

Daniel—the man greatly beloved

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Daniel Study Guide.
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IT IS GOOD to see another title added to the “Study Guide” series published by the Christadelphian Office. This one, on the Prophecy of Daniel, follows the aim of the series: to expound a book of the Bible, drawing out the message for the time in which it was written, and highlighting the exhortation that we can gain today for our discipleship. Many older Christadelphians will have been used to consulting Brother Thomas’s *Brief Exposition of the Prophecy of Daniel*,¹ originally published as part of *Eureka* in the section on “The Apocalypse Rooted in the Prophets”. It is not the easiest introduction to Daniel! Brother Edmund Green’s admirable book *The Prophecy of Daniel*² closely follows Brother Thomas’s work, but is more readable and up-to-date. This new Study Guide, written by Brother Michael Lewis, is a splendid introduction to the prophecy, and builds on the two earlier and lengthier works.

It follows the format of previous Study Guides, with an introduction, an overview, and several short chapters forming the main exposition. It is a seventy-page book, well written, with useful maps, tables and diagrams. The introduction and preface are also very helpful. After the background material, there is panel which divides the book into four great prophecies and the major incidents recorded in Daniel’s life. The overview explains the major themes, the first of which is the kingdom of men versus the Kingdom of God. The importance of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is the second theme. The godly way that Daniel and his friends lived out their lives is the third great theme.

The first six chapters of Daniel

A feature of the book is its clarity, and this is seen, for example, in the panel on page 10, where the four great prophecies from Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8 and 11 are compared. The author takes us nicely into Nebuchadnezzar’s image dream: “he was a military dictator and may well have been suffering from paranoia. We are told in 2:1 that ‘his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him’, and later Daniel provides the reason (verse 29). Nebuchadnezzar was lying awake worrying about what would happen after his reign. Would there be a greater king of Babylon? Would he be usurped as the greatest leader in history? Eventually he fell into a troubled sleep and the answers were given in a dream, although they were not the answers he expected” (p. 13).

A very useful section, “The iron and the clay”, looks closely at Daniel 2:41–43. Whereas the clay represents secular government, the iron represents corrupt Christianity, and the author suggests that the Church today ‘mingles with the seed of men’ by adopting humanist and socialist ideas, and has a powerful influence on state affairs, but remains separate from the state at the time of Christ’s coming. He draws exhortation and warning for us.

The chapters on Daniel’s friends in the fiery furnace (were the beautiful tiles that adorned the walls and temples of ancient Babylon baked in those furnaces?), the tree dream (a good panel here on why there was no silver in the band along with the iron and bronze), Belshazzar’s impious feast and the time when the aged Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den, are all recounted in the context of the great themes that run through Daniel. Brother Michael offers comments on Belshazzar and Darius the Mede, and shows that the Bible is in accord with known discoveries about

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1. *A Brief Exposition of the Prophecy of Daniel*, J. Thomas, The Christadelphian.
 2. *The Prophecy of Daniel* (1988), Edmund Green, The Christadelphian.

these two kings. The exhortations for us today are shown clearly.

The second and third of the great prophecies

The second great prophecy, the vision of the four beasts, is explained in a direct and satisfying way, and the comments on the dreadful fourth beast are good. The huge iron teeth, and nails of bronze, are symbols of, respectively, the Roman military machine, which devoured the world, and Greek culture, in whose hold the Roman world was captive. Brother Michael traces the history of the Roman Empire in a direct manner for those whose knowledge of the ancient world may be slight, and the emergence of the papacy around A.D. 600 as the "little horn" is set out, with reasons for the interpretation. It is here that Brother Michael gives straightforward Scriptural reasons for believing the day-for-a-year principle, when expounding the time period that the papacy would persecute the people of God. The author concludes this section: "This is a powerful prophecy, primarily about the impact of Rome on the Gentile world after the time of the Lord Jesus. We can understand how Daniel felt at the end when he said, 'As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me'. He was starting to realise that God's purpose was going to continue for a long time. But if this was about the Gentiles, what was to happen to Israel? That question, so vital to Daniel, was answered in the next chapter [ch. 8]" (p. 39). There is a useful panel on "Daniel in the letters to Thessalonica" on page 40.

Daniel 8 and 9 form the third great prophecy in the book, focusing on Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem, the desolation of the Land for some 2,000 years and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. In the Hebrew language Daniel is shown the 'evening-morning' vision. The evening-morning refers to the daily offering of lambs under the Law, sacrifices that pointed forward to Christ's sacrifice. Daniel is told that this daily offering would cease during Roman times. Also in this vision were a ram and he-goat and their horns, which were symbols of Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome and their impact on Israel during this long period. Brother Michael ends like this (p. 47): "With the New Testament in hand it is easy for us to understand these things but Daniel was utterly confused (verse 27). He fainted and was ill for a time; though he appears to have discussed the vision with his friends no one understood it. He had to wait over ten years until Gabriel

came to him again to give the full explanation of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus introduced in this chapter [8]"

That second explanation is what we call the Seventy Weeks Prophecy, and it forms the main part of chapter 9. The Seventy Weeks Prophecy is not easy to explain, but Brother Michael sets everything out clearly, with a panel on the way the seventy weeks are broken down into 7-, 62- and 1-week periods. Another panel is entitled, "The Lord Jesus and the 'Abomination of Desolation'". The lovely prayer of Daniel, his response to seeing the signs of the times being fulfilled in his day, is surely a model for all time of how *we* should pray to our Father as we seek a blessing on our Brotherhood and ourselves.

The fourth great prophecy

Brother Michael gives an overview of the fourth great prophecy, which runs over the three last chapters of the book. Daniel sees, as a prelude to receiving the prophecy, a vision of a man very similar to the vision of the Lord Jesus given to John in Revelation. A panel on page 58 compares them. But then Daniel was shown that he would fall asleep, only to be wakened again in the resurrection, which he enacts in 10:7-19. The fourth great prophecy is given in Daniel 11 and 12. "It takes us through the empires of Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome with the focus on Israel . . . with a passage on the final invasion of Israel from the north at the time of the end" (p. 61). It is difficult for us, living at the threshold of the setting up of the Kingdom, to understand why there is so much detail of events during the Greek period, but, as the author comments, "it is probable that the prophecy met the needs of believers in providing support when it was required". The Greek Empire was divided into four parts on the death of Alexander the Great, and only two parts, the north ruled by Seleucus and the south ruled by Ptolemy, affected the nation of Israel, which was situated between them. Daniel 11:21-35 covers the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, who actively persecuted the Jews. In many respects he was the 'Hitler' of the time. The emergence of Rome as the invader of Israel from the north is described in verses 36-39, and the author has some useful comments on the meaning of the rather obscure language of these verses.

The invasion of the Land by the king of the north at the time of the end is compared with the Gogian invasion described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 in a panel on page 60, and another useful panel

links Russia and Rome. This is important, because previous chapters of Daniel (2, 7, 8 and 9) foretell that Rome will be on the world stage at the time of the end. Moscow has been called the 'Third Rome', the second Rome being Constantinople. The "Michael" of Daniel 12:1 is discussed, as is the "time of trouble" of verse 2. The time periods in chapter 12 also receive attention on page 67, and the reader is referred to Brother Green's book for other possible interpretations.

Brother Lewis ends with a fine summary, "The message of Daniel". What a wonderful man Daniel was—a sojourner in a strange country, whose faith raised him to great heights, and who was privileged to be given the broad sweep of God's plan for the earth, centred on the sacrifice of the Lord

Jesus! What a fine example he and his friends are, for did not Daniel "[purpose] in his heart" not to eat of the king's food, just as centuries later his Messiah and Lord "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51) and the death of the cross?

This book deserves to be read widely, especially by the younger members of our Brotherhood, who will truly find it a study *guide*. It will also help to consolidate and refresh those who have studied Daniel before, and they can be assured that they will not have to struggle with terms like the "Greco-Roman dragon" and the "Latino-Greek power in its pagan constitution"! Brother Michael is to be thanked for all the work he has put into writing this book and making Daniel so accessible to a new generation of Bible students.