

Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

Introduction

Information about Daniel

Daniel was a captive Israelite carried off to Babylon after the first conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. At the time of his captivity, Daniel was probably a teenager and a member of a noble family. Daniel probably lived until approximately 530 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar carried out two subsequent sieges and conquests of Jerusalem (597 & 586 B.C.), and destroyed Jerusalem, including the Temple, at the conclusion of the third conquest.

Some scholars have questioned whether Daniel was a prophet or a “wise man” (a primitive form of a scientist who was a cross between a sage and a magician). It is safe to say Daniel was a prophet, because Jesus called him one ^{Matthew 24:15}. He was also a “wise man”, since Daniel included himself in the group of Babylonian “wise men”, and was later placed in a very powerful position, including being the head of the wise men (Daniel 2:48 states *The king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.*).

The term “wise man” is the same as the term Magi, used of the men from the east who visited the child Jesus in Bethlehem ^{Matthew 2:1-16}. Many scholars have suggested that Daniel taught the wise men of Babylon (and later Persia) about the Jewish Scriptures - and this would explain how they knew of the coming of the Messiah.

The Book of Daniel: General Information

The following are the main evidences for Daniel’s authorship of the book of Daniel:

- The author of the book of Daniel refers to himself in the first person in Daniel many times throughout the book ^{7:2,15,28, 8:1,15,27, 9:2,22, 10:2,7,11,12, 12:5}.
- Daniel is mentioned in both the OT ^{Ezekiel 14:14,20, 28:3} and the NT ^{Matthew 24:15}. In the NT passage, Jesus referred to Daniel as “the prophet Daniel”.

Daniel was likely written within the timeframe 540-530 B.C. (i.e., during the last decade of Daniel’s life), and was the last of the Major Prophets to be written.

Due to the accuracy of the historical prophecies in Daniel, skeptics have claimed the book was not written until the century before the birth of Jesus. However, many facts have proven this theory incorrect. Here are a couple of the historical evidences for a much earlier origin:

- Daniel existed when the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the OT) was written in about 285 B.C.
- Josephus documented in his books of history that following Alexander the Great’s conquest of Jerusalem in 332 B.C., a priest named Jaddua showed him references to himself in Daniel.

As a result, Alexander spared Jerusalem from destruction.

The events detailed in the book extend from the first conquest of Nebuchadnezzar (605 B.C.) to the third year of the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia ^{Daniel 10:1} (536 B.C.). Therefore, the length of the captivity was 70 years (605-536 B.C.), as Jeremiah prophesied ^{Jeremiah 29:10-11}.

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The book is a record of the life of and prophetic revelations given to Daniel. For example, In the book of Daniel, God provided Daniel with a comprehensive revelation of His plan for the history of mankind (both Gentiles and Hebrew) up to the Second Coming. Furthermore, the book of Daniel is key to understanding Jesus' Olivet Discourse ^{Matthew 24-25} and the entire book of Revelation. Also, similar to the book of Esther, Daniel revealed God's continuing work in His people Israel, even in the time of their chastening (disciplining).

The Book of Daniel: Outlines

Traditionally, there have been two ways to outline the book of Daniel:

1. Dividing the book into the two halves (Chapters 1-6 and 7-12), and
2. Defining three major divisions: (1) The Personal Background of Daniel in Chapter 1, (2) The Prophetic Course of Gentile Dominion, presented in Aramaic in 2-7 and (3) The Prophetic Course of Israel's Destiny, presented in Hebrew in 8-12.

The Book of Daniel: Languages

An unusual aspect of Daniel is that a large part of the book ^{2:4-7:28} was written in Aramaic. At that time in history, Aramaic was the *lingua franca*: the working or common language, and was the predominant language spoken by the heterogeneous population in Babylon. The use of Aramaic by Daniel seems to be related to the fact that the material in that section of Scripture concerned primarily the Gentile world rather than Israel. Similar uses of Aramaic are found in a few other OT passages ^{Genesis 31:47, Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26, Jeremiah 10:11}. The Aramaic language is also found in the NT, but only in isolated words and short phrases. ^{Matthew 5:18,22, Mark 3:17, 5:41, 7:34, 14:32,36, 15:22,34, John 1:42, 11:16, 20:16, Acts 1:19, 1 Corinthians 16:22}

The Book of Daniel: Theology

In a broad sense, Daniel presents God in the same manner as throughout the rest of the OT: sovereign, loving, omnipotent, omniscient, righteous and merciful. He is the God of Israel, but He is also the God of the Gentiles.

Daniel's Prophecies are not limited to the Messiah; however, they include Christ's 1st Coming, His death on the cross and His return in the 2nd Coming.

The Doctrine of Angels is prominent in the book of Daniel, with both Gabriel ^{8:16, 9:21} and Michael ^{10:13,21, 12:1} named and active in the events of the book.

In his Doctrine concerning Man, Daniel bears witness to the depravity of man, to God's righteous judgement upon him and the possibility of mercy and grace ^{Daniel 4}.

Daniel also gives clear testimony to the subject of the Resurrection, including Daniel's faith that he himself would be resurrected "at the end of the days" ^{12:13}.

Why Study the Book of Daniel?

Accurately prophesies about Gentile history (world kingdoms) all the way to the End Times. Contains the most amazing prophetic passage in the Bible ^{9:24-27}, which details God's plan for the complete redemption of the Hebrew people.

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