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The Book of Daniel: Cultures in Conflict

Living as a Christian in a Post-Christian World



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INTRODUCTION

Authorship and Date

In recent years, there has been much debate as to the date and authorship of the Book of Daniel. This debate is a divisive factor in the overall understanding of the book. As you study this book, it is imperative to clarify your understanding on this issue because of the impact it will have upon your interpretation.

Two Opposing Views

VIEW #1: THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

- Daniel is the author of the book as we have it today, and its history and prophecies are accurate and reliable.
- It was by special revelation from God that Daniel was able to predict the events that have already taken place in history.
- Daniel wrote the book as an old man—sometime around 536 B.C.

VIEW #2: THE MACCABEAN THESIS

- The author of the book as we have it today was an anonymous Jew during the second century B.C.
- This theory purports that the book was written to encourage the Jews who were suffering under the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), during the Maccabean period—thus the reason for its name.
- Understanding that it was written some 400 years after the events described, scholars believe that Daniel consists of ‘non-historical accounts and pseudoprophecies.

As one who believes that the Bible is “God’s inerrant revelation, complete in the Old and New Testaments, written by divinely inspired men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” it is imperative that we hold to the Traditional View of authorship and date for the writing of the Book of Daniel.

Compelling Evidence Regarding Authorship and Date

- Sociological Evidences
- Archeological Discoveries:
- Linguistic Considerations:

In short, the concern over date and authorship of the Book of Daniel rests on the biblical world view of the interpreter. If an individual believes in the supernatural ability of God to reveal the future to His prophet, then he also has no problem accepting Daniel as the author in the sixth century B.C. If, however, an individual does not believe in the supernatural work of God among man, he must find an alternative means of explaining the authorship of Daniel.

Historical Background

KEY HISTORIC EVENTS SURROUNDING THE LIFE OF DANIEL

- 612 B.C. - Fall of Nineveh, capital of Assyria
- 605 B.C. - Battle of Carchemish, establishing Babylonian domination
- 597 B.C. - A second group of captives taken to Babylon
- 586 B.C. - Fall of Jerusalem and the temple destroyed
- 539-536 B.C. - Babylon falls, and the first remnant returns to Jerusalem
- 457 B.C. - A second remnant returns to Jerusalem
- 444 B.C. - A third remnant returns to Jerusalem

HISTORIC EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF DANIEL

- Daniel was born (circa 620 B.C) in Israel during the last days of the kingdom of Judah.
- Daniel was taken captive to Babylon in 605 B.C, at the age of 15, with the first group of captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel continued serving God as a prophet for all of the 70 years of captivity.

Cultural Background

Theological Emphases

- The Sovereignty of God in the affairs of the world.
- God's love and care for His followers.
- The person and work of the Messiah.
- The eschatology of the tribulation, the last days and the new earth.

Part One: The Stories of Daniel in Babylon

The first event described here relays the story of how Daniel and many others find themselves living in a strange, new land with strange, new cultures and religious beliefs. Daniel's character is tested as his home culture clashes with his new, host culture.

I. Daniel's Identity and Character (1:1-21)

The Historical Setting (1-2)

Introduction of Daniel and His Friends (3-7)

Who are they?

What are their names?

- Daniel – 'God is my judge'
- Hananiah – 'Yahweh is gracious'
- Mishael – 'who is what God is?'
- Azariah – 'Yahweh has/will help'

What new names did they receive from Ashpenaz—the chief Eunuch? What did they mean?

- Daniel ⇨ Belteshazzar – 'Bel, protect his life' (Bel is another name for Marduk)
- Hananiah ⇨ Shadrach – 'command of Aku' (the moon god)
- Mishael ⇨ Meshach – 'who is what Aku is?'
- Azariah ⇨ Abednego – 'servant of Nebo' (second greatest god in Babylon)

When were they taken and where were they taken to?

Why were they chosen? What were the qualifications for eligible trainees in Babylon?

How long was their training supposed to last?

What difficulties did the Hebrew children face when they were taken to Babylon?

The Moral Test (8-16)

What was Daniel's decision when faced with this moral dilemma?

What were they supposed to eat?

Why was this decision difficult?

How did the king's men respond to Daniel's resolution?

Who is Melzar? What is so confusing about who this is?

What proposition did Daniel make to their supervisor?

What was the outcome of this proposal?

God's Blessings on Daniel and His Friends (17-21)

How did God continue to bless Daniel and his friends for their faithfulness?

II. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (2:1-45)

The Circumstances of the Dream (1)

How could Daniel have completed three years of training by Nebuchadnezzar's second year?

YEARS OF TRAINING	YEAR OF KING'S REIGN	DATE
First	_____ year	From Sept. 605 (the time Nebuchadnezzar assumed the throne) to Nisan (Mar-Apr) 604 B.C.
Second	_____ year	Nisan 604-603 B.C.
Third	_____ year	Nisan 603-604 B.C.

The Futility of the Pagan Interpreters (2-13)

Who were all these pagan interpreters? What are the characteristics of each?

- Magicians
- Enchanters
- Sorcerers
- Chaldeans

What did the king say to these men when he called them?

How did the Chaldeans, or astrologers, respond?

What happens here with the original text that is important?

Why two different languages?

What ridiculous expectation did the king have of the interpreters? Why

What did the king say would happen to them if they could or could not interpret the dream?

Why would Nebuchadnezzar be so willing to annihilate his wise men?

What excuse did the 'wise men' give the king as to why they could not do what he asked?

How did the king react when the 'wise men' failed to interpret the dream?

Daniel's Intervention (14-30)

Who was Arioch? What did Daniel say to him?

What was the result of Daniel's intervention?

What was Daniel's plan of action for discerning the contents and interpretation of the dream?

How did God respond to their pleas? What did Daniel do next?

The Dream Revealed (31-35)

What did the king see in his dream?

- A **statue** –
 - Head – gold
 - Chest & Arms – silver
 - Middle & Thighs – bronze
 - Legs – iron
 - Feet – iron and clay
- A **stone** –
- A **strong wind** –



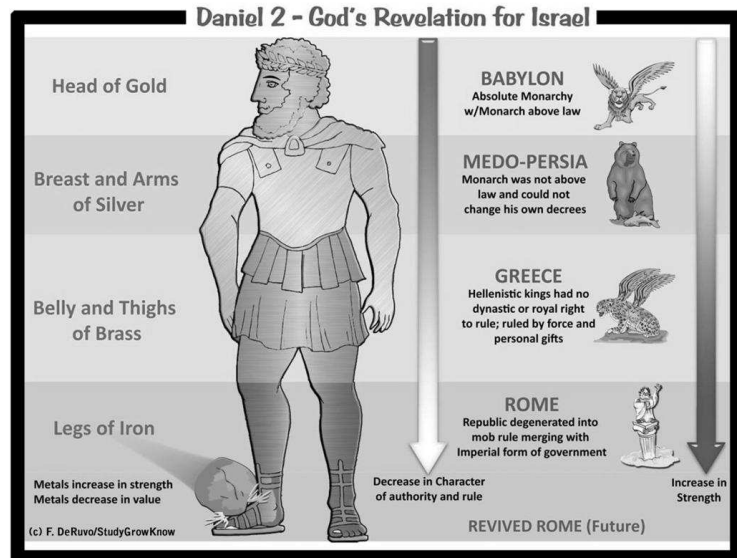
The Interpretation of the Dream (36-45)

Before telling Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of the dream, what did Daniel articulate?

In general terms, what was the meaning of the dream?

What was the meaning behind the
'head of gold'? (37-38)

What was the meaning behind the
'chest and arms of silver'? (39a)



What was the meaning behind the 'middle and thighs of bronze'? (39b)

What was the meaning behind the 'legs of iron'? (40)

What was the meaning behind the 'feet of iron and clay'? (41-43)

What was the meaning behind the 'divinely-made stone'? (44-45)

Nebuchadnezzar's Response (46-49)

III. The Trial of the Three Hebrews (3:1-30)

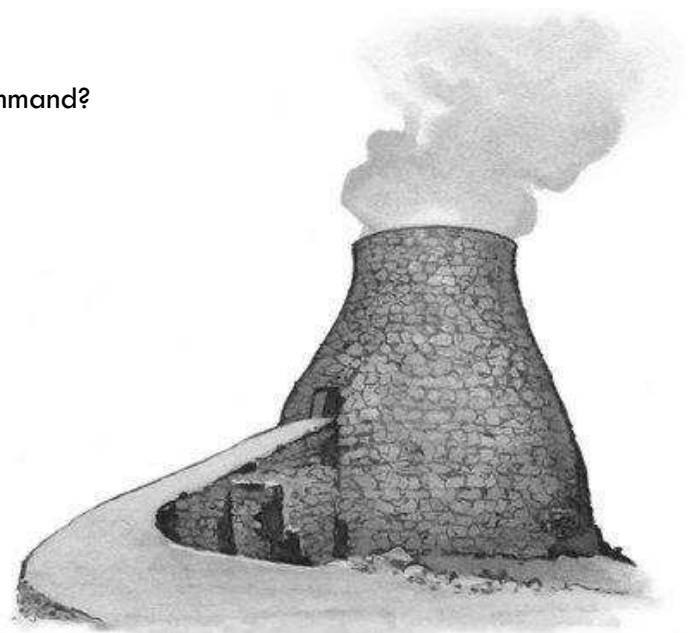
Where was Daniel when all this happened?

The Occasion (1-7)

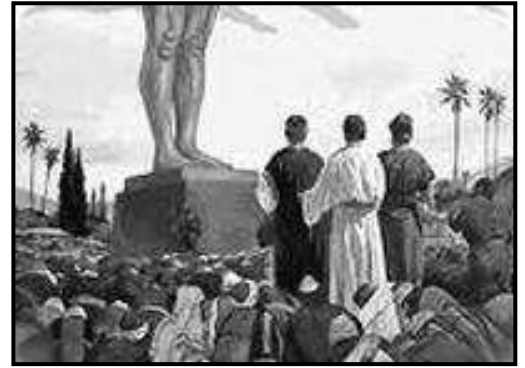
What were the circumstances surrounding the events of this chapter?

Once the officials gathered, what was the proclamation from the king?

What were the consequences of disobeying this command?



What happened when the musicians played?



The Accusation (8-12)

Who accused the three Hebrews of disobeying the king's command? (8)

What were the charges that were brought against the three Hebrews?

The Inquisition (13-18)

What was Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to this accusation?

What options were the three Hebrews given by the king?

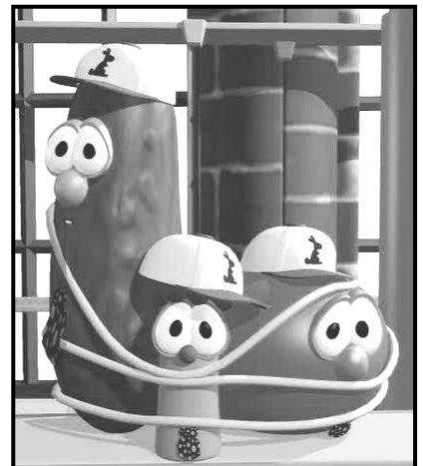
In what way did Nebuchadnezzar make an inadvertent challenge toward God?

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to the king? (16-18)

- They were unwavering in their _____.
- They were unyielding in their _____.
- They were unrivaled in their _____.

The Sentence (19-23)

How did Nebuchadnezzar react to their continued stand?



The Deliverance (24-27)

What did the Babylonians see in the fire?

Who was the fourth person in the fire?

The Result (28-30)

What did Nebuchadnezzar do as a result of this experience?

What were the evidences of God's miraculous power?

What was the ultimate purpose of this miraculous deliverance?

IV. Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream & God's Judgment (4:1-37)

When did the events of Daniel 4 take place?

The King's Proclamation (1-3)

What is the purpose of this letter?

The King's Dream (4-18)

What was happening when the king had this dream? (4-5)

Who did Nebuchadnezzar initially call upon to interpret the dream? (6-7)

Why was the king confident that Daniel would be able to interpret the dream? (8-9)

In what way was his confidence misplaced?

What did the king dream? What things were in his dream? (10-17)

After sharing his dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar request of Daniel? (18)

The Interpretation of the Dream (19-27)

Why did Daniel hesitate to tell Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream? (19)

What was the meaning behind the tree that 'was visible to the end of the whole earth'? (20-22)

What was the meaning behind the second half of the dream? (23-25)

What was the meaning behind the 'stump of the roots of the tree' being left? (26)

What did Daniel encourage the king to do in response to this dream? (27)

The Fulfillment of the Dream (28-36)

When did all this happen to Nebuchadnezzar? (28-29) Why did it not happen immediately?

What was happening at the moment that this dream was fulfilled? (29-31)

What actually happened to Nebuchadnezzar? (32-33)

How did this compare to what Daniel predicted?

How long did Nebuchadnezzar live like this?

By the end of this time, what had changed about the king's perspective of God?

Did the king return to ruling over the Babylonian Empire as Daniel predicted? (36)

Conclusion (37)

After all that Nebuchadnezzar went through, what was his attitude toward God? (37)

V. Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon (5:1-31)

Who is Belshazzar? Was he real or imaginary?

If Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, why does Daniel identify Belshazzar as king?

If Nabonidus was still alive, why would he name his son as the coregent of the empire?

The Feast (1-4)

What is going on in the Babylonian Empire at the time of this party?

What is happening at this party?

Considering that the Temple of Marduk held vessels of the gods of other conquered peoples, why did Belshazzar specifically request the vessels of Jehovah for this desecrating purpose?

The Handwriting on the Wall (5-6)

What is different about the way that God spoke to Belshazzar compared to Nebuchadnezzar?

How is it possible that everyone would be able to see this take place?

How did Belshazzar react when he saw the handwriting on the wall?

The Wise Men of Babylon Called (7-9)

After calling his wise men, what did the king offer to the one who could interpret the writing?

Were the wise men able to interpret the writing?

Daniel Summoned (10-16)

In verse 10, word of this dilemma reached the queen. To whom is this referring?

What was the queen's message to Belshazzar?

What did King Belshazzar say to Daniel when he arrived? What was Daniel's reply?

A Refusal and a Rebuke (17-24)

Why did Daniel refuse the gifts and honors that the king was offering to the interpreter?

Daniel uses verses 18-21 to remind Belshazzar of the ways in which God had worked during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and the consequences of pride in Nebuchadnezzar's life. In short, Daniel gave King Belshazzar a history lesson. What did he share in this history lesson?

Who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom? (18)

Why was Nebuchadnezzar deposed from his kingly throne and his glory taken from him? (19-20)

When was Nebuchadnezzar's throne returned to him? (21)

What charge did Daniel bring against Belshazzar? (22-24)

The Handwriting Explained (5:25-28)

What were the words written on the wall and what was the interpretation Daniel offered?

- Only four brief words were written on the wall.
 - MENE, MENE – numbered
 - TEKEL – weighed
 - UPHARSIN (or PERES) – divided
- Interpretation

Daniel's Exaltation and the Fall of Babylon (29-31)

Did Daniel receive the rewards initially offered by Belshazzar? (29)

What happened to Belshazzar that very night? (30) Who took the kingdom? (31)

VI. Daniel in the Lion's Den (6:1-28)

Who was the first king of the Medo-Persian Empire—'Darius the Mede' or 'Cyrus the Persian'?

So how did the Medo-Persian armies penetrate the impenetrable city of Babylon?

The New Government (1-3)

What did the new king do to reorganize the system of government?

How did Darius come to know Daniel?

A Treacherous Plot (4-9)

What were the reasons for the other officials plotting against Daniel? What did they discover?

What was their conclusion concerning Daniel and his integrity?

Since they were unable to find fault or error in Daniel, what did they do to entrap him?

How did they get King Darius to agree to their proposal?

What was the proposal and what were the consequences of disobeying?

What is meant in verse 8 when it says that the law could not be revoked? Why not?

The Accusation and Condemnation of Daniel (10-18)

What did Daniel do in response to this decree from King Darius?

How did those conspiring against Daniel react to his blatant disregard for the decree?

When the accusation was made against Daniel, what was King Darius' reaction?

Why couldn't the king 'change his mind' and not punish Daniel?

When the king pronounced Daniel's sentence, what did he say and why?

What was done to the opening, or mouth, of the lion's den?

According to the description in verse 18, how did the king feel about what he had done?

The Deliverance of Daniel (19-23)

The next morning, what did the king find at the den of lions?

What explanation did Daniel give as to how he was saved from the lions?

How did the king react?

The Results (24-28)

What did the king command to be done to those who accused Daniel?

What decree did King Darius proclaim to all people?

How did Darius describe the God of Daniel?

What happened to Daniel as a result of this encounter?

Why does the author reference Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian in verse 28?