

Daniel Study | Week 1

Daniel 1–2: Kingdoms Rise and Fall

The Big Picture

The book of Daniel begins during one of the most difficult periods in Israel's history. God's people are being taken from their homeland into Babylon.

Daniel shows us that even when powerful kings and nations seem to be in control, **God is still ruling over history.**

Important Timeline

- **722 BC** | Assyria conquers the northern kingdom of Israel
- **605 BC** | Babylon's first deportation | **Daniel is taken to Babylon**
- **597 BC** | Another major Babylonian deportation | **Ezekiel is taken to Babylon**
- **586 BC** | **Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed**
- **539 BC** | **Babylon falls** to the Medo-Persian power
- **536 BC** | Daniel's **last explicitly dated vision** (Daniel 10:1)

Daniel's recorded ministry spans approximately **605–536 BC, about 69 years.**

Easy way to remember it:

722 Israel falls | 605 Daniel | 597 Ezekiel | 586 Jerusalem destroyed | 539 Babylon falls | 536 Daniel's final dated vision

Daniel 1

Jerusalem Comes Under Babylonian Control

Read Daniel 1:1–2

In 605 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon comes against Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is not completely destroyed at this point. That will happen later, in 586 BC. But Babylon is beginning to take control of Judah.

Some of the articles from God's Temple are taken back to Babylon.

But Daniel tells us something very important:

"The Lord handed Jehoiakim... over to him."

Daniel 1:2

From the beginning of the book, Daniel wants us to understand that **God is still in control.**

It may look like Nebuchadnezzar has taken control on his own, but Daniel tells us that these events have not happened outside of God's sovereignty.

This becomes one of the major themes of the entire book.

Daniel Is Taken to Babylon

Read Daniel 1:3–4

Daniel is among the young men taken to Babylon.

The Bible does not tell us Daniel's exact age.

Daniel and other young men are selected to be educated and trained for service in the Babylonian government.

Babylon Tries to Reshape Them

Read Daniel 1:5–7

Daniel and his friends experience enormous changes.

They are given:

- A new place to live
- New names
- A new language
- A new education
- A new culture

Babylon isn't simply relocating these young men. **They are being trained to live and serve within Babylonian culture.**

But Daniel will show that it is possible to live in a different culture without abandoning faithfulness to God.

Daniel Makes a Decision

Read Daniel 1:8

"Daniel determined that he would not defile himself..."

Daniel is living in Babylon, but he has not forgotten that he belongs to God.

The food regulations given to Israel were part of God's covenant instructions to His people. Daniel is determined to remain faithful to God even though he is far from home.

His life teaches an important principle:

Let people see what following God looks like by the way you live.

God Is With Daniel

As Daniel 1 closes, God gives Daniel and his friends knowledge and understanding.

Daniel is also given understanding concerning visions and dreams, which becomes extremely important throughout the rest of the book.

When Nebuchadnezzar examines them, he finds Daniel and his friends far superior to the others who had been trained.

Big Idea of Daniel 1

Remain faithful to God in a culture that pressures you to conform.

Daniel 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

King Nebuchadnezzar has a troubling dream.

He calls for his wise men and demands that they tell him both **what he dreamed and what the dream means.**

They cannot do it.

The situation becomes so serious that an order is given that threatens Daniel and the other wise men.

Daniel Turns to His Friends

Read Daniel 2:17–18

Daniel goes to his friends and asks them to seek mercy from God concerning the mystery.

Daniel responds to an impossible situation with prayer.

God reveals the mystery to Daniel.

Daniel's first response is not to congratulate himself. **He praises God.**

Read Daniel 2:20–23

Daniel says:

"He removes kings and establishes kings."

That statement captures one of the major messages of Daniel.

Human rulers may possess enormous power, but **God remains sovereign over them.**

There Is a God in Heaven

Read Daniel 2:27–28

Daniel eventually stands before Nebuchadnezzar.

He makes it clear that no human being could accomplish what the king has requested.

Then Daniel says:

"But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."

Daniel does not take the credit for what God has revealed.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Read Daniel 2:31–36

Nebuchadnezzar sees a huge statue.

The statue has:

- A **head of gold**
- Chest and arms of **silver**
- Belly and thighs of **bronze**
- Legs of **iron**
- Feet made partly of **iron and clay**

Then a **stone not cut by human hands** strikes the statue.

The statue is destroyed, but the stone becomes **a great mountain that fills the whole earth.**

What Does the Dream Mean?

Read Daniel 2:37–45

1. The Head of Gold Represents Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon

Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar:

"You are the head of gold."

But Daniel also tells him where his authority came from:

"The God of the heavens has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and glory."
Daniel 2:37

Nebuchadnezzar may be king, but **God is the One who ultimately gave him his authority.**

Daniel then tells him:

"After you, there will arise another kingdom..."

Daniel 2:39

Babylon will not last forever.

Other kingdoms will follow.

The Stone and God's Kingdom

The most important part of the dream is not the statue.

It is the stone.

Daniel explains:

"In the days of those kings, the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed."

Daniel 2:44

Here is what Daniel tells us about this kingdom:

- **God establishes it**
- **It will never be destroyed**
- **It will overcome earthly kingdoms**
- **It will endure forever**
- The stone eventually becomes **a mountain filling the whole earth**

This kingdom does not originate from human power.

It belongs to God.

Daniel 7 Gives Us More

Later in Daniel, another vision tells us more about God's everlasting kingdom.

Read Daniel 7:13–14

Daniel sees **"one like a son of man"** coming to the Ancient of Days.

The Son of Man receives:

- Dominion
- Glory
- A Kingdom
- People from every nation serving Him
- An everlasting dominion
- A Kingdom that will never be destroyed

Notice the connection:

Daniel 2: God establishes a Kingdom that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7: The Son of Man receives an everlasting Kingdom that will never be destroyed.

Follow the Kingdom to Jesus

Hundreds of years later, the New Testament begins announcing the arrival of Jesus.

Luke 1:31–33

Before Jesus is born, the angel tells Mary that Jesus will receive the throne of David and:

"He will reign... forever, and his kingdom will have no end."

The promised King has arrived.

Mark 1:14–15

When Jesus begins His ministry, He announces:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near."

Matthew 12:28

Jesus says:

"The kingdom of God has come upon you."

Luke 17:20–21

When the Pharisees ask when God's Kingdom will come, Jesus tells them:

"The kingdom of God is in your midst."

God's Kingdom did not arrive in the way many people expected.

It came through **Jesus the King**.

How Does This Kingdom Grow?

Read Matthew 13:31–32

Jesus compares God's Kingdom to a mustard seed.

It begins very small, but it grows until Jesus describes it as a tree where **the birds of the air make nests in its branches**.

God's Kingdom begins in a way that may appear small, but **it grows far beyond its beginning**.

The King Has Come

After Jesus' resurrection, the New Testament continues emphasizing His authority and reign.

Matthew 28:18

Jesus declares:

"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."

Acts 2:32–36

Jesus has been:

- Raised from the dead
- Exalted to God's right hand
- Declared both **Lord and Messiah**

Hebrews 1:3

After making purification for sins, Jesus:

"Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Hebrews 1:8

The Father says concerning the Son:

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."

The Gospel Announces That the King Has Come

Jesus is King.

His Kingdom has come into the world through Him, it continues to advance, and Scripture points us toward the day when God's reign will be fully and finally displayed.

Back to Daniel's Statue

As we continue through Daniel, Scripture gives us more information about the kingdoms represented in Daniel's visions.

Daniel explicitly identifies:

- **Babylon** — Daniel 2:37–38
- **Medo-Persia** — Daniel 5:28; 8:20
- **Greece** — Daniel 8:21

That gives us the sequence:

BABYLON → MEDO-PERSIA → GREECE → FOURTH KINGDOM

Daniel 2 does **not explicitly name the fourth kingdom.**

Historically, Rome followed Greece as the dominant power over the land of Israel, and Jesus began His ministry during the period of Roman rule.

For this reason, **Rome has traditionally been understood by many Christian interpreters as the fourth kingdom represented by the iron.**

The most important point of Daniel's vision, however, is not identifying every detail of the statue.

Every human kingdom is temporary. God's Kingdom is not.

Big Idea of Daniel 2

GOD IS IN CONTROL OF HISTORY, NOT HUMAN AUTHORITIES.

Think about the people who originally received the message of Daniel.

They were living away from home.

Babylon looked powerful.

Nebuchadnezzar looked unstoppable.

Their entire world had changed.

But God gave them a picture of history that showed them:

Babylon will not last.

The kingdoms that follow Babylon will not last either.

But God's Kingdom will.

That is why Daniel can still encourage us today.

The world around us can sometimes feel out of control.

Daniel reminds us:

HISTORY ISN'T OUT OF CONTROL BECAUSE GOD HAS NEVER LOST CONTROL.

Kings come and go.

Nations rise and fall.

But Jesus is King. His throne is occupied. And His Kingdom isn't going anywhere.