

## How does the book of Daniel fit into the Bible and into history?

Download and study the chart “**Overview of Old Testament History.**” This chart provides a quick overview of what the Old Testament of the Bible is about. To understand the book of Daniel, it is helpful to understand how it fits into the Bible. Following is an explanation of the chart.

At the bottom of the chart is a time line extending from Creation until about 100 AD. The top of the chart outlines 10 periods of Old Testament history. Above these 10 periods, the chart also shows the Old Testament books which pertain to that period of history. The top of the chart is read from left to right and top to bottom. For example the first period is the Pre-Abrahamic period, the second period is the Patriarchal period, the third period is the Egypt and the Exodus period, and so forth. The chart also shows where the books of the Bible fit into the periods of history. Please follow the chart as I outline some of the major events in the Old Testament.

### Periods of Old Testament History:

The first verse in the Bible reveals that:

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* Genesis 1:1 NASB

We do not know exactly when creation took place, as there may be a gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. The way we currently understand the laws of Physics including the Theory of General Relativity, we are certain that the universe (time, space, and matter) had a beginning and has not always existed. The book of Genesis reveals that God created the universe “In the beginning...” This is also the beginning of the period I have labeled **the Pre-Abrahamic** period of Old Testament History.

In **the Pre-Abrahamic** period, the book of Genesis describes where man, woman, and marriage come from. It explains where sin and death come from. It details the first murder. It describes a time when God destroyed the earth by a great flood. It finally outlines where the nations and the diversity of races and languages that we have on the earth came from. (It is not my goal at the present time to go into detail on any of these events or to give my views on them. At the current time, I am just giving a satellite overview of the Old Testament and what it is about so we can understand where and how the book of Daniel fits into the Old Testament.)

The next period of history shown on the chart begins around 2167 BC with the birth of Abraham. It is called **the Patriarchal** period. Abraham is a man that three great religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – all trace their origin back to. Both Jews and Arabs genetically come from Abraham. Abraham left his country, Ur in Babylon (modern day Iraq), and followed God to a new country, Canaan, where modern day Israel and Palestine are located. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael, from whom the Arabs trace their lineage, and Isaac, from whom Israel and the Jews trace their lineage. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob, who later changed his name to Israel, had twelve sons – the

twelve tribes of Israel are descendents of these twelve sons. The book of Genesis (which covers a longer period of time than the rest of the Bible combined) ends up with Jacob and his twelve sons and one daughter, their wives, and their kids all moving down to Egypt to avoid starving in a famine. (By the way, the book of Job is about another man who probably lived during Abraham's time.)

The offspring of Israel (Jacob) spent more than 400 years in Egypt, and became slaves to the Egyptians probably toward the end of this period of time. The book of Exodus takes up Israel's history near the end of this 400 year period. Thus begins the third period of Old Testament history, **Egypt and the Exodus**. Four books of the Bible – Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – cover this period of time lasting about 40 years. During this period of time, God used Moses to liberate the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Also during this time, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and other laws for the Nation of Israel. After God gives the Ten Commandments and the other laws, Moses sends twelve spies into Canaan. When they return, ten of the spies give a bad report which scares the Israelites, they complain to Moses and to God, and they refuse to enter the Promised Land. God punishes Israel by making them continue living in the desert for about 40 years. The Egypt and the Exodus period begins about 1446 BC and lasts for 40 years.

After the 40 years of living and wandering in the desert, the next period begins. This period, **Conquering the Land**, covers about 10 years where Israel conquers the land of Canaan in the area of the world now known as Israel and Palestine. The people of Canaan were evil. They sacrificed their own kids to a god named Molech by burning them alive. This gruesome act is one of the reasons that God ordered Israel to conquer the land of Canaan; it was judgment for human sacrifice. The book of Joshua covers this period of Old Testament history. Israel conquered Canaan beginning around 1406 BC.

The next period is that of **the Judges**. The books of Judges, Ruth, and part of 1 Samuel cover this period of time. It lasted up until about 1050 BC.

There are two periods or phases next. The first is the period of **the United Kingdom**. During this time beginning about 1050 BC, Three kings rule over Israel – King Saul, King David, and King Solomon (David's son). Upon the death of Solomon in 931 BC, the kingdom divides into the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. We call this next period **the Divided Kingdom** period. During this latter period, a number of evil kings rule Israel and a mixed number of evil and good kings rule Judah. The books of 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings cover these periods of time. 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles which were written at a later date also cover these periods of time. The poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs, and others) were written mostly by David and Solomon, but also had other authors. Also during these periods, several prophetic books called the pre-exilic prophetic books were written to warn both Israel and Judah of their coming judgment if they refused to turn back to God. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was finally conquered by Assyria in 722 BC as warned by God through the prophet Isaiah.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah lasted until around 600 BC when it was conquered in three phases by the Kingdom of Babylon. This begins the period called **the Exile**. The first phase of the exile began about 605 BC when **Daniel** and many of the nobility in Judah were exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. The second phase occurred in 597 BC when Ezekiel and 10,000 Jews were exiled to Babylon. And the third phase occurred in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar attacked again destroying Jerusalem and the temple in Jerusalem. The conquering of the Kingdom of Judah is written about in the books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and some of the prophetic books. The Exilic prophets cover the period of the exile – which lasted about 70 years.

One note – ever since the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah were exiled in 722 BC and 586 BC respectively, descendants of Israel and Judah have been dispersed all over the earth. This is why we find Jews on all the continents and in various countries around the world. This event is called the **Diaspora**. Only recently have more Jews begun to live in Israel than have been scattered around the world. I think I heard recently, that within the last few years, finally there were more Jews living in Israel than in the United States. Possibly the Diaspora is ending. It should also be noted that we are not exactly sure what happened to the people from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, though there are theories and some evidence about different people groups being related to the “ten lost tribes of Israel.” The term Jew comes from the name Judah – so Jews in general are descendants of the Southern Nation of Judah, consisting mainly of three of Israel’s tribes, Judah, Benjamin, and Levi.

The next period of Old Testament history is **the Post-Exilic** period. After approximately 70 years in Babylon, a group of Jews was allowed to return to the land of Israel, and rebuild both the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther as well as the post-exilic prophets cover this period of history. It concludes about 400 BC.

The final period of Old Testament history is the **Inter-Testamental** period. During this period of time, no Scripture was written so technically it is post-Old Testament history. It is sometimes called the **400 Silent Years**. This is a period of time after the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple after the exile, and leading up to the birth of Christ at about 4 BC. It is also the period of time when the Maccabean books from the Apocrypha were written. During this time an evil dictator named Antiochus Epiphanes killed many of the Jews and desecrated their temple by setting an idol in the temple and offering a pig as a sacrifice. (You will run into him again in your study of Daniel since Daniel predicted him.) The Maccabean revolt occurred against Antiochus Epiphanes, from which the Jews get their celebration of Hanukkah.

Finally this leads up to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Christ was born about 4 BC and died sometime around 30 AD. Right after Christ’s death and resurrection, the Church Age began, and has continued up until now. The entire New Testament was written and completed before about 100 AD.

**How does the book of Daniel fit into Old Testament history?** The book of Daniel covers a period of time from about 605 BC, up until around 535 BC. It is the period of time called **The Exile**. Daniel was kidnapped and exiled to Babylon (in present day Iraq) in about 605 BC when he was about 15 years old. He served King Nebuchadnezzar and 2 other kings in Babylon. He also served King Darius, the Medo-Persian ruler. Daniel's book prophesies in detail about the period of time between when he lived up through the time of Christ. He prophesies when Jesus the Messiah or Christ was to come. And he gives detailed prophecies about still future events leading up to the end of the world.

### **The period of the Exile was predicted earlier in the Old Testament**

During the time of the Exodus, right before Moses' death and right before Israel conquered the land of Canaan, God warned Israel through Moses the consequences of disobedience to God's Law.

- **Read Deuteronomy 27:1 thru 28:48.** Summarize the warning and the promise that God gives Israel for respective disobedience and obedience to His Law. How does this passage strike you as you meditate on it?

God continues the warning through Moses in the verses following 28:48. In the next verses he predicts:

The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who shall have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. And it shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you. ... Deuteronomy 28:49-52 (NASB)

If you continue reading God's warning, you will see where Moses predicts the Exile and the Diaspora:

... And it shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. ... Deuteronomy 28:63-64 (NASB)

God warns them that disobedience to His Law, and in particular idolatry, will bring on the punishment that happened in the time of Daniel. This passage, written during the time of the Exodus, was written about 800 years before it was fulfilled!

I should mention, that just as God through Moses predicted the Diaspora, He also predicted the Restoration. God gives them hope which we see this in the following passage:

So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. And the LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. Deuteronomy 30:1-10 (NASB)

A partial restoration from the exile to Babylon happened a few years after the death of Daniel. Up until this day, there has not been a full restoration of Israel back to its land. We are however, some 3400 years after Moses' prophecy, are seeing this restoration happening – fulfilled prophecy from 3400 years ago! In 1948 we saw the establishment of Israel as a nation, and we see a migration of Jews going back to Israel.

- ***Question to ponder.*** What is the probability that these two prophecies – the Diaspora and the Restoration – would occur 800 years and 3400 years after their respective predictions? Only God could make such a prediction!

### **State of the Southern Kingdom of Judah right before the Exile**

There is one more item of background on the book of Daniel that I would like to cover in this lesson. This has to do with the moral and spiritual conditions in Judah, for approximately the last 100 years of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, right before the period of the Exile.

- ***Read 2 Kings 21-25 and 2 Chronicles 33-36 (the last 4 chapters in each book).***  
Summarize the kings of Judah given in these chapters, what were the deeds good or evil that they did, and what was their fate. These are the kings which ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah for roughly the last 100 years before it fell to Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon.

If you did the above exercise you will see the following kings mentioned:

***Manasseh the son of Hezekiah.*** (Hezekiah was a good and godly king mentioned in 2 Kings 20.) Manasseh was evil. He whole-heartedly brought idolatry into Judah. A partial summary of his evil is given in the following verses:

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger. Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever." 2 Kings 21:1-7 (NASB)

Notice that Manasseh not only was into idolatry, but he also worshipped Molech and sacrificed one of his sons to Molech:

And he made his son pass through the fire .... 2 Kings 21:6 (NASB) see above

Manasseh was not only disobeying God's Law, but he was whole-heartedly doing one of the things for which God destroyed the Canaanites when he allowed Israel to conquer them.

**Amon son of Manasseh.** An evil king who reigned only two years. Notice that he conceived his son Josiah when he was about 15. Does this speak of immorality in the land. People did marry younger upon occasion, so I am not sure, but it is something to ponder.

**Josiah son of Amon.** Josiah, unlike his father and grandfather, was a good and godly king. He undid most of what his grandfather Manasseh did, tearing down the altars and places of idolatry which Manasseh had set up. Again we see the child sacrifice of his father and grandfather mentioned where it says that he got rid of it:

He (Josiah) also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech.  
2 Kings 23:10 (NASB)

**Jehoahaz son of Josiah.** An evil king who reigned only three months. Put on the throne by Pharaoh Neco when Neco had killed Josiah.

**Eliakim son of Josiah.** Renamed him **Jehoiakim.** He was another evil king who reigned eleven years.

**Jehoiakin son of Jehoiakim.** Another evil king reigned eight years and was taken captive by **King Nebuchadnezzar** of Babylon.

**Mattaniah (Zedekiah) uncle of Jehoiakin.** Another evil king, who was basically a puppet of Nebuchadnezzar. Again he was walking in the paths of his evil fathers, including the terrible sin of child sacrifice:

Then the king of Babylon made his uncle Mattaniah, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. 2 Kings 24:17 (NASB)

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. . . . they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. Jeremiah 32:1,34-35 (NASB)

So what were conditions just before the exile like? They were like the conditions (idolatry, immorality, child sacrifice, etc.) that God had warned them not to get involved in 800 years earlier under Moses. They were doing the same things for which God had destroyed the Canaanites through the conquering Israelites! God had warned them of exile, now in the last chapters of the book of 2 Kings and in the book of Daniel, He was keeping His promise!

- ***Question for thought.*** How do the conditions of Judah before the Exile compare with the conditions of your country or in the world today?