

THE EASY-TO-READ
COMMENTARY SERIES



DANIEL

In God I Trust

A landscape photograph showing a rocky, arid plain with a gnarled, leafless tree in the foreground. In the background, there is a large, flat-topped mountain under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD
VERSE-BY-VERSE

DANIEL—IN GOD I TRUST
by Practical Christianity Foundation

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INTRODUCTION



The book of Daniel focuses upon many of God's past and future judgments upon His people, the [Israelites \(view image\)](#). The prophet Daniel lived during the same time period as [Ezekiel](#), [Ezra](#), and [Jeremiah](#), and a study of these books reveals several coinciding accounts and prophecies. However, the book of Daniel is also a discourse on world history from the [Babylonian Empire \(view image\)](#) to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the beginning of His eternal reign as King of kings.

During its time, Babylon was the greatest city in the world. Ancient historians have calculated that the city's wall was sixty miles in circumference, fifteen miles on each side, three hundred feet high, and eighty feet thick. It also extended thirty-five feet below the ground to prevent enemies from tunneling underground. The massive wall featured over two hundred towers and one hundred brass gates. In addition, the waters of the [Euphrates River](#) flowed through the city and provided water for the city's moat. This large moat ran along the city wall and somewhat protected Babylon from invasion.¹

[Nabopolassar](#), king of Babylon, led a revolt against the [Assyrians](#) and established the Babylonian Empire in 625 B.C. In 609 B.C., [Necho II](#), the pharaoh of [Egypt \(view image\)](#), invaded Palestine to protect his political interests there. Necho then fought King [Josiah \(view image\)](#) of Israel at [Megiddo \(view image\)](#) in 608 B.C. As a result, Josiah was killed, and Necho II returned victoriously to Egypt with a large army and extended his territory to the Euphrates River:

²⁹In Josiah's days Pharaoh Necho (the king of Egypt) came to help the king of Assyria at the Euphrates River. King Josiah went to attack Necho. When Pharaoh saw him at Megiddo, Pharaoh killed him. ³⁰His officers put his dead body in a chariot and brought it from Megiddo to Jerusalem. They buried Josiah in his tomb. (2 Kings 23:29–30)

In 605 B.C., Nabopolassar sent his son [Nebuchadnezzar](#) to fight Necho's Egyptian army. This bloody battle at [Carchemish \(view image\)](#) drove the Egyptians back to their own land and subjugated [Judah \(view image\)](#) to Babylon. During this time, Nebuchadnezzar received news that his father had died; therefore, Nebuchadnezzar returned to ascend Babylon's throne. After its subjection, Judah rendered tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for three years and then revolted:

¹During Jehoiakim's reign King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked [Judah], and Jehoiakim became subject to him for three years. Then Jehoiakim turned against him and rebelled. ²The LORD sent raiding parties of Babylonians, Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites against Jehoiakim to destroy Judah as the LORD had predicted through his servants the prophets. (2 Kings 24:1–2)

In response, Nebuchadnezzar went to [Palestine \(view image\)](#) to suppress this revolt and then returned to Babylon after defeating [Jehoiakim](#), king of Judah and son of Josiah. Nebuchadnezzar dispersed the Jewish captives to different parts of the Babylonian Empire and thereby obtained the slave labor needed to construct his numerous projects, including the Great Wall of Babylon, several majestic temples, and a magnificent palace. In addition, he commissioned the construction of the [Hanging Gardens of Babylon, \(view image\)](#) one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, for his wife. He also built a great reservoir for irrigation that records indicate measured 140 miles in circumference and 180 feet deep.²

This brings us to the time when Daniel, as a teenager, was transported with the other captive Jews to Babylon. The name *Daniel* means “my judge is God,” and at this time, God's judgment did fall upon [Israel \(view image\)](#).³ Daniel was a man both tested and exalted. However, regardless of

external circumstances, his commitment to the Lord God Almighty never fluctuated. He relied upon God for both lifesaving miracles and the smallest of provisions. As we begin to study this intriguing book, we will see this one man's unwavering faith in his God, beginning from the time that he arrived in Babylon as a young Jew and continuing throughout his years of service under the authority of several kings and kingdoms. There is perhaps no better example of godly faith, dependency, trust, and worship than in the character of the prophet Daniel.

1. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. "Babylonia."
2. *The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1960), 225.
3. J.B. Jackson, *A Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1909), 25.

ISRAEL — The most common name in the Old Testament for the land where the history of Israel takes place is Canaan. It occupies about 9,500 square miles, an area about the size of the state of Vermont, the upstate of South Carolina, or the country of Belgium. Canaan, or Palestine, reaches from the Mediterranean Sea on the west, to the Great Arabian Desert on the east, to the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains on the north, and the Sinai Desert on the south. It is about 150 miles from north to south and 75 miles from east to west. The very location of Israel profoundly affected what was to happen to her over the centuries, for she sat uncomfortably in the middle of the “Fertile Crescent” (including Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Armenia, or to use modern names: Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Iran). This area was the very matrix of humankind, a veritable cradle for civilization.

Due to its strategic location, it served as a land bridge between Asia and Africa, a meeting place, and a contested battlefield for many ancient powers, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. To this day it remains one of the most geopolitically sensitive and important areas of the world.

From west to east the topographical features are the coastal plain, Galilee and the central hill country, flowing in a southerly direction from the Lebanon range; the Jordan Rift Valley, continuous with the Bekaa Valley, continuing south to the Dead Sea in the Arabah; and the Transjordanian highlands as the southern continuation of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains in Phoenicia/Lebanon on into the Moab-Edom plateau. It is an arid and exotic land of great variety. Mountains in the north are in stark contrast to the Arabah and the lowest point on the earth, the Dead Sea, some 1,300 feet below sea level.¹

¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Charles W. Draper, “Israel, Land Of,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 844.

EZEKIEL (*the strength of God*) — one of the four greater prophets. [... **READ MORE**]

He was the son of a priest named Buzi, and was taken captive in the captivity of Jehoiachin, eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was a member of a community of Jewish exiles who settled on the banks of the Chebar, a “river” or stream of Babylonia. He began prophesying B.C. 595, and continued until B.C. 573, a period of more than twenty-two years. We learn from an incidental allusion, Ezekiel 24:18, that he was married, and had a house, Ezekiel 8:1, in his place of exile, and lost his wife by a sudden stroke. He lived in the highest consideration among his companions in exile, and their elders consulted him on all occasions. He is said to have been murdered in Babylon and to have been buried on the banks of the Euphrates. The tomb, said to have been built by Jehoiachin, is shown, a few days journey from Bagdad.

Ezekiel was distinguished by his stern and inflexible energy of will and character and his devoted adherence to the rites and ceremonies of his national religion. The depth of his *matter* and the marvelous nature of his visions make him occasionally obscure.

Prophecy of Ezekiel.—The book is divided into two great parts, of which the destruction of Jerusalem is the turning-point. Chapters 1-24 contain predictions delivered before that event, and chapters 25-48 after it. Again, chapters 1-32 are mainly occupied with correction, denunciation and reproof, while the remainder deals chiefly in consolation and promise. A parenthetical section in the middle of the book, chapters 25-32, contains a group of prophecies against *seven* foreign nations, the arrangement being apparently intentional. There are no direct quotations from Ezekiel in the New Testament, but in the Apocalypse there are many parallels and obvious allusions to the later chapters—40-48.¹

¹ William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

EZRA — Priest and scribe of the fifth century B.C. He descended from Aaron through Phinehas and later Zadok (*Ezra 7:1–5; 1 Chronicles 6:4–14*). Ezra was sent with a large company of Israelites to Jerusalem by King Artaxerxes of Persia in 458 B.C. (*Ezra 7:7*). His mission was “to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (*7:10 NASB*).

He was supplied with silver and gold and the vessels of the former temple from the king’s treasury and given the power to appoint public officials to enforce the law. After he divided up the supplies among the tribes of Israel, he made sacrifices unto the Lord and began to initiate reform. His first act of reform was to deal with the issue of mixed marriages. The Israelites had intermarried among the surrounding nations. Through prayer, intercession, and preaching he quickly achieved some measure of success (*10:19*). Nehemiah records that he read the law before all of the people in 444 B.C. at the reinstatement of the Feast of Tabernacles (*Nehemiah 8*). Ezra was of profound importance to Israel and biblical scholars today. He was the main instigator of reform just after Israel’s return from exile and one of the most important preservers and teachers of law in Jewish history. (He was probably the author of the books of Chronicles and Ezra and the final editor of the Old Testament.) Additionally, he is the main source of information about the first return from exile.¹

¹ Kevin Burns, “Ezra,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 542.

JEREMIAH (*whom Jehovah has appointed*) — “the son of Hilkiyah of the priests that were in Anathoth” (*Jeremiah 1:1*). [... **READ MORE**]

Jeremiah was called by the Lord at a very young age (B.C. 626) to the prophetic office, and prophesied forty-two years; but there is little mention of him during the eighteen years between his call and Josiah’s death, or during the short reign of Jehoahaz. During the reigns of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, B.C. 607–598, he opposed the Egyptian party, then dominant in Jerusalem, and maintained that the only way of safety lay in accepting the supremacy of the Chaldeans. He was accordingly accused of treachery, and men claiming to be prophets had their “word of Jehovah” opposed him (*Jeremiah 14:13; 23:7*). As the danger from the Chaldeans became more threatening, the persecution against Jeremiah grew hotter (*18*). The people tried to kill him; then follows the scene in *Jeremiah 19:10-13*. He was set, however, “as a fenced grazen wall,” (*15:20*), and went on with his work, reproving king and nobles and people.

The danger which Jeremiah had so long foretold at last became reality. First Jehoiakim, and afterwards his successor Jehoiachin, were carried into exile, *2 Kings 24*; but Zedekiah, B.C. 597– 586, who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, was more friendly to the prophet, though powerless to help him. The approach of an Egyptian army, and the consequent departure of the Chaldeans, made the position of Jeremiah full of danger, and he tried to effect his escape from the city; but he was seized and finally thrown into a prison-pit to die, but was rescued. On the return of the Chaldean army he showed his faith in God’s promises, and sought to encourage the people by purchasing the field at Anathoth which his kinsman Hanameel wished to get rid of (*Jeremiah 32:6-9*). At last the blow came. The city was taken, the temple burnt. The king and his princes shared the fate of Jehoiachin. The prophet gave utterance to his sorrow in the writings of Lamentations.

After the capture of Jerusalem, B.C. 586, by the Chaldeans, we find Jeremiah receiving better treatment; but after the death of Gedaliah, the people, disregarding his warnings, took refuge in Egypt, carrying the prophet with them. In captivity his words were sharper and stronger than ever. He did not shrink, even there, from speaking of the Chaldean king once more as “the servant of Jehovah” (*Jeremiah 43:10*). After this all is uncertain, but he probably died in Egypt.

It is easy to understand Jeremiah's state of mind when we consider his circumstances. He saw the nation going straight to hopeless ruin, turning a deaf ear to all the Lord's warnings. A reign of terror began in the preceding reign, during which not only the prophets but all who were distinguished for religion and virtue were cruelly murdered. The nation tried to wipe out the religion of Jehovah; idolatry was openly established, dishonesty was so universal that no man trusted another, and society was utterly disorganized. How could one who saw the nation about to reap the awful harvest they had been sowing, and yet had a vision of what they might have been and might yet be, refrain from recording his despair in the writings of "Lamentations"?¹

¹ 1 William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

BABYLONIA/BABYLONIANS — Both Ashurbanipal and Kandalanu, his viceroy in Babylon, died in 627 B.C. For a year Babylonia had no recognized ruler. Then the throne was seized by the Chaldean prince Nabopolassar (625–605 B.C.) who established the 10th dynasty of Babylon, which has come to be called the Chaldean or Neo-Babylonian dynasty. With the accession of the 10th dynasty the Babylonian independence movement gained its long-sought goal: freedom from Assyrian domination. Yet history depreciated the triumph; the Chaldean dynasty was Babylonia's last.

Aided by Media, the kingdom of the Iranian plateau, Nabopolassar put an end to the Assyrian empire. By 612 B.C. Assyria's chief cities had fallen: Asshur, then the religious center; Nineveh, the administrative center; and Nimrod, the military headquarters. The last light of Assyria was snuffed out by Nabopolassar in 609 B.C. Under his son Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.), Babylonia inherited the Assyrian empire. For a moment in history, Babylonia was master of the whole Near East. Nebuchadnezzar brought about the end of the Hebrew kingdom of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., deporting part of its population to Babylonia in the event referred to as the exile (*2 Kings 24:1–25:21*).

Under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon became the fabled city of luxury and splendor with which its name is commonly associated. Partly because of the king's haughty belief that he alone was responsible for his kingdom's glory, partly because of his tyrannical oppression of the poor, God struck Nebuchadnezzar with a fit of temporary insanity. For a period of time, according to the Book of Daniel, the great Babylonian monarch believed himself an animal, lived out-of-doors "with the beasts of the field," and "ate grass like an ox," until "his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws." When his reason finally returned, Nebuchadnezzar was a humbler king (*Daniel 4*).

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son, son-in-law, and grandson within the space of six years. Thereafter, one of his high diplomatic officials, Nabonidus, one of history's most enigmatic personalities, took the throne (555–539 B.C.). During his reign, the Medes, formerly allies of the Chaldeans, came under a new ruler, Cyrus II of Persia (559 B.C.), who over the next 10 years conquered an empire nearly 3,000 miles in extent, from the Aegean Sea to the Pamirs (mountains in central Asia).¹

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988) 248.

NABOPOLASSAR — the Babylonian founder of the Chaldean dynasty (626–539 B.C.) and ruler of Babylon for twenty-one years (626–605 B.C.). No mention is made of his father’s name, which probably indicates that he was not of royal blood. In the early years of his reign, he battled the Assyrian occupiers of Babylonia. Eventually, in league with the Medes and possibly the Scythians, he conquered Nineveh in 612 B.C. Though Nabopolassar’s name is not mentioned in the Bible, this defeat of the Assyrians is celebrated in the book of Nahum. Nabopolassar’s son, Nebuchadnezzar II, defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish shortly before the death of his father (*Jeremiah 46:2; 2 Chronicles 35:20*).¹

¹ David B. Weisberg, “Nabopolassar,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 678.

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