

Daniel

The Authorship and Dating

The authorship and dating of Daniel has been a focus of contention between conservative and liberal critics. "Probably no date of a biblical book has been so positively asserted or so stridently denied as that of Daniel."¹ Although the book's historical context is between 590 and 530 B.C., some critics believe that Daniel was actually written in 2nd Century B.C. As proof for their conclusions they cite linguistic, historical and theological reasons.²

Although some deny Daniel as the author, internal and external evidence provide sufficient reason for accepting the book's traditional dating and authorship. Concerning internal evidence Daniel is mentioned 75 times while his Babylonian name is mentioned another 8 times. The book's recording of firsthand Babylonian culture and its Aramaic linguistic characteristics (2:4-7:28) which resemble the Elephantine papyri as well as Ezra (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26) give further support to a 6th century B.C. dating.³ External evidence also supports an early date. As a 6th Century B.C. document Ezekiel recognizes Daniel as a man of wisdom and insight that is characteristic of Daniel's book (Ezekiel 14:14, 20: 28:3). "Two extrabiblical references to Daniel by his original Babylonian name of Belshazzar have now been found in cuneiform sources that date to 560 B.C."⁴ The fact that Apocrypha books dating to the 3rd and 2nd century B.C. (Tobit, The Watchers, and Ecclesiasticus) quote Ezekiel, Nahum and Daniel also promote an early dating.⁵ This is noteworthy as it indicates that Daniel was not only in circulation before the 2nd century B.C. but had also been around long enough to have established itself as authoritative. In the NT Jesus quotes Daniel and then qualifies him as a prophet (Matthew 24:15). A 2nd century dating as advocated by some not only rejects Daniel as a prophet but also questions Jesus' integrity.⁶ Evidence abounds for a 6th century B.C. dating of Daniel. Concerning the issue the following quotes provide an overall picture.

Liberal critics have disputed the authorship and date of the book of Daniel, claiming that it was written by an anonymous author about 167 B.C. They have held to their position tenaciously because of a basic bias against miracles and prophecy and their claim that the book has overwhelming linguistic and historical problems. But their contentions have been fully answered by conservative scholars.⁷

Despite the numerous objections which have been advanced by scholars who regard this as a prophecy written after the event, there is no good reason for denying the sixth-century Daniel the composition of the entire work. This represents a collection of his memoirs made at the end of a long and eventful career which included government service from the reign to Nebuchadnezzar in the 590's to the reign of Cyrus the Great in the 530's.⁸

¹ David Allan Hubbard William Sanford LaSor, Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey the Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, Second ed.(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). 574.

² Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 423.

³ Robert I. Vasholz, "Qumran and the Dating of Daniel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21(4), no. (1978).

⁴ William H. Shea, "Bel(Te)Shazzar Meets Belshazzar," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26(1), no. (1988). 81.

⁵ Roger Beckwith, "Early Traces of the Book of Daniel," *Tyndale Bulletin* 53 (1), no. (2002).

⁶ Thomas J. Finley, "The Book of Daniel in the Canon of Scripture," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165(255), no. (3008). 208.

⁷ Paul N. Benware, *The Essential Bible Survey of the Old Testament*(Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003). 242.

⁸ Archer. 423.

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The Recipients

Daniel addresses the exiles in Babylon during the middle 6th century B.C.. As the exiles had every opportunity to question God's intention during their captivity, Daniel delivered this message reminding them that God had not forsaken His people. Israel still remained God's covenant community.

The Purpose

The various stories within Daniel may be summarized in the following manner: 1) There are protective stories where Daniel or other Hebrews are protected from danger. 2) There are stories where Daniel is needed to explain world events to heathen kings. 3) Daniel's visions provide explanation of God's relationship to both Gentile and Hebrew. 4) Daniel's prophecies have time orientation which end in the blessing of the Hebrew people. From this evidence we can conclude that Daniel was written in order to comfort and assure the Hebrew exiles that God would protect them through the time of Gentile oppression and bring them into a place of eternal blessing and rule.

The Message

Daniel's experience in the first chapter is an introduction to the content of the rest of the book. As prophesied and due to their sin (Daniel 9:2ff), Jerusalem is taken by the Babylonian Kingdom (representing entire Gentile oppression) and Daniel (representing entire nation of Israel) is preserved through the Babylonian reign (representing entire "Times of Gentiles" oppression). Chapters 2-6 focus upon God's protection of Israel. During this time of predicted domination (9:1), God is preserving a faithful remnant in the midst of the ruling Gentile nations. First, God's protection of the Hebrew Boys (chapter 3, 6) illustrates that God will keep a faithful remnant through the "Times of Gentiles". Secondly, the fact that the Gentile Kings need the Hebrew boys to interpret their dreams (Chapters 2,4,5) gives evidence that God is still honoring Israel as the 'mediator' to other nations (Genesis 12, 15). Chapters 7-12 focus upon the progression of Israel unto the 'Messianic Kingdom.' Through these chapters, Daniel describes the 'Times of Gentiles' (7,8,11) and provides assurance of the coming Messianic Kingdom (7,8,9,12).

The Theme

The Protection and Preservation of the Hebrew People during Gentile oppression

Daniel

Outline

- I. Introduction 1:1**
- II. The Lord's Preservation of Jewish Remnant Through Gentile Rule 1:1-6:28**
 - A. The Lord Sustains His Remnant 1:1-21
 - 1. Jerusalem Youth Carried to Babylon 1:1-7
 - 2. The Youth Purpose to Serve the Lord Alone 1:8-16
 - 3. The Lord Preserves the Health of the Youth 1:17-21
 - B. The Lord Reveals Gentile rule to His Remnant 2:1-49
 - 1. Babylonian Wise Men Fail to Interpret King's Dream 2:1-13
 - 2. Daniel Offers to Interpret King's Unrevealed Dream 2:14-23
 - 3. Daniel Interprets King's Unrevealed Dream 2:24-45
 - 4. The King Honors Daniel 2:46-49
 - C. The Lord Sustains His Remnant through Fire 3:1-30
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar Demands Worship of Self Image 3:1-7
 - 2. Youth Refuse to Worship Image 3:8-18
 - 3. Youth Condemned to Furnace 3:19-23
 - 4. Youth Delivered through Furnace 3:24-28
 - 5. Nebuchadnezzar Honors the God of the Youth 3:28-30
 - D. The Lord Reveals King's Rule to His Remnant 4:1-37
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar Remembers Troubling Dream 4:1-6
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar Remembers Daniel's Interpretation 4:7-27
 - 3. Nebuchadnezzar Remembers Dream's Fulfillment 4:28-33
 - 4. Nebuchadnezzar Testifies to the Lord's Ability 4:34-37
 - E. The Lord Reveals King's Demise to His Remnant 5:1-31
 - 1. Belshazzar's Feast Interrupted by God's Message 5:1-9
 - 2. Daniel Interprets God's Message 5:10-28
 - 3. Belshazzar Rewards Daniel and Looses Kingdom 5:29-31
 - F. The Lord Sustains Remnant in Lion's Den 6:1-28
 - 1. Daniel's Privileged Position 6:1-5
 - 2. Enemy Traps Daniel due to His Godliness 6:6-17
 - 3. Daniel Delivered by God over Enemies 6:18-24
 - 4. Daniel's God Honored Throughout the Land 6:25-28
- III. The Lord's Promise of Messianic Kingdom 7:1-11**
 - A. Temporary Ruler will Bring Worldwide Destruction 7:1-28
 - 1. Daniel's Vision of the Beast with Ten Horns 7:1-14
 - 2. Beast's Temporary Kingdom Brings World-wide Destruction 7:15-28
 - B. Ruler will bring Destruction Against God's People 8:1-27
 - 1. Daniel's Vision of the Ram and Goat 8:1-14
 - 2. Vision anticipates Persecution of God's People Until Prince of Peace 8:15-27
 - C. The Vision of Seventy Weeks 9:1-27
 - 1. Daniel Understands Jeremiah's Seventy Years 9:1-3
 - 2. Daniel's Prayer for Forgiveness 9:4-19
 - 3. Daniel's Vision of Seventy Weeks 9:20-27
 - D. The Promises a Future Messianic Kingdom 10:1-12:13

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- 1.Mournful Daniel Supported by Angelic Host 10:1-21
- 2.Message Concerning Near Future 11:1-12:4
- 3.Message Concerning Distant Future 12:5-13

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Questions for Daniel

1. What is the setting of Daniel?
2. Discuss the dating and authorship of Daniel.
3. Describe the significance of Daniel within Old Testament Criticism.
4. Describe the Kingdoms through which Daniel the prophet lived.
5. Describe the major kingdoms of the two visions in chapters 2 and 7.
6. In what way would the stories of protection in chapters 3 and 6 influence the audience of Daniel?
7. In what way would the visions in chapters 2 and 7 have influenced the audience of Daniel?
8. Discuss the confession of Nebuchadnezzar in 4:34-37 and its relationship to the authorship of Daniel.
9. Discuss the prophetic statement starting in 9:24.
10. Discuss the prophetic statements concerning the ram and goat in chapter 8.

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