

The Book of Daniel: the Key to Bible prophecy



Daniel in the Lion's Den portrayed by Rubens 1577-1640

understand Bible prophecy. Without understanding Daniel, a thorough understanding of Revelation is impossible. Daniel is the foundation for the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is the completion of the plan first revealed to Daniel in the Babylonian and Persian kingdoms over 2500 years ago.

Events surrounding the book of Daniel



Map of the Assyrian Empire 700 BC.

battle, was replaced by his son, and Assyria become part of the Neo Babylonian Empire.

Jehoahaz, Josiah's 2nd son, was installed in his father's place, he ruled for 3 months till Pharaoh Neco returned from Haran, Jehoahaz was taken as a captive to Egypt and replaced with his brother Eliakim renamed Jehoiakim (608-598 B.C.) by Pharaoh Neco. Judah became a vassal of Egypt.

Introduction

Daniel is one of the most important books of the Bible to understand. Daniel connects the Old and New Testaments. Through Daniel, God revealed the exact date month and year of Messiah death (Christ) and events leading to His return.

Daniel demonstrates God's complete control and comprehension over time and nations, by giving detailed prophecies about the succession of kingdoms and rulers. Daniel foretells the eventual establishment of Messiah's kingdom, which will overthrow the kingdoms of this world.

For the reason, Daniel is often the most attacked book in the Bible. Critics date Daniel's authorship to the 2nd century B.C.; otherwise, critics must accept the super natural.

Daniel is also important for anybody who wants to

A. The Kingdoms in conflict

The book of Daniel takes place from B.C. 605 to 530, bridging both the Babylonian and Persian kingdom's rule over Judea and Jerusalem. Daniel follows a turbulent and period in Israel's history. Israel and Judah were buffer nations between the powerful nations of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon.

Babylon was a once former great kingdom dominated by the Assyrian Empire. In 621 B.C., Nabopolassar became the king of Babylon he challenged Assyrian control. In 612 B.C., with the aid of the Medes and Scythian hordes, Nabopolassar sacked the Assyrian capital of Nineveh.

Assyria, following the sacking went into a quick decline, the armies of Assyria abandoned the cities of Haran at the approaching Babylonians in 610 B.C. Egypt allied itself with Assyria against Babylon to retake the city. Pharaoh Neco, (2 Kings 23:28-30) on his way was through Israel was intercepted by the armies of Judah led by Josiah (640-609 B.C.). Josiah killed in

In 605 B.C., Egypt was trying to inherit what remained of the Assyrian empire, resulting in the battle of Carchemish. Carchemish was Egypt's last attempt for control of Middle East, Babylon defeated Egypt and Judah became a vassal of Babylon. In 605 B.C., Nabopolassar also died, and his son Nebuchadnezzar commander of the Babylonian forces returned to Babylon. On his return to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem took hostages and looted treasures from the Temple. Hostages secured Jerusalem's surrender; among them were included Daniel, Shadrach, Mishach and Abendgo descendents of the Royal family.

B. Josiah's Revival

The reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) was another important event in the history of Judah. Under Josiah rule, Israel experienced a spiritual revival. Josiah was the great grandson of Hezekiah (715-699 B.C.). Hezekiah's son Manasseh (697-642 B.C.) and Manasseh's son Amon (642-640 B.C.), Josiah's father, was a period of apostasy for Judah. They turned away from the God of Israel. Josiah was different; he sought to do God's will.



**Tiglath-Pileser III,
(II Kings 15:29)
745-727 B.C.
King of Assyria**

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and at eighteen, the priest Hilkiah found *The Book of the Law* in the Temple. Josiah reinstated the Covenant, celebrating a national Passover, and destroying idol worship (2 Kings 22-23). Jeremiah was a young contemporary of Josiah who was twenty-one, when God first spoke to him. Jeremiah served with King Josiah until Josiah's death in 609 B.C., Jeremiah wept for his friend and king who died at 39 years of age.

Another contemporary of Josiah and Jeremiah was Ezekiel, a thirty-year old priest, in 597 B.C. He along with Jeremiah, Daniel and his friends benefited from Josiah's revival. The revival prepared a select group of Jews for the coming exile and future destruction of Jerusalem.

The Daniel we see in Babylon and Persia is the product of the revival in the days of Josiah.

Daniel in relation to the other prophet

Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel and Jeremiah all three being in Jerusalem when Daniel and his friend were taken captive to Babylon. In 605 B.C. Daniel, was a young man probably about 14 to 15 years of age. In 605 B.C., (Jeremiah 1:1-2) Jeremiah was in his 22nd year of ministry called as youth probably near the age of 14, making him about 36 years of age. Ezekiel was thirty in 597

B.C., making him 22-years old in 605 B.C. (Ezekiel 1:1-2).

Date and Authorship

A. Authorship

Daniel is as established as author, throughout the contents of the book of Daniel. Daniel is told in Daniel 12:4, "seal the book until the time of the end", and in verse 9, we read, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed".

Jesus also attributes the book's authorship to Daniel in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14).

In the third century, a pagan named Porphyry questioned the sixth century B.C. dating and authorship of Daniel. Jerome, translator of the Vulgate, replied to his charges in his *Commentary on Daniel*.

Critics followed porphyry in the 17th century, who claimed Maccabean Jews wrote Daniel in the Maccabean period (166 B.C.), because of Daniel precise historical accuracy.

B. Date

The dating of the book of Daniel varies from sixth to 2nd century B.C. Liberal critics, who attribute the authorship to the Maccabeans in 166 B.C., give the book a late date.

The purpose of the late dating is denial of the super natural aspect of the book.

Conservative Christians and Jews, who accept the super natural aspect of scripture, have no problem with dating the book from 605 to 536 B.C, during the time of Daniel.

These dates are arrived by specific references to events and reigns of kings in Judah, Babylon and Persia. Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus and Jehoiakim, historical kings of Babylon, Persia and Judah, can be dated

and verified outside of the Bible, using the dates of these kings; a reliable dating for Daniel can be established.

Place in the scriptures

The Jewish Bible is divided into three sections, The *Law*, the *Prophets* and the *Writings*. In the Hebrew Bible, Daniel is included in the third section known as the writings or *Kethubim* (Writings) or Hagiographa. In the Septuagint¹ and Vulgate, Daniel is placed with the Major Prophets; the Christian Old Testament follows the pattern of the Septuagint. Josephus also includes Daniel in the second section of the Jewish canon.

The reason Daniel is placed in the Kethubim, (writings), is not because Daniel is considered less inspired than the prophets, as some critics claim. Daniel is in the third division because Daniel was not called a *nabhi* or prophet. He was seen as a *hozeh* (seer) and a *hakham* (wiseman). The second section was reserved only for books written by those addressed as prophets. The third division is not considered less inspired and includes Psalms, Proverbs and Chronicles. David is a prophet and his writings inspired, but Psalm is placed in the third division in the same division as Daniel.

Purpose

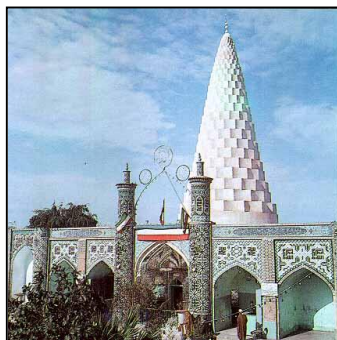
Daniel is a book of encouragement for those want to assured of God's control. The book of *Daniel* is born out of tribulation and uncertainty. Daniel is a young boy, taken as captive into a foreign land away from his family and city of birth. By trusting God, Daniel along with his obedient friends become rulers in kingdoms of Babylon and Persia.

The underlying message in Daniel is God is in control. The nations are subject to the will of God, not the will man, and God will preserve His people through trouble. By revealing specifics of His plans, God prepares and encourages His people for the future. Daniel confirms the identity of Jesus Christ as Messiah, by foretelling the exact month and year of Messiah's death and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple following. The book of Daniel lays the groundwork for the return of Messiah, detailing events that will take place in the end of days, leading to the return of Messiah.

Daniel also uses the example of Daniel and his friends as example of how saints are to act in the face of trouble, knowing God is in control despite the difficulty.

Languages

Aramaic and Hebrew are the two languages used in Daniel. Hebrew is used in Daniel 1:1 to Daniel 2:4a and Chapters 8 through 12, Aramaic is used from Daniel 2:4a to 7:28. The Aramaic language was the common language or *lingua franca*, used in Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian communication. Aramaic is found also in the Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26 and Jeremiah 10:11.



**The Daniel Mosque,
traditional location of
Daniel's tomb**

Why did Daniel compose a portion of his revelation in a foreign language? Some have used this to argue a late date for the book of Daniel. Aramaic in fact was the common language in the 6th century B.C., not the Maccabean period (166 B.C) where Greek became the common language. Daniel message was not only to the Jewish people, but also to the nations. Aramaic in Daniel's day is equivalent to English in our day. Daniel 2:4 to 7:28 would be accessible to any literate, Greek, Babylonian or Jew in Daniel's day and later.

Divisions of Daniel

There are several ways to divide the book of Daniel. The most popular is to divide Daniel into 2 halves, Chapters 1 to 6 and Chapters 7 to 12. The first half is historical; the second half is apocalyptic or predictive. Chapter 1 is viewed as an introduction.

Another division is to view the Aramaic section Daniel 2:4 to 7:28 as the

¹ The Christian Old Testament has the same books number of books in the Jewish Bible or Tanach, the placement is based on the order in the Septuagint.

message to the nations, with the Hebrew portions Chapters 1 and 8 through 12 as a message to the Jewish people.

Apocryphal additions

The Greek version of Daniel, from the Septuagint includes several additions not found in the Hebrew or Aramaic texts. They are *The Prayer of Azarias*, *The Song of the Three Holy Children*, *Susanna*, and *Bel and the Dragon*.

The *Prayer of Azarias* and the *Song of the Three Holy Children* contain the prayer and praise of Daniel's three companions while in the furnace in Daniel chapter 3.

Susanna is the story of a woman protected by Daniel, who obtains conviction of two judges guilty of trying to seduce her. According to the Law of Moses, they execution takes place.

Bel and the Dragon has three stories; Daniel destroys Bel's image, kills the dragon and is fed by Habakkuk the prophet in the lion's den for six days in Daniel 6.

These stories are rejected as not genuine parts of the book of Daniel but later additions.

Defending Daniel against the Critics

Not until the third century, was the book of Daniel questioned. A neo-Platonist, a student of Plotinus, Porphyry (A.D. 234-305) wrote a 15-volume work entitled *Against the Christians*, attacking the evidences of Christianity. The only surviving fragments of his writings are preserved in St. Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel*.

Jerome (A.D. 347-420) in his introduction to his *Commentary on Daniel* said this,

Porphyry wrote his twelfth book against the prophecy of Daniel, (A) denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in this title, but rather by some individual living in Judea at the time of Antiochus who was surnamed Epiphanies. He furthermore alleged that "Daniel" did not foretell the future so much as he related the past, and lastly, that whatever he spoke of up till the time of Antiochus contained authentic history, whereas anything he may have conjectured beyond that point was false, inasmuch as he would not have foreknown the future..... I wish to stress in my preface this fact, that none of the prophets has so clearly spoken concerning Christ as has this prophet Daniel. For not only did he assert the he would come, a prediction common to the other prophets as well but also he set forth the very time at which he would come..... For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers as a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past.²

Porphyry's arguments against Daniel and were again raised in the seventeenth century with the rise of higher criticism³. Prior to this period, Jerome's view of Daniel was the view of the church. The arguments against Daniel have been listed by Thomas S. Kepler and they include,

1. About 200 B.C. the Prophets were added to the Law to compose the Jewish "Bible". Yet Daniel is not among the Prophets, being added to the sacred writings about A.D. 90 When the Jewish Bible was completed.
2. The Book of Daniel is not mentioned in any Jewish literature until 140 B.C., When the Sibylline Oracles (3:397-400) refer to it.
3. Jesus Ben Sirach about 190 B.C. lists the great men of Jewish history (Ecclesiasticus 44:1-50:24) But among these names Daniel is missing.
4. Words borrowed from the Babylonian, Persian and Greek languages appear in Daniel.
5. Jeremiah is mentioned as a prophet and his writings are referred to.
6. In Jeremiah's time (Also the period Nebuchadnezzar) the Chaldeans are spoken of as a nation or people, but in the book of Daniel, they are known as astrologers, magicians, diviners of truth.
7. The book of Daniel is written partly in Aramaic, a language popular among the Jews in the Second century B.C. but not at the time of Nebuchadnezzar.
8. The author has an excellent view of history after the time of Alexander the Great, especially during the Maccabean struggles; but his history shows many inaccuracies during the Babylonian and Persian periods.
9. The theology regarding the resurrection of the dead and ideas about angels show that the author lived at a later time than that of Nebuchadnezzar....
10. The pattern and purpose of the book of Daniel as an apocalypse, which reinterprets history from the time of

² Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel*, quoted from *Daniel Key to Prophetic Revelation*, John F. Walvoord, Moody Press, 1971, Chicago.

³ Historical-Criticism: literary criticism in the light of historical evidence or based on the context in which a work was written, including facts about the author's life and the historical and social circumstances of the time.

Nebuchadnezzar until the time of Judas Maccabeus and Antiochus IV and written in 165 B.C. fits better into the scheme and purpose of Daniel than if the book were written in the period of Nebuchadnezzar, predicting history for the next 450 years.⁴

The objections to Daniel are in six categories.

Six criticisms

1. Rejection of canonicity

Daniel's inclusion in the third section of Hebrew canon (Hagiographa, The Writings) and not among the prophets was not because Daniel was written after the canon was closed. Daniel was viewed as an official or wiseman not as a prophet, he was prime minister in both Babylonian and Persian courts. He was not called a prophet in his book (Nabi) and did not preach to the people. His words are placed alongside, Psalms, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and proverbs all considered inspired and part of the Hebrew canon.

Daniel is also mentioned in the book of Ezekiel three times (Ezekiel 14:14, 20, 28:3). Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries. In 605 B.C. when Daniel was taken captive, Ezekiel was 22-year old, destined for the Jewish priesthood. When Ezekiel penned the name of Daniel in chapters 14 and 28, Daniel's exploits, rising to the level of prime minister under Nebuchadnezzar would have been known.

Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24:15 calls specifically brings attention to the book of Daniel referencing the Abomination of Desolation referred to in the book of Daniel. Jesus calls Daniel a prophet and verifies the book as part of Holy Scripture.

2. Rejection of detailed prophecy

Prophery's original objection is that prophecy is impossible, this stems from the rejection of theism and the rejection of the super natural. This is the reason Daniel has come under such an intense attack by the critics. For those who view omniscience as part of God's character, the foretelling of future of events is not out of the ordinary.

Even if the critic accepted the late date as valid, they still run into the problem of prophecy. Daniel foretold the exact month and year of (Messiah) Christ's death and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 by the Romans in Daniel 9:24-27, over 200-years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

3. Rejection of miracles

If Daniel is rejected because of miracles such as the three boys in midst of the fire (Daniel 3), The hand writing on the wall (Chapter 5), Daniel in the lions' den (chapter 6) and the appearance of angels, (Chapters 8,9,10,11,12), then all of scripture must be rejected. This is the point and presuppositions of the critics, to deny the existence and possibility of the super natural.

4. Textual problems

Critics of Daniel focus on the Aramaic and Hebrew divisions of Daniel, claiming the text was tampered with by late date redactors, who changed the contents. Robert Dick Wilson an expert authority on Aramaic comments on the Aramaic in the book of Daniel,

We claim, however, that the composite Aramaic of Daniel agrees in almost every particular of orthography, etymology and syntax, with the Aramaic of the North Sem inscriptions of the 9th, 8th and 7th centuries BC and of the Egypt papyri of the 5th cent. BC, and that the vocabulary of Daniel has an admixture of Hebrew, Babylonian and Persian words similar to that of the papyri of the 5th century BC; whereas, it differs in composition from the Aramaic of the Nabateans, which is devoid of Persian, Hebrew and Babylonian words, and is full of Arabisms, and also from that of the Palmyrenes, which is full of Greek words, while having but one or two Persian words and no Hebrew or Babylonian.⁵

⁴ Daniel: Key to Bible Prophecy, John F. Walvoord, Moody Press, 1971, Chicago Pg. 18, quoting Thomas S. Kepler, Dreams of the Future, pp. 32-33

⁵ Ibid, pg. 22 quoting from Robert Dick Wilson, "The Aramaic of Daniel", in Biblical and Theological Studies, pg. 296

5. Problems of language

Greek and Persian words found in Daniel have been used as evidence for a late dating of the book of Daniel. Critics claim these words were not a common part of Assyrian and Babylonian language and prove Daniel was written in the Maccabean period.

This argument is no longer valid in light of archeological discoveries. One hundred before Daniel, Greeks served as mercenaries in the Assyrian armies under the command of Esarhaddon (683 B.C.) as well as in the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar.⁶

Persia was the successor of the Babylonians and Daniel rose to the rank of Prime minister. Daniel would have been familiar with the language before and after this event. Diplomatic and economic relations between Persian speaks and Babylonians would be expected, and the borrowing of words from one culture to another is very common.

6. Alleged historical inaccuracies

The historical accuracy of Daniel is another point of attack by the critics. They claim, because Daniel was written in 2nd century his grasp of Babylonian and Persian history is lacking. Daniel has repeatedly proved the critics wrong. Here are two examples of how the accuracy of Daniel is demonstrated in Archeology.



Babylonian Chronicle starts with Nabonassar (8th cent BC)
Mentions the march of Nebuchadnezzar to Egypt to visit
Ramses II

The Babylonian Chronicle

This clay tablet is a Babylonian chronicle recording events from 605-594 BC. It was first translated in 1956 and is now in the British Museum. The cuneiform text on this clay tablet tells, among other things

3 main events: 1 The Battle of Carchemish (famous battle for world supremacy where Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, 605 BC.), 2 The Accession to the Throne of Nebuchadnezzar II, the Chaldean, 3. Capture of Jerusalem on the 16th of March, 598 BC.

For example, Daniel chapter 5 has Belshazzar as the King of Babylon, this has often been disputed by the critics. The discovery of the *Nabonidus Chronicle* provided an precise explanation that agreed with Daniel's account of the situation in Babylon.

Secular history says Nabonidus was the King of Babylon, Daniel says Belshazzar was king. Critics pointed to this, saying Daniel is in error, this changed as a result of the discovery of the *Nabonidus Chronicle*. Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered a cylinder with an inscription in the Euphrates River which cleared the confusion about the King of Babylon.

There were two kings of Babylon in Daniel's day, a father and son. The father Nabonidus installed his son Belshazzar as co-regent, Nabonidus spent much of his time in Arabia. When the Persians conquered the city in 539 B.C. Belshazzar was killed. Nabonidus was later captured and sent to exile. This explained the promise made to Daniel in Daniel 5:29, after Daniel explained the meaning of the writing on the wall, Belshazzar promised to make him third ruler.

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Daniel 5:29

Asphenaz, is mentioned in the first chapter of Daniel as master of the Eunuchs. The critics claim no such person ever existed. Recent discoveries again proved the accuracy of the book of Daniel. Asphenaz name has been found on monuments of ancient Babylon which are now in the Berlin Museum. The Babylonian monument had the following statement, "Ashpenaz, master of eunuchs in the time of Nebuchadnezzar"

⁶ ibid, pg 23

The Rulers and Prophets of Daniel's Time

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Assyria

Nabopolassar 620-605
 Revolted against Assyria
 Nebuchadnezzar
 He soon succeeded
 In 605 BC after the
 Battle of Carchemish



605 Battle of Carchemish, Babylonian armies defeat Assyrian power. Nebuchadnezzar is General of Babylonian forces. Babylon then swarms Judeans and takes captives and temple treasures to Babylon.

Last King of Judah
 Jehoiachin (3 months)
 Jehoiakim 608-597
 Zedekiah 597-586



The Babylonian Army destroys the city of Jerusalem in 586 BC after the Judeans revolt.

Persian/Median Empire

522-486 BC Darius the Great. The Temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius' reign



539-529 BC Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede defeat the Kingdom of Babylon. Captives are allowed to return home.



Temple construction started in 536 BC, completed 516 BC under Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel was appointed Governor over Judah by Persian King Darius Hydraspes. He was involved in rebuilding the Temple.



444 BC Menech, Command given by Persian King Artaxerxes I for Nehemiah to oversee rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. Walls and gates. City rebuilt under constant threats of war.

Nehemiah

Melachi

Zechariah

Haggai

Esher

Ezra

Daniel

Habakkuk

Jeremiah

Joel

Nahum

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was appointed as a captive into Babylon in 597 BC.

Grecian Kingdoms succeeding Alexander the Great

- Ptolemy..... Egypt
- Cassander..... Greece & Macedonia
- Seleucus..... Babylon & Syria
- Lysimachus..... Thrace



3 BC After the death of Alexander the Great, his kingdom is divided between his four generals



166 BC Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes after Temple is desecrated. 100 year Jewish Kingdom begins. Roman invasion ends independence.



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