



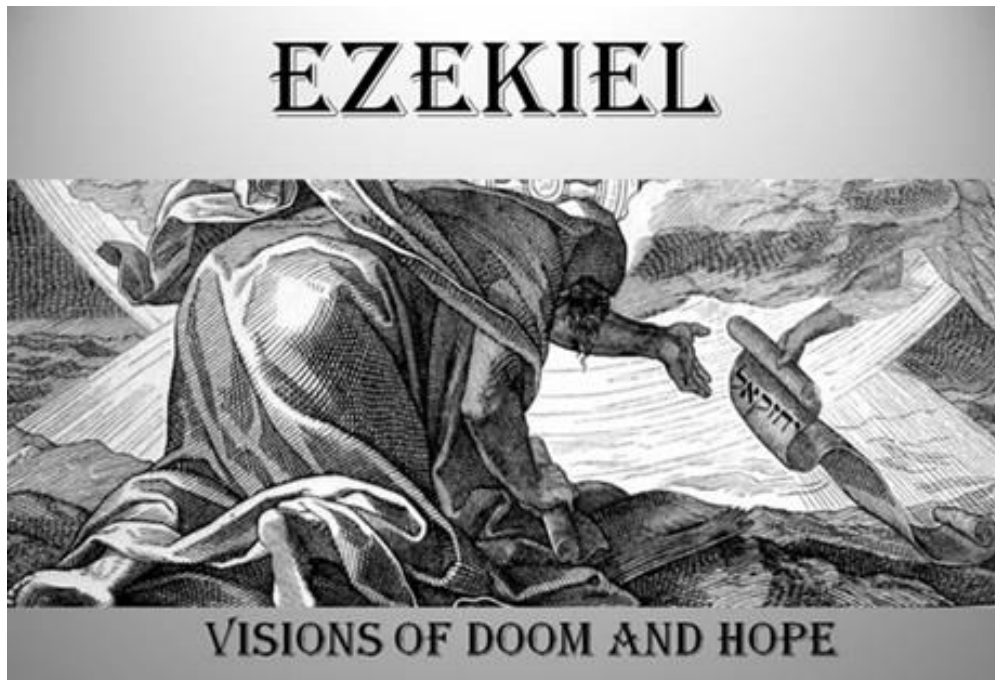
## **My Drift**

**Title: Bible – Books of Ezekiel and Daniel**

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## **Background**

The Book of Ezekiel was written during a tumultuous time in Judah. The Babylonians, during the time the book was being written, captured Judah's inhabitants in three waves, scattered the rest, or left behind the poorest of the poor. Ezekiel, a priest-turned-prophet during the time of the Babylonian takeover and captivity of the land of Judah, wrote this 48-chapter book between 593 BC and 573 BC (the three waves of deportation happening in 605, 597, and 586 BC). Ezekiel would've been writing in the midst and aftermath of the Babylonian invasion. He himself would've been taken to Babylon in the second wave, 597 BC. He was a contemporary of other major prophets, such as Daniel and Jeremiah, and minor prophets, such as Habakkuk and Obadiah. (Ezekiel 3:12-21).



**The siege of Jerusalem**



**Captured Judah's Inhabitants Taken into Captivity in Babylon**

**The Babylonians besieged Jerusalem because one of their wicked kings, Jehoiakim, placed his faith in the Babylonians by making himself a vassal king to them. In other words, he would pay tribute to the Babylonians in exchange for protection and a guarantee the Babylonians wouldn't invade.**

**But he rebelled against Babylon and placed his faith in other nations who failed him. Enraged by this severing of their relationship, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem.**



**Ezekiel**

### **Main Theme**

**Ezekiel received word from the Lord to give to Jerusalem a number of symbolic acts to symbolize how far Judah had fallen from the Lord. The majority of the book shows the repercussions of Israel's rebellion against God. As a result, God gave Israel over to their enemies for a 70-year period of time.**

**Some of these symbolic acts include:**

- ✚ Jerusalem was symbolized as a brick that the Babylonians would come and destroy, especially the bricks used to make the temple (Ezekiel 4).**
- ✚ “Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side” (Ezekiel 4:4).**

**The main theme of the book appears to be threefold:**

**First, God has let Israel reap the rewards of their sin through their captivity in Babylon (Ezekiel 23).**

**Second, God will punish the nations who have wreaked havoc on Israel throughout their history.**

**Third, God will restore the Israelites and return them home, giving them hope that this captivity in Babylon will not last forever.**

### **What Can We Learn from Ezekiel Today?**

**First, our sins have consequences. What may seem like an innocuous action can actually tear apart entire nations.**

**Second, God takes his people very seriously. Any nation that conspires against his people will receive his vengeance in full, as seen in the nations that wreaked havoc on Israel.**



**Third, God will restore us back home. Although we are wanderers in a strange land for a short time, a new Jerusalem and earth are coming, just like they had for the Israelites when they returned from captivity.**

**Fourth, our sin is our own. A particularly poignant verse in Ezekiel 18:20 shows that God measures our sins by what we personally do, not what our parents or those close to us have done. Even if we have a tattered legacy, we can still turn to God and start a new narrative in our own lives. And even if our parents are saved, that doesn't guarantee our own salvation.**

### **Popular Verses from Ezekiel**

**Ezekiel 1:20-21, "Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels".**



**Does the Bible talk about UFOs? What is the meaning of Ezekiel's prophecy of a "wheel within a wheel"? Had the prophet seen a flying ship from outer space?**

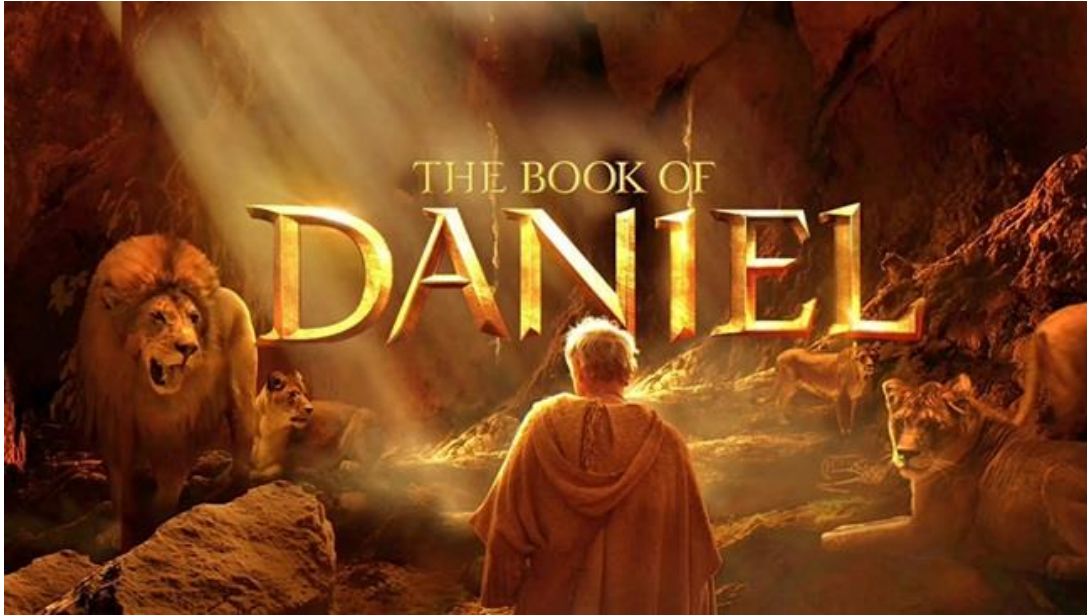
**Ezekiel 14:11, "Then the people of Israel will no longer stray from me, nor will they defile themselves anymore with all their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God, declares the Sovereign Lord."**

**Ezekiel 33:11, "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his**

**way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'"**

**Ezekiel 36:26, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."**

**Ezekiel 37:11-12, "Then he said to me: 'Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore, prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.'"**



### **Who was Daniel?**

**Roughly 2,600 years ago a Judean teenager was taken captive by the rapidly ascending Babylonian Empire—a governmental juggernaut of unstoppable military strength, great wealth and technological advancement. While such an event normally led to a life of misery as a slave, God had something else in mind for this young man.**

**Daniel—the teenager who had been taken captive—came to realize that God was miraculously working with him, and not just to preserve his life. God was revealing through him major prophecies of future cosmic and political upheaval.**

**As a resident of the world’s premier capital city and an honored wise man in King Nebuchadnezzar’s court, Daniel demonstrated God’s superiority over the pagan gods of Babylon. He also left a legacy of faithful obedience to God in spite of grave trials and difficulties.**

**This eschatology (the doctrine of the last things) ultimately affirms that the God of Israel's previous deliverance of Daniel from his enemies prefigures his future deliverance of the people of Israel from their present oppression.**

**The book's themes have resonated throughout the ages, including with the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the authors of the canonical gospels and the Book of Revelation. From the 2nd century to the modern era, religious movements including the Protestant Reformation and later millennialist movements have been deeply influenced by it.**

## **The Book of Daniel Structure**

### **PART I: Tales (Chapters 1:1–6:29)**

**Chapter 1: Induction into Babylon**

**Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

**Chapter 3: The Fiery Furnace**

**Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar's Madness**

**Chapter 5: Belshazzar's Feast**

**Chapter 6: Daniel in the Lions's Den**

### **PART II: Visions (Chapters 7:1–12:13)**

**Chapter 7: The Four Beasts**

**Chapter 8: The Ram, He-Goat and Horn**

**Chapter 9: The Seventy Weeks**

**Chapters 10–12: Daniel's final vision**

### **Introduction in Babylon (Chapter 1)**

In the third year of King Jehoiakim, God allows Jerusalem to fall into the power of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon. Young Israelites of noble and royal family, "without physical defect, and handsome," versed in wisdom and competent to serve in the palace of the king, are taken to Babylon to be taught the literature and language of that nation. Among them are Daniel and his three companions, who refuse to touch the royal food and wine. Their overseer fears for his life in case the health of his charges deteriorates, but Daniel suggests a trial and the four emerge healthier than their counterparts from ten days of consuming nothing but vegetables and water. They are allowed to continue to refrain from eating the king's food, and to Daniel, God gives insight into visions and dreams. When their training is done Nebuchadnezzar finds them 'ten times better' than all the wise men in his service and therefore keeps them at his court, where Daniel continues until the first year of King Cyrus.

### **Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four kingdoms (Chapter 2)**

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. When he wakes up, he realizes that the dream has some important message, so he consults his wise men. Wary of their potential to fabricate an explanation, the king refuses to tell the wise men what he saw in his dream. Rather, he demands that his wise men tell him what the content of the dream was, and then interpret it. When the wise men protest that this is beyond the power of any man, he sentences all, including Daniel and his friends, to death. Daniel receives an explanatory vision from God: Nebuchadnezzar had seen an enormous statue with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of

mixed iron and clay, then saw the statue destroyed by a rock that turned into a mountain filling the whole earth. Daniel explains the dream to the king: the statue symbolized four successive kingdoms, starting with Nebuchadnezzar, all of which would be crushed by God's kingdom, which would endure forever. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the supremacy of Daniel's god, raises Daniel over all his wise men, and places Daniel and his companions over the province of Babylon.



### **The fiery furnace (Chapter 3)**

Daniel's companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue and are thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is astonished to see a fourth figure in the furnace with the three, one "with the appearance like a son of the gods." So, the king calls the three to come out of the fire, blesses the God of Israel, and decrees that any who blaspheme against him shall be torn limb from limb.

### **Nebuchadnezzar's madness (Chapter 4)**

Nebuchadnezzar recounts a dream of a huge tree that is suddenly cut down at the command of a heavenly messenger. Daniel is summoned and interprets the dream. The tree is Nebuchadnezzar himself, who for seven years will lose his mind and live like a wild beast. All of this comes to pass until, at the end of the specified time, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that "Heaven rules" and his kingdom and sanity are restored.



### **Belshazzar's feast (Chapter 5)**

Belshazzar and his nobles blasphemously drink from sacred Jewish temple vessels, offering praise to inanimate gods, until a mysterious hand suddenly appears and writes upon the wall. The horrified king summons Daniel, who upbraids him for his lack of humility before God and interprets the message: Belshazzar's kingdom will be given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar rewards Daniel and raises him to be third in the kingdom, and that very night Belshazzar is slain, and Darius the Mede takes the kingdom.

### **Daniel in the lions' den (Chapter 6)**

Darius elevates Daniel to high office, exciting the jealousy of other officials. Knowing of Daniel's devotion to his God, his enemies trick the king into issuing an edict forbidding worship of any other god or man for a 30-day period. Daniel continues to pray three times a day to God towards Jerusalem; he is accused and King Darius, forced by his own decree, throws Daniel into the lions' den. But God shuts up the mouths of the lions, and the next morning Darius rejoices to find him unharmed. The king casts Daniel's accusers into the lions' pit together with their wives and children to be instantly devoured, while he himself acknowledges Daniel's God as he whose kingdom shall never be destroyed.



**Daniel in the Lions' Den**

### **Vision of the beasts from the sea (Chapter 7)**

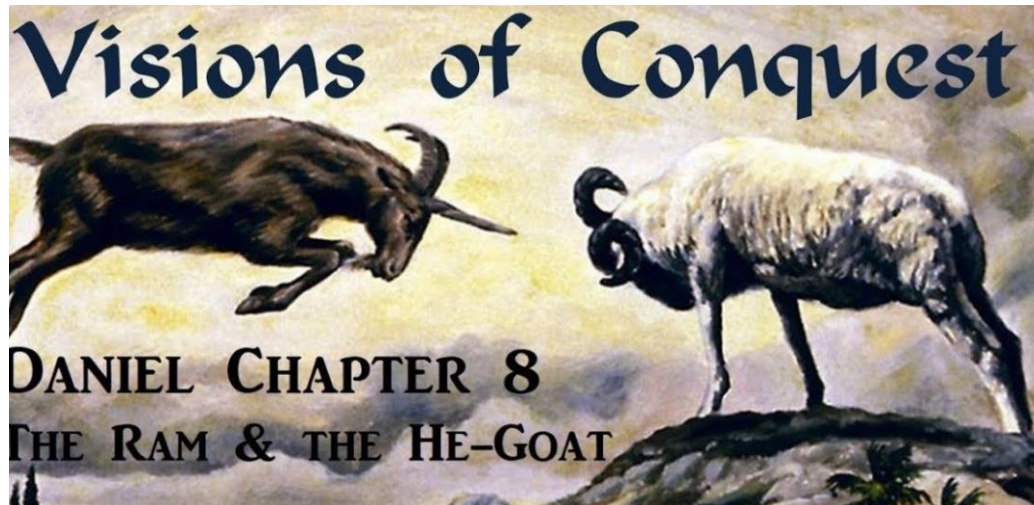
In the first year of Belshazzar, Daniel has a dream of four monstrous beasts arising from the sea. The fourth, a beast with ten horns, devours the whole earth, treading it down and crushing it, and a further small horn appears and uproots three of the earlier horns. The Ancient of Days judges and destroys the beast, and "one like a son of man" is given everlasting kingship over the entire world. One of Daniel's attendants explains that the four beasts represent four kings, but that the holy ones of the "Most High" would receive the everlasting kingdom. The fourth beast would be a fourth kingdom with ten kings, and another king who would pull down three kings and make war on the "holy ones" for "a time, two times and a half," after which the heavenly judgment will be made against him, and the "Holy Ones" will receive the everlasting kingdom.



**Beasts from the Sea**

### **Vision of the ram and goat (Chapter 8)**

In the third year of Belshazzar Daniel has a vision of a ram and goat. The ram has two mighty horns, one longer than the other, and it charges west, north and south, overpowering all other beasts. A goat with a single horn appears from the west and destroys the ram. The goat becomes very powerful until the horn breaks off and is replaced by four lesser horns. A small horn that grows very large, it stops the daily temple sacrifices and desecrates the sanctuary for two thousand three hundred "evenings and mornings" (which could be either 1,150 or 2,300 days) until the temple is cleansed. The angel Gabriel informs him that the ram represents the Medes and Persians, the goat is Greece, and the "little horn" is a wicked king.



### **Vision of the Seventy Weeks (Chapter 9)**

In the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel meditates on the word of Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years; he confesses the sin of Israel and pleads for God to restore Israel and the "desolated sanctuary" of the Temple. The angel Gabriel explains that the seventy years stand for seventy "weeks" of years (490 years), during which the Temple will first be restored, then later defiled by a "prince who is to come," "until the decreed end is poured out."

### **Vision of the kings of north and south (Chapters 10–12)**

**Daniel 10:** In the third year of Cyrus, Daniel sees in his vision an angel (called "a man", but clearly a supernatural being) who explains that he is in the midst of a war with the "prince of Persia", assisted only by Michael, "your prince." The "prince of Greece" will shortly come, but first he will reveal what will happen to Daniel's people.

**Daniel 11:** A future king of Persia will make war on the king of Greece, a "mighty king" will arise and wield power until his empire is broken up and given to others, and finally the king of the south (identified in verse 8 as Egypt) will go to war with the "king of the north." After many battles (described in great detail) a "contemptible person" will become king of the north; this king will invade the south two times, the first time with success, but on his second he will be stopped by "ships of Kittim." He will turn back to his own country, and on the way his soldiers will desecrate the Temple, abolish the daily sacrifice, and set up the abomination of desolation. He will defeat and subjugate Libya

and Egypt, but "reports from the east and north will alarm him," and he will meet his end "between the sea and the holy mountain."

**Daniel 12:** At this time Michael will come. It will be a time of great distress, but all those whose names are written will be delivered. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt; those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." In the final verses the remaining time to the end is revealed: "a time, times and half a time" (three years and a half). Daniel fails to understand and asks again what will happen and is told: "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."

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