

Introduction to Daniel

Prepared by Steve Gregg

I. Historical background: The Babylonian Captivity

A. Three waves of the conquest of Jerusalem and deportation

1. 605 B.C. Daniel and others of noble and royal blood taken
2. 597 B.C. Ezekiel goes into captivity with Jeconiah and others
3. 586 B.C. Destruction of the temple & general deportation

B. Four pagan kings under whom Daniel served:

1. Babylonian: Nebuchadnezzar (ch.1-4); Belshazzar (ch.5, 7, 8)
2. Persian: Darius (ch.6, 9, 11); Cyrus (ch.10)

C. Godly influences on Daniel

1. Probably born of royal blood around the time of Josiah's reforms
2. May have heard Jeremiah, and read Jeremiah's book (Dan.9:2)
3. May have known Ezekiel, a fellow captive in Babylon. Ezekiel knew of Daniel (Ezek.14:14, 20/28:3)

II. Biographical sketch

A. Born of the king's seed or nobility around the time of Josiah's reforms

B. As a youth, carried away captive to Babylon (605 B.C.)

C. Trained 3 years in the language of the Chaldeans

D. Like Joseph, Daniel was elevated to high rank because of ability to interpret dreams

E. Served as a statesman under kings of Babylon and Persia until at least 536 B.C. (the third year of Cyrus (Dan.10:1).

F. Was also a prophet (Num.12:6/Matt.24:15), though not, as others, as God's spokesman to Israel

III. Daniel in the critics' den

A. Assigned a late date by critics, sometime in the Maccabean period (170-160 B.C.)

1. Greek/Persian loan words
2. Not included with the prophets in Masoretic Canon 6th or 7th cent. A.D. (included with "the writings" instead)
3. Alleged historical inaccuracies
 - a. Date of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion (contr. Jer.25:1/Dan.1:1)
 - b. In the writer's day, "Chaldeans" were thought to have been a group of soothsayer-priests (Dan. 2/4:7/5:7, 11)
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar's madness (ch.4)
Cartledge wrote: "History knows nothing of the madness of Nebuchadnezzar reported in Daniel."
 - d. Belshazzar the king
Herodotus (400 B.C.), Xenophon, Brosus, Abydenus, and contemporary Cuneiform writings name Nabonidas, not Belshazzar, as last king of Babylon.
 - e. Darius the Mede
This man is unknown from extrabiblical historical records.

B. Evidence of earlier date

1. Answers to the above objections
 - a. Dates of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion: Daniel used Babylonian reckoning, while Jeremiah used Jewish reckoning. Babylonians use "accession year," Jews used "non-accession year" methods.

Jeremiah 25:1

"The 4th year of Jehoiachim"

Jewish reckoning

1st year-----608 B.C.

2nd year-----607 B.C.

3rd year-----606 B.C.

4th year-----605 B.C.

Daniel 1:1

"The 3rd year of Jehoiachim"

Babylonian reckoning

-----accession year

-----1st year

-----2nd year

-----3rd year

b. Chaldeans also known as ethnic designation (Dan.3:8/5:30)

c. Nebuchadnezzar's madness

I. Babylonian history records no governmental activity by Nebuchadnezzar from 582 to 575 B.C.

2. Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered a damaged tablet from the period of Nebuchadnezzar, which reads:

“For four years...in all my dominions I did not build a high place of honor, the precious treasures of my kingdom I did not lay out. In the worship of Merodach...I did not sing his praises...I did not clear out canals.”

3. In *Praeparatio Evangelica* (ix.41), Eusebius quotes Abydenus as saying that, in Nebuchadnezzar’s later years, “being possessed by some god or other,” the king went up to his palace and announce the coming of the Persian mule (Cyrus) who would bring the people into slavery. Abydenus continues: “He, when he had uttered this prediction, immediately disappeared.”

d. Belshazzar the king

1. In 1854, in Ur, a cornerstone of a temple built by Nabonidas, was found, which read:

“May I, Nabonidas, King of Babylon, not sin against thee. And may reverence for thee dwell in the heart of Belshazzar, my firstborn, favorite son.”

2. Since 1854, many other references to Belshazzar have been found, showing that Nabonidas had committed the kingship to his son and had retired to Tema, North Arabia, at the time Babylon fell.

e. Darius the Mede

1. “Darius” may be a title, rather than a name.

2. Some identify with Gubaru (called Gobryas by Greek historians), Cyrus’ general, who subdued Babylon and ruled there for two years until Cyrus arrived.

3. Some identify Darius with Cyrus, whom Daniel mentions in 10:1.

2. Incidental points of historical accuracy

a. Knowledge of Belshazzar

b. Knowledge of the Babylonian kings’ power to enact and modify legislation (Dan. 2:12f, 46), but of the Persian kings’ not having such powers (Dan.6:8ff)

c. Knowledge of the change of modes of execution from burning, under the Babylonians (ch.3) to the den of lions, under the Persians (ch.6).

3. The testimony of Jesus (Matt.24:15)

IV. The Book of Daniel

A. Theme: God’s sovereignty over the nations (2:21/ 4:25, 32/ 5:21)

B. Author: Daniel (8:1/ 9:2/ 10:2/ 12:5-8)

C. Prophetic accuracy

D. Apocalyptic genre

E. Divisions:

1. *Historical (ch.1-6) and Prophetic (ch.7-12) sections*

2. *Hebrew (ch.1, 8-12) and Aramaic (ch.2-7) sections*

Expansion on Aramaic section: ABC CBA structure:

A. Four empires and God’s kingdom (ch.2, 7)

B. God’s supernatural preservation of His people (ch.3, 6)

C. Punishment of proud kings (ch. 4, 5)

F. Progressive Prophetic Parallelism:

Empires	Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9	Chs. 10-11
Babylonian	Gold	Lion	—	—	—
Media-Persian	Silver	Bear	Ram	Decree to Rebuild	4 Persian kings
Grecian	Bronze	Leopard	He-goat	70 “weeks”	N & S kings
Roman	Iron	Unique Beast	—	Prince to come	Ships of Kittim
God’s Kingdom	Growing Stone	A Son of Man	—	Messiah	—