



EXILES *AND* *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

A STUDY COMPANION FOR
REDEMPTION HILL CHURCH



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EXILES AND EMPIRES

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

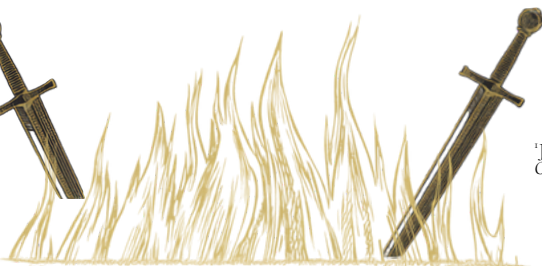
Welcome to our journey through Daniel. The book of Daniel has fascinated Christians for centuries with its heroic stories of courage, visions of power and splendor, and imagery of empires colliding. It is also true that many Christians are intimidated by Daniel and perhaps confused by much of its content.

I don't want us to be intimidated or confused. The Lord has graciously given us this great book to remind us of His indescribable grace. We have His Spirit indwelling us and illuminating His Word to us so that we can understand and apply this great book to our lives. Like Daniel, we too find ourselves in exile, and it often seems as though God is distant, and a foreign empire is in control. But through His Word—specifically this book—I know God is reorienting our hearts around His sovereignty, the Kingdom he is advancing, and His Son, the true and better Daniel. James Montgomery Boice wrote, “The great and most important theme in Daniel is there is but one God...and that he is sovereign over the events of history.”¹ It is my prayer that our study will encourage you, challenge you, and equip you to pursue our Sovereign King Jesus with your whole heart.

This guide is meant to supplement our Sunday sermons and your participation in groups. I pray you find it fruitful and edifying in your study of God's Word.

Let's journey through Daniel together as we fix our eyes on Jesus.

Pastor Joe



¹James Montgomery Boice, *Daniel: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 15.



EXILES AND *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Clearing the Fog & Avoiding Confusion

It is easy to get lost in the details when reading Daniel. Over the centuries, well-meaning Christians have often treated this book like a secret puzzle to solve rather than God's Word to live by. Here are three common traps to avoid as we study together.

First, we must guard against the temptation to treat Daniel as a secret codebook for mapping out modern geopolitical headlines or predicting the exact timeline of Christ's return. Whenever we turn this book into an end-times calendar or get bogged down in intricate charts, we miss its heart. Daniel's apocalyptic visions were given to comfort suffering exiles by reminding them that God controls history—not to help us calculate exact dates or match modern nations to specific horns. The primary goal of prophecy is never idle speculation, but steadfast faithfulness.

At the same time, we need to be careful not to reduce the first six chapters into simple moral lessons that tell us to just be brave like Daniel so God will always save us from the lions. Daniel and his friends are certainly inspiring models of integrity, but they are not the main characters of the story—God is. The truth is that God does not always preserve His saints from earthly suffering or trial in this life, but He promises to be with us through it and to vindicate us in the end. Most importantly, these stories point us beyond human heroes to the true and better Daniel, Jesus Christ, and the ultimate salvation He offers. Where Daniel faced the lions' den, Jesus faced the jaws of death on the cross for our sins, stepping into the darkness so that we might be brought into God's eternal Kingdom. Daniel is not primarily a guide to human bravery, but a glorious testimony to God's sovereign grace keeping His people through Christ.





EXILES AND *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Historical Setting

The Book of Daniel is set during the Babylonian Exile during the late 7th century and early 6th century BC. Following Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Jerusalem in 605 BC, Daniel and other noble Judean youths were carried off to Babylon. This marked the beginning of "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24), a period where Israel lived under foreign, pagan rule.

- The Babylonian Empire (605–539 BC): Daniel serves in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus, and Belshazzar.
- The Medo-Persian Empire (539 BC onward): Daniel continues his service under Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great following the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonians.

Authorship and Date

- Late 6th Century BC (Likely between 536 and 530 BC): The internal evidence indicates that Daniel wrote the book (e.g., Daniel speaks in the first person in Daniel 7–12). Jesus explicitly references "the prophet Daniel" in Matthew 24:15. Under this view, the detailed prophecies of Daniel 11 are authentic predictive prophecy given by God. In addition, early manuscript evidence supports this view¹
- The traditional 6th-century BC date honors the testimony of Jesus, the canonical unity of Scripture, and the supernatural nature of predictive prophecy. RHC holds to an early dating of the book likely.

¹ESV Study Bible, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 1581–1583.



EXILES AND EMPIRES

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

How Do We Interpret the Shift in Genre?

Daniel is split between historical narrative (chapters 1–6) and apocalyptic vision (chapters 7–12). Apocalyptic literature relies on vivid symbolism, cosmic imagery, and hyperbole rather than literal reporting. To interpret the book faithfully, we must read each section according to its proper literary design¹.

- Narrative: Read as historical events demonstrating God's providence and human faithfulness in exile.
- Apocalyptic: Read as symbolic visions revealing spiritual realities, cosmic conflict, and God's sovereign control over history, rather than taking every symbol with strict literalism. If the original audience (exilic Jews) wouldn't have read the symbols as literal, then neither can we.

When Was Daniel Written, and Why Does It Matter?

Evangelical scholars hold that Daniel was written in the 6th century BC by Daniel himself, while critical scholars argue for a 2nd-century BC date during the Maccabean Crisis. This debate centers on whether the detailed predictions in chapters 8–11 represent genuine prophecy or historical reflection written after the fact.²

- 6th-Century View: Affirms supernatural predictive prophecy, honours Jesus' reference to Daniel as a prophet (Matthew 24:15), and trusts the biblical witness.
- 2nd-Century View: Sees the text primarily as an encouragement written to help Jews endure persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

¹Sinclair B. Ferguson, Daniel, *The Preacher's Commentary*, vol. 21 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 13–17

²Ferguson, Daniel, 14.



EXILES AND *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Which Four Kingdoms Are Represented in Chap. 2 & 7?

The statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chapter 2) and the four beasts from the sea (chapter 7) depict a succession of world powers. Identifying these empires influences how we understand the arrival of God's everlasting Kingdom and the identity of the "Son of Man."

- Conservative View: Babylon → Medo-Persia → Greece → Rome (with Christ establishing His Kingdom during the Roman era).
- Maccabean View: Babylon → Media → Persia → Greece (focusing on the divided Greek kingdoms leading to Antiochus IV)

How Does Daniel Connect to the New Testament and Jesus?

The central hermeneutical goal for any Christian reader is discerning how Daniel points forward to Christ and His Church (John 5:39). Rather than isolating Daniel in the Old Testament, we must read it through the lens of Gospel fulfillment.

- The Son of Man: Daniel 7:13–14 provides Jesus with His favorite self-designation in the Gospels, claiming divine authority and an everlasting kingdom.
- The Uncut Stone: Christ is the stone that crushes human empires and establishes a kingdom that fills the whole earth (Daniel 2).
- The True Exile: Jesus experienced the ultimate exile and judgment on the cross so that His people could be brought safely into God's eternal presence.
- The Better Daniel: While Daniel is a noble servant who stood blameless before earthly kings, Jesus is the ultimate, sinless Servant of the Lord who obeyed the Father perfectly. Daniel faced the lions' den and survived, but Jesus willingly entered the jaws of death, ultimate judgment, and came through victorious.



EXILES AND *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Structure of Daniel

The Book of Daniel is masterfully constructed around two distinct structural frameworks: a macro-level overview divided by literary genre, and an intricate, symmetrical chiasmic arrangement at its center. Together, these frameworks show how the everyday struggles of faithful exiles (chapters 1–6) fit into God's sovereign control over cosmic history (chapters 7–12).

Macro Structure by Genre and Focus

The book splits cleanly into two major halves, moving from earthly narratives in the royal courts of Babylon and Persia to apocalyptic visions of the end of the age.

- Part 1: Stories of **Exile** (Chapters 1–6)
 - Genre: Historical Court Narrative
 - Focus: Demonstrates how God's people live with unyielding faith, moral integrity, gospel courage, and practical wisdom inside hostile, pagan empires.
- Part 2: Visions of **Empires** (Chapters 7–12)
 - Genre: Apocalyptic Prophecy
 - Focus: Pulls back the spiritual curtain to reveal the hidden cosmic warfare, the temporary rise and fall of human regimes, and God's ultimate victory.

The Central Aramaic Chiasm (Chapters 2–7)

While chapters 1 and 8–12 are written in Hebrew (focusing on Israel's covenant destiny), chapters 2–7 are written in Aramaic—the international language of the ancient Near Eastern empires. This central section is arranged in a chiasmic structure, where parallel chapters mirror the exact same theological truths:

- A: Four Empires & God's Eternal Kingdom (Ch. 2)
- B: Persecution & Deliverance in the Furnace (Ch. 3)
- C: Pride & Humiliation of a Babylonian King (Ch. 4)
- C': Pride & Fall of a Babylonian King (Ch. 5)
- B': Persecution & Deliverance in the Lions' Den (Ch. 6)
- A': Four Beasts & God's Eternal Kingdom (Ch. 7)¹

¹Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Daniel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 20–22



EXILES AND EMPIRES

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Key Theological Themes

- The Absolute Sovereignty of God: God rules over human kingdoms, setting up rulers and bringing them down according to His will (Dan 2:21, 4:17).
- Faithfulness in Exile: God's people are called to live as cultural exiles—engaging their culture without compromising their holy identity. This reminds us that we are not citizens of this earth, but our citizenship is from heaven.
- The Transitory Nature of Human Empires: Human empires look grand (the statues, the beasts), but they are fragile and doomed to fall before the Incomprehensible Kingdom of God.
- Suffering and Ultimate Victory: God does not always preserve His people from trials and suffering, but He always vindicates them in the end, and he is very much present in their suffering.

Daniel and the Book of Revelation

Daniel serves as the Old Testament blueprint for John's vision on the island of Patmos, providing the symbolic language, timelines, and cosmic imagery that John uses to describe the final victory of Jesus Christ. While centuries separate the two prophets, their messages are inextricably linked across redemptive history:

- Shared Imagery of Empires and Beasts: Daniel sees four distinct beasts rising from the sea representing violent human regimes (Dan 7). Revelation 13 picks up this exact vocabulary, merging those four beasts into a single, terrifying monster to symbolize the ultimate culmination of anti-God political power.
- The Ruler of the Times: Daniel introduces the symbolic timeline of "a time, times, and half a time"—or 3.5 years (Dan 7:25, 12:7)—to show that God sets strict limits on the duration of earthly persecution. Revelation repeatedly expands on this same period using 42 months and 1,260 days (Rev 11:2–3, 12:6) to reassure believers that their suffering is finite.

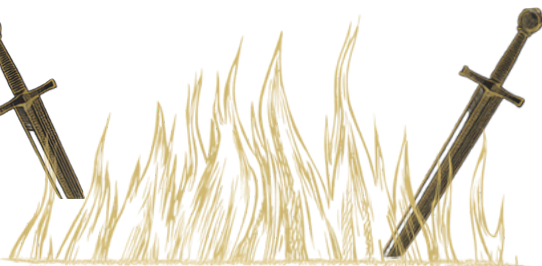


EXILES AND *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

- The Open Courtroom: Both books pull back the curtain to show heavenly throne-room scenes where the Ancient of Days opens the books of judgment (Dan 7:9–10; Rev 20:11–12), proving that no matter how arrogant human rulers become, the Supreme Court of Heaven gets the final word.
- Sealed vs. Unsealed: At the end of his book, Daniel is told to "seal up the book until the time of the end" (Dan 12:4) because Christ had not yet arrived. In contrast, John is explicitly told not to seal his book (Rev 22:10) because, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the end times have been inaugurated and God's plan is fully unveiled.

Where Daniel provides the foundation of apocalyptic hope for exiles waiting for the Redeemer, Revelation reveals the fulfillment. The "Son of Man" who approaches the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 is the crucified and risen Lamb of Revelation 19, returning as King of kings to establish an eternal kingdom that will never be destroyed.





EXILES ^{AND} EMPIRES

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Study Along With Us

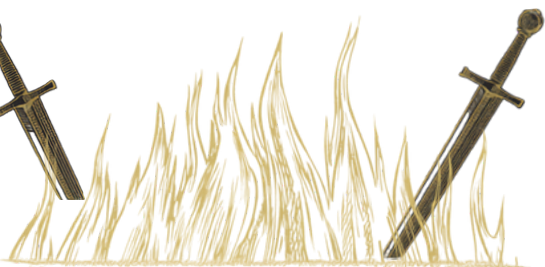
As we walk through the Book of Daniel together, we encourage you to engage with God's Word throughout the week before gathering on Sunday. Use our sermon schedules on the following pages to read the assigned passage at home, and take time to reflect deeply on what God is revealing to you.

Grab a notebook or journal, and as you read through each passage, write down your thoughts using these three key reflection questions:

- 1. Listening to God: What is God speaking to you through this passage?
- 2. Loving Jesus: How does this passage stir your affections for Jesus, and what is the risen Christ inviting you to through this text?
- 3. Living in Mission: How is this passage moving you toward personal obedience and mission in your daily life?

Engage with God's Word in our Gospel Community Groups

Every other week, our groups gather to discuss the sermon. You can be prepared ahead of time by utilizing our online study guide and group questions. Go to rhccartersville.com/daniel to follow along and get connected.



EXILES
AND
EMPIRES
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FALL SEMESTER SERMON SCHEDULE

8/30/2026	DANIEL	1:1-7
9/6/2026	DANIEL	1:8-21
9/13/2026	DANIEL	2:1-30
9/20/2026	DANIEL	2:31-45
9/27/2026	DANIEL	2:46-49
10/4/2026	DANIEL	3:1-18
10/11/2026	DANIEL	3:19-30
10/18/2026	DANIEL	4:1-3
10/25/2026	DANIEL	4:4-18
11/1/2026	DANIEL	4:19-27
11/8/2026	DANIEL	4:28-37
11/15/2026	DANIEL	5:1-16
11/22/2026	DANIEL	5:17-31



EXILES AND EMPIRES

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

SPRING SEMESTER SERMON SCHEDULE

1/3/2027	DANIEL	6:1-18
1/10/2027	DANIEL	6:19-28
1/17/2027	DANIEL	7:1-8
1/24/2027	DANIEL	7:9-14
1/31/2027	DANIEL	7:15-28
2/7/2027	DANIEL	8:1-14
2/14/2027	DANIEL	8:15-27
2/21/2027	DANIEL	9:1-19
2/28/2027	DANIEL	9:20-27
3/7/2027	DANIEL	10:1-9
3/14/2027	DANIEL	10:10-21
3/21/2027	DANIEL	11:1-20
3/28/2027	EASTER	
4/4/2027	DANIEL	11:21-35
4/11/2027	DANIEL	11:36-45
4/18/2027	DANIEL	12:1-4
4/25/2027	DANIEL	12:5-13

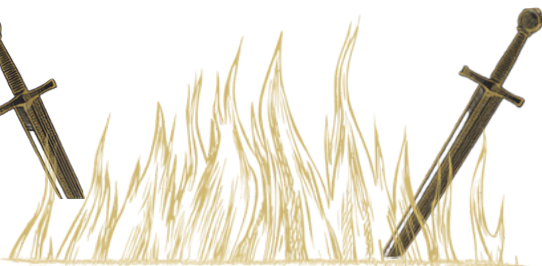


EXILES AND *EMPIRES*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel Resources for you to Go Deeper

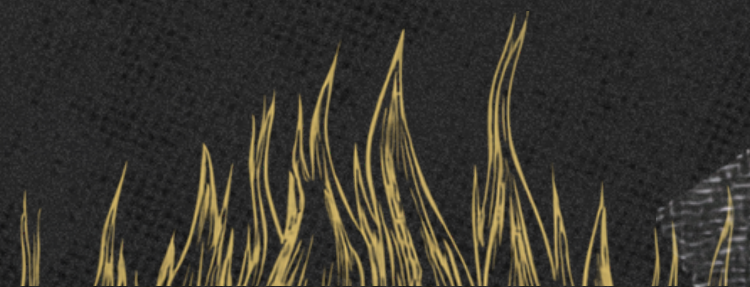
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EXILES
AND
EMPIRES

THE BOOK OF DANIEL



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