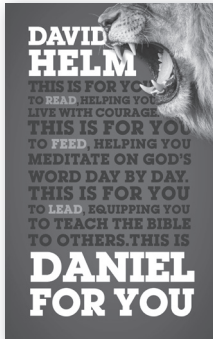




Staying strong in a hostile world

Daniel

by David Helm



Daniel For You

If you are reading *Daniel For You* (see page 84) alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of Daniel For You:

Study One > Ch 1–4
Study Two > Ch 5–6
Study Three > Ch 7–10
Study Four > Ch 11–14

Study Five > Ch 15–17
Study Six > Ch 18–21
Study Seven > Ch 22–26

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, moms and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That’s why we’ve designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let’s take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here’s the question that will do that. It’s designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader’s Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that’s not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you’ll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God’s word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader’s Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God’s word.

Why study Daniel?

How can we remain faithful to our God in a world that rejects him?

Is it even worth standing firm and obeying him, when his kingdom often seems so very far away?

How can we live courageously and confidently in nations that do not seek to live under God's rule?

And is it possible to be a blessing to our nations, and show the power and goodness of our God, even in a time such as ours?

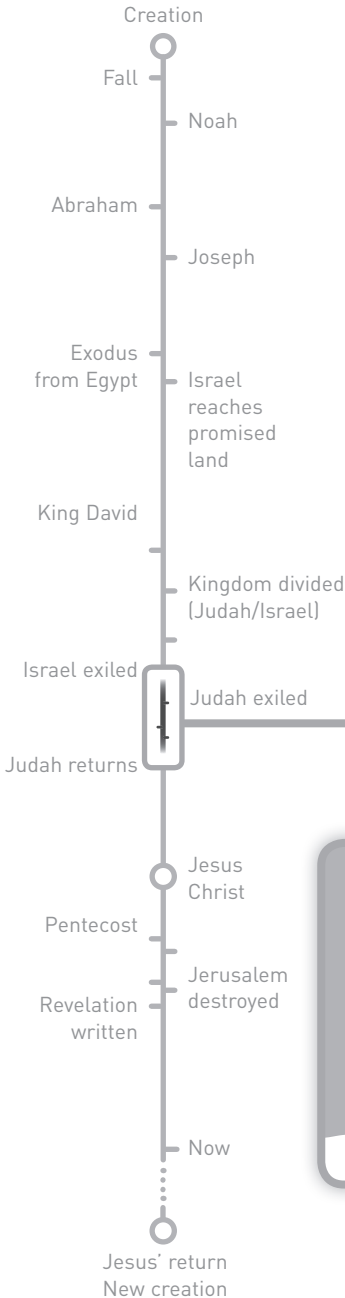
Those are pressing questions for those of us who live in contexts where to be a Christian is no longer the norm (if it ever was), and is increasingly to be misunderstood, maligned and even mistreated. And since this is the context in which Daniel found himself, the book that bears his name is one that will reassure, challenge and thrill us as we read it today.

In chapters 1 – 6, we will see Daniel and his three friends seeking to remain faithful to God while making a home in Babylon—in the world. In chapters 7 – 12, we will find Daniel, through a series of visions, discovering how God will bring his people home from Babylon—and learning that the end of exile would not be the moment of fulfillment of God's promises of a King and a kingdom for his people.

For Daniel, that moment remained in the future, and that king a figure in the distant shadows. For us today, we can look back to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and forward to his return, as the glorious moments when all this was, and will be, fulfilled. In many ways, we can see more clearly even than this faithful prophet of God—and yet, as these seven studies will show, how Daniel lived and what Daniel saw has so much to teach us. This book will show us what we can expect from this life, and how we can and must remain faithful and courageous in our world.

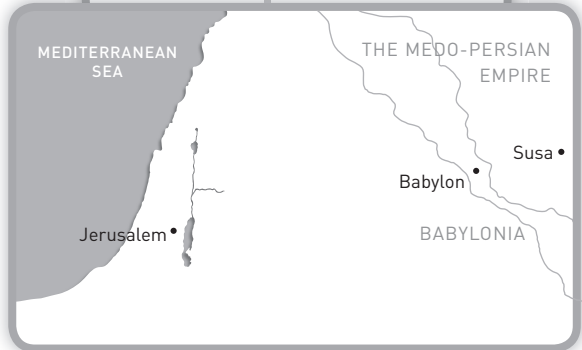
BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Daniel fit into the whole story of God's word?



DANIEL 605-538BC

- 605BC Daniel and the other exiles taken to Babylonia by King Nebuchadnezzar
- 562BC Nebuchadnezzar's reign ends
- 550BC Belshazzar rules Babylonia
- 539BC Babylonia falls to the Persians. Reign of King Darius/Cyrus begins
- 538BC Small group of Jews return to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple and city wall.



1

Daniel 1 – 2

BABYLON: SURVIVING AND THRIVING



talkabout

1. When do you find it easiest to excuse doing something you know is wrong?



investigate

▶ Read Daniel 1 v 1-7

2. When King Nebuchadnezzar takes the city of Jerusalem, what does he take into “exile” in Babylon (v 2-4)?

DICTIONARY

Judah (v 1): God’s people had divided into two kingdoms: Israel and Judah.

Babylon (v 1): a superpower; Israel’s enemy.

Articles (v 2): precious objects used to worship God in the temple in Jerusalem.

- **Read Genesis 12 v 1-3; 2 Samuel 7 v 12.** Why is what has happened in Jerusalem so serious?

In Daniel 1 v 6-7, we meet the leading characters of the first half of the book: Daniel and his three friends, four youths who were part of the deportation. They were stripped of their Jewish names and given Babylonian ones. How will they fare in Babylon? What will become of them, so far from Jerusalem? Will there be a future for God’s people, as God’s people?

▶ Read Daniel 1 v 8-21

3. What does Daniel (and his friends) resolve not to do (v 8)?

DICTIONARY

Defile (v 8):
make unclean or unacceptable in God's sight.

- Why does this cause a problem, and what solution does Daniel propose (v 9-14)?

Why do the four refuse the food? Three possibilities are:

- The kind of food: it may have contradicted the dietary requirements in Leviticus 11.
- The use of the food: it may have been food taken from sacrifices to pagan gods.
- Whose food it was: sharing a meal meant unity in fellowship; here, with a pagan king.

Whichever it was, it is clear that their consciences simply would not allow them to accept this food and wine.



explore more

optional

What makes someone into the kind of worshiper of God who will have this kind of resolve?

▶ Read 2 Kings 22 – 23

What did King Josiah do?

This all happened while Daniel and his friends were young, and (as nobles' children) very possibly being reared in the royal palace.

What does this suggest about the influence of childhood on our adulthood? How does this encourage and challenge church families? Parents?

4. How does this episode conclude (v 15-20)?

5. Re-read verses 2, 9 and 17. In each verse, God “gives” someone something. For each, pick out what he gave, and to whom.

➔ **apply**

6. How does knowing that “God gives,” on both a national level and in personal ways, change the way we view life?

- How does it encourage us to follow our consciences, even when this could be costly?

 **getting personal**

Has there been a time (perhaps it is now) when your conscience has urged you to follow a potentially difficult path? Did you listen to your conscience, or bow to pressure? Next time you're in a similar situation, what truths do you need to remember that will give you the strength to follow your conscience?



↓ investigate

▶ Read Daniel 2 v 1-13

7. Why can the king's advisers not explain his dream to him (v 10-11)?

- Why is this serious news for Daniel and his friends (v 12-13)?

▶ Read Daniel 2 v 14-23

8. When God reveals the content and meaning of the king's dream to Daniel, how does Daniel respond (v 20-23)?

DICTIONARY

Mercy (v 18): here, being spared punishment (by having the dream revealed to them by God).

Deposes (v 21): removes from power.

- What truths about God are we reminded of in these verses?

▶ Read Daniel 2 v 24-49

9. What was the content of the dream (v 31-35)?

DICTIONARY

Chaff (v 35): the inedible husks of corn, which would be blown away by the wind when the grain was "threshed."

Incense (v 46): sweet-smelling substance.

10. What is the interpretation of the dream (v 36-45)?

11. Why would the words “after you” (v 39) have been a great relief to Nebuchadnezzar?

12. What were the rise and fall of various powerful empires all heading toward (v 44-45)?

• **Read Luke 20 v 17-19.** How does Jesus link the image of Daniel 2 v 44-45 to himself?

➔ **apply**

Nebuchadnezzar needed to hear that the major event in history would be the coming of the stone—and we now know that the stone is Christ. He is the one who replaces all humanity’s self-rule; who, in fact, smashes it.

13. How is this both exciting for us, and a warning to us?



- Remember that the meaning of the dream was intended for the pagan king, not the godly servant. What does this mean for us today?



getting personal

Daniel is not only pointing us to Jesus; he is also an example to us. Daniel told the king that God was speaking to him, through the dream. We are to tell the world that God is speaking to it, through Jesus. Wherever God has placed you, remember this: he has a word to be made known.

What difference will it make this month if you see yourself as having been placed where you are by God to make his word known and intelligible?



pray

Turn the words of Daniel 2 v 20-23 into your prayer of praise, thanking God for revealing his wisdom to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. Ask God to use you to make his word known.

Pray for the resolve to follow your conscience even when that's difficult. Pray through any particular situations you have shared together.