined with *Ha-Tsaba* ([Of] the Host / [Of] the Army) - *Ha* as the definite article "the" and *Tsaba* (singular of *Sabaoth*) meaning "an assembled mass organized for warfare," referring to armies of angels, stars, or people.

Theological Meaning in the Book of Daniel: In the specific visionary landscape of Daniel 8, the title carries deep theological weight:

- **Target of the "Little Horn":** The vision describes a "little horn" (historically linked to the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and eschatologically to the Antichrist) that grows so proud it challenges the heavenly realm. It does not merely attack humans; it blasphemously exalts itself to be equal with *Sar Ha-Tsaba* (God Himself).
- **Sovereign Owner of Worship:** The verse notes that the little horn takes away the "*daily sacrifice from Him*." Because temple sacrifices were offered exclusively to God, the "Prince of the host" can only be a title for *Yahweh*.
- **Distinction from Angels:** While lesser angels in Daniel are called "princes" (such as Michael, who is referred to as "*one of the chief princes*" in Daniel 10:13), God is designated as the absolute ruler over them all, and later in the same vision (Daniel 8:25) this entity is mirrored by the title *Sar-Sarim*, meaning "the Prince of princes."

Old Testament Comparison: The title *Sar Ha-Tsaba* shares an exact linguistic parallel with another major Old Testament manifestation, while operating as a singular version of God's most frequent military name:

- **Joshua Parallel:** The exact phrase *Sar-Tsaba* appears in Joshua 5:14-15, when Joshua encounters a mysterious divine warrior holding a drawn sword. The figure commands Joshua to take off his sandals because the ground is holy, revealing Himself as the "Commander of the army of the Lord" (*Sar-Tsaba -Yahweh*). In Daniel, the title appears with the definite article (*Sar Ha-Tsaba*) to show He is *the* definitive Commander.



- **Relation to Yahweh-Sabaoth:** A closely related and common biblical name of God is Yahweh-Sabaoth (translated as "*The Lord of Hosts*" or "*The Lord of Armies*"). *Sabaoth* is simply the plural form of *Tsaba*. Therefore, while *Yahweh-Sabaoth* means "The Lord of the Armies," Daniel's phrase *Sar Ha- Tsaba* means "The Commander of the Army." Both titles convey the exact same theological reality: God is the warrior-king who commands the forces of heaven to defend His people and deliver justice.

Chay Ha-Olam (Lives Forever): In the Book of Daniel, the Hebrew phrase Chay Ha-Olam (written with the preposition as b'Chay Ha-Olam) translates literally to "The Living One of Eternity" or "He Who Lives Forever." It appears explicitly in Daniel 12:7, where a celestial figure (the man clothed in linen) raises both hands to heaven and swears a solemn, unshakeable oath by this specific divine title.

The title constructs a direct relationship between God's essence and the concept of time: **Chay** (the root means "alive" or "living," unlike the idols of bronze or stone common in the Babylonian setting of Daniel, this title anchors God as a vibrant, active, self-existent entity; and **Ha-Olam** (*Olam* means a vast horizon, an indefinite period, antiquity or absolute eternity, paired with the definite article prefix *Ha-* implying "The Ultimate Eternity" or "The Universe" across all history).

Theologically, the name is selected intentionally to fit the critical themes of Daniel's final apocalyptic vision:

Sovereignty Over Time: Throughout the book, earthly kingdoms (Babylon, Persia, Greece) rise, conquer, and violently crumble. By invoking *Chay Ha-Olam*, the text contrasts transient human empires with a God whose existence is unbended by time and who outlasts every tyrant.

Absolute Guarantee of Prophecy: In Daniel 12:7, the angel is asked how long the suffering of the holy people will last. Swearing by "Him who lives forever" guarantees that even if God's people are shattered in the short term, the ultimate outcome is secure because the One orchestrating history spans past the crisis into eternity.

Connection to Resurrection: Just prior in Daniel 12:2, the book introduces the concept of the dead awakening to *Chayei Olam* (eternal life). God is called *Chay Ha-Olam* to show that He can grant eternal life to believers because He is Himself the eternal source of life.

Aramaic Names (Chapters 2–7)

The Aramaic names are found in the court tales and public decrees. Theologically proper, they reveal how God demonstrates His supremacy to a global, gentile audience, forcing pagan kings to acknowledge His rule:

Elah Shmayya (God of Heaven): Counters the ancient Near Eastern concept of localized deities. It reveals God's omnipresence and transcendence: He is not a local deity confined to Jerusalem or Babylon, but rules the entire cosmos (Daniel 2:18, 2:19, 2:28, 2:37, 2:44).

Elah Rahamin (God of Mercies): Demonstrates God's goodness and immanence. Even as the high God of heaven, He is intimately approachable and answers the prayers of His desperate servants (Daniel 2:18).

Illy / Illaya (Most High): Focuses on God's sovereign providence. This title is frequently forced from the lips of pagan kings (like Nebuchadnezzar) when they realize that human rulers only hold power by divine permission. Daniel 10:21 contains the Hebrew equivalent (Daniel 4:17, 4:24, 4:25, 4:32, 4:34, 5:18, 5:21, 7:18, 7:22, 7:25, 7:27).

Mare Malkin (Lord of Kings): Establishes God's absolute political supremacy. Emperors may command nations, but they answer directly to the Lord of Kings (Daniel 2:47).



Gale Razin (Revealer of Mysteries): Explicitly reveals God's omniscience. Pagan sorcerers are left in the dark, but God knows all hidden things, including the entirety of future human history (Daniel 2:28, 2:29, 2:47).

Atik Yomin (Ancient of Days): Magnifies God's aseity (self-existence) and eternity. While earthly empires rise and fall like beasts from a turbulent sea, God sits permanently, timelessly enthroned as the ultimate, unchanging Judge (Daniel 7:9, 7:13, 7:22).

Chay Alama (He Who Lives Forever): Emphasizes God's immortality and eternity. It contrasts the fragile, brief lifespans of human monarchs with the endless, self-sustaining life of God (Daniel 4:34 - Aramaic portion); a Hebrew equivalent (*Chay Ha-Olam*) appears in Daniel 12:7.

2. Theologies of Pneumatology and Angelology

The Book of Daniel serves as a foundational bridge for late Old Testament theology, offering some of the most explicit developments of Pneumatology (the theology of the Spirit) and Angelology (the theology of angels) in the Hebrew Bible. Following is an exploration of these two theological narratives, backed by biblical text and historical-critical commentary.

Pneumatology

The theology of pneumatology within the Book of Daniel primarily presents the Spirit as the sovereign agent of divine illumination, supernatural wisdom, and apocalyptic revelation. While Daniel contains fewer explicit references to the "Spirit" compared to prophetic books like Ezekiel, its pneumatological framework is foundational for tracing how God's presence equips His people to navigate hostile, pagan empires. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) is often depicted as an empowering force for leadership, prophecy, and wisdom. In Daniel, Pneumatology is uniquely framed through an Aramaic lens, primarily via pagan observations of Daniel's supernatural insight.

The most direct pneumatological descriptions in Daniel come from the observations of pagan rulers. King Nebuchadnezzar and the Queen Mother describe Daniel as possessing the "spirit of the holy gods" (Aramaic: *ruach elahin qaddishin*). We see supernatural insight over occultism through the Spirit of God involving Babylon's principal astrologers, sorcerers, and magicians' failure to interpret the royal dreams because they relied on human intellect and occult systems. Conversely, Daniel possessed "insight, intelligence, and wisdom like that of the gods" from the perspective of the Babylonian elite.

From a Christian theological lens, this pagan phraseology recognizes the distinct, indwelling operational presence of the Holy Spirit granting illumination. Daniel 6:3 notes that Daniel distinguished himself because an "excellent spirit" (*ruach yattira*) was in him. This points to a pneumatological reality where the Spirit transforms a believer's character, intellect, and work ethic. The Spirit operates through Daniel's rigorous discipline and regular prayer rhythms, demonstrating that Old Testament pneumatology is deeply practical, affecting ordinary vocational excellence.

In Old Testament pneumatology, the Holy Spirit typically came upon specific individuals temporarily for designated tasks and Daniel represents a profound case of selective, sustained indwelling for the preservation of God's covenant people during exile. A couple of keynotes to the Spirit's presence communicated in Daniel:

Bridge to New Covenant Indwelling: Similar to Joseph in Egypt, Daniel's continuous filling by the Spirit across multiple decades and regimes (Babylonian and Medo-Persian) serves as a developmental seed for New Testament pneumatology,



foreshadowing the permanent indwelling promised to all believers under the New Covenant.

Apologetic Demonstration: The Spirit's presence in Daniel functions as a polemic against the regional gods of Babylon. By filling an exiled captive, the Spirit proves that Yahweh's sovereignty is not bound by geographic borders or national defeats.

While the word "Spirit" (*ruach*) appears mostly in the narrative first half of the book (Chapters 1–6), the concept shifts dynamically into the "Spirit of Vision" in the apocalyptic second half (Chapters 7–12):

Sovereign Revelation: The text emphasizes that deep mysteries are not resolved through human deduction, but are revealed by God. In Daniel 2:19-22 and the visions of the later chapters, secrets are "unlocked" through divine revelation—a core function of the Spirit's illuminative work.

Universe Engagement: The apocalyptic visions (such as the four winds stirring the great sea in Daniel 7:2) tie pneumatology back to its cosmic origins in Genesis 1:2. In Daniel, the *ruach* is the driving power behind geopolitical shifts, proving that the rise and fall of empires are entirely directed by divine decree.

Angelology

The theology of angelology in the Book of Daniel represents a critical turning point in biblical revelation, transitioning from a general acknowledgment of heavenly messengers to a highly structured, apocalyptic framework. Daniel is the first biblical text to explicitly name specific angels, introduce a celestial hierarchy, and reveal that nations have patron spiritual entities directing world events behind the scenes.

The angelology of Daniel is structurally tied to seven primary entities or angelic beings that define the interaction between the heavenly realm and human history:

1) Messenger Gabriel	Explains complex prophetic timelines and eschatological visions to mankind.	Daniel 8:16, 9:21
2) Archangel Michael	Functions as the warrior patron prince and protector of the nation of Israel.	Daniel 10:13, 12:1
3) "Prince of Persia"	Fallen angelic entity influencing the geopolitical affairs and rulers of the Persian Empire.	Daniel 10:13, 20
4) "Prince of Greece"	Fallen spiritual authority directing the rise and aggressive campaigns of the Greek Empire.	Daniel 10:20
5) Watchers/Holy Ones	Heavenly council that decrees judgments, removes human rulers, and establishes divine sovereignty.	Daniel 4:13, 17
6) Delivering Angel	Nameless divine agent deployed to execute immediate physical deliverance for the faithful.	Daniel 3:25, 6:22
7) "One Like a Son of Man"	A supreme heavenly figure who receives an everlasting dominion; distinct from created angels.	Daniel 7:13-14



The theology of Daniel marks a major development from pre-exilic Israelite thought, moving toward a fully realized apocalyptic worldview:

Celestial Dualism and Territorial Spirits: Prior to Daniel, Israelite theology focused heavily on God's direct interaction with nations. Daniel pulls back the curtain to reveal that earthly political powers have celestial counter-parts (the "Princes" of Persia and Greece). Geopolitical wars are shown to be reflections of ongoing spiritual warfare in the heavenly places.

Transcendent God and Intermediaries: As Israel's understanding of God's absolute transcendence deepened during the exile, angelology grew to explain how a holy, transcendent God governs a broken world. Angels in Daniel bridge the gap by serving as interpreters, cosmic warriors, and judicial administrators.

"Type of Christ" (Son of Man): While the created angels showcase limitation, the introduction of the figure "like a Son of Man" in Daniel 7 acts as the ultimate theological climax. Unlike the angels who merely serve or fight, this figure is brought directly before the Ancient of Days and given universal, eternal worship and kingship, a role later claimed by Jesus Christ to define His own divine identity.

And, in a comparative religious context, Daniel's highly developed angelology related to contemporary Near Eastern frameworks analyze the unique theological boundaries:

Daniel vs. Ugaritic/Canaanite Literature

Ugaritic Council: In Canaanite myth, the *Assembly of El* consists of independent, polytheistic deities competing for power.

Danielic Assembly: Daniel adapts the Canaanite structural imagery into the heavenly "Watchers" and "Holy Ones"; however, it completely strips them of autonomy. They operate strictly as a subservient council of Yahweh executing the sovereign decree of the Most High.

Daniel vs. Persian/Zoroastrian Dualism

Zoroastrianism: Features an equal, dualistic struggle between the forces of light (Ahura Mazda) and darkness (Angra Mainyu).

Daniel's Framing: While Daniel acknowledges intense spiritual battles in the heavens (such as the 21-day delay in Chapter 10), it rejects equal dualism. The fallen princes of Persia and Greece are bound by historical timelines pre-determined by Yahweh, reinforcing absolute biblical monotheism.

Theological Synthesis of Angelology & Satanology / Demonology

The Book of Daniel (specifically chapters 7–12) serves as the foundational bridge in biblical literature where individual angels and demonic forces transition from anonymous corporate agents of Yahweh into distinct, named cosmic figures with specific geopolitical roles.

Development of Named Angelic Hierarchy

Gabriel: Appears in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 as the primary agent of divine revelation, interpretation, and eschatological timelines.

Michael: Introduced in Daniel 10:13 and 12:1 as "one of the chief princes" and the specific guardian angel/protector of Israel.

Functional Shift: Angels in Daniel are no longer just temporary messengers; they are permanent bureaucratic officials within a highly organized heavenly court.

Son of Man: The figure in Daniel 7:13–14 introduces an exalted, potentially angelic or divine messianic figure who triumphs over chaotic, beastly earthly kingdoms. A common point of discussion in historical theology is whether the prominent figures in Daniel represent the classic Old Testament *Angel of the LORD* (often interpreted by evangelicals as a Christophany). The evidence in Daniel indicates that the named entities are distinct, created, and limited heavenly beings, rather than the uncreated



Angel of the LORD. This dynamic shows a shift that the *Angel of the LORD* who spoke with absolute divine authority in Genesis and Exodus recedes and is replaced by a complex network of mediated angelic agencies that highlight the vastness of God's spiritual administration.

Evolution of Satanology in Daniel

Absence of a Singular Satan: The noun *ha-satan* (the Accuser/Deceiver) does not explicitly appear in Daniel's apocalyptic visions but Daniel triggers a revolution in Satanology and demonology by shifting the focus from an abstract, divine prosecutorial force to a highly structured, rebellious, and politically active cosmic hierarchy. Daniel completely disrupts this paradigm by introducing an active, resisting spiritual underworld.

Decentralized Evil: Satanology is expressed through the "princes" of pagan empires and human tyrants who act under their influence.

The Little Horn: The ruler in Daniel 7:8 and 8:9–12 blasphemes God and flings stars (angelic hosts) to the ground, blurring the line between human king and demonic hubris.

The Inversion of the Divine: Evil is institutionalized through oppressive geopolitical structures rather than a singular, personalized devil.

Cosmic Dualism and Geopolitical Territorialism

Territorial Spirits: Daniel introduces a universe where spiritual forces actively resist God's plans and messengers in real-time introducing the model that nations are governed by specific supernatural being with the view of territorial spirits called "princes" (*sarim*) are assigned to specific geographical regions and human empires are governed by distinct supernatural entities. In Daniel 10:13-20, the text names the "Prince of the Kingdom of Persia" and the "Prince of Greece" are articulated as malevolent entities fighting against God's angels.

- **Prince of Persia:** Mentioned in Daniel 10:13, this entity resists the divine angelic messenger for 21 days, showcasing a highly developed Satanology of demonic resistance.
- **Prince of Greece:** Mentioned in Daniel 10:20, indicating that impending geopolitical shifts are preceded by shifts in the heavenly hierarchy.
- **Celestial-Earthly Mirroring:** Earthly battles (e.g., the persecutions by Antiochus IV Epiphanes) are direct reflections of ongoing warfare in the spiritual realm.

3. Theology of Christology

The Book of Daniel serves as a foundational Old Testament bedrock connecting to New Testament Christology. Written in a context of exile and intense persecution, its visions shift the theological focus from a localized earthly monarchy to a divine eternal King. Daniel also provides the essential vocabulary and theological framework that Jesus and the early Church used to understand and articulate the identity, mission, and ultimate triumph of Jesus as the Messiah.

The intersection of Christology and the Book of Daniel centers on the development of messianic identity, specifically bridging the gap between nationalistic expectations and a divine savior. The New Testament writers directly adopted Danielic imagery to explain Jesus' pre-existence, incarnation, suffering, and ultimate eschatological triumph.

"Son of Man" (Hebrew: *Ben-adam* / Aramaic: *Kebar Enash*)

The intersection of Danielic theology and Christology is most acutely felt in the figure of the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7:13-14.

Heavenly Figure: Daniel envisions "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven, a description traditionally reserved for Yahweh Himself in Hebrew poetry (e.g.,



riding the clouds) (Daniel 7:13). In Ancient Near Eastern context and Hebrew scripture (e.g., Psalm 104:3), cloud-riding is an exclusive trait of Yahweh.

NOTE: In the Old Testament and broader Ancient Near Eastern literature, "riding on the clouds" is an exclusive attribute of deity (the Cloud Rider), used to signal Yahweh's presence, judgment, and authority (e.g., Psalm 68:4, Psalm 104:3, Isaiah 19:1). By claiming this title, Jesus claims a divine status rather than mere human kingship.

When Daniel visions "one like a son of man" approaching the Ancient of Days with the clouds of heaven, he is describing an upward, heavenly inauguration where a human figure is exalted to share God's universal, everlasting rule. The New Testament directly connects Christ's post-resurrection ascension to this prophecy. When Luke records that Jesus "was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9), he is not merely logging historical coordinates; he is framing the historical departure of Jesus as the literal fulfillment of Daniel 7:13. Jesus is the "Son of Man" entering the heavenly courtroom to claim the everlasting dominion, glory, and kingdom promised in the vision.

Universal Dominion (*Pelach*): This figure is led into the presence of the Ancient of Days and given an everlasting kingdom, glory, and dominion over all nations and languages. Daniel 7:14 states that all peoples, nations, and languages should "serve" him. The Aramaic word used here is *pelach*, which throughout the Book of Daniel exclusively refers to the religious worship rendered to a deity (cf. Daniel 3:12, 6:16).

Jesus' Self-Identification: Jesus explicitly adopts this title as His primary self-designation in the Gospels. By doing so, He claims a role that is both profoundly human ("son of man") and uniquely divine.

When Jesus faces the Sanhedrin in Matthew 26:64, his self-identification with Daniel 7:13 is the explicit trigger for his conviction of blasphemy. The high priest recognized that the Danielic "Son of Man" was not a political deliverer, but a divine judge.

High Priest Confrontation: At His trial (Matthew 26:64), Jesus directly quotes Daniel 7, asserting that His judges will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds. This explicit claim to Danielic authority is what triggers the high priest's charge of blasphemy.

Messianic Timeline and the Suffered Messiah

Daniel's prophecies introduce a critical chronological and theological framework for the timing and nature of Christ's first coming. The intersection of Christology and the Book of Daniel centers on the development of messianic identity, specifically bridging the gap between nationalistic expectations and a divine, universal savior. The New Testament writers directly adopted Danielic imagery to explain Jesus' pre-existence, incarnation, suffering, and ultimate eschatological triumph.

Finishing the Transgression: Daniel 9:24-27 outlines a timeline for finishing transgression, putting an end to sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. Daniel 9:24 outlines the ultimate purpose of the prophetic timeline is to finish transgression, put an end to sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The writer of Hebrews relies heavily on this framework to explain how Christ's single sacrifice permanently replaced the Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 9:12, 10:14).

Cut-Off Messiah: Daniel 9:25-26 foretells the arrival of an "Anointed One, a prince," who will be "cut off and have nothing." Daniel 9:26 provides a foundational framework for a suffering Messiah, noting that the *Mashiach* will be "cut off, but not for himself." This directly intersects with Mark 10:45, where Jesus explains his purpose to give his life as a ransom for many.

Atonement Intersection: This creates a profound Christological intersection with the Messiah's victory is achieved not through immediate geopolitical conquest, but



through a substitutionary, violent death that achieves the cosmic reconciliation Daniel anticipated.

Pre-Incarnate Christ (Christophany)

Daniel records direct encounters with a heavenly figure whose descriptions perfectly match John's vision of the glorified Jesus in Revelation.

Fourth Man in the Fire: In Daniel 3:25, Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth figure walking in the fiery furnace whose appearance "is like a son of the gods."

Man Clothed in Linen: Daniel 10:5-6 describes a heavenly being with a body like beryl, eyes like flaming torches, and a voice like the roar of a multitude.

Revelation Parallel: This description matches Revelation 1:13-15 exactly, identifying this figure as the pre-incarnate Logos.

Textual Parallelism (Daniel 7 and Revelation 1)

The apocalyptic vision of Daniel serves as the exact visual vocabulary used by John the Revelator to describe the exalted Christ, confirming the early Church's conviction that the *Yahweh* of Daniel is the *Christos* of the Gospels:

Daniel 7:9: "His clothing was as white as snow, and the hair of his head was like pure wool."

Revelation 1:14: "The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire."

Daniel 7:14: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away."

Revelation 1:18: "I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Essential Canonical Reference Index:

Daniel 3:25 / John 8:58: The eternal, pre-existent protector navigating human trials.

Daniel 7:13-14 / Mark 13:26: The physical return of Jesus Christ in universal power.

Daniel 9:24-26 / Galatians 4:4: The precise execution of God's redemptive timeline in history.

Daniel 12:2 / John 5:28-29: Christ as the author and executor of the final resurrection.

4. Theology of Covenant Ecclesiology

The Book of Daniel is often read primarily as a handbook for end-times prophecy or a collection of Sunday-school moral stories. However, underneath its apocalyptic visions and court tales lies a robust, deeply rooted Theology of Covenant Ecclesiology—the study of the nature, structure, and identity of God's covenant community (the church/Israel) in a hostile world.

The covenant community in Daniel is radically redefined. It moves away from geopolitical borders, physical temples, and national sovereignty, shifting instead toward an international, spiritually resilient, and suffering counter-culture.

Redefinition of Holy Space and Identity

As noted previous, in the ancient Near East the defeat of a nation and the destruction of its temple implied the defeat of its god. Daniel immediately shatters this paradigm by showing that Yahweh's covenant community survives even when its physical institutions are leveled.

Sovereignty Over Exile: Daniel 1:1–2 establishes that the Lord *delivered* Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hands. The exile is not a failure of the covenant, but the fulfillment of its curses for disobedience (cf. Deut. 28).

Body as the Temple: Deprived of the Jerusalem temple and sacrificial system, the covenant community maintains its holiness through ritual purity and dietary boundary markers (Dan. 1:8–16); however, the community itself had to come to the realization that the community must become the locus of God's presence.



The writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel foretold that Yahweh will write His law on human hearts and replace a "heart of stone" with a living heart, shifting away from the stone tablets of the old covenant, and dwelling within (cf. Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26).

In exile, Israel had to learn that God could not be confined to a building in Judea as Daniel's upstairs room became a Holy of Holies and Daniel praying in his upper room with open windows facing Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10) subverted ancient temple worship by turning a private, domestic space into a place of sanctuary worship.

While Ezekiel, also in Babylonian exile, was a Levite priest who focused on temple rituals and visions of God's glory, but Daniel was a royal layman serving in a pagan court. Daniel's practice of praying from his private upper room, especially during the exile when the temple lay in ruins, marks a profound theological shift in Israelite worship. This, and the writings of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, acts as a scriptural prefiguring of how Christ and the New Covenant decentralize God's presence from a physical building to the hearts of believers.

True Worship without Walls: Daniel's habit of praying three times a day toward Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10) demonstrates that covenant ecclesiology is anchored in the promises of God (specifically Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:46–53), not the immediate physical possession of land.

The narrative of Daniel in the lions' den offers a profound theological template for what "worship without walls" looks like when institutional, geographical, and structural religious systems are stripped away and Daniel demonstrates that the true sanctuary is the human heart aligned with God.

Community of the "Maskilim" (The Wise)

Daniel introduces distinct ecclesial identity markers for God's people during times of intense cultural pressure and persecution as they are a community defined by spiritual discernment and endurance.

Called-Out Remnant: Throughout the court narratives (Dan. 1–6), the covenant community is a tiny minority. They operate within the secular empire but refuse to be assimilated by its idolatrous demands (Dan. 3:16–18, 6:10–11).

Maskilim (Wise Teachers): In the apocalyptic section, the covenant community is specifically identified as the *maskilim*, "those who are wise" (Dan. 11:33, 12:3). Their ecclesial function is not political revolution, but instructing the masses, spreading truth, and leading many to righteousness.

Purification Through Suffering: The community's suffering is not meaningless; it is a structural necessity for their refinement. Daniel 11:35 notes that some of the wise will fall "so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end."

Son of Man (Community Identity of the Saints)

The critical turning point of Daniel's ecclesiology occurs in Chapter 7, where the identity of the covenant community is linked to a heavenly representative. Daniel 7:13 introduces "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven to receive an everlasting kingdom. Note, The Son of Man arriving on the clouds to receive an everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13-14), is the Risen Christ / the Lamb, the one who holds the keys of death and will return in glory to reign forever (Revelation 1:12-18; 19).

Fundamentally, later in the same chapter, the interpretation of the vision shifts the reception of this kingdom from the singular "Son of Man" to the collective community (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27).



The theological realization is that the covenant ecclesiology in Daniel is therefore *Christocentric* (prophetically anticipating the New Testament reality). The church/saints will participate in the vindication, resurrection, and rule of the coming King.

Covenant Continuity

The Book of Daniel is rarely viewed through an ecclesial lens because the Church is an unrevealed mystery in Old Testament prophecy. However, a "Covenant Ecclesiology" runs deep through its narrative. Daniel redefines the community of faith not by geographical borders or temple walls, but by covenant loyalty under foreign exile.

Daniel 9 provides the explicit theological framework for how God intends to fulfill His covenant with His ecclesia despite their historic failures.

Priority of Covenant Prayer: Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:4–19 is saturated with covenant language. He appeals directly to "the great and awesome Yahweh, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him." He recognizes that the community's plight is a direct result of violating "the curse and sworn oaths written in the Law of Moses" (Daniel 9:11).

Seventy Sevens: The angelic response (Daniel 9:24–27) outlines a 490-year decree to finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, and bring in everlasting righteousness. It is interesting to note that the entire era from the start of the period of the judges, when Israel began to fall away from Yahweh, to the fall of Jerusalem spans approx. 470- 500 years (about 1350 BC to 586 BC).

Cutting Off of the Anointed One: The ultimate redemption of the covenant community is tied to the "Anointed One" (Messiah) being "cut off" (Dan. 9:26). Daniel establishes that the covenant community's ultimate restoration requires a substitutionary, atoning act that goes far beyond a mere return from geographic exile.

Eschatological Vindication and Resurrection

Daniel concludes by anchoring the faith of the covenant community in the ultimate defeat of evil and the physical resurrection of the dead.

Ultimate Tribulation: The community is warned of an unprecedented time of distress, a thematic continuation of the "little horn" waging war against the holy people and defeating them for a limited time (Daniel 7:21, 25).

Final Deliverance: True membership in the covenant ecclesia is determined by a heavenly registry - "But at that time your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered" (Daniel 12:1).

Ecclesia Resurrected and Glorified: Daniel 12:2–3 offers one of the clearest Old Testament affirmations of bodily resurrection. The covenant community does not fade into history; they awake to everlasting life, and the *maskilim* (the wise) "will shine like the brightness of the heavens... like the stars for ever and ever."

Synthesis to the Ecclesia (Church) Today

The Book of Daniel serves as a theological bridge between the Abrahamic-Davidic covenants and the New Testament *Ekklesia*. It demonstrates that God's covenantal community is defined by faithfulness, not geopolitical sovereignty.

Remnant and the Identity of the Church: Daniel redefines the covenant community during the Babylonian exile. When the visible structures of Israel (temple, city, monarchy) collapsed, the covenant survived through a faithful remnant. Daniel and his companions refuse the king's defiling food (**Daniel 1:8**). This establishes that the true covenant community is marked by ethical and ritual holiness, not geographic location.

The NT church adopts this "exilic identity" with Peter's address to the church as "elect exiles" (1 Peter 1:1). He commands them to abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11), mirroring Daniel's refusal of Babylon's defilement. The Church is a covenantal



remnant called out from the nations, functioning as a moral counter-culture within global empires.

Son of Man and Community Solidarity: The messianic vision in Daniel introduces a structural framework for New Testament Christological ecclesiology. Daniel sees "one like a Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven to receive an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13–14). Crucially, this kingdom is also given to "the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:18, 27).

The Son of Man represents both an individual messianic king and a community body. Jesus claims the title "Son of Man" to define his mission (Matthew 26:64) and Paul synthesizes this community identity into the doctrine of the "Body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). Because the Head (Christ) receives the kingdom, the faithful few (the Church) inherit it alongside Him.

New Testament ecclesiology is inherently communal as the Church (the Bride) has no covenantal standing independent of its union with the Son of Man.

Overturning of Kingdoms and Universal Temple: Daniel foretells of the shattering of human empires by a divine, expanding kingdom. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, a stone cut out by no human hand smashes the poly-metallic statue (Daniel 2:34–35). This stone becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth, symbolizing a kingdom that will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44).

The New Testament synthesis occurs when Christ identifies Himself as the chief cornerstone rejected by the builders (Matthew 21:42–44). The New Testament church is built upon this stone, transforming into a global spiritual temple (Ephesians 2:19–22). The Church is the institutional manifestation of the stone kingdom, which does not overthrow empires through military might, but displaces them through spiritual expansion and covenantal longevity.

Covenant Tribulation, Vindication, and Resurrection: Daniel outlines a linear timeline where covenant faithfulness leads to suffering, followed by ultimate vindication. The book highlights severe persecution under imperial powers, notably the "little horn" who wears out the saints (Daniel 7:25). Yet, this suffering ends in vindication and resurrection - "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2).

The Book of Revelation explicitly uses Daniel's imagery (the beasts, the blasphemous horns, the 1,260 days) to describe the tribulation of the NT church (Revelation 13:1–8). Jesus warns the disciples that the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel requires endurance (Matthew 24:15). The Church's covenantal experience mimics Christ's narrative of suffering under the world powers, followed by eschatological vindication and bodily resurrection.

5. Theologies of Prolegomena & Epistemology

The Book of Daniel establishes foundational theological principles (prolegomena) regarding God's absolute sovereignty over world empires, while detailing a distinct epistemology where true knowledge and discernment originate exclusively from divine revelation rather than human imperial wisdom.

Daniel establishes that true knowledge comes exclusively from the sovereign God of heaven, who alone reveals mysteries, shatters human arrogance, and supersedes pagan wisdom through historical unfolding and direct revelation.

Theological Prolegomenon

In systematic theology, a prolegomenon (plural: *prolegomena*) represents the introductory framework, foundational assumptions, and methodological prerequisites necessary for understanding a divine revelation. In the Book of Daniel, the



prolegomenon is not merely a literary introduction; it is a profound theological statement.

The first chapter of Daniel establishes the core truth that governs the entire book: **Yahweh retains absolute sovereignty over human history, even when His people are defeated and exiled.** This understanding provides the interpretive lens through which all subsequent visions, geopolitical shifts, and miraculous interventions must be understood:

Daniel 1:1–2: Establishes that Nebuchadnezzar's victory was explicitly granted by the *Yahweh*, refuting pagan supremacy (The Foundation of Sovereignty).

Daniel 1:7: Outlines the renaming process designed to replace Yahwistic identities with pagan ones (The Pressure of Assimilation).

Daniel 1:8: Highlights Daniel's internal resolve not to defile himself, setting the stage for divine vindication (The Boundary of Faithfulness).

Daniel 1:17: Asserts that God, not Babylonian training, endowed the youths with knowledge, skill, and prophetic insight (*The Source of Revelation*).

Daniel 1:21: Mentions Cyrus the Great, subtly signaling the eventual fall of Babylon before the visions even begin (The Transience of Empire).

The narrative in Daniel opens with a jarring theological claim: the holy city is besieged, and the vessels of God's temple are carried off to a pagan treasure house. Instead of attributing this to the superior power of Babylon's gods (Marduk / Bel), the text explicitly states that *Yahweh delivered* them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

This establishes a foundational prolegomenon: Israel's exile is not a failure of God's power, but a manifestation of His righteous judgment and covenant fidelity. History is not driven by military might, exemplified by the Kingdom of Judah, but by divine decree.

It is notable to highlight the Babylonian attempt to systematically erase Jewish identity by changing the names, diet, and education of Daniel and his companions. This represents a clash of worldviews. **The prolegomenon of Daniel reveals that while empires can change an individual's outward environment, they cannot master human conscience or alter God's election. The celestial conflict is fought not with weapons, but through compromised loyalty versus unyielding devotion.**

In response, Daniel and his contemporaries refuse the king's defilement (the royal diet) and instead request simple vegetables and water. Their superior physical and intellectual condition after ten days subverts Babylonian wisdom and expectations.

The theological premise established is that true wisdom, vitality, and insight do not originate from imperial resources or occult sciences but are direct gifts from God.

God honors covenant obedience over political pragmatism.

Lastly, by concluding the introductory narrative with the note that Daniel remained until the first year of King Cyrus, the narrator (Daniel) sets a chronological boundary that outlasts the Babylonian Empire itself. **This introduces the ultimate theme of the book: human empires are inherently transient. They rise, reach their peak, and crumble, while the kingdom of God endures forever.**

Theological Epistemology

In the Book of Daniel, epistemology is fundamentally theological. The narrative establishes that true, deep reality cannot be discovered through human intellect, political strategies, or pagan sorcery alone. Instead, valid knowledge is an act of divine revelation. The book contrasts two competing epistemological systems: the



Babylonian/Imperial model (reliant on human wisdom, science, and the occult) and the Theocratic model (reliant on the Sovereign God who reveals mysteries).

In chapters 2, 4, and 5, the world's most sophisticated intellectual elite (the Babylonian magicians, enchanters, and astrologers) consistently fail. King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar demand answers that demonically empowered human empirical observation cannot provide. The text mocks the highest tier of human academic and occult achievement to demonstrate that human reason has a hard ceiling and is fundamentally blind to ultimate supernatural truths.

The doxology of Daniel 20:20-22 is the epistemological thesis of the entire book. Daniel explicitly states that wisdom is a divine property. God does not just possess knowledge; he distributes it. True discernment is an illumination of "hidden things" that human eyes cannot naturally see. Daniel does not out-think the Babylonian wise men using superior intellect, but instead, his knowledge is a direct gift from God. The Hebrew word *raz* (mystery) is introduced to show that certain truths are completely locked away from human discovery unless God chooses to unveil them. **Epistemology in Daniel is therefore passive on the human end; it is received, not achieved. True knowledge requires spiritual alignment, humility, and prayer.**

The visions in the latter half of the book (chapters 7–12) shift from historical narratives to apocalyptic literature. Here, epistemology connects directly to eschatology. God grants Daniel a panoramic view of future empires to prove that history is not a random series of events; **God knows the future because He ordains it. To know the truth, one must know the Ruler of History.**

Knowledge, from the perspective of Daniel, is never neutral - It demands a response! When Nebuchadnezzar receives knowledge, he is expected to humble himself. When Belshazzar rejects the writing on the wall, his epistemological blindness leads to physical destruction. **True knowledge should lead to worship, but the pride of human wisdom always leads to madness and judgment.** Nebuchadnezzar's madness (Daniel 4:34-37) represents the ultimate end of human prideful epistemology. When the king assumes he built Babylon through his own wisdom, he loses his human mind and acts like an animal. **Sanity and true intellectual capacity return only when he looks to heaven and acknowledges divine sovereignty.**

In the Book of Daniel, several key Hebrew and Aramaic words are used to capture the concepts of wisdom, knowledge, and intellectual or spiritual insight. Because the Book of Daniel is written in both Hebrew and Aramaic, it features words from both languages to describe these traits. The primary words used and their specific meanings include:

Chokmah (Wisdom) meaning practical skill, capacity, or comprehensive wisdom. In a broader biblical context, *chokmah* means the practical "skill of living" or craftsmanship. In Daniel, it refers to exceptional mental capability and administrative aptitude given directly by God. For instance, in Daniel 1:17, God grants Daniel and his friends *chokmah*, making them far superior to the king's magicians. It is also used in Aramaic form (*chokmah*) in Daniel 2:20-21 to declare that ultimate wisdom belongs to God alone.

Madda / Manda (Knowledge & Reason) meaning intelligence, consciousness, scientific knowledge, or the cognitive ability to perceive and learn. In Daniel, the Hebrew form **madda** is used in Daniel 1:4 and 1:17 to denote an aptitude for learning, literature, and "understanding science." The Aramaic equivalent, **manda**, appears later in the book (e.g., Daniel 4:34) to describe King Nebuchadnezzar's "reason" or "understanding" returning to him after his period of madness.



Da'at (Knowledge & Perception) meaning knowledge gained through experience, perception, and discernment. It stems from the root *yada* (to know). In Daniel, it is famously used in Daniel 12:4, which prophesies that in the time of the end, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge (*da'at*) shall increase."

Sachal / Sekhel (Insight & Prudence) meaning insight, comprehension, success, or the ability to act prudently. It implies looking at a situation deeply to understand the cause and effect. It is used in Daniel 1:17 to describe the "skill" or "intelligence" God gave the four youths in all literature. It is also the root for *Maschil* (wise leaders/teachers) who instruct many in the end times (Daniel 11:33, 12:3).

Binah (Understanding & Discernment) meaning the faculty of understanding, distinguishing, or separating truth from error. In Daniel, this word specifically targets Daniel's unique ability to discern the hidden meaning of visions, dreams, and spiritual mysteries (Daniel 1:17, 9:22).

Synthesis of Prolegomena & Epistemology

The Book of Daniel serves as a profound theological intersection where prolegomena (the foundational principles of how God reveals Himself) and epistemology (the theory of knowledge, or how humans perceive and understand truth) synthesize. In Daniel, knowledge is not merely an intellectual pursuit; it is a battleground between human autonomy and divine sovereignty. True knowledge is always derived from divine revelation, establishing that theology must precede and govern human epistemology.

The synthesis occurs when Daniel establishes that true knowledge is a vertical gift, accessed through faith, prayer, and illumination; thus, epistemology in Daniel is strictly dependent on God's willingness to reveal Himself to us (prolegomena).

What many miss in the account of Daniel is that prayer as the epistemological conduit. Daniel, when faced with execution, does not brainstorm - **Daniel prays**. In Daniel 2:17–19, we see a demonstrated example of Daniel and his companions seeking "mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery" through prayer. The result is that knowledge is granted to Daniel in a "vision of the night" that came from *Yahweh* (**NOTE**: Daniel sought the prayers of his close friends). Therefore, the epistemological method for the believer is spiritual dependency, not autonomous intellectualism.

The epistemological thesis statement in Daniel explicitly synthesizes these concepts before Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:27–28 - "No **wise men** (*Chakkimin* - general category for the educated class, philosophers, and counselors of the state), **enchanters** (*Ashaphim* - specialists who used spells, rituals, and incantations to ward off evil spirits or deal with the unseen realm), **magicians** (*Chartumim* - borrowed from an Egyptian root (*hry-tp*) meaning "lector priests" or sacred scribes), or **astrologers** (*Kasdayim* - originally an ethnic term for people from the land of Chaldea/Babylonia, but evolved in Daniel's time to a technical designation for the class of astronomers and astrologers who tracked the movements of celestial bodies to divine omens and future events) can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is **Elah** [a God] in heaven who reveals mysteries." In these verses, Daniel dismantles human epistemology and anchors all true understanding in the revelatory nature of God.

Daniel's gift of spiritual discernment and ability to interpret the writing on the wall in Chapter 5 or the visions in Chapters 7–12 is consistently tied to the presence of the *Yahweh*. Even the pagan Queen Mother recognizes this synthesis, noting that Daniel possesses "the spirit of the holy gods... light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods" (Daniel 5:11).



Lastly, eschatological epistemology (Sealed and Unsealed Knowledge) in the final chapters of the book, the synthesis of prolegomena and epistemology takes on a historical and eschatological dimension. God dictates not only what can be known, but when it can be known. The sovereign restriction of knowledge in Daniel 12:4 is where the angel tells Daniel to "shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end." Yahweh exercises sovereign control over the timeline of human comprehension. The spiritual condition for understanding these things in Daniel 12:10 provides a final epistemological divide: "None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand." In Daniel's theology, morality, relationship with *Yahweh*, and true knowledge are inseparable. Sin blinds the mind, while covenant faithfulness yields true cognitive clarity.

The theological summary of the Book of Daniel concludes that human beings cannot think their way through enlightened transcendence to ultimate truth. The theologies of Epistemology and Prolegomena teaches that we can only truly know reality through an understanding of the Sovereign Almighty *Yahweh* of the universe who has chosen to step across the creator-creation divide to reveal Himself, and true wisdom begins with the fear (*yir'ah* – "Awe, Wonder, Reverence, Honor, Obedience, and Trust") of the Sovereign King who holds in His hands the course of empires and the illumination of Himself to His created humans.

Application to the New Testament Church

The synthesis of Daniel's prolegomena and epistemology directly shapes how the New Testament Church must operate in a pluralistic, post-Christian society.

Rejecting Cultural Accommodation and Pragmatism: The modern Church faces an epistemic crisis, frequently mimicking corporate strategies, secular psychology, and political alignments to gain cultural traction.

The New Testament echo is from Paul who mirrors Daniel's critique of secular epistemology in 1 Corinthians 1:20 - *"Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"*

The Church must retrieve its theological prolegomena. We do not look to culture to determine our methodology. Our foundational premise is the Lordship of Christ and the sufficiency of Scripture. Like Daniel, the Church must resolve not to defile itself with the "king's rich food" (Daniel 1:8) (i.e., the compromised epistemologies of the modern age).

Embracing the Epistemology of the Cross: Just as Babylon could not comprehend God's roadmap for history, the current world system cannot comprehend the gospel through raw human reason.

True epistemological clarity is given by the Holy Spirit. As 1 Corinthians 2:14 notes, *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."*

Christian education, apologetics, polemics, and preaching must rely on spiritual illumination rather than mere rhetorical persuasion. The Church must cultivate communities of deep prayer, understanding that we "know" truth intimately through the indwelling Holy Spirit, who reveals the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Maintaining Prophetic Counter-Culture and Conviction: Because our prolegomena proclaims that God's kingdom outlasts all human empires (Daniel 2:44), our epistemology gives us the certainty required to withstand persecution.



Jesus challenges the Church to have an ultimate epistemic allegiance - *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28).

When secular powers demand total ideological compliance, much like Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (Daniel 3), the Church's secure knowledge of God's final victory grants it the courage to say, *"We must obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29).

6. Theologies of Bibliology & Hermeneutics

The Book of Daniel serves as a foundational Old Testament laboratory for both Bibliology (the doctrine of scripture, revelation, and inspiration) and Hermeneutics (the method of interpretation). Throughout its twelve chapters, the book displays how God communicates His sovereign will and how human agents receive, record, and interpret that divine disclosure.

Daniel reveals a high view of divine word inscription and a reliance on canonical interpretation. God actively governs history, writes words on walls (Dan 5:5), preserves sacred texts (Dan 9:2), and unlocks prophetic meaning through supernatural revelation (Dan 2:19, 28).

Theology of Bibliology

Bibliology in Daniel is framed around the absolute authority of God's spoken and written word. God is the ultimate source of knowledge, unveiling mysteries that human wisdom cannot access.

Supremacy of Divine Revelation: In Daniel 2, the insufficiency of human wisdom is exposed when the Babylonian wise men fail to recount Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel declares that illumination belongs solely to God: *"There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries"* (**Daniel 2:28**). True revelation does not originate from human intuition but from divine initiation.

Inspiration and Preservation of Text: Daniel explicitly highlights the authority of previously recorded Scripture. In **Daniel 9:2**, the prophet writes, *"I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years which, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem."* Here, Daniel treats the prophecies of Jeremiah not merely as historical letters, but as inspired, authoritative text (*"the word of the Lord"*) that demands literal fulfillment.

Infallibility of the Heavenly Scroll: In **Daniel 10:21**, an angelic messenger references *"what is inscribed in the book of truth."* This anthropomorphic language of a heavenly book underscores the immutability and absolute certainty of God's decrees. What God has written cannot be altered by earthly empires.

Sealing of the Canon: At the climax of the book, Daniel is told to *"shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end"* (**Daniel 12:4**). This directive highlights the preservation and finality of the revelation. It is a completed corpus intended for preservation across generations. Note that the Book of Daniel is intricately connected to the Book of Revelation written by John. In Revelation, John witnesses the **Lamb open the seals** of the scroll, signaling that the consummation of history is at hand (Revelation 5-6).

Theology of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics in Daniel is complex, transitioning from the interpretation of human dreams to the decoding of apocalyptic visions, and establishes that proper hermeneutics requires both divine illumination and disciplined textual study.

Human intellect alone cannot decode divine communication. For example, when Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (Daniel 2 and 4) or the handwriting on the



wall (Daniel 5), the interpretation (*peshet*) is given by God. And Daniel acknowledges that he does not possess superior wisdom but is simply a vessel for communicating *Yahweh's* message (Daniel 2:30). Daniel acknowledges that wisdom and the unveiling of deep things come from God, not human intellect (Daniel 2:21-22).

We can see that a grammatical-historical reading of prophecy from Daniel 9 that Daniel engages in an exemplary hermeneutical exercise. He reads Jeremiah's prophecy contextually and chronologically and takes the "70 years" literally. His hermeneutic connects historical reality with theological truth; thus, proving earlier revelation anchors later interpretation.

We can also see Daniel's need for Supernatural Agents involving interpretation of apocalyptic symbolism. As the book transitions from historical narratives to apocalyptic visions (Daniel 7–12), the hermeneutical task becomes more difficult. Daniel himself is routinely terrified and confused by what he sees (Daniel 7:15, 8:27). God provides "interpreting angels" (like Gabriel in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21) to mediate the meaning, establishing that apocalyptic imagery requires a divinely authorized framework to be understood properly.

Lastly, it is important to draw attention to the fact that interpretation in Daniel is not merely an academic exercise, but it requires spiritual discernment granted through pneumatic illumination. However, this brings us to progressive revelation and the eschatological horizon:

Progressive Revelation: The theological concept that God does not reveal His entire will, character, or plan to humanity all at once. Instead, divine truth is disclosed gradually over time, adapting to human capacity and historical context, with each stage being built upon the last.

Eschatological Horizon: The ultimate boundary line of history and theology is eschatology. It represents the final consummation of God's purposes, the "last things" (*eschaton*) including judgment, renewal, and the eternal state. It acts as the vanishing point toward which all history and revelation converge.

In Daniel 12:8-9, Daniel admits, *"I heard, but I did not understand."* The angel responds that the words are locked until the end times. This introduces a crucial hermeneutical principle that some biblical texts possess an eschatological horizon, meaning their full significance will only be unlocked progressively as history approaches its consummation. Progressive revelation and the eschatological horizon exist in a dynamic, forward-moving relationship.

Synthesis and Intersection

The relationship between Bibliology and Hermeneutics in the Book of Daniel is deeply symbiotic, creating a cohesive framework for biblical authority. The intersecting cycle in Daniel is where bibliology provides the raw material for hermeneutics, while hermeneutics validates the nature of bibliology.

Bibliology and hermeneutics are inseparable in Daniel. The high view of Scripture (Bibliology) dictates that God's word is a closed, divine mystery until God Himself grants the key to unlock it (Hermeneutics). Because the text originates from the mind of the Sovereign Creator (Bibliology), its interpretation demands a posture of humility, prayer, and divine aid (Hermeneutics). The text is both the objective truth delivered from heaven and the subject of spiritual interpretation that points steadfastly to God's ultimate victory over earthly empires.

Several points to keep in mind in Bible study are:

Authority Demands Accuracy: Because Daniel views the written word as infallible (Bibliology), he approaches the text of Jeremiah with rigorous attention to detail



(Hermeneutics). If the word were not divinely inspired, the chronological calculation of the 70 years would be irrelevant.

Progression of Wisdom: The book moves from dreams interpreted by a divinely gifted man (chapters 1–6) to written texts interpreted by angels and preserved for the future (chapters 7–12). This shift demonstrates that while God's revelation is fixed and unchanging (Bibliology), the human understanding of that revelation is progressive and historically bound (Hermeneutics).

Sovereign Text: Ultimate authority does not rest with the human interpreter, nor with the mighty kings of Babylon and Persia; it rests in the text that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Ultimately, Daniel synthesizes these two fields by showing that the God who speaks is also the God who explains. Bibliology guarantees that God has spoken truly; Hermeneutics ensures that His people can live faithfully in light of what He has said, trusting His sovereignty over history until the final consummation of Yahweh's plan.

7. Theologies of Protology and Proleptic Eschatology

Protology establishes God as the sovereign Creator of ALL (Daniel 2:20-22), while proleptic eschatology pulls the future victory of God's eternal kingdom into the present timeline, guaranteeing that earthly empires will fall to the Most High (Daniel 7:13-14).

Protology and proleptic eschatology frame the Book of Daniel by bridging the absolute beginnings of God's sovereign design (protology) with the forward-looking intrusion of His ultimate future (proleptic eschatology). Together, these theologies demonstrate that history is neither random nor cyclical, but a strictly monitored linear timeline anchored by God's initial decrees and pulled toward His final victory.

Protology

In the Book of Daniel, protology is not a passive backstory. It serves as the essential foundation for its intense eschatology. Daniel demonstrates that Yahweh sovereignly launched creation and is the only one who can justly orchestrate the ultimate conclusion of this fallen world and restore it to something that we can't begin to understand any more than we can envision what the Garden of Eden must have appeared in all of its beauty. Key protological points in Daniel includes:

Sovereign Creator Over History: Daniel frames God's absolute control over human empires as a direct right of His status as Creator.

Vision of the Four Beasts (Daniel 7:1-8): Four chaotic kingdoms emerge from the "great sea" whipped up by the four winds of heaven. In ancient Near Eastern thought, the sea represents original chaos. By showing God controlling this sea, Daniel references Genesis 1:2. The Creator continuously subdues chaos to execute His plan.

Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9-10, 13, 22): God is explicitly given the title "Ancient of Days" (*'Atîq Yômîn*). This title emphasizes His pre-existence before time, space, and the creation of humanity. His throne of flaming wheels denotes an uncreated, self-sustaining authority that predates the rise of any human empire like Babylon or Persia.

Recapitulation of the Image of God: The Book of Daniel systematically contrasts the divine ideal of humanity established at creation with the degrading nature of human pride.

Original Creation Mandate (Genesis 1:26-28): Humanity was created in the image of God to exercise benevolent dominion over the beasts of the earth.

Beastly Devolution (Daniel 4:28-33): King Nebuchadnezzar boasts of his own power, abandoning acknowledgment of the Creator. Consequently, he loses his



human dignity and devolves into a beastly state, eating grass like an ox. This narrative acts as a protological warning: when humans stop reflecting on the Creator, they lose their status as rulers and become like the animals they were meant to govern.

Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14): In stark contrast to the destructive beasts arising from the sea, one "like a son of man" (a human being) approaches the Ancient of Days. He is given everlasting dominion, glory, and a kingdom. This represents the ultimate restoration of the true Adam. The original creation mandate of human dominion over the earth is perfectly fulfilled in this heavenly human figure.

Creation Language and the Defiance of Empire: Daniel uses specific creation themes to expose human kingdoms as cheap, idolatrous imitations of the true Creator's work.

The Cosmic Tree (Daniel 4:10-12): Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a massive tree that provides food and shelter for all birds and beasts. This imagery mirrors the abundant, life-giving ecosystem of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). However, because this empire relies on human hubris rather than divine provision, the tree is ordered to be chopped down (Daniel 4:14), proving that human utopias cannot replicate God's creation.

The Creation of Idols vs. the Creator (Daniel 3 and 5): In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar sets up a golden image, demanding worship. In Daniel 5:23, Daniel indicts Belshazzar for praising "gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know," while failing to honor "the God in whose hand is your breath." This directly echoes Genesis 2:7, where God breathes life into humanity. Daniel argues it is absolute folly to worship man-made fabrications instead of the Author of breath.

Theological Summary: Protology in Daniel proves that history is not a series of random accidents or a cycle of winning empires. Because God is the Source of Genesis, He is the Author of Destiny. The order established at the beginning of time guarantees the justice, judgment, and restoration promised at the end of time.

Proleptic Eschatology

The Book of Daniel is a foundational text for apocalyptic literature, offering a profound look at proleptic eschatology. This theological concept means that God's final, future victory and kingdom are not just distant events; they break into the present reality to comfort and command believers today. In Daniel this means God shows earthly empires where their end is near and Yahweh's eternal rule invades history before it happens. This should give cause for sustained faith to suffering believers.

Following is what is seen in the Book of Daniel:

Present Clash of Kingdoms (Daniel 1-6): The narrative begins not in heaven, but in the harsh reality of exile. Daniel and his friends are thrust into Babylon, a pagan empire demanding total assimilation. The proleptic reality is that God's ultimate sovereignty over human empires is demonstrated immediately. The future downfall of prideful nations is previewed in the present lives of the exiles:

Daniel 2:44: God sets up a future kingdom that will never be destroyed, shattering all earthly kingdoms.

Daniel 3:26-27: The deliverance from the fiery furnace proves God's future rescuing power is active *now*.

Daniel 6:26-27: Darius confesses that God's kingdom is enduring, experiencing a present realization of an eternal truth.

Vision of Judgment and Vindication (Daniel 7-8): The narrative shifts from historical stories to apocalyptic visions. Daniel sees terrifying beasts rising from the sea, representing brutal earthly empires that oppress the saints. In the middle of chaos, the scene shifts to the heavenly courtroom. The future final judgment is pulled into



Daniel's present vision. The "Ancient of Days" takes His seat, and the books are opened. The ultimate defeat of evil is treated as an accomplished, secure reality, giving the persecuted community the strength to endure.

Daniel 7:9-10: The heavenly courtroom is seated for judgment.

Daniel 7:13-14: The "Son of Man" receives everlasting dominion and glory.

Daniel 7:27: The sovereignty and greatness of all kingdoms under heaven are given to the holy people of the Most High.

Timeline of Redemption (Daniel 9): Daniel prays over the desolation of Jerusalem, realizing the 70 years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah are ending. Gabriel responds with the prophecy of the "seventy weeks." God overlays a grand redemptive timeline onto Daniel's immediate historical moment. The ultimate answers to sin, guilt, and rebellion are guaranteed. Believers are invited to live out the holiness of the future "most holy place" while still waiting for the timeline to conclude.

Daniel 9:24: Seventy weeks are decreed to finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

Final Victory and Resurrection (Daniel 10-12): The book concludes with a massive, detailed vision of geopolitical conflict, culminating in a time of unprecedented distress, followed by ultimate deliverance. The narrative reaches its eschatological peak by revealing the physical resurrection of the dead. This future expectation serves as a present anchor. Knowing that death is not the end, and that vindication is secure, transforms how the "wise" live, endure, and instruct others during times of intense societal pressure.

Daniel 12:1: Michael arises, and everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered.

Daniel 12:2-3: Multitudes who sleep in the dust will awake—some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. The wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens.

Theological Summary: Proleptic eschatology in Daniel means that the end determines the meaning of the present. The future kingdom of the Son of Man is so certain that its power, ethics, and faith bleed backward into history. For Daniel and his readers, this theology turns survival into a form of resistance; they do not bow to empires today because they have already seen those empires fall tomorrow.

Application to the Church Today

The Book of Daniel, written from the crucible of Babylonian and Persian exile, Daniel addresses an identity crisis. It speaks directly to a covenant people displaced by aggressive geopolitical superpowers. For the contemporary Church, this text is not a mere roadmap of future events, it is a theological manual for living as a faithful, alternate society. By anchoring its origin in protology and its destiny in proleptic eschatology, the Church finds the exact mechanism required to resist assimilation, endure systemic pressure, and embody the future kingdom of God in the broken reality of the present.

To implement the theologies of Daniel, the Church must adopt a distinct rhythm of life that honors both the absolute beginning and the ultimate end. Today, the church applies these truths by living as a faithful, counter-cultural community that trusts God's sovereign creation order and anticipates His final, victorious kingdom.

Practice Strategic Subversion through Excellence: Daniel did not retreat to a monastic desert; he rose to the highest ranks of civil service in Babylon and Persia (Dan 2:48; 6:3). He served the welfare of the city, yet his ultimate allegiance never shifted. The Church must not retreat into cultural ghettos or engage in culture-war hostility. Instead, it must exhibit undeniable vocational excellence and public service while remaining fiercely anchored in the ethics of God's initial commands.



Maintain Regular Rhythms of Defiant Worship: In Daniel 6, when the king signs a decree banning prayer to anyone but himself, Daniel reacts not with a political rally, but by going to his roof, opening his windows toward Jerusalem, and praying three times a day, *"as he had done previously"* (Dan 6:10). His liturgical consistency was a direct, proleptic subversion of the state's claim to absolute authority. The Church's most potent political act is its uncompromised corporate worship, which proclaims that Jesus Christ, not Caesar, is Lord.

Embody the Ethics of the New Jerusalem Now: Because Daniel 7:27 promises that *"the kingdom and the dominion... shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High,"* the Church must not adopt the predatory methods of the beasts (power, coercion, manipulation, oppression) to secure its safety. We live out the future reality today by practicing radical hospitality, sacrificial generosity, unconditional mercy, and truth-telling, acting as a living outpost of the coming Kingdom of God.

Summary Checklist: When protology and proleptic eschatology meet, they form the identity of the church as an eschatological remnant living in diaspora. Daniel did not withdraw from Babylon, nor did he assimilate. He served the empire excellently as a high-ranking administrator (Dan 6:3) while maintaining uncompromised devotion to God, praying three times a day toward Jerusalem (Dan 6:10). He brought the reality of the future Kingdom into the courts of pagan kings

Dual Citizenship: The church applies Daniel's theology by avoiding two extremes: cultural capitulation (becoming Babylon) and total monastic withdrawal (ignoring Babylon). The church is called to bless the city it resides in (Jer 29:7) through excellent work, art, and leadership, while remaining distinct holy exiles (1 Pet 2:11).

Witness of Martyrdom and Integrity: When the church is pressured to worship the idols of the age (whether political ideologies, materialism, or statism), it acts on the theology of resurrection found in Daniel 12:2. Believers can face the "fiery furnaces" (Dan 3) and "lions' dens" (Dan 6) of social ostracization or persecution because they know the God of the beginning (Protology) is already waiting for them at the end (Eschatology).

Do we view current events through a Protological Lens? Are we functioning out of anxiety and fear, or are we actively remembering that God holds ultimate sovereignty over the rise and fall of nations (Dan 2:21)?

Are we compromising with the Imperial Table? In what ways is the modern world attempting to rename us, re-educate us, and force us to digest ideologies that distort our covenant identity?

Is our faith Proleptic or Postponed? Do we treat the Kingdom of God merely as a faraway paradise after we die, or are we actively pulling its ethics, justice, and transforming power into our neighborhoods today?

