

DANIEL - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What picture of God do you see in Daniel? Is it not important to get the historical setting for Daniel? Where were God's people at this time? What do you think the neighboring nations thought of the God of Israel, since He did not (or could not) prevent their being taken captive? God had said again and again that He would have to let His people go. Does it seem that He had let Daniel go?
2. What do you think of first when you think of the book of Daniel? Do you think of the "stories" (the history), or the prophecies? Do you believe that God has a full knowledge of all our past, present, and future choices? Even our moral choices? If so, is it still possible to have human freedom? On what basis do we assert our belief in the "supernatural" or the "divine" origin of the book of Daniel? Most modern Old Testament scholars reject the idea of God's foreknowledge on philosophical grounds, and believe, therefore, that "Daniel" was not written by Daniel at all but by someone in the early second century BC claiming to be Daniel. This would make most of the book historical and not "prophetic." How would you answer such a person? Why would God bother to predict the future when we so often fail to understand it until the prediction has already come to pass? (See John 13:19; 14:29; 16:1-4) Does it do anything for us to know that God knows the future? Would it have been an encouragement to the Jews to know that God is not caught by surprise in the affairs of men?
3. There is a great deal of argument about the interpretation of Daniel, even about the size of the book. Should it include the longer version of chapter three (verses 24-90 in Roman Catholic Bibles) and the three stories of Susanna, Bel, and the Dragon? (chapters 13 and 14) The earliest copies of the book of Daniel do not include these passages. Furthermore, these passages are available today only in Greek and not in the original Hebrew or Aramaic in which the rest of the book is written. On what basis would you accept the Protestant/Orthodox Jewish version and reject the Roman Catholic version? If you reject these apocryphal portions of Daniel that the Roman Catholics think are inspired do you regard yourself as a "higher critic" of the Bible?
4. When were Daniel and his three friends taken into Babylonian captivity? Do we have any hints as to their ages at the time? What kind of background did these young men have? (Daniel 1:3; See also 2 Kings 20:17,18) What do you think was the main reason Daniel and his friends did not want to eat the "food and wine from the king's table?" (Daniel 1:5; compare Daniel 10:2,3; 1 Corinthians 10:25; Romans 14:1-5) Why do you think Daniel and his friends did so much better than the rest after the three year "university course?" (Daniel 1:17) Why do you think the King brought these young "prisoners" into his own service? Why were their names changed?
5. Why do you think God worked so directly and repeatedly with Nebuchadnezzar? What kind of person was Nebuchadnezzar? Was he accustomed to being obeyed even when he made apparently unreasonable demands? (Daniel 2:3-12) After several unusual experiences with Daniel and his companions, Nebuchadnezzar developed considerable respect for their God. What do you think of Nebuchadnezzar's new approach to worshiping God? (Daniel 3:29) Had his "picture of God"

- really changed? Did it ever change? (Daniel 4:34-37) Do you expect to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven?
6. How would you like to live in a country where the king demanded that you worship his “god” in **the** way and at **the** time he commanded or he would throw you into a burning, fiery furnace? (Daniel 3:5,6) What would you think of such a king? Has God ever said, “Either obey Me, or I will throw you into an eternally burning hell?” Has God ever said, “Either obey Me, or I will torture and burn you as long as you deserve and then I’ll kill you?”
 7. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace, who was the fourth person that appeared there with them? Was it “the Son of God” or “a son of the gods”? (Daniel 3:25, Compare *KJV* and *RSV*) Did Nebuchadnezzar have a “photo” of “the Son of God” in his possession? What do you think made him say what he did?
 8. What do you think happened to Nebuchadnezzar during those seven years of “exile”? (Daniel 4:29-33) Doesn’t the punishment seem a little harsh? Why do you think this brought Nebuchadnezzar to his senses? Was God responsible for this experience? Does God do this to people in our day?
 9. Do you think Daniel was foolish to pray so openly to his God during the time of the king’s decree forbidding it? (Daniel 6:10) Would you tend to use more “discretion?” Was Daniel so “stuck in a rut” that he couldn’t change or was he boldly challenging the king’s decree? Or did he have other reasons for his behavior? Would it bother you to work with someone like Daniel? Why do you think the king was willing to sign such a decree? If you were being tried for being a “Christian”, would the evidence declare you “deserving of capital punishment”, “guilty in the first degree”, “guilty in the second degree”, or “not guilty?”
 10. What does Daniel’s prayer tell us about him, his attitude toward God and his understanding of why they were in captivity? (Daniel 9:4-19) How does Daniel identify his fellow saints? (Daniel 9:4; compare Revelation 12:17 and 14:12)
 11. What do you understand was happening in the struggle with Cyrus? Who was the “man dressed in linen”? (Daniel 10:4-6) Was it Gabriel? (see Daniel 8:16 and 9:21; *DA* 234) Who was “the prince of Persia”? (Daniel 10:13) Who was “Michael” who came to help him? (Daniel 10:13,21; see 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and compare John 5:25) What does the name Michael mean? Why does the name “Michael” only appear in the scriptures in passages where He is in direct conflict with Satan? Were Gabriel and Michael pressuring Cyrus or were they protecting Cyrus from the Devil’s pressure, so that he could make up his mind without force?
 12. Who are the participants in the judgment scene in Daniel 7:9-14? (compare Job 1 & 2, Zechariah 3:1-5 and Revelation 12:10) At what time in history do you think this is taking place? How many are observing all of God’s actions? Is God being judged in all this (Romans 3:4) or just us? If you could hear Satan telling his version of your life and your sins, would you vote for yourself?
 13. Where do you think we are in the prophecies of the book of Daniel?
 14. One Bible commentator suggests that “When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience.” (*TM* 114) What would it take to bring this about, and what kind of religious experience would be the result? How could the study of books like Daniel and Revelation produce a great revival? (*TM* 113) If we were to work out the time schedule of each prophecy and could identify each item in detail would this guarantee a great revival? Does the Devil know all these details? Has he been changed?

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