

Daniel: Book of Hope

Syllabus for Winter Term 2007
(This is a fourth edition.)

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Introduction

The Book of Daniel is one of the most significant books included in the Bible. Not only was it inspired by God, but it also provides an excellent opportunity to experience a study in contrasts. In its pages we see recorded a variety of perspectives (Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar both participated in its writing), a variety of languages (see notes on the Book of Daniel), and a variety of styles (stories and prophetic messages).

This syllabus is being created with several very specific goals in mind. It is my goal to make available a combination of information: both simple and technical. The simple information is intended to pull the reader back to the basics. No matter how smart we may think that we are, we can gain benefit by approaching the text with the attitude of the simple learner. But there is also a fair amount of technical information. It is not intended that all of this be memorized in great detail. That which should be memorized will be highlighted in class.

But there are serious attacks against the basic teachings of the book of Daniel. These attacks come from non-Christians, from non-SDA Christians, and from people who claim to be SDA Christians. A simple knowledge of the book is not enough to face such attacks. Many highly educated people have lost their faith as they entertained serious, doubting questions relating to this book. Over the last couple of decades, some incredibly powerful answers have been discovered as some of the brightest minds of the SDA church focused on the issues involved.

This syllabus is a kind of short work on the book of Daniel. It is a primary source for students taking the Weimar College class RELB 301 (formerly RELB 202) which is offered in the Winter quarter of 2007. Future editions, if created, will build upon this work. Please understand that there are a number of glitches in formatting and in overall appearance. There are likely to be a variety of other mistakes (for which I claim full responsibility).¹

The main sources of information which are included in this syllabus are class notes from seminary classes taught by the late Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel, Dr. Hans Erbes, and Dr. Richard Davidson (teachers at Andrews University Theological Seminary in the early 1990's). There is also influence from a variety of other seminary professors. Another resource utilized were class notes from Dr. Douglas Waterhouse (formerly a teacher at Andrews University, in the undergraduate program). In addition to these individuals,

¹The second, third, and fourth editions gave an opportunity to clear up a variety of glitches which entered the work as I had used unfamiliar software (Dagesh-Pro, version 4.0). After using the software for another three years, it was possible to conquer a number of earlier problems.

information comes from the written works of Dr. William Shea, Dr. C. Mervin Maxwell, Dr. Jacques Doukhan, as well as written and spoken material from Clifford Goldstein and Pastor Michael Oxentenko (see the annotated bibliography for additional information). Many other books have entered into the preparation of this material--both consciously and unconsciously (it is probably never possible to track down each and every root of an idea). Even Solomon said that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In addition, a number of thoughts have come to play by spending time reading the original languages and praying that God would guide the thought processes.

As can be seen in the introduction, the class will follow the order of the book of Daniel. In Daniel chapters 8, 9, and 11, the material has been divided into two sections each. This is due, in part, to the volume of material. It is also due to the nature of these passages which call for a look in very different directions. For example, the study of Daniel chapter eight (8) requires a working knowledge of the doctrine of the sanctuary. That is why such a study is inserted at this point.

Each section of this syllabus is divided into three main parts: an introduction, a group of theological tools, and a portion which brings out spiritual insights or practical applications. Each INTRODUCTION surveys the "general lay of the land" so to speak. It points toward the basic direction of that chapter in the book of Daniel or in related material. Each part containing the THEOLOGICAL TOOLS will give some of the basic theological discussion on the matter. Some of this is very simple. At times, this section can get rather technical. Though it may seem to be tedious to the uninitiated reader, the tools presented can be a life-saver when facing intellectuals who come with doubting questions. The last part of each section focuses on the SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS or PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS. These sections may serve as a kind of seed bed for planning sermons or worship talks. They are often in the style of the kinds of discoveries which can come from a devotional reading of scripture.

Details on class requirements-- including reading assignments, tests, and written work--will be given in the course outline (which is handed out as a separate document).

It is my prayer that you will be benefited in at least three ways while taking this class on the book of Daniel. You will come to better understand and appreciate God as your personal friend and your ever-present help. You will understand the basic message of the book of Daniel. And you will be better equipped to face the questions which are being hurled at those who take a historicist approach to the study of Daniel. If these three benefits can be realized, then my prayers have been answered.

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