

Daniel 1 - Taken Captive to Babylon

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COURSE COMMENTARY



1:1 - Historical Setting

- **Judgment by God**

The downfall of Israel occurred in stages, becoming ever more severe, until the city and temple were destroyed. This was the first stage in God's judgment against the rebellious nation. Several prophets were sent by God over a lengthy period of time to warn Israel in advance of the impending judgment, but the nation would not heed (e.g., Jer. [25:3-11](#)).

1:1 - Third or Fourth Year?

- **Nebuchadnezzar king in Jehoiakim's third or fourth year?**

Daniel writes: "In the **third year** of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it." (Dan. [1:1](#)).

Jeremiah writes: "The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the **fourth year** of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem... 'behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations.'" (Jer. [25:1-2,9](#)).

How could Nebuchadnezzar's siege be in Jehoiakim's third year (according to Daniel) if his first year and prophesied attack is in Jehoiakim's fourth year (according to Jeremiah)?

- **The Nature of "Bible Difficulties"**

Apparent contradictions caused by incomplete knowledge of the facts.

Our choice: exercise faith or take the well-worn path of the skeptic?

- **Nisan or Tishri Years?**

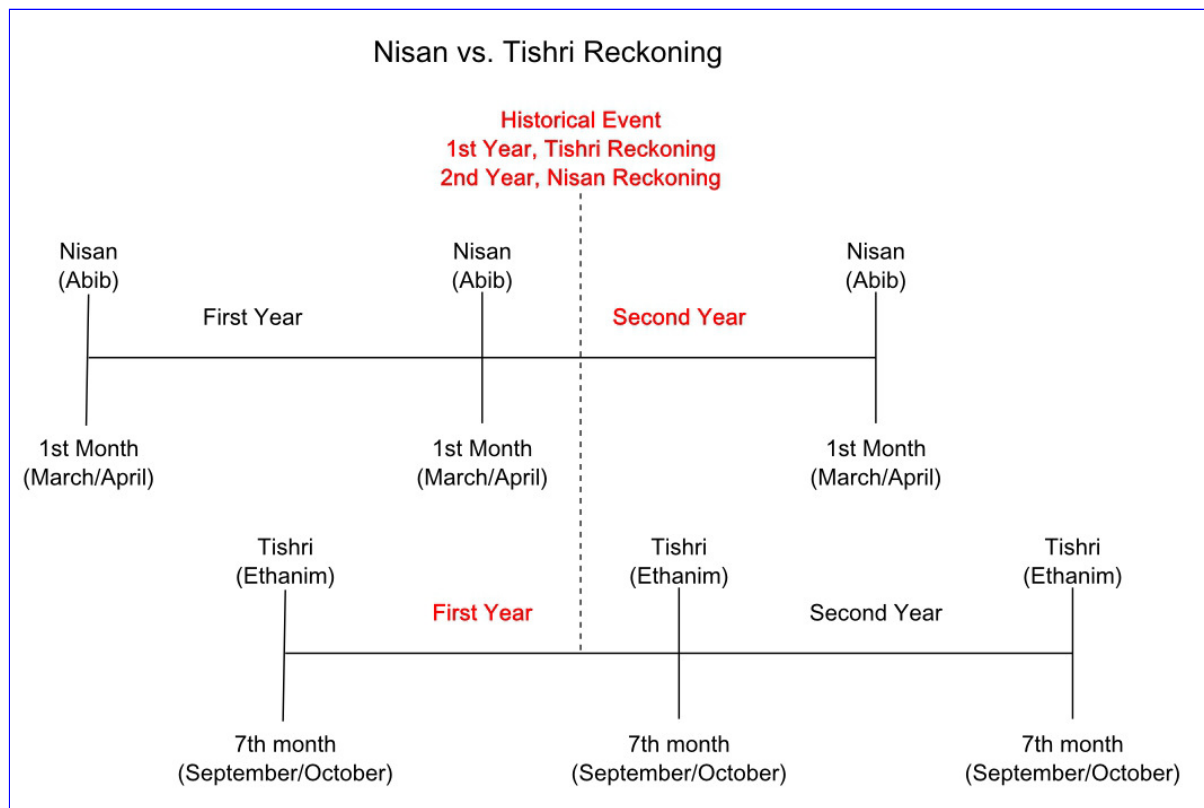
In many cultures today, the new year begins on January 1st. But in Daniel's time the new year could begin in the month of Nisan (March / April) or the month of Tishri (September / October). It appears that Jeremiah reckons Jehoiakim's reign using years beginning in Nisan (the Assyrian practice), whereas Daniel reckons the reign using years beginning in Tishri (the Judean practice).

Any event falling after the first day in Nisan, but before the first day of Tishri, could be described as being in two different years depending upon the point of view of the writer.

Jehoiakim's third year (in Tishri years--from Daniel's perspective) could also be his fourth year (in Nisan years--from Jeremiah's perspective).

Nisan or Tishri Years?

Since the siege occurred during the summer, it would fall in this period between Nisan (spring) and Tishri (fall).

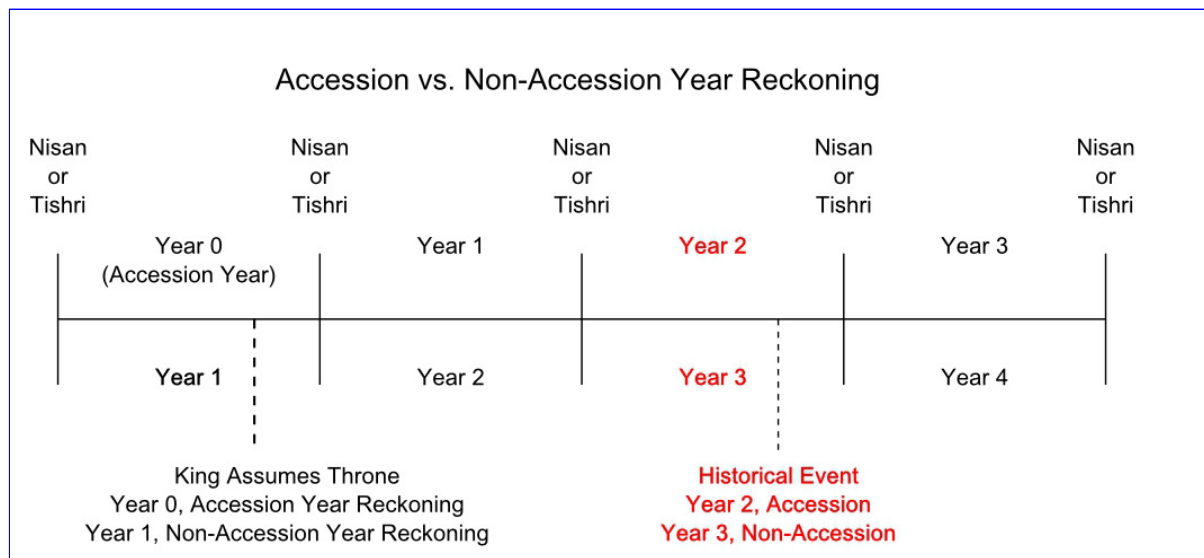


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- **Accession or Non-Accession Years?**

Another possible factor: how to attribute years to a king's reign when rulership changes mid-year?

Accession vs. Non-Accession Reckoning



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In Babylon: the first (partial) year was

the king's and considered "year zero." His first year didn't start until the next new year.

In Israel: the first (partial) year was the king's first year (non-accession reckoning).

A writer using non-accession reckoning would count one additional year in a king's reign than another writer using accession-year reckoning.

Daniel appears to have used accession-year reckoning, whereas Jeremiah did not.

- **Daniel Taken Prior to Carchemish?**

There is yet another possibility. If Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem prior to the battle of Carchemish, then it could be that Daniel 1:1 and Jeremiah 25:1-2 are describing two different events. Daniel would be describing an attack at an earlier time than Jeremiah who relates an event in Nebuchadnezzar's first year near the time of the battle of Carchemish.

Some commentators feel this is unlikely because they doubt Nebuchadnezzar could have penetrated as far as Jerusalem prior to the battle of Carchemish when Pharaoh Neco of Egypt was defeated and lost control over the region.

1:1 - King of Babylon

- **Neo-Babylon (New Babylon)**

Hebrew word behind "Babylon" is **babel** which is associated with the first kingdom recorded in Scripture: the city of Babel founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:10; 11:9).

God judged mankind's refusal to disperse and fill the earth through the introduction of languages (Gen. 11:7-8).

This association of Babel with **confusion** is also evident in how Scripture represents the restless confusion of the wicked "peoples" and "nations" with the sea (Isa. 17:12-13; 57:19-21; Jer. 6:22-23; Rev. 17:1, 15).

We believe this association is a subtle clue concerning the Gentile origin of the beasts depicted in Daniel (Dan. 7:3) and Revelation (Rev. 13:1) who arise from the sea.

1:2 - God's Sovereign Judgment

- **"the Lord gave"**

Judgment of Israel was according to the Mosaic covenant under which she had bound herself before God (Ex. 19:5-8; 24:6-8; Deu. 29:1, 9, 12, 14; 31:16, 20; cf. Jer. 34:18).

Judgment due to 1) Israel's continual idolatry and the unjust reign of her leaders from the throne of David; and 2) because she had failed to keep the Sabbath of the land for a period of 490 years, a period of 70 x 7 (Lev. 26:33-34; 2Chr. 36:17-21).

This becomes the basis of the famous prophecy of Seventy Sevens in Daniel 9.

1:2 - Land of Shinar

- **The Kingdom of Man**

The land of Shinar is a reference to southern Mesopotamia, the region of Babylon, near modern-day Bagdad.

Mentioned to connect Neo-Babylonia under Nebuchadnezzar with Babel under Nimrod.

Represents the pride and human independence which characterized Nimrod's kingdom of Babel.

The "kingdom of man" in opposition to the "kingdom of God."

The throne of man (Times of the Gentiles) vs. the throne of David.

1:2 - Temple Vessels Stolen

- **Contest of Gods**

By taking the temple vessels to the house of his god, Nebuchadnezzar was honoring his god, but also demonstrating the superiority of his god over the God of Israel.

While articles from Yahweh's temple remain in the hands of a Gentile pagan power, the implication is that Yahweh is powerless to do anything about it.

This creates a historical tension which God ultimately resolves by overthrowing Babylon, in part, due to the desecration of these same vessels by Belshazzar (Dan. 5:30).

1:3-7 - Program of Training

- **Integration and Indoctrination**

The word for "young men" can describe an age range from a helpless child up to a young adult. If Daniel was born around 620 B.C., then he would have been about age 15.

To train the young men for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court.

Immersion in Babylonian ways to purge them of their identity and Jewishness—a brainwashing of sorts.

God's plan: sending Daniel ahead in preparation for the rest of the Jews who would arrive in the next two deportations. (Daniel was already in Babylon for eight years when Judeans of the captivity of 597 arrived, and eighteen years when those of 587 came.)

Like Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 50:16-20) and Mordecai (Est. 2:5-6; 10:3).

1:3-7 - New Names

- **A Change of Identity?**

Considerable uncertainty concerning the meaning of the Babylonian names.

Hebrew names recognized characteristics of Yahweh, whereas the new Babylonian names celebrated pagan gods.

See the commentary for additional discussion regarding possible meanings of the Babylonian names.

1:8-16 - Steadfast Faith

- **Purposed in His Heart**

Daniel could have become bitter toward his own people and God since their disobedience led to his predicament at the hand of God. After all, wasn't it God Who had failed him by allowing his capture and forced deportation?

He was a captive of a powerful foreign king in the land of that king and could lose his life.

There was undoubtedly great peer-pressure to accept the king's food like all the other young men.

The food was no doubt of excellent quality which would be tempting.

His parents were 900 miles away and would not know if he chose to compromise.

He was a young lad, not someone in leadership or destined to serve as a priest.

1:8-16 - Refusal to be Defiled

- **Problems with Meat and Wine**

Levitical regulations regarding unclean animals (Lev. 11:45-47; Acts 10:14-16).

Kosher preparation to avoid eating fat or blood (Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; 19:26).

Meat and wine dedicated to a pagan god (1Cor. 10:19-28).

The term for “vegetables” includes grains. Unlike meat and wine, these were probably not dedicated.

1:8-16 - God’s Response

- **Better and Fatter Flesh**

The word for “fatter” flesh means being physically healthy, not necessarily heavier.

Daniel’s wisdom in proposing the test.

Daniel’s confidence that God would respond.

1:17-20 - Knowledge and Skill

- **Granted by God**

A combination of natural and spiritual gifts.

These young men had great natural abilities. All people have natural abilities from God.

Their natural abilities were augmented by spiritual abilities and gifts which God gives to those who trust in Him.

The combination can be extremely powerful and useful: true knowledge and Godly wisdom!

Not for personal benefit alone, but for a witness to the Babylonians (Dan. 2:24-28, 45-47; 3:28-30; 4:1-3, 27; 5:19-22; 6:20-22) and for the benefit of Israel in captivity (Dan. 1:19, 21; 2:49; 6:3).

- **Godly vs. Worldly Wisdom**

Daniel recognized his wisdom was granted from God (Dan. 2:10).

Daniel’s wisdom became well known (Eze. 28:2-3)

1:17-20 - Visions and Dreams

- **Unique to Daniel**

Only Daniel had this special spiritual endowment.

“Visions” denotes “a communication from God to be communicated to others, with a focus on the visual aspects of the communication.”

Visions concerning the sequence of Gentile kingdoms during the Times of the Gentiles (Dan. 7:2-28; 8:1-27; 10:1-12:3).

“Dreams” denotes “a series of thoughts, images, or feelings that occur during sleep as a natural altered state of awareness, with a focus on the images a dream invokes.”

Both Daniel and Joseph were given revelation in dreams (Gen. 37:5-10; Dan. 7:1) as well as the ability—through God—to interpret the dreams of others (Gen. 40:5; 41:15; Dan. 2:1; 4:5).

1:21 - Daniel Outlasts Babylon

- **First Year of Cyrus**

Chronological indicators within the book of Daniel (Dan. 1:1, 21; 2:1; 5:31; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1; 10:1).

The first year of Cyrus dates to 536 B.C. It is mentioned here because of its significance.

Daniel remained in Babylon until at least the third year of Cyrus in 534 B.C. when he received his final vision (Dan. 10:1).

Significance of the first year of Cyrus: 1) Cyrus issued a decree to allow Jews to return to Jerusalem; 2) Daniel outlasted the entire Babylonian regime which took him captive.

Application

- **The True Source of Wisdom**

God alone is the true source of wisdom (Col. 2:8; Eph. 4:17-18).

- **Living in the Kingdom of Man**

Daniel shows us how to successfully live as followers of God amidst a pagan culture.

- **Establishing a Scriptural Foundation**

Daniel and his friends were already rooted in the faith before calamity struck. They knew God’s Word and had it hidden in their heart from a very early age.

This allowed them to stand when others would have failed.

- **Accepting the Sovereignty of God**

Daniel did not personally deserve any of the things which happened to him.

Rather than become bitter and useless to God, he saw God’s sovereign hand in the calamity.

The result was a long history of useful service to God and his people.

- **Walking Consistently For the Distance**

Daniel’s consistent service spanned a period of approximately 70 years.

His started out with a desire to follow God (here).

He ended with a desire to follow God (in the lion’s den at the approximate age of 80).

- **Christianity is All-Inclusive**

Wherever God has placed us is our place of service.

There is no such thing as separation between religious and secular service.

Our purpose is to know God and serve him in every area of life.



- **God Works in Adversity**

Daniel's capture and deportation seemed like a catastrophe in his life.

He was torn away from everything familiar and plunged into an environment hostile to his faith.

Yet it was God's purpose to take him to Babylon and raise him up in the government.

- **Principle over Pragmatism**

Daniel honored God without compromise.

As a result, God responded.

Daniel majored on obedience and left the results in God's hands.