

Outline for Daniel

Introduction: Daniel is the first and only example of a fully apocalyptic book in the Hebrew Bible. The term ‘apocalyptic’ does not mean cosmic destruction or nuclear annihilation as we use the term today- it literally means ‘unveiling’ or ‘revealing what has been hidden’. We see the flowering of apocalyptic literature starting from the second century before the common era. Common traits of apocalyptic literature include prevalence of visions with future orientation, anonymous or pseudonymous authorship (writing under a “pen name”), use of mysterious, code-like language and imagery, dualistic theology pitting good against evil, and a context of oppression.

We see all of this in the book of Daniel. Although it purports to be about events in the exile in the 6th century BCE, scholars widely agree the book is more probably written during the experience of the Jews suffering under the terrible Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Like the New Testament book, Revelation, Daniel is best read less as a crystal ball to future events and more as a testament to the faith of a community under threat and their ability to resist, hang on, and hope for better times.

- Chapter 1: Israelites in Nebuchadnezzar’s court: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
- Chapter 2: Daniel recounts and interprets Neb’s dream- the statue with the feet of clay
- Chapter 3: The golden statue; the Israelites refuse to worship and are thrown into fiery Furnace where they survive
- Chapter 4: Neb’s second dream and Daniel’s interpretation
- Chapter 5: King Belshazzar’s feast, the writing on the wall, Daniel interprets the writing
- Chapter 6: Leaders seek to bring Daniel down; law passed that anyone who worships Anything but King Darius to be thrown into lion’s den; Daniel in lion’s den
- Chapter 7: Daniel’s vision of the four beasts; vision of final judgment; the interpretation of Daniel’s dream- mysterious series of kingdoms and rulers
- Chapter 8: Vision of the ram and goat; Gabriel interprets dream in context
- Chapter 9: Daniel prays for people; Gabriel comes and tells Daniel the time of destruction Will be 70 weeks
- Chapter 10: Daniel has another vision of “one in human form” comforting him
- Chapter 11: Vision of future
- Chapter 12: Resurrection of the dead; final judgment; unknown time

Stories to know: Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue (Chapter 2); Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Chapter 3); the writing on the wall (Chapter 4); Daniel in the lion’s den (Chapter 6)