

Daniel

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Originally written in 2014

Introduction

The book states in the eighth chapter that Daniel is the author as stated in the first person repeatedly. Earlier chapters include statements about Daniel in the third person and that has led some scholars to think that some friends of his wrote the earlier chapters. However such a manner of writing was common among ancient authors when writing of historical events. Jesus referred to Daniel as the author: "**Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place** (let the reader understand), (Matt 24:15)

It also seems that Ezekiel referred to Daniel as his contemporary:

- Ezek 14:14 even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD.
- Ezek 14:20 even *though* Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* son or *their* daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."

Noah lived at least 1500 years before Job and Job lived at least 1500 years before Daniel, a contemporary of Ezekiel. In these verses Ezekiel is saying that even if those prophets spanning such a long time period had interceded for Judah God would still have executed judgment against His sinful people. Ezekiel is then recognizing Daniel as a fellow prophet.

The book of Daniel is included in the Septuagint, which places it before the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), which is the time period that skeptics try to date the book. The date of the birth of Daniel can be placed at c. 620 B.C. and the dating of his writing would begin with his capture as a hostage by Nebuchadnezzar in 605-604 B.C. According to 1:21 the writing continues until the first year of Cyrus (c. 537 B.C.) regarding his public ministry and to the third year of Cyrus (535 B.C.) in his prophetic ministry (10:1). After Daniel was taken to Babylon, Jerusalem was captured in two more stages (597 and 586 B.C.) when more Jewish captives were taken. David records how he fondly remembered his home and the temple at Jerusalem even after 70 years of captivity (6:10). It seems that Daniel then revised and completed his memoirs during his retirement in 532-530 B.C. when he would have been about 90 years old.

The book is written in two languages as is Ezra. Chapters 1 and 8-12 are in Hebrew and chapters 2-7 are in Aramaic. It seems that the Aramaic chapters deal with concerns relating to the citizenry of the Babylonian and Persian empires and the other six chapters relate to mainly Jewish concerns and God's plans for His covenant people's future. It seems then that the

Aramaic chapters were available to the Gentile people since Aramaic was their primary language during the periods of the Babylonian and Persian empires.

It is not difficult to determine several theological values of this book. The **first** is the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh for it certainly seemed that His cause had been lost as the temple had been destroyed and His people taken into foreign lands:

2Chron 36:18-21 All the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought *them* all to Babylon. (19) Then they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all its fortified buildings with fire and destroyed all its valuable articles. (20) Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, (21) to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.

We read in the first six chapters how God rules over the affairs of men and such is supported with miracles such as Daniel being able to determine contents of dreams, the saving of Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace, and the deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den. **Secondly** we read of the power of prayer as Daniel and his friends continued to pray even when threatened with persecution. The **third** emphasis is the long-range plan of God's program of redemption. The plan involves God's divine-human Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel predicts the precise year of the appearance of Christ and His ministry in A.D. 27 (Dan 9:25-26). **Finally** we read of the resolute grace of God as He would finally fulfill His promise to Abraham:

Gen 18:17-19 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, (18) since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? (19) "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Daniel lived with the exiled nation during its captivity and witnessed their release under Cyrus. He then prophesied their return to the Promised Land. In the NT age Israel experienced hardening of heart but, after the full number of Gentile believers has been redeemed, the larger "Israel" of the church age would be put into their land:

Rom 11:25-27 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; (26) and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." (27) "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

During the first six chapters of the book we will read how we can live as did Daniel in a secular society. Daniel was a godly man sent to live in an ungodly Babylon when it seemed that God had

withdrawn His blessings on the Jewish nation. This Babylon was representative of a system of ungodly communities much as is the world of 2014. Daniel and his friends were under tremendous pressure to conform to the society standards much as today. Religion was tolerated as long as it was left “on the reservation”. It is important to keep in context that the book details how four Hebrew teenagers acted under severe distress and told to conform to the standards of that Babylonian society. They had been taken from their society, other friends, their religious customs and they were now in a strange land far from home. Today we see the same conversions desired by the USA as young people are told to learn evolution and to apply it to many different areas of intellect such as sociology, psychiatry, science, etc. The world wants to conform us to its image of acceptance but we are to be transformed to God’s standards as told by Paul:

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The leaders considered themselves not answerable to anyone much as most rulers in the world today. Nebuchadnezzar worshipped gods but not Yahweh as do many rulers today. But we will read that God revealed that He was in control of history and that there would be the establishment of His Kingdom that will endure forever.

We can outline these chapters as did J. Vernon McGee¹:

- A. Chapter One. Decline of Judah, Taken to Babylon.
- B. Chapter Two. Dream of Nebuchadnezzar and interpretation of Daniel
- C. Chapter Three. Decree of Nebuchadnezzar to enforce universal idolatry, three Hebrews cast into the furnace
- D. Chapter Four. Dream of Nebuchadnezzar about a great tree hewn to a stump fulfilled in his madness.
- E. Chapter Five. Downfall of Babylon foretold by Daniel reading the handwriting on the wall.
- F. Chapter Six. Decree of Darius to enforce worship of himself, Daniel in the den of lions.

A great example that we should have for our attitude as we live in such a world is given in the third chapter:

Dan 3:16-18 *Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. (17) "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. (18) "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

This is also the mindset of our Lord when facing the final act of His ministry:

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *The Prophets: Daniel*, Thomas Nelson, 1991.

Matt 26:42 *He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."*

It is important to read about the historical background of the first chapter contained in 2 Kings 23:34-24:6 before proceeding with this study:

- **2Kings 23:34-37** *Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, and he died there. (35) So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, each according to his valuation, to give it to Pharaoh Neco. (36) Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiiah of Rumah. (37) He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.*
- **2Kings 24:1-6** *In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. (2) The LORD sent against him bands of Chaldeans, bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken through His servants the prophets. (3) Surely at the command of the LORD it came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, (4) and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the LORD would not forgive. (5) Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? (6) So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son became king in his place.*

Here is a suggested time-line from Wiersbe²:

605 B.C. Jerusalem is taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and his three friends taken to Babylon

602 B.C. Daniel and friends complete three years of training and Nebuchadnezzar has dream interpreted by Daniel.

586 B.C. Jerusalem and the temple destroyed by the Babylonians

539 B.C. Belshazzar's feast. Cyrus, King of Persia, conquers Babylon and reigns until 530.

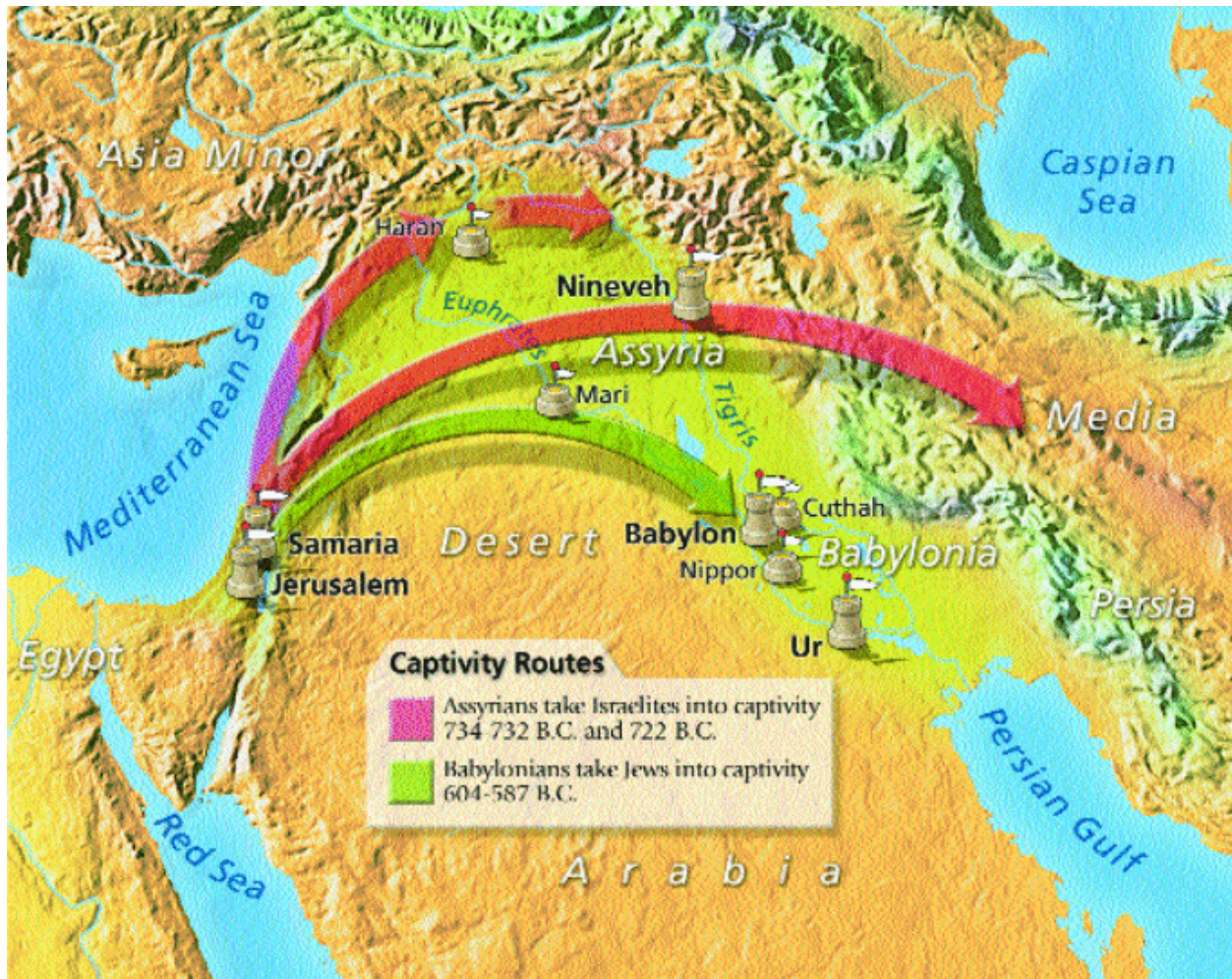
538 B.C. Cyrus decrees that the Jews can return to Judea and rebuild the temple.

537 B.C. About 50,000 Jews return, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Daniel has his prophetic vision about the end times.

522-486 B.C. Darius I reigns and rebuilding renewed in 520. Temple is completed and dedicated in 515.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: An OT Study – Daniel*, Cook Communications Ministries, 2000.

Here is a map of the taking of Jewish captives during the Assyrian and Babylonian period:



References

(In addition to Wiersbe and McGee in footnotes)

1. James Montgomery Boice, "An Expository Commentary: Daniel, Baker Books, 1989.
2. John McArthur, "Daniel", Thomas Nelson, 2000.
3. Gleason L. Archer, Jr, General Editor of "The Expositor's Bible Commentary", Zondervan, 1985. Gleason L. Archer, Jr, Author of subset: "Daniel"

CHAPTER ONE

Dan 1:1-2

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. (2) The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

The important point is that the Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. God's covenant with Israel was dependent upon their obedience and if they disobeyed He would scatter them among the Gentiles (Lev 26; Deut 27-30). Isaiah had proclaimed the day when God would bring this about (Isa 13; 21; 39). God would rather have His people living in captivity rather than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing His name. Nebuchadnezzar invaded the southern kingdom of Judah three times. The first attack was in 605 B.C. only about 100 years after the northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians. The second invasion was in 597 B.C. with many Jewish leaders and some priests like Ezekiel being taken prisoners. The third invasion was in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was completely destroyed and the people deported to Babylon including Jeremiah. It must have been the first invasion when Daniel and his friends were taken captive. Nebuchadnezzar thought of himself as a god and his invasion proved to himself that he was greater than the God of the Jewish nations. He had destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple. The taking of the treasure from Jerusalem to the treasury of his god was evidence of that exaltation to him. However we read in verse two that God was still in control as He allowed this invasion to succeed as punishment on the disobedient people and to show that He was sovereign (Rom 8:28).

Dan 1:3-7

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, (4) youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. (5) The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. (6) Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. (7) Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abednego.

The king now wanted to convert some of the best young men of Israel to Babylonian education so that they could properly serve him. It seems that Daniel and his friends were 15-16 years old when taken captive. He had only the best of these young men chosen and ordered them to be taught Chaldean literature and language. This would be a very rigorous and demanding education of the documents contained in the extensive imperial library in Babylon. These young men were

to be given the best food and wine and they were appointed to be educated for three years before being put into his personal service. This would be a bit accelerated version of the college degrees in America with a curriculum dictated by the government of the Babylonian empire.

Note that the names of the sons of Judah all had names relating to their God. The “el” at the end of their names is the name of God and the “ah” is a shortened form of Yahweh. The king had their names changed to reflect the names of his gods Aku, Bel, and Nego. Daniel means “God is my Judge” and Belteshazzar means “Bel protect his life”. Mishael means “Who is like God” and Meshach means “Who is as Aku is?”. Hananiah means “Jehovah is gracious” and Shadrach means “command of Aku”. Azariah means “Jehovah is my helper” and Abednego means “Servant of Nebo (Nego)”. If one controls the names of someone then they are supposed to be under the control of that person or god. So the purpose of the name changes was to proclaim that they formerly served God but now they serve the king’s gods. Of course this action did not meet this criterion since the king could not change their hearts.

Dan 1: 8-10

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. (9) Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, (10) and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

Daniel seems to have been the leader and chief spokesman of the group and he was determined to not conform to this food and drink order. The Jews were to only eat animals approved by God and with the blood drained from the flesh (Lev 11; 17:10-16). The king’s food would also have been first offered to idols and faithful Jews would not eat such defiled food. Daniel also respected authority so he did not openly rebel against this order but sought permission to make some changes. He did not publically protest, burn down buildings, organize a march, or take any other actions against his oppressors. He set an example for us in that he politely requested the commander of the officials to give them permission to deviate from the strict food and drink requirements. We also see again that God is sovereign in that He had granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander. Initially the commander expressed his fear of the action of the king upon him if the Jewish young men were to look haggard from their deviation of diet compared to the other youths would be conforming to the king’s diet.

Dan 1:11-16

But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, (12) "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. (13) "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see." (14) So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. (15) At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating

the king's choice food. (16) So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

Daniel presented a well-thought-out plan to the commander. This attitude reminds us of Joseph and his relationship with Potiphar and both are examples for us in dealing with authorities. He requested that they be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. This is the first example of Daniel acting on faith and such will help him later in more challenges. He requested that he allow a ten-day trial to see if their diet led to them looking worse than the other youths after allowing each group to have separate dietary meals. He said that the commander could then deal with them based upon any differences in appearances. The commander agreed with the plan and put them to the ten-day test. After ten days of this special diet the young men looked healthier than those on the king's diet and so they were allowed to stay on it.

Dan 1:17-21

As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams. (18) Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. (19) The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. (20) As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. (21) And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

It was not the diet that gave them such favor from the Lord, but their obedience to Him in all of their life. God gave them mastery over every branch of Akkadian and Sumerian scholarship. Daniel even became one who understood all kinds of visions and dreams much like Joseph had done in the court of Egypt. After three years of learning, they were presented to Nebuchadnezzar for their final oral exams. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were found to be superior to all the other students and they were made offers in the king's service. The king even found them to be ten times more knowledgeable than all the other people in his realm. No doubt this evaluation includes the dream interpretations that will be presented in chapters 2, 4, and 5 since the last sentence states that Daniel continued in his service until the first year of Cyrus. We are not to read into this event that Daniel and his friends participated in the occult but that they were much better in their assignments than those others in the king's court. Magicians and conjurers certainly dealt in the occult but such was forbidden to the Jews (Deut 18:9-13). Even though they had to work with those others, they certainly remained pure before the Lord. We will see later that Daniel prayed and God revealed the secrets to him so he did not depend upon the movement of stars or incantations as did the others in the king's service. Certainly Christian students today should also excel in their studies but they should also remain pure before the Lord. The first year of King Cyrus was 539 B.C. and we will read that Daniel was also still alive in the king's third year (10:1) when Daniel would be 83 years old. Each believer is either a conformer or being transformed and those choosing to be transformed may have trying times but their rewards will be great.