

INTRODUCTION to DANIEL

I. Purposes

A. Why study Daniel?

1. To enlarge our knowledge of sacred history in understanding the way God's plan for His people has unfolded. Daniel reveals God's hand of providence in delivering His people during and after the promised judgment of exile.
2. To enlarge our knowledge of the workings and out-workings of prophecy. Much emphasis is given to the relatively short-term predictions regarding the intertestamental period, and to the more apocalyptic predictions of the end of the age.
3. To learn lessons of faith for our personal Christian lives.

B. Why did Daniel write?

Directed to the nations as well as to his own people, Daniel's message was to reaffirm God's sovereignty, not only in His people's affairs, but especially over the false gods of the conquering nations.

C. Theological emphases (per Archer in *EBC*)

1. The **Sovereignty of Yaweh**, God of Israel, especially displayed in His governing the affairs of kings and through the miracles associated with this period.
2. The committed **faith** of God's people, especially displayed in their unstinting self-denial for God's cause and in their prayer life.
3. **Redemption**, immediate and also as seen in the long run.
4. God's **grace** towards His people, despite their judgment for rebellion.

II. Authorship and Date

- A. Daniel the man (phps. 620-530; his ministry and prophecy span the 70 year length of the captivity)

B. Authenticity of Danielic authorship

1. The book claims Daniel in the second half of the book where he is referred to in the first person. Third person refs. in the first half are in keeping with other ancient works like Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Caesar's *Gallic Wars*.
2. Daniel is cited by name by his contemporary, Ezekiel (14:14,20; 28:3).
Ezekiel 14:14 "Even *if* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD.
3. Daniel is recognized from Maccabean days, being named in I Maccabees 2:59,60.
1 Maccabees 2:59,60 Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, for their fidelity, were saved from the flame. Daniel for his singleness of heart was rescued from the lion's jaws.
4. Jesus credited Daniel with writing about the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15; Lk. 21).
Matthew 24:15 " Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"
5. Portions of Daniel were found among the intertestamental DSS.
6. The LXX placed Daniel after Ezekiel.
7. Uniform tradition of Jews and Christians.

C. Historical background

- 612 –Fall of Nineveh; Assyrians flee to Haran
- 609 –Josiah killed at Megiddo as he tries to cut off Egyptians on their way help Assyria vs. Babylon
- 605 –Nabopolassar dies and is succeeded by his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who decisively defeats Egypt and Assyria at Carchemish.
 - Nebz. inherits Egyptian Palestine and demands double tribute from King Jehoiachim; royal hostages are taken for insurance (cf. Is. 39:7).
- 597 –King Jehoiachin and Ezekiel taken captive after Judean revolt
- 587 –Destruction of Jerusalem
- 539 –Cyrus conquers Babylon
- 536 –Jews return to begin reconstructing the Temple (Ezra 3:8-10)
 - Last historical time post in Daniel, 10:1

Neo-Babylonian Rulers

Nabopolassar (d. 605)

Nebuchadnezzar (605-562)
Eval-Merodach (562-560; ben Nebz)
Neriglissar (560-556; usurper; son-in-law of Nebz)
Labashi-Marduk (556; ben Neriglissar)
Nabonidus (556-539; usurper; probable son-in-law to Nebz)
Belshazzar (548-539; ben Nabonidus)

III. Critical objections

Porphry of Tyre (d. 303), an anti-christian neoplatonist of the III cent., was the first rationalist to develop the idea that Daniel's prophecies were written after the fact in the Maccabean era. Most of his arguments are preserved in Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel* which was written to refute Porphyry.

The critics still see Daniel as a pseudepigraphal work of the Maccabean period. A few critics suggest that parts of Daniel (2-7) may have been written as early as the time of Alexander the Great.

Robert Dick Wilson of Princeton Seminary made the defense of Daniel his life-long project. He refuted the critics with scholarly erudition without the benefit of the DSS, recognizing that Daniel is the hardest book of the OT to defend. He knew that if its authenticity could be shown, it would be a great evidence for divine inspiration due to its detailed predictions.

For a popular anthology of answers to the critics objections, see McDowell, *Daniel in the Critics' Den*. K.A. Kitchen has a more technical refutation in his *Problems in Daniel*.

A. External Objections

1. Daniel is found in the "Writings" of the Hebrew Bible, one of the last sections to be formulated, after the crystallization of the prophetic canon.

BUT

- a. The Massorettes may have classified Daniel outside the prophets because he was more of a statesman than holder of prophetic office.
 - b. The LXX, probably by the early II b.c., included Daniel among the prophets
 - c. Josephus' pre-Massoretic canon implies that the LXX accurately preserved Jewish tradition by placing Daniel within the prophetic canon.
2. The post-exilic prophets do not mention Daniel, nor does Ecclesiasticus.

BUT Note that I Maccabees 2:59ff, Baruch 1:15-3:3, and the Sybylline Oracles III all refer to Daniel and his book.

3. No mention of the man Daniel in Babylonian/Persian archaeological records.

- BUT
- a. He was obscure for many years after Nebz.
 - b. Discoveries are recent; many tablets have yet to be translated.
 - c. Babylonian bias

B. Internal Objections

1. Linguistic

a. Aramaic in Daniel is an intertestamental language which belies a late date.

- BUT
- (1) Use by Laban in Gen. 31:48,49 (Galeed vs. Mizpah) and later in the Amarna correspondence (1200) show Aramaic’s early origins. Assyrian govt officials used it as early as 1100.
 - (2) The form of Aramaic in Daniel (Imperial Aramaic) developed within governmental circles in the VII and is closely akin to the Aramaic of Ezra (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26), Jeremiah (10:11), and of the Elephantine papyri of the V.
 - (3) Most significantly, Daniel’s Aramaic is UNLIKE the Maccabean Aramaic of the “Genesis Apocryphon” which was found among the DSS. These discoveries of 1948 have exploded one of the chief arguments of the critics, actually necessitating just the opposite of their hopes.

| | DANIEL | GENESIS APOCRYPHON |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| SYNTAX: | subject, verb, object | verb, subject, object |
| VOCABULARY: | basically Babylonian (9/10) | Palestinian |
| INFLECTIONS: | Imperial Aramaic | Palestinian |

(4) Unless two authors are posited, it must be recognized that the **Hebrew** of Daniel is like that of the post-exilic prophets, and UNLIKE the Maccabean Hebrew of 1QS and 1QM among the DSS.

- b. Greek (!) cognates in Daniel prove that the book came out of the Hellenistic era, likely after Antiochus IV.

BUT

- (1) As it turns out, there are really only three Greek loan words in Daniel, and these are technical terms for the Greek instruments of chpt 3 (though Harrison believes these were Mesopotamian instruments with adulterated Akkadian/Persian names).
- (2) Inscriptions of Sargon II (722-05) show that he had sold into slavery Greek captives of Cyprus and Ionia. Greek mercenaries also served under the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, not to mention the Greek merchantmen who plied the fertile crescent from VII onward.
- (3) Significantly, there are no Greek administrative or gov'tal terms in Daniel; these terms are basically all Persian (ca. 15), many of which may have been cognates from Babylonian usage.

2. Historical objections

Despite the critics' allegation that the author had a good knowledge of Jewish history after the fact, still he trips himself up on anachronisms and inaccuracies.

- a. Regarding the year of Nebz's accession, it seems that 1:1 clashes with Jer. 25:1,11 and 46:2.

Daniel 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Jeremiah 25:1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon)

BUT

- (1) Daniel apparently follows the Babylonian "Accession" year system where the year of accession is not included in the length of reign, whereas Jeremiah follows the Judean "non-accession" method of reckoning where the first year does equal year one.
 - (2) Jeremiah could be following the religious calendar while Daniel would be on the civil calendar.
- b. Daniel 1 (1,5,18) says Daniel and friends would be in training three years before entering service, but Daniel 2 includes them among the wisemen in Nebz's 2nd year.

- c. There appears to be a confusion of the ethnic term (1:4) for Chaldean with a professional caste (2:2) of wisemen.
- .X. R.D. Wilson has ably shown that the term for “wiseman” originally came from a Sumerian precursor (*galdu* = “master builder”). As the Babylonian language went through a metamorphosis, this term became phonetically equivalent to the term for Chaldean.
- d. There is no secular reference to Nebz’s madness

BUT

- (1) “Seven times” not necessarily seven calendar years
- (2) Berossus, a Babylonian priest from 250 b.c., mentioned a sudden illness of Nebz toward the end of his reign; (Berossus is cited by Josephus in *Contra Apion*, 1:20).
Berossus’ student, Abydenus, reported that Nebz was possessed by a god (cited by Eusebius).
- (3) Rawlinson deciphered a tablet that said, “I, Nebz, did no building for four years.”
- e. Darius the Mede is an anachronism (he didn’t rule till 520) and his parentage (9:1) is an historical blunder.

BUT

- (1) This Darius is apparently Gobryas (per Herodotus) who was left in charge of Babylon.
- (2) “Darius” was not a proper name, but a title much like “Caesar.” (Darayavahush; “Dara” means king)

-Somewhat dated objections-

- f. The fortress city of Babylon taken in one night?! .X. The ancient Babylonian Chronicle (also Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, 7:20) has confirmed Herodotus’ account that the city was captured without any degree of fighting.
- g. Who was the king of Babylon at its destruction? The Greek historians (Herodotus) say it was Nabonidus and that he was pensioned off (Berossus says to Carmania).

BUT

- (1) The Nabonidus Chronicle recovered in the 20th century makes plain that Nabonidus left the crown prince, Belshazzar, in charge of Babylon. The Babylonian Chronicle also says that the king of Babylon was killed in the conquest.

(2) 5:16,30 promises that Daniel could be third in the kingdom for good reason: because Belshazzar was second in command

h. O.K. The Nabonidus Chronicle says that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. So how can 5:11,22 imply that he was the son of Nebz?

.X. Father/Son are Semitic generics for ancestor/posterity. Note Gen. 28:13; 32:9. On the Black Obelisk, Shalmanesar III calls Jehu “ben Omri” (sic).

3. Prophetic Objections

The sticking point for the rationalists: too many detailed predictions mean that each prophecy was written as a *vaticinium ex eventu* (prophecy after the event).

a. Prophecies of the four kingdoms in chpts. 2 & 7; Daniel must have been written in the II cent. to bring history up to date. This necessitates identification of the kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and lastly Greece.

BUT

Details in Daniel require the Medo-Persian empire to be taken as one kingdom, with the result that the fourth kingdom, Rome, is still future to the II cent. E.g.,

- (1) 7:5 = three victories of Medo-Persia
- (2) 7:6 = four heads of third beast (leopard) is divided Grecian empire
- (3) 8:3 = two unequal parts of Medo-Persian empire which is dashed by the blitzkrieg Greece
- (4) 6:12,15 = Darius was bound by the laws of the Medes and Persians
- (5) 5:28 = the first kingdom was conquered by a united kingdom of the Medes and Persians

b. Prophecies of Persia and Greece (chpt 8; 10:20) and of Antiochus Epiphanes (8, 11) must be after the fact.

.X. Other prophets foretell the coming of Greece into Palestine, e.g., Zechariah 9, Ezekiel 26:12ff.

c. Porphyry was right — Daniel 11 takes too much faith to believe that anyone could predict the detailed events of this passage.

4. Doctrinal Objections

Daniel's doctrine is too developed for the VI but is much in vogue in the intertestamental period.

a. Apocalypticism, esp. chpt. 7

.X. Isaiah's Little Apocalypse (24-27) is quite early (unless one takes the critics' dating > circular reasoning), and Zechariah 9-14 must also be reckoned with.

b. Physical resurrection in 12:2,3. The OT speaks of an afterlife, but it took NT development to bring forth the hope of physical resurrection.

BUT

(1) Earlier refs. to the resurrection: Job 19, Is. 26:19, Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, chpt. 37.

(2) The heart of the covenants was that the fathers themselves were to be able to appropriate the promises (Heb. 11:13,39,40,19; Mt 22:31,32).

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... 19 concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

c. Clear statement of Messianic expectation

d. Advanced angelology, where angels even have names (cf. Raphael of Book of Enoch)

.X. Note the appearance of angels as early as Genesis (3, 18, 28:12). Zechariah also has quite a few angels.

C. Conclusions of the critics

1. Much of Daniel was written after the abomination of desolation (168) but before Judas Maccabeus (165) cf. 8:13.

2. Portions may have been written earlier in IV or III.

3. The book's prototype began to crystallize when two separate parts, the first half in Aramaic and the second half in Hebrew, were joined together into one message. Subsequently, a clever scribe smoothed the transition between the two parts by translating chpt. 1 into Hebrew, and chpt. 7 into Aramaic.

D. Problems for the critics

1. Surprising incidental accuracy of Daniel, more so than the later Greek historians. E.g.,
 - a. Nebz changes his decrees while Darius the Persian cannot.
 - b. Babylonian punishment of fire vs. Persian lions.
 - c. Chpt 3: deification of the Babylonian monarch. (Persians restored temple of Marduk.)
2. Vocabulary
 - a. Older Imperial Aramaic
 - b. Many Persian loan words (esp. technical terms for govt) while no Hellenisms.
3. Jewish recognition of canonicity of Daniel. A II cent. production would have been suspect like the many pseudepigraphal works from that era which were rejected.

Significantly, the Essenes' *War Scroll* appears to make use of the language of Daniel (1, 15-19 cf. Daniel 11:40-12:3), implying the preceding existence of Daniel, a fact which is also confirmed by fragments of Daniel among the DSS.
4. Any alleged blunders are too obvious for the "brilliant II cent. scholar" to have been tripped up.
5. Theological problem for a Christian to reject Christ's witness along with the rest of the Bible (e.g., Revelation).

IV. NT usage

A. Messianic usage of the Son of Man (7:13). See esp. Matt 26:64.

64 Jesus said to him, "*It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*" 65 Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy!"

B. Allusion to Daniel 3:6 cf. Matthew 13:42,50

Matt. 12:42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

C. Abomination of Desolation in 9:27, 11:31, 12:11 cited in the Olivet Discourse found in Matt. 24:15, Mk. 13:14.

D. Numerous NT allusions: see Archer in *EBC* for a helpful list of parallels between the Olivet Discourse and Daniel and between Revelation and Daniel.

V. Outlines

CHIASTIC

1. Historical Introduction - Chpt. 1 (Hebrew)

2. Message to the Nations - Chpts. 2 - 7 (Aramaic)

(per Keil):

GOD'S TRIUMPH OVER THIS WORLD'S

(2) Statue

POWER

Beasts (7)

(3) Fire

PERSECUTION

Lions (6)

(4) Nebuchadnezzar

PRIDE

Belshazzar (5)

3. Message to Israel - Chpts. 8 - 12 (Hebrew)

-OR-

CHRONOLOGICAL

(Note Contrasts)

1. History - Chpts. 1–6

Narratives; 3rd person; Dan.

2. Prophecies - Chpts. 7–12

Prophecies; 1st person; angels