

# GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

## Expositional Study Of Daniel

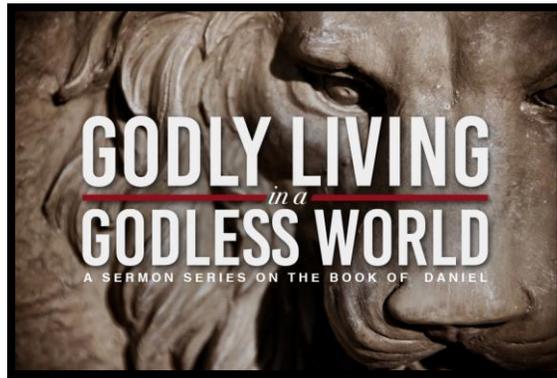
Daniel 1:1-2

Part 2

Written By

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**W**hy study the book of Daniel? It clearly and concisely tells us how to live to God's glory in godless times ... and there is no doubt we do, in fact, live in godless times. To see the moral darkness you need look no further than New York City. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article gives us decadent data point:

Restaurant owners can't require ties for male diners only. Gyms can't tell clients which locker room to use. And in most cases, an employer can't put "John" on a worker's ID if she prefers "Jane." New York City's Human Rights Commission is establishing what advocates called some of the most powerful guidelines in the nation on gender-identity discrimination, releasing specifics Monday to flesh out broad protections in a 2002 law. "Today's guidance makes it abundantly clear what the city considers to be discrimination," which can lead to fines of as much as \$250,000, Commissioner Carmelyn P. Malalis said in a statement . . . "New York City vaults to the front of the line" with its new guidelines and strong legal framework for human-rights complaints, said Michael Silverman, executive director of the Transgender

Legal Defense & Education Fund. “These are real, everyday struggles for transgender people.”<sup>1</sup>

You know, you can hide a lot of sinful behavior in cleverly designed anti-discrimination laws. Further, once a culture begins to purposefully and illogically make that which has historically been seen as abnormal, normal, then *anything* or any type of behavior is capable of being deemed normal. You might need to read that sentence again.

From what I know of the origin and purpose of sexuality as detailed in the creation account in Genesis, coupled with the timeless nature of God’s prohibition against all forms of deviant sexuality in the Torah, I seriously doubt God believes New York has vaulted itself to some higher moral plane. But in their love affair with post-modernism’s love of relativism, New York leaders and people are legislating any and all forms of sexual perversion in the name of progress, and they’re making sure you cow-tow to their twisted thinking by penalizing you for standing up and speaking out about deviant sexual behavior. Makes you wonder, what’s next?

Darkness truly is descending, is it not? Hence the need for guidance from God regarding how we are supposed to live. Daniel’s twelve chapters effectively equip us for the road ahead. They achieve this worthy purpose by showing, in a variety of historical narratives, how Daniel and his three friends lived in the wicked polytheistic system of ancient Babylon. They also give us great guidance in the intricate and exact prophecies which are woven through the book like a beautiful thread. To study this apocalyptic book, therefore, is to study how to be salt and light when you’re living in a time of moral decay and darkness. What could be more important? Not much, and that’s why we are resolved to pour over the pages of this powerful, pragmatic prophecy.

To enhance our understanding of this prior to our analysis of the individual chapters, we must concern ourselves with one introductory concept:

## Browsing The Basics Of The Book

In this study, we shall ask and answer three pivotal questions:

### What’s The Theme?

Every biblical book is divinely designed to communicate an over-arching theme. No haphazard arrangement here, just carefully constructed chapters to validate a given message of God to His people, be they Israel in the Old Testament or Christians in the New Testament. Daniel is no exception. Being the fourth book of the Major Prophets (counting Lamentations as a sub-set of Jeremiah), it finalizes what the others developed. Isaiah primarily addresses the concept of the *salvation* of God. Jeremiah warns Israel



<sup>1</sup> Associated Press, “New York City Unveils Rules on Gender Discrimination,” The Wall Street Journal, December 21, 2015, accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-unveils-rules-on-gender-discrimination-1450742331>

of God's impending *judgment* for their national embrace of evil. Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel in his early years, speaks eloquently about the coming *glory* of God. Daniel rounds out these positive prophetic pronouncements by speaking about the coming messianic *kingdom* of God. From his divinely ordained interpretation of the great image of chapter two (Daniel 2:44-45), which represents the final world empires which will terminate with the coming of the Messiah's kingdom, to his precise prophecy about the birth and death of the Messiah in chapter 9, verses 24-27, Daniel's book drips with kingdom consummation, with the emphasis that God's moral and spiritual light will, ultimately, defeat and cordon off evil. More precisely, Daniel's elucidation about the rise and fall of the final world empires after their seventy year divinely ordained captivity, corrected the erroneous theological view that the messianic kingdom would immediately follow the captivity. Daniel's prophetic counsel to his people was/is clear: prepare to live uncompromised, godly lives for the long haul but never forget that God is sovereignly working to fulfill every facet of His kingdom plan. We can and should easily tap into this principle too.

No doubt, these were encouraging words for captive Jews, like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Despite the moral, spiritual, economic, and national destitution of their penal predicament, God didn't just have His eyes on them; He had an ancient, complex, and well-thought-out sovereign plan to deal definitively with evil, resulting in the institution of cosmic righteousness.

This providential purpose answered a whole lot of perplexing questions for Daniel and his friends, and they serve the same purpose for us, as saints, today. Has God forgotten us when our lives fall apart? Is God truly all-powerful and all-good when His people are enduring an unbelievably evil life event? How are we to live when it seems that evil triumphs, and do our actions really serve a purpose? Is there an end to the ever-encroaching domination of evil? Will the first in wickedness ever be last to be replaced by the last in righteousness? Yes, will the great reversal Jesus spoke about ever really occur? Yes, yes, and yes shouts Daniel ... so hang on to the hope embedded in this profound, pragmatic book of inspired Scripture.

The book does, in fact, contain additional sub-themes.

- Daniel's penchant for prayer reminds us of the utter need for communication with the living God as we experience a moral and spiritual sunset.
- Daniel's deliverance from several life-threatening situations related to his commitment not to compromise his faith (viz., choosing not to eat the king's meat when commanded to do so in chapter one, praying openly to God when the law said not to in Daniel chapter 6) followed by legal persecution and sovereign deliverance and professional job elevation clearly demonstrates our need to do and believe likewise. Where have you compromised your biblical beliefs for the sake of peace, unity, etc.? Perhaps some radical adjustments are warranted.
- Daniel's inexorable commitment to articulate God's truth to a spiritually truthless and hostile society serves as a model for us as well.

These are just three of several additional secondary themes; however, they are all eclipsed by God's raw, sovereign power to establish His Son's righteous kingdom on earth and in the heavenlies, thereby eradicating the rule and reign of Satan and wickedness. Believe me, when

the man shows up in a black suit at your door to serve you papers penalizing you for hate speech regarding an episode where you called certain behavior immoral, you will want to have the hope of this prophecy embedded in your heart and mind to help you navigate forward in rough seas caused by the Prince of Darkness.

Thank God He is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-good. Just these three unique divine qualities assure us He is more than capable of fulfilling every facet of the prophecy concerning the nations of the world and His Son's coming kingdom He gave to Daniel so many years ago.

### What's The Structure?

The literary structure of the book not only substantiates the book's divinely ordered purpose, but it represents as well-balanced, carefully thought out order to achieve said purpose. Additionally, the way the book is crafted demonstrates one man, Daniel, wove its various pieces together to reveal God's kingdom plans to mankind. While this type of study could be several studies in and of itself, depending on how deep you would like to drill, we, for the constraints of time, must limit our observations.

Here are a couple of ways you can divide the book. The first chart I've devised shows the literary balance of the book. You will note how the messianic program of God takes center stage



by explaining first what the geo-political structure of the world will look like prior the revelation of the Messiah, while the second panel shows God's plan for Israel in relation to that coming Davidic empire. And this is theologically correct because the divine covenants were originally made with them: the Abrahamic (Genesis 12), the Mosaic (Exodus 19ff), the Davidic (2 Samuel 7), the Palestinian (which details Israel's relation to the land promises of the

Abrahamic; Deuteronomy 30:1-10), and the New Covenant (Jeremiah 30-31). From the unconditional, eternal nature of the first covenant (Genesis 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chronicles 16:16-17; Psalm 105:9-10), where God promised to make Israel His premier people and inheritors of divinely chosen land parameters, to the last covenant where He promised they, as a nation, would be restored spiritually in the messianic kingdom (Jeremiah 31:33-34), God revealed His intricate plan to bless the Gentiles through the Jews.

Daniel's structure purposefully builds to this exciting theological climax.

Another chart, created in 1970 by David W. Gooding, readily shows the purposeful thematic balance in Daniel's book. I've taken the liberty to meld several of the great concepts he highlights in his



lengthy article into one chart for pedagogical purposes. From this chart you can easily see how one man, Daniel, thoughtfully and purposefully constructed his book to substantiate his overarching authorial argument. This balance is by no means accidental. It helps us not only remember the book, but it heightens our ability to see clearly that God is behind, above, and in world events, be what they may, to guide them toward their kingdom termination point so peace can, and will, reign supremely. So have hope!

A third and final question we need to entertain is, really, THE question of the book:

## What's The Date?

This is probably one of the most hotly debated questions regarding any book from the Old Testament. Why? Dating Daniel is a hot topic because of one reason only. Those who say they believe in God yet do not believe in a God who provides exact prophetic fulfillment, or who believe God created our cosmos and then closed Himself out of it to leave us to our evolutionary purposes, these scholars cannot swallow the precise prophetic fulfillments of the book. For example, how does one account for the fact that Daniel, who died around 536 B.C., was able to foretell, with absolute precision, the rise and fall of the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and finally Rome hundreds of years before the fact (Daniel 2:36-49; 7:1-12)? According to the prophecy, as detailed in chapter 8 (vv. 21-27), how did Daniel know the Grecian empire would not only defeat and replace the Medo-Persian empire in a blitzkrieg fashion, but he knew that after the demise of their leader (Alexander the Great) the kingdom would be divided among his four generals (Cassander ruled over Macedonia, viz., Greece; Lysimachus ruled over Thrace (composing modern day Eastern Greece) and upper Asia Minor, viz., Turkey, Seleucus ruled over the largest section covering much of Asia Minor, and modern day Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Jordan.; Ptolemy ruled over Egypt and Palestine, the second largest facet of Alexander's former Empire) , ... and this is exactly what occurred. Chapter 11 alone contains over one hundred historically specific prophecies stated before the fact.

Yes, how does one explain this? Well, if you are an anti-supernatural, rational, higher critic, one who holds the biblical text to be guilty until proven innocent, and who believes that miracles and prophecy are not possible, then you'll devise arguments to prove that Daniel was written at a date after the said events. That's exactly what liberal scholars have historically done.

Scholars of this heretical background posit a date of writing in the second century, specifically between 174 and 164 B.C., or during the time of wicked rule of the Seleucids over Israel. Their arguments to support this conclusion are now listed, though not exhaustively for time does not permit a full treatment.

- The Old Testament is divided into three sections: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Kethubim in Hebrew and Hagiographa in Greek). The Jews included Daniel in this last, non-prophetic section because the book did not exist when the prophetic canon closed between 300-200 B.C. *Rebuttal:* Daniel was not included in the prophetic portion because Jewish scholars believed his book was characteristically different from that of the major and minor prophets. Further, Daniel is mentioned in the sixth century B.C. book of Ezekiel three times (14:14, 20; 28:3), thereby, underscoring an early date for the book.

- The book resembles apocalyptic books of the later date, books which are well-known for their detailed and grotesque images, pseudonymity, and speaking grandiosely about historical events after the fact as if they had not yet occurred in order to lend credence and power to the writing. *Rebuttal:* Just because a book shares similarities with books written at later times does not necessarily mean it is from that time. Scholars know that Akkadian literature from the twelfth century B.C. contains apocalyptic features. Does that mean, then, Daniel is from this era? If so, that's even more amazing.
- The book employs late Aramaic in chapters two through seven, and Persian and Greek words are also from a later period than the sixth century B.C. *Rebuttal:* This is merely a presupposition and does not square with the lexical evidence as is validated by Dr. Gleason Archer in his treatment of this subject in his helpful and insightful book *A Survey of Old Testament: Introduction*. Since Daniel lived well into the Persian rule of Babylon (viz., 536 B.C.) it stands to reason he would employ Aramaic in his book in order to speak to these new invaders. Further, the presence of three Greek words in Daniel three, words which describe musical instruments, with the last one (*symphonia*) being found in Greek literature in the time of Plato (ca. 370 B.C.), does not necessitate an early date for Daniel. Words like this have circulated beyond national boundaries for years and naturally so because people like music. Daniel could have easily known of these words, especially in his political position. Additionally, I would add that Daniel, who had to be familiar with Aramaic to do his political job, wrote chapters two through seven in Aramaic so the Gentile nations would know exactly what God said concerning them and their demise. Interesting, God wanted them to know that He and He alone ruled and reigned over the nations. It is all a latent evangelistic call I think.
- Chapters two through seven are in Aramaic, which does not support a sixth century date when Jews held to Hebrew as their national language. Dating the book in the second century would be more plausible because Aramaic was more acceptable at this time. *Rebuttal:* What is most interesting is these same scholars accept the numerous Aramaic portions of Ezra as being dated in the fifth century B.C. Why, then, the big rush to relegate Daniel to the second century? I think I know the motivation, don't you? Those who embrace this heretical view do not want to face the living God who has spoken most clearly and profoundly. Ask yourself a personal question: Do I purposefully tamper with the biblical text to re-shape it to suit my questionable purposes? In our relativistic culture, people readily twist the original meaning of the biblical text to suit all kinds of biblical unsound activities.
- The book has its share of historical inaccuracies for one who supposedly saw and wrote about these amazing prophetic events. For instance, Belshazzar is called the king and son of Nebuchadnezzar, when he was neither. His father was Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon (556-539 B.C.) according to Babylonian inscriptions. *Rebuttal:* This is really no problem for since the discovery of the Nabonidus Chronicle we understand that Belshazzar was a

co-regent with his father Nabonidus. This explains why Daniel, then, was only offered to be the third ruler in the kingdom (Daniel 5:16). Belshazzar was second in command.

- The book contains a mature understanding of theology which is too advanced for a sixth century date. Motifs like the activity of the angelic class, the emphasis upon the last divine judgment, the raising of the dead to life, and the coming of the messianic kingdom are better represented in the apocryphal literature of the inter-testamental period of the second century. *Rebuttal:* Again, can you say the word presupposition or assumption? But more substantial rebuttal exists. Archer points out several heresy busting points: Zechariah, writing from 519-470 B.C., mentions the Messiah often (Zechariah 2:3; 3:1; 6:12; 9:9; 13:1; 14:5). Angels, also, crop up all over the place in his book (Zechariah 1:11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19; 2:3, 8, 9, 11; 3:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9; 5:2, 4, 5, 10; 6:4, 5, 7 to name a few places). Angels play a great role in God's redemptive/kingdom plan in some of the oldest books of the Old Testament (Genesis 16:7, 9, 10, 11; 21:17; 22:11, 15; Exodus 3:2; 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; Numbers 20:16, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 34, 35 and so on and so forth). A weak argument is one which seeks to force its presuppositions on given text or book in order to explain it away in some scholarly fashion. As for the concept of the resurrection being of a more fashionable and palatable second century B.C. date, all one has to do is read the Old Testament. Job, the oldest book in the Bible, speaks about a resurrection (Job 19:25-26), Isaiah mentions it in 26:19; Ezekiel writes an entire chapter about it in his book as he describes the resurrection of the once dead nation of Israel (Ezekiel 37), and the resurrection of the dead through the ministries of Elijah and Elisha clearly substantiate the doctrine had a wide understanding early in Israel's history and theology (1 Kings 17:17ff; 2 Kings 4:8ff). I'll stop here because I know you are smart enough to get the proverbial point. Placing an evolutionary doctrinal template onto the biblical text is arbitrary and questionable, at best, especially when you do so in order to explain the inspired text away. Far better and wiser to accept a book, like Daniel, as being from the God who is beyond time and space and who does know the actions of all mankind in time (Isaiah 42:9).

Should you really desire to dig into the argument supporting a sixth century date, then I would direct you to Dr. Archer's fine work, which I read in college in the late 70s.<sup>2</sup> I also had to memorize these arguments for one question on my doctoral entrance test for Semitics at Dallas Theological Seminary. We had to know this information because we, as scholars, would be called to defend the veracity, historicity, and prophetic value of divinely inspired books in the face of those who desire to diminish it so they could live with limited accountability. *The bottom line of these data points cannot and should not be missed:* Since the wealth of proof rests on a sixth century date for Daniel's detailed prophecy, there is a God in heaven who has spoken to us

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<sup>2</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament: Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 379-403. An additional book to read which contains even more helpful information is Josh McDowell's *Daniel in the Critics Den* (San Bernardino: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1973).

regarding the fact He is guiding all history and all nations to their termination at the erection of the glorious Davidic kingdom of His son, Jesus, the Messiah.

God has spoken in Daniel, not multiple Jewish authors living after the fact of the “prophecies.” Judgment Day is coming. Angels are working overtime to guide the kingdoms of this world to this final battle between truth and error, light and darkness, and God and Satan. And God’s people are given clear directives regarding how they are supposed to live in the interim. Courage and non-compromise are to energize us no matter how the geo-political winds blow.

On another note, if you are looking for evidence to substantiate the existence of God, you need look no further than Daniel, really. Further, if you need evidence to guide you toward belief in Jesus, as the Messiah, predicted in Daniel some five hundred years before His glorious, magnificent birth (Daniel 9:24-27), then you have found what you are looking for. Now is the time to believe.

If you, on the other hand, just can’t begin to swallow these evidences to the ancient nature of this prophetic book, if you are still clinging tenaciously to your humanistic, I love science above all else belief, then no amount of biblical evidence will convince you to move away from disbelief to belief in God. Your problem is not informational, it’s volitional. Should this be your life situation, know that I’m praying for God to get your attention as the kingdoms of this ol’ world draw to a definite close. I’ll be praying that God will get your attention, like He did of Sir Isaac Newton, one of the great scientists of the seventeenth century. Writing at the end of his life, his words illustrate he learned how to properly evaluate the hard evidence God put in front of him:

“I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”<sup>3</sup>

As Alister McGrath concludes after this quote: That ocean is still there, its unplumbed depths inviting us to go deeper and go further. And from our perspective, the book of Daniel is just one of those wonderful bodies of water waiting your exploration in your quest to find God.

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<sup>3</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 122–123.