Introduction to Daniel

1. What is the book of Daniel?
- The Book of Daniel begins with the setting of Daniel (probably in his early to mid-teens) taken captive during the time that King Jehoiachin was taken (approximately 19 years before Jerusalem was destroyed and King Zedekiah was taken to Babylon). Daniel was exiled to Babylon with his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He and his friends were held in high regard by the leadership of Babylon which also sparked jealousy from Babylon's "middle management".
- Daniel's wisdom was an asset to multiple generations of leadership in Babylon from King Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar's grandson) to King Darius the Mede who, with the Medes and Persians, conquered the Babylonian empire.
- The last half of the book of Daniel focuses on prophetic messages delivered by God through the angel Gabriel (the same angel who prophesied the birth of John the Baptist). These prophesies cover several of the centuries prior to Christ’s birth. In addition, his prophecies speak of the actions of the messiah, his death and his ascension into heaven.
- The prophet Daniel is held in high regard by God, and is one of the prophets that is memorialized in the New Testament as well as in other books such as Ezekiel an elder, fellow prophet appointed to speak to those in Babylon. In contrast, skeptics try to disprove that that this book was written prior to the 2nd century BC because the details, in their mind, couldn’t possibly be written hundreds of years before because they are too accurate.

2. Who was the Author?
- Daniel

3. When was it written?
- Approximately 535 BC

4. What was the historical time span?
- 605 to 535 BC
5. The Babylonian Captivity

A. There were 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. After years of Jewish rebellion, the destruction of the temple & general deportation occurs.

B. Daniel served under four pagan kings:
   1. Babylonian: Nebuchadnezzar (chapters 1-4)
   2. Babylonian: Belshazzar (chapters 5, 7, 8)
   3. Medo-Persian: Darius (chapter 6, 9, 11)
   4. Medo-Persian: Cyrus (chapter 10)

C. Godly influences on Daniel
   1. He was probably born of royal blood around the time of Josiah’s reforms.
   2. He may have heard Jeremiah, and read Jeremiah’s book (Daniel 9:2).
   3. He may have known Ezekiel, a fellow captive in Babylon. Ezekiel knew of Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14, 20/28:3)

6. The person Daniel: Biographical sketch

A. He was either a royal descendant or of some noble birth and was, likely, born during the time that King Josiah began to enact many religious reforms (note reference in chapter 1:3).
B. As a youth (likely an early teen), Daniel was carried away captive to Babylon (605 B.C.).
C. He was trained 3 years in the language and culture of the Chaldeans.
D. Like Joseph, Daniel was elevated to high rank because of God giving him the ability to interpret dreams.
E. He served as a statesman under kings of Babylon and Persia until at least 536 B.C. (the third year of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1).
F. Was also a prophet (Numbers 12:6/Matthew 24:15), though not like Ezekiel or other fellow prophets who were God’s spokesmen to Israel. Other biblical contemporaries (with many being close to a generation older than Daniel) include Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Jeremiah.


A. Assigned a late date by critics who refute the supernatural, sometime in the Maccabean period (170-160 B.C.)
   1. Greek/Persian loan words. There are a few words that are in the book that are Greek and Persian – which critics try to indicate it had to be written during the Grecian reign.
   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 (contrast Jeremiah 25:1 with Daniel 1:1)
      b. In the writer’s day, “Chaldeans” were thought to have been a group of soothsayer-priests (Daniel 2/4:7/5:7, 11)
      c. Nebuchadnezzar’s madness of 7 “times” (Chapter 4) – British Historian Paul Anthony Cartledge wrote: “History knows nothing of the madness of Nebuchadnezzar reported in Daniel.”
      d. For a long time, no record of a “Belshazzar” the king.
      a. Herodotus (400 B.C.), Xenophon, Brosus, Abydenus, and contemporary Cuneiform writings name Nabonidas, not Belshazzar, as last king of Babylon.
      e. The unknown character of Darius the Mede – no extrabiblical historical records.
B. Evidence to the earlier date and answers to the objections

I. Dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion: Daniel used Babylonian reckoning, while Jeremiah used Jewish reckoning. Babylonians use “accession year,” measurement, while Jews used “non-accession year” methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 25:1</th>
<th>Daniel 1:1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The 4th year of Jehoiakim”</td>
<td>“The 3rd year of Jehoiakim”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish reckoning</td>
<td>Babylonian reckoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year - accession year</td>
<td>Not counted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>607 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>606 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>605 B.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

III. Nebuchadnezzar’s madness (7 times could mean 3 ½ years or 7 years depending on whether Babylonian seasons (2 seasons per year) were used rather than years in the prophecy).
- Babylonian history records no governmental activity by Nebuchadnezzar from 582 to 575 B.C.
- 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 Merodachapters ...I did not sing his praises... I did not clear out canals.”
- In Praeparatorio 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.”

IV. Belshazzar the king
- 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.”
- 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.

V. Darius the Mede
- “Darius” may be a title, rather than a name.
- Some identify with Gubaru (called Gobryas by Greek historians), Cyrus’ general, who subdued Babylon and ruled there for two years until Cyrus arrived.
- Some identify Darius with Cyrus, whom Daniel mentions in 10:1.

2. Incidental points of historical accuracy
- Knowledge of Belshazzar: How could someone whom history forgot, pop up centuries later by someone other than an eyewitness?
- Knowledge of the Babylonian kings’ power to enact and modify legislation (Daniel 2:12, 46), but of the Persian kings’ not having such powers (Daniel 6:8).
- Knowledge of the change of modes of execution from burning, under the Babylonians (Daniel 3) to the den of lions, under the Persians (Daniel 6).

3. The testimony of Jesus (Matthew 24:15)
8. Important Aspects of the Book of Daniel

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

B. Confirmed authorship by several mentions of the name Daniel: (8:1, 9:2, 10:2, 12:5-8)

C. Prophetic accuracy. The details are unprecedented and far too specific to be made up.

D. Apocalyptic genre (the book that set the stage for entire sections of Jewish literature centuries later).

E. Divisions:

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

2. Written in Hebrew (chapters 1, 8-12) and Aramaic (chapters 2-7) sections
   Hebrew written section seems to be focusing on what is important to the Jewish people while the Aramaic section on what is important to all readers.
   A. Four empires and God’s kingdom (chapters 2, 7)
   B. God’s supernatural preservation of His people (chapters 3 & 6)
   C. Punishment of proud kings (chapters 4 & 5)

F. Progressive prophetic parallelism of current and future kingdoms – ultimately, God’s Kingdom:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empires</th>
<th>Chapter 2</th>
<th>Chapter 7</th>
<th>Chapter 8</th>
<th>Chapter 9</th>
<th>Chapters 10-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babylonian</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media-Persian</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>Ram</td>
<td>Decree to Rebuild</td>
<td>4 Persian kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grecian</td>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>Leopard</td>
<td>He-goat</td>
<td>70 “weeks”</td>
<td>Kings of North &amp; South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Unique Beast</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Prince to come</td>
<td>Ships of Kittim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Kingdom</td>
<td>Growing Stone</td>
<td>A Son of Man</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Messiah</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Daniel Chapter 1

1. When did Nebuchadnezzar take the first group of captives from Jerusalem?
   i. Who gave him victory over Jerusalem and why is it important to know this?
   ii. What plunder did Nebuchadnezzar take with his troops back to Babylon?

2. Read verse 3. What was Ashpenaz’s role?
   i. What does this likely mean occurred to Daniel?

3. What were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah chose for?

4. Bel (or Baal) was the chief god of Babylon, Aku was the moon god, and Nebo was the son of Bel (or Baal) Daniel means “God is my judge” --- Beltashazzar means “May Bel (or Baal) protect his life” Hananiah means “Yahweh is gracious” --- Shadrach means “Command of Aku” Mishael means “Who is what God is?” --- Meshach means “Who is what Aku is?” Azariah means “Yahweh helps” --- Abednego means “Servant of Nebo”
   i. What do all of the names have in common?
   ii. Which name change had the closest meaning to the original name?

5. According to verse 8, Daniel didn’t want to eat what was being provided by the royal household. Why did he make this decision?
   i. What was the concern of the chief Babylonian official?
   ii. In lieu of the royal food, what did Daniel and his friends eat?
   iii. After ten days, what did the chief official discover?

6. What gifts did God give to Daniel and his three friends?
   i. What, additional, special ability did God give specifically to Daniel?

7. After Nebuchadnezzar was impressed by Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, what did he proceed to do with them?

8. When did Daniel’s service to kings finally come to an end?
   i. Read Isaiah 44:28. What do we learn will happen several centuries after Isaiah’s prophecy in the 700s BC?
Daniel Chapter 2

1. After Nebuchadnezzar was disturbed by his dream, what was the challenge he presented?
   i. Who did he present this challenge to?
   ii. What was the penalty for not rising to the challenge and to whom would the penalty ultimately apply?
   iii. What was the reward for succeeding?
   iv. How was the challenge responded to?

2. Read Genesis 41:1-41. How were the Pharaoh’s circumstances similar to Nebuchadnezzar?
   i. How were the Pharaoh’s request similar yet different from Nebuchadnezzar?
   ii. How were the outcomes of Joseph and Daniel similar?

3. Once Daniel received word of the challenge, how did he communicate with the royal court?
   i. After this communication, what did Daniel proceed to do and urge his friends to do also?
      1. Why is this important to remember?
   ii. What did God reveal to Daniel?
   iii. How did Daniel respond to this revelation?

4. When Daniel came to king Nebuchadnezzar, who did Daniel clearly give the glory to concerning the revelation of his dream and the interpretation?

5. Concerning the interpretation of the dream, who was the head of gold and how might this have initially been flattering?
   i. How did this initial uplifting interpretation quickly fade?
6. In 539 B.C. Babylon was conquered by the Medes and the Persian Empire. It ruled until 330 B.C. but lacked the unchallenged authority that Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon had demonstrated. Which kingdom did this apply to with respects to the dream?

7. In 330 B.C. Alexander the Great and the Greeks conquered the Persian Empire. This vast kingdom spanned across India to the Middle East all the way to Southern Europe which was the known world at the time. Which kingdom does this pertain to in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar?

8. In 63 B.C. Rome conquered Northern and Southern Israel along with the surrounding regions and endured, by far, the longest, for over ½ a millennium. Which kingdom does this appear to be in the dream?

9. The most popular eschatological theology in the USA was developed in the early 19th century. At the core of its message is the understanding that Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God/ Kingdom of Heaven during the 1st century, but the Jews rejected the Kingdom so it was never established. However, read these passages and indicate what you feel Jesus is communicating: Matthew 4:17, Matthew 10:6-8, Matthew 12:24-30, Luke 17:20-22.

   a. In the previously mentioned theological system, some believe that Jesus did bring the Kingdom of God, but when He left, He took it with Him. Read Acts 5:12-16 and Acts 8:4-8. If having power over unclean spirits or demons is a demonstration of the Kingdom of God, what can we conclude from these passages?

10. Read Matthew 13:24-33. How is Jesus’ description of the Kingdom of God/Heaven similar to the vision Nebuchadnezzar saw?

   a. What do we learn about Jesus’ parables regarding the Kingdom of God/Heaven?

11. Read Daniel 2:44-45. Knowing that Jesus brought the Kingdom of God/Heaven during the time of the Roman Emperors, explain how this was fulfilled spiritually:

12. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to the dream’s interpretation?