

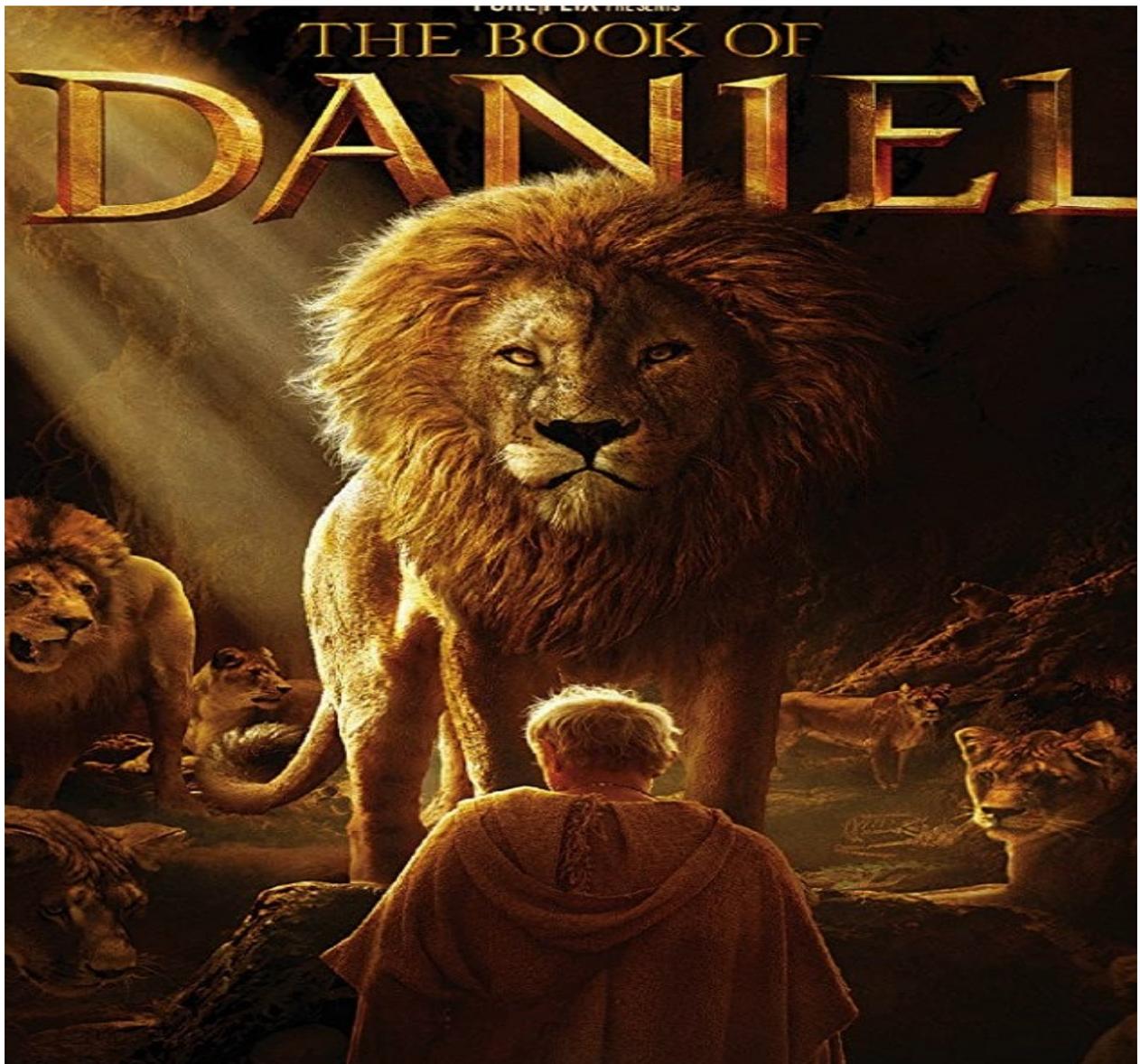


## **Pastors Bible Study**

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**Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor & Teacher**

**Rev. Teresa Lynn Rushdan, Instructor**



## What is a Prophet?

As a mouthpiece or spokesman of God, the prophet's primary duty was to speak forth God's message to God's people in the historical context of what was happening among God's people.

The broadest meaning is that of forth telling; the narrower meaning is that of foretelling. In the process of proclaiming God's message, the prophet would sometimes reveal that which pertained to the future, but contrary to popular opinion, this was only a small part of the prophets message.

- **Forthtelling** involved insight into the will of God...it was exhortative challenging people to obey.
- **Foretelling** entailed foresight into the plan of God; it was predictive, either encouraging the righteous in view of God's promises or warning in view of coming judgement.

**So, the prophet was the divinely chosen spokesman** who, having received God's message, proclaimed it in oral, visual, or written form to the people. For this reason, a common formula used by prophets was "Thus says the Lord."

As God's spokesman, their message can be seen in a three-fold function they had among the people of God in the Old Testament.

**What Does Prophet Mean?** The word prophet defines someone who gives the declarations of God. These men and women did not exist for their own glory but for the glory of God. The Hebrew word for prophet is *Nebi*, which is derived from the verb *action*, "to bubble forth" like a fountain. The English word for prophet comes from the Greek word *prophetes* which means to "speak for another, especially one who speaks for a god."

The biblical prophets spoke the truth which came from God. Their unique vocation allowed them to authoritatively speak on God's behalf. They never spoke on their own authority nor did they share their own opinions. They only shared their message as God instructed them. Their role was to make God's will known, as well as his holiness, and to instruct God's people to reject idolatry and sin.

The divine inspiration and instruction of the Old Testament prophets are affirmed in the New Testament, **2 Peter 1:20-21**: "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Interestingly enough, women were also prophets. Moses's sister Miriam is called a "prophet" (**Exod. 15:20**), as are Deborah (**Judg. 4:4**) and Huldah (**2 Kings 22:14-20**).

## **How Did These Men and Women Become Prophets?**

The Bible doesn't explain how the word of the Lord came to a prophet, however, there are a number of examples where the Lord revealed his will through visions aside from an audible or internal voice (**1 Samuel 3:1,15**; **2 Samuel 7:17**; **Isaiah 1:1**; **Ezekiel 11:24**) or dreams (**Numbers 12:6**). Jesus also fulfilled this advocacy of his father as a priest, prophet, and king.

The Bible uses the terms major and *minor* simply as a way to divide the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The Major Prophets are described as "major" because of the longer lengths of their books, not their significance.

## **List of the Major and Minor Prophets**

### **The Four Major Prophets:**

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel

### **The Twelve Minor Prophets:**

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

## **What Do the Major and Minor Prophets Have in Common?**

The Major and Minor Prophets are typically the least popular for Christians to study or read. Primarily due to the difficult and unusual prophetic language. There are constant warnings and condemnation of either God's people going astray or what will happen to those who choose to reject God.

However, there is valuable truth to be gleaned from each book. For example, we can read of **Christ**'s birth being foretold in Micah and Isaiah. We can then read how Christ will return in the books of Zachariah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

As with every part of the Bible, the Major and Minor Prophets shouldn't be skipped over. In fact, these books give us some of the richest glimpses and foreshadowing of Christ that we see in the entire Old Testament. If you're looking for a better understanding of the Messiah and the events that led to and foretold his coming, the Major and Minor prophets are must-reads.

We discover God's first mention of a prophet in **Deuteronomy 18:18-19**.

*“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.”*

## **The Book of Daniel Introduction (Daniel means God is my judge)**

### **Who wrote the book?**

Named after its writer, Daniel’s book is a product of his time in Babylon as a Jewish exile from Israel.

While still a young man, Daniel travelled to Babylon with a group of young Israelite nobles, men of promise whom the conquering power felt could be of use in service (Daniel 1:3–4).

Once Daniel arrived, the leadership in Babylon renamed him Belteshazzar in an effort to more closely identify him with his new home (1:7).

Daniel lived there throughout the Jews’ seventy-year captivity (1:21; 9:2), eventually rising to become one of only three administrators over the provincial governors throughout the kingdom (6:1).

Daniel recorded his experiences and prophecies for the Jewish exiles during his time in the Babylonian capital, where his service to the king gave him privileged access to the highest levels of society.

His faithful service to the Lord in a land and culture not his own makes him unique among almost all the people of Scripture—Daniel stands as one of the only major figures in the Bible to produce a completely positive record of his actions.

### **Where are we?**

The Babylonians exiled the group containing Daniel and his three friends—best known by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—to the cultural center of their empire, the city of Babylon, in 605 BC.

This move was part of the first of three deportations (605, 597, and 586 BC) carried out by the Babylonians in Israel after they subdued Jerusalem and the unfaithful King (2 Kings 23:36–24:2).

The teenaged Daniel found himself in the midst of a strongly polytheistic religious culture, meaning he had ample opportunities to fall into error.

However, he stood firm in his faith among the Babylonian people on several significant matters—including dietary regulations and worship practices (Daniel 1:8–16; 6:6–12).

### **Why is Daniel so important?**

Daniel is one of the few Bible books that takes place during a period of judgment (many books foretell it and a few look back on it) and in a foreign nation.

Whether it's in the contrast between the culture's idol worship and Daniel's faithful purity or in the account of the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar and his humbling encounter with God, the pagan backdrop in Daniel makes the Lord's power shine through in a magnificent and majestic way that stands out in Scripture.

The book of Daniel makes it clear that the true God is the supreme ruler over heaven and earth (Daniel 4:17), even when all seems lost and the consequences of sin seem overwhelming.

### **How do I apply this?**

Daniel and his God-fearing friends were forced to live in Babylon, far from home and far from the land their Lord had promised them.

Later in the book, Daniel prophesied of terrible trials still to come in the Promised Land (Daniel 11:31). Whatever the trial was, though, it was always the result of sin.

Have you ever endured the weight or consequences of sin and felt as though God had left you behind, that He had stranded you in a world far from the comforts associated with home?

The book of Daniel paints a portrait of how to serve God faithfully in the middle of such a world and how to persevere in hope even with no immediate solutions to the problems that get us down.

## **II. The Book of Daniel**

### **A. The Theme...**

1. “God Rules In The Kingdoms Of Men” - Dan 2:21; 4:17,25,32,34-35; 5:21
2. In this book, we see the rule of God is...
  - Manifested in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus, kings of the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians
  - Foretold to occur in the days of the Persians, Greeks, and Romans
3. In this book, we learn that the rule of God would be especially manifested...
  - With the establishment of God’s kingdom - Dan 2:44
  - With the vindication of the cause of His saints - Dan 7:27

### **B. A Brief Outline**

1. God’s Providence In History - 1:1-6:28
  - Daniel and his determination to be pure - 1:1-21
  - Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s promotion - 2:1-49
  - Faith in the face of fire by Daniel’s friends - 3:1-30
  - Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream and temporary insanity - 4:1-37
  - The writing on the wall and fall of Belshazzar - 5:1-31
  - Darius and his den of lions - 6:1-28

### **God’s Purpose in History - 7:1-12:13**

- Daniel’s dream of the four beasts - 7:1-28
- Daniel’s dream of the ram and the goat - 8:1-27
- Daniel’s prayer, and the vision of the seventy weeks - 9:1-27
- Daniel’s vision of the time of the end - 10:1-12:13

One of the more fascinating books of the Bible is the book of Daniel...

- The first six chapters contain accounts of faith that inspire both young and old
- The last six chapters are filled with apocalyptic visions that challenge even the most advanced Bible students and scholars

## **Daniel and His Times**

### **The Man...**

The name “Daniel” means “God is my judge”

2. He was a person of deep and abiding faith

- As a youth, he purposed not to defile himself - Dan 1:8
- When old, he persisted in serving God despite threats against his life - Dan 6:10

3. God blessed Daniel because of his faith

- He rose to great heights in the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia -Dan 2:48; 6:1-3
- He served as a statesman, a counselor to kings, and a prophet of God

4. Daniel was contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel

- Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem before and during the Babylonian exile (626-528 B.C.)
- Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon among the exiles (592-570 B.C.)
- Daniel prophesied in the capital of Babylon (605-586 B.C.)

5. Nothing is known of his personal life outside of the book

- He descended from one of Judah’s prominent families, if not from royal blood - Dan 1:3
- At an early age (12-18) he was taken from his family to be trained in the courts of Babylon - Dan 1:3-4
- Whether he ever married is uncertain

## **B. The Time in Which He Lived...**

- Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians, chasing them south through Judah
- At Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar heard of his father's death; he returned to assume the throne in Babylon
- The first group of Jewish captives were taken, along with Daniel and his friends Dan 1:1-4 c. 597 B.C. - A second remnant taken to Babylon 1) Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah) followed the reign of his father, Jehoiakim 2) He lasted just three months, when Nebuchadnezzar took him and 10,000 Jews to Babylon - 2 Kin 24:8-16 3) This second group of captives included Ezekiel - Eze 1:1-3 d. 586 B.C. –

### **Fall of Jerusalem and the temple destroyed**

- Zedekiah was installed as king in Jerusalem, but was weak and vacillating
- Eleven years later, Jerusalem was totally devastated by Babylonian forces - 2 Kin 25:1-10 3)
- A third group was taken into Babylonian captivity, but Jeremiah was among those who stayed behind - 2 Kin 25:11-12,22; Jer 39:11-14; 40:1-6 e. 536 B.C.

### **Babylon falls, and the first remnant returns to Jerusalem**

- Cyrus, king of Persia, sends the first remnant back under the leadership of Zerubbabel - Ezra 1:1-5; 2:1-2
- The foundation of the temple was soon started, but the temple was not completed until 516 B.C. - Ezra 3:8-13; 6:14-16 f. 457 B.C.

### **A Second Remnant Returns to Jerusalem**

- Ezra the priest returns with this group - Ezra 7:1-8:36
- He leads a much-needed revival - Ezra 9:1-10:44 g. 444 B.C.

### **A Third Remnant Returns to Jerusalem**

- This group is led by Nehemiah - Neh 1:1-2:20
- Under his leadership, the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt - Neh 3:1-7:73 3) Together with Ezra, they restore much of the religion - Neh 8:1-13:31

- Daniel lived through much of these times (605-534 B.C.)
- He was among the first group of captives taken to Babylon - Dan 1:1-4
- He continued there over the entire 70 years of captivity - Dan 1:21; 10:1; Dan 9:1-2; Jer 25:11; 29:10

# DANIEL

	<b>Biographical Section</b> Daniel Interprets Others' Dreams		<b>Prophetical Section</b> Angel Interprets Daniel's Dreams	
	MAIN EMPHASIS: DANIEL THE PROPHET		MAIN EMPHASIS: THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL	
	Introduction and setting (1) Nebuchadnezzar's apocalyptic dream (2) Historical narratives (political and personal) (3-6)		Daniel's foundational vision (7) Prophetic visions (near and far) (8-12)	
	CHAPTERS 1-6		CHAPTERS 7-12	
	POLITICAL POWERS	... IN DANIEL'S DAY		... AND AFTERWARD
	<b>Babylonian Rule</b>	<b>Medo-Persian Rule</b>	<b>Grecian Rule</b>	<b>Roman Rule</b>
	Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar	Darius Cyrus	Alexander the Great Four generals	Last of the Gentile powers
<b>Theme</b>	God's sovereignty over kingdoms and His unfolding plan for the future			
<b>Key Verses</b>	2:20-22, 44; 4:34-37			
<b>Christ in Daniel</b>	The stone that will crush earth's kingdoms (2:34-35, 44); Son of Man (7:13-14); the coming Messiah who will be crucified (9:25-26)			