

Major Prophets: Daniel

BIBLE BASICS

Introduction

Daniel's life and ministry span the **full seventy-year period** of the Babylonian captivity. The Lord had promised through the prophet Jeremiah:

“For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.” — **Jeremiah 29:10**

Daniel was taken into exile as a teenager, about sixteen years old, and his Hebrew name means “**God is my Judge**.” In the providence of God, he was selected by the Babylonian royal court for **education and government service**, and the Lord used him as a prophetic witness **to Jews and Gentiles alike**. Daniel becomes a living example of how God preserves His people in exile: not by removing them from the world, but by keeping them faithful within it—without compromise, without hatred, and without fear.

The Book of Daniel

The Book of Daniel contains **12 chapters** in the standard Protestant ordering. **Orthodox and Catholic Bibles also preserve additions** (commonly called *Deuterocanonical portions*) which are used liturgically in many traditions:

- **Daniel 3:24–50** — *The Prayer of Azariah* (used in liturgical prayer; you noted the 9th Hour connection)

A prayer of repentance, humility, and hope offered from within the fiery furnace. It is used in Church prayer and reflects total trust in God even under judgment.

- **Daniel 3:51–90** — *The Song/Canticle of the Three Young Men* (Midnight Praise)
- **Daniel 13** — *Susanna* (often read liturgically, including in Bright Saturday)
A narrative of injustice, false accusation, and divine vindication. God reveals truth through Daniel, protecting the innocent and exposing corruption.
- **Daniel 14** — *Bel and the Dragon*
Two accounts demonstrating the powerlessness of idols and the living reality of the true God, who alone saves and delivers.

The Book of Daniel can be divided into two main sections:

1. Chapters 1–6: Historical Narratives

These chapters recount episodes from Daniel’s life and the lives of the three young men. They focus on faithfulness under pressure, obedience in exile, and God’s protection of His servants.

2. Chapters 7–12: Visions and Prophecies

These chapters contain apocalyptic visions revealing the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms and the ultimate establishment of God’s eternal kingdom.

Across both sections, one truth remains constant: **God rules over history**. Kings rise and fall, empires appear and disappear, but the purposes of God stand firm.

The Book of Daniel teaches that:

- God governs the affairs of nations
- Faithfulness to God is possible even in hostile environments
- True wisdom comes from God, not human power or learning
- God’s kingdom will outlast all earthly kingdoms

Daniel shows that holiness is not withdrawal from the world, but **faithful witness within it**.

Be Faithful to the Little Things

Daniel 1 — Faithfulness Before Power

The first test of Daniel’s faith does not come through persecution or violence, but through **comfort, privilege, and gradual compromise**. Babylon attempts to reshape the identity of the exiles by changing their education, language, food, and daily habits.

“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah.”

(Daniel 1:3–6, NKJV)

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah are selected not only for service, but for **assimilation**. The king provides them with royal food and wine—symbols of favor, security, and belonging within Babylonian culture. A system designed to reshape identity—language, education, food, and social belonging. Babylon does not merely want their labor; it wants their hearts.

The inner decision

Daniel's defining moment is seen in a single sentence:

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

(Daniel 1:8, NKJV)

This is the first victory of Daniel: **a victory inside the heart**. Before there is any furnace, any lions, any visions, there is the quiet obedience of refusing defilement. Faithfulness begins within the heart, long before it is tested publicly.

Rather than demand an exemption, Daniel wisely asks for a trial rather than making a scene:

“Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.”

(Daniel 1:12, NKJV)

And the result is recorded plainly:

“And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.”

(Daniel 1:15, NKJV)

True wisdom! **Daniel does not seek conflict, but he refuses compromise**. His obedience is firm, yet peaceful. God honors the obedience of His servants—not as a formula, but as a testimony. Their faithfulness becomes visible to others, and God is glorified through them.

“And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.”

(Daniel 1:15, NKJV)

The spiritual principle

Small obediences form the soul. Faithfulness is not only tested in dramatic martyrdom; it is trained in daily restraint, discernment, and purity of conscience.

Fasting here functions as:

1. **Commitment** — a concrete “yes” to God when compromise is offered
2. **Love** — not legalism, but loyalty of heart
3. **Healing for the spirit** — training the will to obey rather than drift

Christ later describes the same principle:

“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few

things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” —
Matthew 25:20–21

And Daniel’s faithfulness bears fruit publicly:

“Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah... and in all matters of wisdom and understanding... he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.” — **Daniel 1:18–20**

St. Gregory the Great draws the spiritual meaning forward:

“All the good deeds of our present life, however many they may appear to be, are few in comparison with our eternal recompense...” — **St. Gregory the Great**

Having Pure Motives

Daniel 2 — Wisdom without Self-Glory

Daniel 2 reveals that true service to God is not only about *what* we do, but **why** we do it. When King Nebuchadnezzar demands both his dream and its interpretation—and decrees death for all the wise men of Babylon—Daniel is placed in immediate danger. Yet his response exposes the purity of his heart.

“Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: ‘Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.’”

(Daniel 2:24, NKJV)

Daniel’s first concern is **not his own safety**, but the lives of others, including pagan wise men. He does not rejoice in their impending downfall, nor does he use the moment to advance himself. This reveals the first motive of true service: **love for others**.

We see Daniel here as a savior both physically and spiritually.

“Let us not then be looking open-mouthed toward others. For it is true, the prayers of the saints have the greatest power, on condition, however, of our repentance and change.” —
St. John Chrysostom

Dependence on God, Not Ability

When Daniel stands before the king, he refuses personal glory:

“The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals

secrets...”

(Daniel 2:27–28, NKJV)

Daniel makes it clear that wisdom does not belong to him by nature. He does not present himself as exceptional, gifted, or superior. Instead, he directs attention entirely to God. His words protect him from pride and preserve the purity of his ministry.

Daniel further clarifies his motive:

“As for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king.”

(Daniel 2:30, NKJV)

Daniel’s role is not self-exaltation but mediation. God reveals the dream so that truth may be known, lives may be spared, and divine authority may be acknowledged.

Two Pure Motives in Service

Daniel’s actions reveal two governing motives:

1. To save others from destruction
2. To give glory to God alone

St. John Chrysostom observes that Daniel increases his honor precisely by refusing honor, showing that the work is divine rather than human.

“**For nothing is so advantageous** and so likely to pacify the hearers **as to say nothing about oneself of an honorable nature**, but on the contrary, to forestall all suspicion of wishing to do so. And, in truth, much more did they [the apostles] increase their glory by despising glory and showing that what had just taken place was not a human act but a divine work; and that it was their part to join with the beholders in admiration rather than to receive it from them.... In the same manner also did the ancient fathers, for instance, **Daniel, say, “Not because of any wisdom I have** more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me.” ... And again Joseph, “Do not interpretations belong to God?”

(St. John Chrysostom)

True service seeks the salvation of others and the glory of God, not personal recognition. When motives are pure, God entrusts greater responsibility. Daniel’s humility becomes the foundation for his authority.

Service that seeks glory fades quickly; service rooted in love and humility bears eternal fruit.

Finding Peace in the Midst of the Fire

Daniel 3 — Faith That Does Not Negotiate

Daniel 3 presents one of the clearest biblical portraits of **faith under coercion**. The issue is no longer subtle compromise but open, enforced idolatry.

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”- (Daniel 3:1–6, NKJV)

The command is absolute. Worship is demanded publicly, and refusal carries immediate death. Faithfulness now requires visible defiance.

The Nature of Persecution

The accusation against the three youths does not arise from theology but **envy**. Those once saved by Daniel’s intercession now repay good with hatred. This reveals a recurring spiritual pattern: **righteousness exposes resentment**. This is the nature of the sinful man who likes to annoy the righteous and persecute them. The three youths started praising God and glorifying Him in the fiery furnace. The church sings this praise daily.

“If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace... **But if not**, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods.”
(Daniel 3:17–18, NKJV)

This confession defines mature faith. The three youths believe fully in God’s power—but they do not make obedience conditional upon deliverance. Their loyalty is absolute.

They believe:

- God **can** save
- God **may** choose not to
- God is worthy of obedience **regardless**

Victory Before the Miracle

St. John Chrysostom teaches that their victory occurs **before** the fire is quenched:

“The wreath of victory was placed on their brows as soon as they were cast into the furnace... from the moment they uttered those words.”

Faithfulness is not measured by outcome, but by **confession**.

The Presence of the Fourth

Nebuchadnezzar witnesses something beyond his power:

“Look! I see four men loose... and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”
(Daniel 3:25, NKJV)

The furnace becomes a place of divine revelation. Christ is not only the One who delivers *from* suffering, but the One who stands *within* it.

“Let faith be yours, and God will be with you in your trouble. There are waves on the sea, and you are tossed about in your cabin, because Christ sleeps.... If you allow faith to sleep in your heart, Christ is, you might say, sleeping with you in your ship. Because Christ dwells in you through faith, when you begin to be tossed about, awake Christ from his sleep. Awaken your faith, and you shall be assured he will not desert you. You may think that you are forsaken, because he does not rescue you at the very moment you desire. But did he not deliver the three children from the fire?” – St. Augustine

Christ's presence is that which transforms! Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying,

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.” Daniel 3:28-29

Stand Up for the Truth

Daniel 3:16–18 — Obedience Without Bargaining

The stand taken by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego is one of the clearest examples in Scripture of **truth spoken without fear and without negotiation**.

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ”
(Daniel 3:16, NKJV)

Their response is calm, respectful, and unflinching. They do not argue, justify themselves, or attempt to escape the situation through clever speech. Truth does not need defense—it needs confession.

Faith That Refuses to Negotiate

Their statement contains one of the most mature expressions of faith in the Old Testament:

“If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

(Daniel 3:17–18, NKJV)

This reveals **obedience without conditions**. Their faith does not depend on outcome, safety, or success. They believe in God’s power, but they submit to God’s will even if it leads to death.

The three youths defied death, because of their faithfulness to God. They believed that God can save them even if He does not save them from the temporal fire. They were not afraid of the king’s threat, for they believed that:

1. **God is sovereign over life and death**
Their lives are in God’s hands, not the king’s furnace.
2. **Faithfulness is greater than survival**
Even if God allows martyrdom, obedience remains victory.

Victory Before Deliverance

St. John Chrysostom explains that their triumph occurred **before** the miracle:

“The reason why I admire those youths and pronounce them blessed and enviable is not because they trampled on the flame and vanquished the force of the fire but because they were bound and cast into the furnace and delivered to the fire for the sake of true doctrine. For this was the whole of their triumph, and **the wreath of victory was placed on their brows as soon as they were cast into the furnace**. And yet, even before this momentous event, the wreath was woven for them. It was from the moment that they uttered those words as they spoke with such boldness and forthrightness to the king when they were brought into his presence. “We have no need to answer you concerning these things.” ... After the utterance of these words, I proclaimed them conquerors; after these words, grasping the prize of victory, they hastened on to the glorious crown of martyrdom, following up the confession that they made through their words with the confession made through their deeds.”

The miracle confirms their faith, but it does not create it.

Revelation Through Opposition

Standing for truth accomplishes three things:

1. **It exposes falsehood**
Idolatry collapses when confronted by unwavering faith.

2. It reveals Christ

Nebuchadnezzar sees the fourth Person in the fire—a revelation that would not have occurred without resistance.

3. It saves others

The king glorifies God publicly, and a nation hears the truth.

Eternal Perspective

St. Jerome writes:

“Look at their faith! We believe, it says, that he is able to save us; but if it should be that our sins prevent him, we still believe in him who will not deliver us. We do not believe in this life but in the future life; nor do we believe in him in order to escape burning here but in order to escape passing from this fire into another fire.”

True faith looks beyond the present trial to eternal life.

Cost of Truth

Standing for truth:

- May cost comfort
- May invite persecution
- Always reveals God
- Never ends in loss

Faith that refuses to bow becomes a witness not only to God’s power—but to His worthiness.

Pray for Others

Daniel 9 — Intercession That Bears the Burden of Many

Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9 reveals the **heart of a true intercessor**. He does not pray from distance or superiority, but from **deep identification** with his people.

“Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”

(Daniel 9:3, NKJV)

Prayer for Daniel is not routine, obligation, or formality—it is **encounter**. Scripture says, “*I set my face toward the Lord God*”, describing intentional focus, longing, and reverence.

Daniel does not rush to requests.

“O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him...”

(Daniel 9:4, NKJV)

True intercession starts by remembering **who God is**, not by explaining what people have done.

Shared Guilt, Not Accusation

One of the most striking features of Daniel’s prayer is his language:

“We have sinned and committed iniquity... we have rebelled.”

(Daniel 9:5, NKJV)

Daniel does **not** say *they*.

He says *we*.

Although Daniel is personally righteous, he refuses to separate himself from his people. He carries their sin as his own. This is priestly prayer.

The Pattern of Biblical Intercession

Daniel’s prayer follows a pattern in his prayer:

1. Glorifying God
2. Confessing sin
3. Acknowledging justice
4. Appealing to mercy
5. Trusting God’s covenant

This is the same pattern seen in:

- Moses interceding for Israel
- Nehemiah praying for Jerusalem
- Christ praying for the world

Fasting, Sackcloth, and Ashes

Daniel’s physical posture mirrors his inner humility. Fasting does not manipulate God, it **aligns the heart**.

St. John Chrysostom explains:

“What will you say, Daniel? You are among the good; you enjoy honor before God and people; why do you concern yourself with the others? But Moses also acted the same way. And what does he say? “He asked for the things that were due with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.” Why did he do that, if what he was asking was due the Israelites? He did it so

that he might not make them unworthy of this. For there is no compulsion that can be applied to God; he is above all laws. He did this “to seek in prayer and petition.”

Intercession is not demanding what is owed, it is **pleading for grace**.

Why Intercession Matters

- It joins love to repentance
- It bridges heaven and earth
- It invites mercy into judgment
- It prepares hearts for restoration

Daniel prays before the return from exile occurs. His prayer becomes part of the fulfillment of God’s promise.

Intercession means:

- Standing before God for others
- Accepting responsibility without blame
- Loving people even in their sin
- Trusting God even in discipline

Summary: Daniel: Faithfulness in Every Season

Daniel is a model of **holy balance**: a man deeply involved in the affairs of the world, yet never absorbed by them. He served kings, governed empires, interpreted dreams, and shaped history, while remaining wholly devoted to God.

In the World, Not of the World

Daniel was entrusted with administration, authority, and influence, yet he never confused **service to the state** with **service to God**. His integrity did not depend on circumstances, political favor, or personal safety. Whether under Babylonian, Median, or Persian rule, Daniel remained unchanged because his allegiance was fixed.

A Man of the Inner Life

Behind Daniel’s public strength was a private faith:

- He prayed consistently
- He fasted humbly
- He confessed corporately
- He obeyed quietly

His power flowed from communion, not position.

The Shape of True Service

Daniel's life teaches enduring spiritual principles:

- **Be faithful in the little things** — obedience precedes promotion
- **Have pure motives** — give glory to God, not self
- **Find peace in the fire** — God is present in trial
- **Stand for the truth** — faithfulness matters more than survival
- **Pray for others** — restoration is born through intercession

Daniel lived most of his life outside the Promised Land, yet he never lost hope in God's promises. His story assures us that **exile is never the end**, and faithfulness in suffering prepares the way for restoration.

God does not require ideal conditions to reveal His glory, He requires faithful hearts.



Review Questions

1. What does Daniel mean?

"God is My Judge"

2. How many extra chapters are in the Book of Daniel from the Deuterocanonical / Apocryphal books?

[There are extra verses and 2 extra chapters that the Orthodox and Catholics include.]

3. What is meant when it is said to be faithful in little things?

[Daniel and three youths stood firm in their faith and fasted. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.]

4. What does it mean to fast?

[1. Showing God our commitment. 2. Act of love. 3. Good for the spirit]

5. What were Daniel's motives?

[Daniel had two motives: 1. He wants to save people from death. 2. He wants to give the glory to God through this gift.]

6. What was the three youth's belief toward going into the fiery furnace?

[A. God can save them, and that He is the Guardian of their lives, and that He does not allow them to die.
B. They believed that if God allowed them to die, they would accept that courageously, offering their lives as a sacrifice of love to God.]

7. How does Daniel pray?

[To Daniel, prayer was not a matter of routine or a duty he had to perform, but rather an enjoyment of seeing God's face, for he said, "I set my face toward the Lord God."]

8. How did Daniel serve his people?

[He served his people, not with the spirit of fanaticism, but with the spirit of holiness and humility, with love to all people.]

9. How did the three youths find peace in the fiery furnace?

[They believed that God can save them even if He does not save them from the temporal fire.]

10. What does standing for the truth lead to?

[Standing up for the truth: 1. Allows many people to hear the truth who may have not heard it before due to the response of the opposition. 2. Reveals Christ to us and to others; Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king saw the 4th Person in the fire. 3. Keeps us out of the everlasting fire.]

