

A stylized, geometric illustration of a city at night. The scene is composed of various colored blocks and shapes. In the upper left, a red block features a yellow arched window with a black silhouette of a person standing inside, hands clasped. The sky is dark blue with several yellow stars and dark, horizontal, arrow-like shapes. In the background, a silhouette of a city with various buildings and spires is visible against a green ground plane. The overall style is modern and abstract.

DANIEL

THRIVING IN EXILE



THERE IS A GOD IN HEAVEN WHO REVEALS MYSTERIES.

DANIEL 2:28

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INTRODUCTION

The book of Daniel tells the story of Daniel and his friends, as well as the visions he saw, during his time in exile in Babylon, six centuries before the birth of Jesus. Because of the fascinating events of Daniel's life and the apocalyptic nature of his visions, the book of Daniel is a favorite of felt-board teachers and end-times scholars alike. But to make this book about either "daring to be a Daniel" or calculating predictions about the future misses the entire point of the book.

The book of Daniel is ultimately a book about God. It's the story of God's people, broken by the consequences of their sin and challenged by the pagan culture

in which they find themselves, finding grace from a mighty God who stands above the earthly and spiritual powers that would threaten to destroy them. It's a story about a redeemed people learning to live as a renewed people, bringing light and life to the culture around them. It's the story of God's people thriving in exile.

Today, we are entering our own form of cultural exile. For the first time in our nation's history, Christians are on the verge of being a minority population. As the age of Christendom gives way to a post-Christian, secular age, and the Church is pushed from the center of social and political power

to the margins, God's people are again finding themselves in a culture that is often hostile to our faith.

So how can we live in relationship with God in a culture that is so set against the things of God? By meeting the God of Daniel, who stands above all earthly and spiritual powers, and is graciously at work in all things to bring His people closer to Himself. We can not only survive but thrive in exile by daily encountering Jesus, who loves to meet His people powerfully in the margins.¹

The purpose of this guide is to help you make the most of this series and truly thrive in new ways

during our journey through the book of Daniel. We've prayed this would be a help and a blessing to you, as we seek to enjoy and make known the beauty of Jesus in Daniel that shapes all of life.

¹ While all of the Bible - including the Old Testament - is ultimately telling us about Jesus (John 5:39), Daniel is especially interesting because Jesus makes a number of direct appearances in this book.

BACKGROUND

AUTHOR AND DATE:

The book of Daniel was written by Daniel (Dan. 7:1; 12:4-5), a Jewish exile who lived in Babylon between 605 B.C. and 536 BC (Dan. 1:1; 10:1).²

When approaching a book of the Bible, it's important to know its context. Context orients us as we explore what each particular section of God's Word has to say to us. Daniel is a particularly unique book with multiple languages and literary genres, so in order to understand it we must know and pay attention to where these shifts occur.

LANGUAGE: Daniel is one of just two books in the Old Testament that is written in multiple languages. Daniel 1:1-2:4a are written in Hebrew (the traditional language of the Old Testament), then chapters 2:4a-7:28 shift to Aramaic (an international language in the ancient world) before returning to Hebrew in chapters 8:1-12:13. Commentators have suggested that the language shift in chapters 2-7 seems to indicate this is the core of the book.

² Some modern scholars have argued for a second-century author-date, making much of Daniel's visions history at the time they were written (rather than prophecy). For a great defense of sixth-century authorship, see Sam Storms' [Introduction to Daniel](#).

STRUCTURE & GENRE: The book of Daniel is made up of 2 distinct sections: 1) Chapters 1-6 tell the story of Daniel and his friends in exile and 2) Chapters 7-12 contain visions Daniel saw of the future. Interestingly, each section is written in a different literary genre, so a key to interpreting the message of Daniel well is to know which section you are in:

- Ch 1-6 = Narrative (other examples of narratives in the Bible are the books of Exodus, Acts, and the Gospels)
- Ch 7-12 = Apocalyptic (another example of apocalyptic literature in the Bible is the book of Revelation)

Just as you would understand and interpret details differently in a History Channel episode on Abraham Lincoln versus a fantasy film like *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, so we should approach each section of Daniel with its genre in mind.³

CENTRAL MESSAGE: God stands above all earthly and spiritual powers, and is at work in all things to bring about His redemptive purposes.

³ For a helpful explanation of how to understand apocalyptic literature, see James K.A. Smith's overview [found at The Gospel Coalition](#).

DANIEL'S PLACE IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

To understand the significance of exile in Daniel, we need to know where this book finds itself within the unfolding story of redemptive history. Long before the events of the book of Daniel, God came to a man named Abram and promised to restore all that was lost in the Fall through his family (Gen. 12:1-3). Abram's family grew into an entire nation, just as God promised, but become enslaved by the nation in whose land they had settled. So God raised

up Moses to deliver His people from Egypt and bring them into their own land. In this Promised Land, God's purpose was to reveal Himself to Israel, so they could enjoy a restored relationship with Him and show the world how beautiful and good life with God is (Deut. 7). Life in the Promised Land was to be a picture of Eden restored to the whole world.

But God's people failed to live in relationship with Him in the

Promised Land, just as our first parents did in the Garden. And while God sent prophet after prophet to call His people back to Himself, their rebellion got worse and worse. Eventually, the nation of Israel grew more evil than the pagan nations around them (2 Chron. 33:9), so God raised up evil kings to defeat Israel and carry them out of the Promised Land.

This is where the book of Daniel begins. In exile. Removed from the blessing of the Promised Land because of their sin. And yet, what we see in the book of Daniel is that right when you would expect God to finally be done with His people, He's really just beginning.

God is sovereignly at work to redeem what was lost in the fall by developing a faithful remnant in this foreign land. Daniel and his friends are a part of that faithful remnant. Not only do their lives show the nations the goodness

of their God, one day God would send a greater representation of Himself through this faithful remnant. He would show the world what God is really like in His fullness, without ever failing. And through His life, death, and resurrection, He invites all people to enjoy a restored relationship with God as a gift that can't ever be lost. He is the true and better Daniel. He is Jesus. And this book is ultimately about coming to know, love, and trust Him more, that our lives too might show the world how wonderful life with God is (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

MAJOR THEMES

SOVEREIGNTY - As Creator, God stands above His creation and does whatever He pleases with it. He knows all things, controls all things, and is actively at work in all things to bring about His purposes. (Isaiah 46:9-10, Romans 8:28-30)

IMMANENCE - While God is indeed all-powerful, He is also actively involved in every part of His creation - including the lives of people. Even the everyday things of life have spiritual significance and opportunity. (Acts 17:28)

GRACE - In Daniel, we see the surprising nature of God's grace, or undeserved love, as He uses His incredible power to work on behalf of the unworthy. (Rom. 5:8)

EXILIC LIVING - Though Daniel

would live the majority of his life in Babylon, he never considered it his true home. This kept him from being influenced by the brokenness of Babylon, while also causing him to work for the flourishing of Babylon while he was there. The NT authors pick up on this language of exilic living to describe our life on earth, wherever God has placed us. (Jeremiah 29:11, 1 Peter 2:11-12)

PRAYER - Prayer is so common in the book of Daniel, you could argue this is a book about the power of prayer. We have much to learn from watching Daniel pray. (Jas. 5:16b)

HOPE - Daniel's visions of the coming King who will restore all things give us hope in the midst of our exile, that one day God will make it all right. (1 Pet. 1:3-5)

PREACHING SCHEDULE

Daniel 1:1-7	March 11
Daniel 1:8-24	March 18
Daniel 2	March 25
Daniel 3	April 8
Daniel 4	April 15
Daniel 5	April 29
Daniel 6	May 6
Daniel 7	May 13
Daniel 8	May 20
Daniel 9:1-23	May 27
Daniel 9:20-27	June 3
Daniel 10-12	June 10

SONGS WE'LL BE EMPHASIZING DURING THIS SERIES⁴

- *We Will Not Be Shaken* by Brian Johnson
- *Oh God* by Citizens and Saints
- *Behold Our God* by Sovereign Grace
- *His Mercy Is More* by Matt Boswell
- *Rock of Ages* by Ascend the Hill

⁴ Download our [Daniel playlist on Spotify](#) to sing along all week long.

WHAT TO DO DURING THIS SERIES



PRAY

that God would do a profound work in your life through this sermon series. This is a prayer He is glad to answer!

PREPARE

for each week's gathering by reading and reflecting on the upcoming Scripture during the week. You may be surprised to see how much God has to say to you through the sermon when His Word has been in you all week.

DISCUSS

each week's sermon in community using the discussion questions

on our website. If you're not in a Community Group, this series is a great time to try one!

DOWNLOAD

the Daniel playlist to keep singing all week long.

EXPLORE

the recommended resources to learn more about how to share the beauty of the gospel in our secularized culture.

INVITE

your friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. to join us for good news! Sundays at 10am.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- [Our Secular Age by The Gospel Coalition \(Book\)](#)

To thrive in exile, we must understand the culture we are in. This book by the Gospel Coalition is a great, accessible read for anyone wanting to learn more about the cultural shift we are experiencing and the unique challenges/opportunities this presents us with as Christians.

- [How \(Not\) To Be Secular by James K.A. Smith \(Video\)](#)

In this lecture, James K.A. Smith gives a more academic and robust look at what it means to live in a secular age, and how we as God's people can actually grow and thrive here.

- [Daniel's 70 Weeks by Sam Storms \(Article\)](#)

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9 are among the most debated and confusing parts of the book. In this article, Dr. Storms reviews popularly held views on the meaning of Daniel's 70 weeks, before explaining and giving evidence for his own. Even if you don't land in the same position as he does, this article is helpful in summarizing and explaining various views of how to interpret these important verses.

FOR WE DO NOT
PRESENT OUR
PLEAS BEFORE
YOU BECAUSE
OF OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS,
BUT BECAUSE
OF YOUR GREAT
MERCY.

DANIEL 9:18



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