

Old Testament Survey

Daniel

The Meaning of Daniel

The name Daniel means “God is Judge” or possibly “God is my Judge.” The book itself is a prophetic outline of human history showing God’s supreme sovereignty over the affairs of men as both King and Judge.

General Outline of Daniel

- I. Training and Testing of the Remnant - Daniel 1:1-21
 - A. Captivity of the hostages by Nebuchadnezzar - Daniel 1:1-2
 - B. Training of the Jewish youths for the king’s service - Daniel 1:3-7
 - C. Daniel’s first test of obedience, his challenge of faith - Daniel 1:8-16
 - D. Consequent reward: attainment in wisdom, promotion in position - Daniel 1:17-21
- II. Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream and God’s Plan for the Ages - Daniel 2:1-49
 - A. Enigma of the dream - Daniel 2:1-13
 - B. Daniel’s interpretation and prayer for God’s wisdom - Daniel 2:14-23
 - C. Daniel’s recall and interpretation - Daniel 2:24-45
 - D. Resultant glory to God and the promotion of Daniel - Daniel 2:46-49
- III. Golden Image and the Fiery Furnace - Daniel 3:1-30
 - A. Erection of the image and compulsory state religion - Daniel 3:1-7
 - B. Accusation and trial of the faithful three - Daniel 3:8-18
 - C. Execution of the sentence - Daniel 3:19-23
 - D. God’s miracle of deliverance and the Son of God - Daniel 3:24-27
 - E. Nebuchadnezzar’s second submission to God - Daniel 3:28-30
- IV. Nebuchadnezzar’s Warning Dream and Subsequent Humiliation - Daniel 4:1-37
 - A. The dream - Daniel 4:1-7
 - B. Daniel’s recognition - Daniel 4:8-18
 - C. Daniel’s interpretation for the arrogant king - Daniel 4:19-27
 - D. The King’s humiliation - Daniel 4:28-33
 - E. The King’s repentance and submission to God’s sovereignty - Daniel 4:34-37
- V. Belshazzar’s Feast: God’s Judgment on Babylon - Daniel 5:1-31
 - A. Belshazzar’s arrogant abuse of God’s holy vessels - Daniel 5:1-4
 - B. Handwriting on the wall - Daniel 5:5-9
 - C. Request of the ruler to the man of God - Daniel 5:10-16
 - D. Judgment of God against the proud king - Daniel 5:17-28
 - E. The exaltation of Daniel and the death of Belshazzar - Daniel 5:29-31
- VI. In the Lion’s Den - Daniel 6:1-28
 - A. The Conspiracy - Daniel 6:1-9
 - B. Daniel’s detection at prayer and his subsequent sentence - Daniel 6:10-17
 - C. Daniel’s miraculous deliverance - Daniel 6:18-24
 - D. Darius’ testimony to God’s sovereignty - Daniel 6:25-28
- VII. Triumph of the Son of Man - Daniel 7:1-28
 - A. The Vision of the Beasts - Daniel 7:1-8
 - B. The Kingdom of God - Daniel 7:9-14
 - C. The Angel’s interpretation of the vision - Daniel 7:15-28
- VIII. Conquest of Persia by Greece and Antiochus Epiphanes - Daniel 8:1-27
 - A. The Vision of the Ram, He-Goat, and Little Horn - Daniel 8:1-12
 - B. The Interpretation of the vision by Gabriel - Daniel 8:13-27
- IX. Vision of the Seventy Weeks - Daniel 9:1-27
 - A. Daniel’s Persistent prayer - Daniel 9:1-19

- B. Gabriel's appearance with the answer to Daniel's prayer - the Vision of the Seventy Weeks - Daniel 9:20-27
- X. Triumph of Persistent Prayer - Daniel 10:1-21
 - A. An angelic appearance in spite of demonic opposition - Daniel 10:1-14
 - B. The Angel encourages Daniel, promising further revelation - Daniel 10:15-21
- XI. Persecution Under Antiochus, a Picture of the End - Daniel 11:1-45
 - A. From the Persian Empire to Alexander the Great - Daniel 11:1-4
 - B. Wars between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Dynasties - Daniel 11:5-20
 - C. Persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes - Daniel 11:21-39
 - D. The Antichrist of the last days - Daniel 11:40-45
- XII. Tribulation and the Final Triumph of God's People - Daniel 12:1-13
 - A. The Great Tribulation - Daniel 12:1
 - B. Resurrection and Judgment - Daniel 12:2-3
 - C. Sealing of the prophecies - Daniel 12:4
 - D. The prediction of three and one-half years - Daniel 12:5-7
 - E. Final commission of Daniel - the 1290 and 1335 days - Daniel 12:8-13

Critical Theory as to the Maccabean Pseudigraphical Origin of Daniel

Modern liberal scholars almost universally assign the authorship of Daniel to some unknown author during the Maccabean period, sometime around 150 B.C. The reason for this is that the book of Daniel contains such accurate and precise prophecies concerning future events of that time that liberal scholars see no way a person in the sixth century B.C. could be so accurate. To this it is obvious the book could only be written from the perspective of one looking at history and not from the perspective of one receiving divine revelation.

Historical Arguments for a Late Date

1. The Jewish canon places Daniel among the *Kethubim* (Writings) rather than among the *Nebihim* (prophets). This proves that the Jewish rabbis considered Daniel to not be a prophet.

So what! Other Old Testament books written much earlier than Daniel appear in the Kethubim, such as Job, the Davidic Psalms, and Proverbs. Additionally, Josephus numbers Daniel with the prophets in the first century. This would point to the fact that it was the Masoretes that assigned Daniel to the Kethubim and not Nebihim. Also, most of Daniel is historical in nature and hence appears on the surface to not be a prophetic book like some of the other Minor Prophets.

2. Jesus ben Sirach (author of Ecclesiasticus) makes no mention of Daniel although he refers to all the other prophets.

This is no proof that Daniel was not a prophet. Ezra was not mentioned by Jesus ben Sirach along with many other major characters of Jewish history.

3. Supposed historical inaccuracies prove the author of Daniel lived many years after the events described. One such inaccuracy is the statement by Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine in the third year of Jehoiakim whereas Jeremiah 46:2 says that it was the fourth year.

The reason for this is simple. The Chaldeans used the accession year dating of reigns whereas the Jews used the actual year. Thus the third year of Jehoiakim's reign as reckoned by the Babylonians would be identical to the Jewish fourth year.

4. Liberal scholars assert that the class of wisemen known as the Chaldeans in Daniel is an ethnic term that would have not become specialized in meaning until much later.

However, the author of Daniel does recognize the existence of “Chaldeans” as both an ethnic term (Daniel 5:30, 3:8) and a specialized term referring to the wisemen. Additionally, Robert Dick Wilson points out that the “Chaldeans” may have been high government officials which would explain their problem with Daniel’s three friends in Daniel 3:8.

5. The appearance of Belshazzar is seen as pure fabrication by early critics. Additionally, Belshazzar is referred to as Nebuchadnezzar’s son in Daniel 5.

More recent scholarship has shown that Belshazzar was indeed an historical person, and served under his father Nabonidus as the king in Babylon. This explains his promise to Daniel to make him the third ruler in the kingdom. The problem with the statement of Belshazzar being Nebuchadnezzar’s son is resolved by understanding that son could refer to a direct son or a descendant. Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus who married one of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughters.

6. The figure of Darius the Mede is seen as the product of historical confusion. Apparently the author of Daniel confused him with Darius the son of Hystaspes, a successor of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel asserts that Darius the Mede was an old man when he became ruler in Babylon whereas history tells us that Darius Hystaspes was a young man when he assumed the throne. Furthermore, Daniel says that Darius the Mede was “made” king which would imply a higher power. Evidently then, Darius was made King of Babylon by Cyrus. Much historical analysis has been done to determine who this Darius the Mede was with the best conclusion being that he was Gubaru, a governor under Cyrus the Persian.

Literary and Linguistic Arguments for a Late Date

1. Foreign loan words found in Daniel. For example, in the Aramaic portions of Daniel there are at least fifteen Persian terms, and in Daniel 3:5 there are three Greek words.

However, it is evident that Daniel was not put into its final form until the first few years of the Persian empire. Furthermore, the Greek words used are all instruments, something that would be normal given the cultural exchanges of that day. Furthermore, if Daniel was written in 150 B.C., we would assume that there would be many more Greek words used than just three (for example, an examination of the books of the Maccabees prove this). Furthermore, the LDANIEL had trouble translating some of the words in Daniel and in fact mistranslated some of them. How could this have been if Daniel had been written around the same time as the LDANIEL?

2. Grammatical evidences for an earlier date of Daniel 2-7 force some critics to date these chapters no later than the third century B.C. and assign the others to a later date.

However, the Aramaic portion of Daniel is not a proof that these chapters were written late, but that they were addressed to a different audience. These chapters refer to the Gentile world powers, and as such were written in their language. Another major point is that there is no evidence of Greek influence in the text of Daniel as far as grammar and vocabulary. Again, this is hard to believe if the book had been written in the Hellenistic period 150 years after Greece conquered the world.

Theological Arguments for a Late Date

1. The presence of advanced theological concepts, such as angels, judgment, and emphases like the apocryphal literature of the inter-testamental period point to a late date.

This cannot be substantiated. Zechariah, dated around 519 B.C., mentions angels. In fact, Zechariah and Daniel are so similar that one could conclude that Daniel influenced Zechariah or Zechariah influenced Daniel.

2. Daniel's theology is more complex than the Jewish thought of the sixth century B.C.

Again, this cannot be proven but is mere conjecture.

Exegetical Arguments for a Late Date

1. It is impossible for one living in the sixth century B.C. to accurately predict the future of events for the next few hundred years with such accuracy.

They are right, if one denies the supernatural origin and inspiration of the Bible.

2. It is interesting that the prophecies in Daniel extend up to only the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. This would point to Daniel being composed during the time of Antiochus as a book of comfort to those suffering persecution.

However, the activities of Antiochus Epiphanes would pose the most serious threat to Israel's existence to that time and therefore would require more attention. Additionally, the prophecies regarding Antiochus point to a more distant threat, that being the Antichrist of the last days.

3. The Fourth Kingdom as identified in Daniel is Greece. The second and third correspond to Media and Persia respectively.

However, the prophecies in Daniel 2 and 7 would point clearly to the identification of the fourth empire as being that of Rome and not Greece. Greece is seen as the belly and thighs of brass whereas the second kingdom is seen as Media and Persia together. Additionally, the prophecy of the Ram and He-Goat in Daniel 8 clearly point out that the third empire is that of Alexander the Great.

World Kingdom	Daniel 2	Daniel 7
Babylon	Head of Gold	Lion
Medo-Persia	Arms and Chest of Silver	Bear with three ribs
Greece	Thighs and Belly of Brass	Leopard with Four Wings and Four Heads
Rome	Legs of Iron, Toes of Iron/Clay	Diverse Beast

Additional Proofs of Daniel's' Authorship

1. The testimony of Christ - Matthew 24:15.

2. The author of Daniel shows an accurate knowledge of sixth-century events and customs. For example, Susa is said to be in the province of Elam in Daniel's time (Daniel 8:2) whereas during the Roman and Greek time it was in the province of Susa.

3. The prophecies of Daniel 9 point clearly to the Messiah. This could only be the result of divine prophecy.