

# A Look at the Book

by Denis Lyle

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*The book of Daniel teaches us about the Universal Sovereignty of God and encourages us to trust in His rule over the affairs of men and nations.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 2:30, Isaiah 46:10, Daniel 1:2, Daniel 3:25, Daniel 5:13, Daniel 6:2, Luke 21:24

**Topics:** "Prophetic Scripture", "Sovereignty Of God"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the book of Daniel, highlighting the prophetic accuracy and divine inspiration of Daniel's predictions about the rise and fall of empires. The sermon emphasizes the importance of honoring God in ungodly environments and resting on His absolute sovereignty. It explores the historic setting of the book, focusing on Judah's departure from God's word and worship, leading to their deportation to Babylon. The specific purpose of the book is to encourage believers by showcasing God's rule over the affairs of men and enlightening their minds about future events. The majestic character of Daniel is exemplified through his unwavering faith and integrity despite facing challenges in a foreign land.

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## Transcript

Reading: Daniel 1:1-2  
1. A LOOK AT THE BOOK  
The memo said "Top Secret". Every person in the Oval office had been given orders to arrive promptly at 8.00am. No one must know, especially CNN, that the president of the United States, the vice president, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council and other top officials had been called for this executive briefing. Object: to hear a futuristic projection of the rise and fall of our planet's major countries and their leaders.

This was not a strategy meeting. This was to be the unveiling of the destiny of the world. The president never looked more nervous. He sat facing his advisers, men and women of keen intelligence whom he had entrusted with decisions that could affect millions of lives. With his fingers pressed together under his chin, he looked like he was praying. Considering the state of the world, his attitude was logical. When he signalled to an armed guard, the door was opened to allow one man to enter.

The man took his seat and faced the leadership advisers of the most powerful nation on earth. Tension was high. "Gentlemen", the president said soberly, "you are about to hear about the future of the world as we know it. Listen carefully for your very lives are at stake". My, is this an imaginary scenario, or could it really happen some day What is fiction today may easily be fact tomorrow. This scene did happen in a another country with different players. One man, divinely inspired, accurately prophesied of the rise and fall of empires and their rulers.

Scholars have scoffed and doubters have discredited, but history has substantiated his words and the future will verify his predictions. Believing or disbelieving what this man said could change our lives forever. Who was this man Daniel was his name and to know Daniel and the book he wrote is to learn how to live today and look at the future with confidence. Now Prophetically Daniel deals with "the times of the Gentiles", (Lk 21:24) that period of time that began in 606 with the fall of Jerusalem and political control of Jerusalem passed from Jewish to Gentile hands where it has remained ever since.

For although the government of the modern reborn state of Israel is located in Jerusalem and the old city is now in the hands of the Jews, the Dome of the Rock a Muslim mosque still stands on the ancient site of Solomon's Temple. The "times of the Gentiles", will end when Christ returns to establish his earthly kingdom. Practically, Daniel encourages us to honour God in a ungodly environment, "them that honour Me, I will honour", (1 Sam 2:30) is vividly illustrated in this book.

Personally, Daniel stimulates us to rest on the absolute sovereignty of God, "there is a God in heaven... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men". Now we cannot plunge straight into this book without getting an idea of what it is all about. So this... I want us to have "A LOOK AT THE BOOK." (1) THE AUTHENTIC CONTENT OF THE BOOK Was Daniel an actual person And if so, are his predictions trustworthy Interestingly, the book of Daniel is one of the prime targets against which Biblical critics launch their attack.

They believe that if they can discredit this book, then the entire Bible will come tumbling down like a pack of cards. Now what do they say They say, "Daniel is a fictitious book, it was not written when it purports to have been written, that all of the events which the book of Daniel prophesied were written after they had already come to pass". Now why do they say this Because the book of Daniel is a prophecy, God predicting ahead of time what was going to be. And the critic's say, "there is no such thing as God predicting what is going to happen in the future."

They deny the supernatural, and that is why the liberals hit this book. Now why do you and I not think like them Because of (1) The genuineness of this book: (a) IS AFFIRMED BY THE SCRIPTURES: This book is affirmed in the Old Testament: Ezekiel mentions Daniel by name and regards him as such an outstanding person as to link his name with those of Noah and Job. (14:14 28:3) This book is affirmed in the New Testament: by none other that the Lord Jesus Himself. (Matt 24:15) The critic says that Daniel is a forgery, Christ says that Daniel is a prophecy, and we take our stand with the Lord Jesus.

It always amazes me how the critics seem to think they tell God what He can and cannot do. The Lord Jesus says there was a Daniel and he was a prophet. That settles it! (b) IS CONFIRMED BY THE SCIENTISTS: That is archaeology confirms the book of Daniel. For e.g.; the opening verses say that Nebuchadnezzar the ruler of Babylon, took vessels from the temple at Jerusalem and brought them into the treasury of his god. "Never heard of such a thing", says the modernist. "That was a completely unknown custom, we can't find any reference in ancient history to such a practice".

Can't they They have now discovered an inscription that proves Nebuchadnezzar always put his choicest spoils into his house of worship. Just one of those peculiar habits of the king. In the first few verses there is a reference to a fellow by the name of Aspenaz, who was master of the eunuchs. The critic says, "No one ever heard of this fellow, he was just another fictional character out of Daniel's fantasy". Do you know something During the last quarter of a century, the name Aspenaz has been found on the monuments of ancient Babylon, which are now in the Berlin Museum.

It says, "Ashpenaz, master of eunuchs in the time of Nebuchadnezzar". My, what a Bible we have accurate to the very last detail. What a God we have able to predict the future. (2) THE EMPHATIC MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

What is the book of Daniel all about What is its theme Very simply, The Universal Sovereignty of God. "God is still on the Throne", that's the message of the book of Daniel. Now this message of God's Rule over the realm of man is conveyed to us in two ways. Here is a book that stresses: (a) THE REIGN OF THE LORD: Look at the two key phrases in the book of Daniel. (2:28 4:25) Now if you bring these two phrases together you have the key to the book. "There is a God in heaven... the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men".

The whole point is that the God of the Bible, who is the Christians God is sovereign over the affairs of men and of nations. Now here is something we can trace throughout this book. Look at God's Rule: 1. In relation to JEHOIAKIN: (1:2) Who gave "The Lord gave... " Nebuchadnezzar thought he captured the city. The Babylonian Daily News probably had the headline, "Nebuchadnezzar conquers King of Judah." No, he didn't God gave it to him. The Sovereignty of God in the affairs of men. 2.

In relation to NEBUCHADNEZZAR: (2:37) Do you see it Old Neb said, "I have got all this, is this not great Babylon which I have built" (4:30) How did Nebuchadnezzar, a wicked, despotic king come to the throne of Babylon It is simple. The God of Heaven gave it to him. 3. In relation to BELSHAZZAR: (5:18 22 23) What is this book teaching us But that the kingdoms of this world are passing away and the Kingdom of the Most High is going to abide and through all the running centuries, through all that is taking place, the Most High Rules!

Now does that not thrill your soul We all know about despots. We call them by different names Hitler, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein, Kadafi, but Daniel shows us God's sovereignty in dealing with despots, for under the sovereign rule of God, the biggest of men will be humbled and brought to the dust. Do you know why Heaven Rules: God Rules: Look at Eastern Europe. Did you ever think you would live to see the Berlin Wall down Communism reeling! How will history interpret these events People pressure.

How will believers interpret these events God ruling! (a) (b) THE NAME OF THE LORD: What is the name that is most frequently used of God in this book "The Most High". (3:26 4:2 17, 24, 25 5:32 5:34 7:18 22 25 27) Do you know when that was first used Lot had been taken captive: Abraham set out in pursuit: Lot was rescued, the enemies goods were taken. The King of Sodom tried to do a deal with Abraham and Abraham said, "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." (Gen 14:22) Now the phrase, "the most High God", is the translation of the Hebrew name "EL ELYON "the possessor of heaven and earth".

My, God can dispose of His property as He pleases. Now this is the message of the book of Daniel, " the Most High ruleth". Thank God behind the political intrigue: the rise and fall of nations: the emergence and disappearance of despots, there is Hand that is Shaping: a Heart that is Planning: a Sovereign God who is accomplishing His will for Heaven Rules. Its important for us as we begin this series of studies to consider: (3) THE HISTORIC SETTING OF THE BOOK Look at how the book opens in (1:1-2) Some years ago a prison chaplain noticed one of the prisoners sewing a covering on a pair of overalls.

Greeting the man cheerfully, he said, "Good morning, friend! Sewing" " No sir", replied the prisoner with a grim smile, " Reaping". As the book of Daniel opens, the Southern Kingdom of Judah is about to reap a bitter harvest for long years of disobedience to God's Word. Judgement should not have come as any

surprise, for as far back as Moses, the initial dynamic leader of the people sombre warnings had been clearly sounded (Lev 27 Deut 28) regarding the price of departure from God.

Now when judgement came, it was for two clear reasons. Notice in (1:1) (a) THE DEPARTURE IN JUDAH: Two particular sins caused Judah to be taken into captivity. 1. There was a Departure from the WORD of GOD: You see the Mosaic Law specified that every seventh year the land was not to be farmed since it was a sabbatic year, a year of rest for the land, symbolising that "the earth is the Lord's". (Lev 25:1-4 26:32-35) This was God's Word to the nation, but they disregarded it and for 490 years the land had no rest.

How long will it take us to learn that we cannot disobey God's Word and escape My, God is not playing games with us in the Bible. When God tells us to do something we must do it or pay the price. Think of it... 490 years and no sabbatic years, that is 70 sabbatic years ignored. So what did God do He sent them into captivity for 70 years. (2 Chron 36:21 Jer 25:11) Think of the patience of God lasting for nearly 500 years, a patience which had all but run out. For the Northern Kingdom of Israel, that divine patience was exhausted in 722 BC when the Assyrians besieged Israel's capital, Samaria and carried away captives its leading citizens.

Now more than 100 years later Babylon came as God's instrument of judgement on Jerusalem. God's patience has limits because He is also a God of justice and He must judge sin. And any nation or individual is foolish to imagine that God will never intervene to judge. 1. 2. There was a Departure from the WORSHIP of GOD: Idolatry had become an accepted lifestyle. Do you recall that Israel the Northern Kingdom had been swallowed up by Jeroboam's calf worship and the worship of Baal Now in Judah, the Southern Kingdom the same sordid story was repeated.

No wonder we read in (1:2) "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim... into his hand". (2 Kings 23:5) Now Babylon was the centre of idol worship. Indeed, idolatrous religion had its origin there. (1:2) refers to the land of Shinar, the old word for the land of Babylon. Nimrod the tyrant, comes to mind, and visions of the tower of Babel. (Gen 10:10 11:2) You see, when God allowed them to be taken into captivity to Babylon, He was sending them back to the capital city of idolatry and for 70 years they experienced those idols that they wanted to serve.

I want to tell you that after their years of captivity in Babylon they had no more desire for idol worship. To this day the Jewish people the Jewish people only worship one God... Jehovah. Do you see what happened to them God put them in the land of Babylon to hate the false idols that they had once loved. Do you know something We also had better be careful to what we attach ourselves, for God may let us have our fill of it. So there was (a) Consequently there was: (b) THE DEPORTATION OF JUDAH: Look at the PERIOD of it: (1:1) Now keep in that this deportation took place in 3 stages.

The first attack took place in 605 BC, the one spoken of in our text at which time the first group of captives among whom were Daniel and his friends were taken. The second invasion was in 597BC when a much larger number of people were taken. The third and final invasion was in 586 BC when the temple was destroyed and the city was burned. (2 Kings 24: 6-16) Look at the PURPOSE of it: (1:4) By removing "the cream of the nation", Nebuchadnezzar was impoverishing that nation of its future leaders, and at the same time recruiting young men for Babylon.

Look at the PLACE of it: (1:2) Babylon at this time in history was number one superpower. This was a ruthless and evil empire. According to Habakuk in his book Babylon was Idolatrous (1:11 Dan 1:2)

Invincible (1:6) Insolent: (1:10) Immoral: (2:5) What an awful place to try and live for God, yet it was here that Daniel was taken as a teenager, and it was here he remained until the end of his life. So often I hear believers saying, "its so difficult to live for the Lord where I work, I think I'll change my job".

Did you ever think of Daniel As a teenager in the midst of idolatry: immorality: indecency: maintaining a testimony for God. One of the reasons God has given us this book is to encourage us. (4) THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF THE BOOK (a) Is to ENCOURAGE our HEARTS: In its aim Daniel is very like the first epistle of Peter. Peter wrote to small churches throughout the regions of Asia Minor, believers who were up against it and on whom worse things were still to come. Here were " exiles", living under terrible times of persecution.

So Peter writes his letter out of a pastors heart to encourage these suffering saints. (1 Pet 5:12) Now Daniel is very much like that. Its aim is to encourage the people of God, to see the sovereignty of God, to see the purpose of God, to see the greatness of God and to rest their faith in God. My, is it not so easy to become earth-bound To see only the temporal To gaze at man instead of God, time instead of eternity, the outlook instead of the uplook. Listen: "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will". (4:25) And that is as true in the United Kingdom as it was in Babylon and in Judah in Daniels day.

In fact Jeremiah called Nebuchadnezzar the "Lord's servant". (Jer 25:9) He was the Temporal Ruler, but the Lord is the Eternal Ruler. God is in charge. Does that not encourage you I tell you sometimes we become discouraged when we think of the people who are running our country, when we think of the policies they pass in Westminster. My, if we did not believe in a sovereign God overcoming mans mistakes: man's self-will: we could not sleep at night. But we have no cause for worry.

Why Well, we can go off and drop to sleep because "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps". (Ps 121) God is on the throne and He is going to stay awake. So Daniel is written to (a) But there's another reason. Its written to: (b) TO ENLIGHTEN OUR MINDS: The first six chapters of Daniel are concerned with Daniel and his personal friends and are essentially historical in character. The remaining chapters are concerned with Daniel and his peoples future, and are mostly prophetic in character.

For Daniel is to the Old Testament what Revelation is to the New Testament. The two books go hand in hand. We cannot understand Daniel apart from Revelation, and we cannot understand Revelation apart from Daniel. Now we are all curious about the future are we not That is why people pick up their newspapers in the morning and read the daily " horrorscope", I mean "horoscope". They want to know what the day has in store for them. They want to know the future. But God is the only one who can foretell the future.

God declared in His Word, "I am God and there is none like me declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done". (Is 46:10) " God holds the key of all unknown And I am glad If other hands should that key, Or if He trusted it to me I might be sad." Now in the book of Daniel we see the programme of Gentile history from the arrival of Babylon through the conquests of the Medes and Persians: the Greeks and Romans to the rule of Anti-Christ just before the second advent of Jesus Christ.

"What is the world coming to" is a question that is often heard on the lips of many people today. It would be more correct to ask, "what is coming to the world" For it is the growing conviction of many that "countdown to apocalypse", has already begun. How are we to live "in these last days" Well look in closing

at: (5) THE MAJESTIC CHARACTER OF THE BOOK Daniel means "God is my judge". Three times in the book he is called "greatly beloved", by God. (9:23 10:11 10:19) Here was a man who spent almost his entire career from the time he was a teenager until he was a very old man in positions of influence and authority, in highly visible public life.

Yet there is not record of anything against him... do you recall the testimony of his enemies "they could find no fault". (6:4) Now its difficult for people who serve in high-profile positions to through their lives unscathed. We have witnessed this in the western world. Prominent leaders have come under the searchlight of the media and have been publicly discredited when secret scandals in their lives have been exposed. But a testimony Daniel had in Babylon "they could find no fault". (6:4) "No fault", in spite of: (a) HIS ENVIRONMENT: Think of this: Daniel was snatched from his lovely home in the city of Jerusalem at about the age of 16 years... deported to far away Babylon.

Here he was in court life from his youth upwards. What did he face in the court of Babylon "Luxury: Laxity: Lust "and a boy of 16 away from home is plunged into that and remained in it for the rest of his life and kept himself unspotted from the world. How are you doing in that world of yours Are you being controlled by the pressures from without or by the power from within Are you allowing the world to change you, or are you changing the world (b) HIS ACHIEVEMENT: Here he was a member of a captive race, a foreign people.

A Jew, yet he rose to the highest position in the land of Babylon. Daniel presided through three kingdoms and four reigns. How did he manage to keep his head through all that time Through all those changes Did he compromise Did he bow down Did he go half-way Not at all. Daniel honoured God and God honoured Daniel. My, is this not the unchanging principle of Scripture "them that honour me I will honour". (1 Sam 2:30) Are you honouring God in your business life As the world looks on in all the wheeling and dealing, have you got Daniel's testimony "no fault". (a) (b) (c) HIS RETIREMENT: Daniel finished well.

In fact he is called out of retirement to serve a second time. Isn't that amazing "then was Daniel brought in before the king". (5:13) Recalled from retirement, recalled and promoted even higher "the third ruler in the kingdom". (5:29) But do you know what the next Emperor Darius did He makes Daniel the top man again. "And over these three presidents of whom Daniel was first". (6:2) What a man! From teenager till pensioner: from captive to president: from lowest to highest not one record of anything against him.

That makes me so ashamed, but it makes me so encouraged. For if Daniel could live to please God so can we. For we have a Living Saviour: an Indwelling Spirit: a Completed Bible: a Sovereign God. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men". (3:25) What matters most is that He rules and reigns in our hearts so that in the Babylon of our day we will be Christians of the calibre of Daniel. May it be so.

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