

Daniel - Introduction, Part 2

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COURSE  COMMENTARY 

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Background

- **Daniel's Name**

Daniel's name means either "God is judge" or "God is *my* judge." Like Cyrus, who Isaiah prophesied was named by God (Isaiah 45:3), I believe Daniel's name was arranged by God in order to underscore a primary theme of the book: **the judgment of the nations** (both Jew and Gentile).

- **Daniel's Early Years**

We know little about the childhood of Daniel. He was probably born around 620 B.C. during the reign of Josiah (642-611), the last godly king of the southern kingdom of Judah. This would make Daniel a teenager, perhaps as young as age 14 or 15, when he was taken captive to Babylon.

- **Daniel's Years of Service**

After being taken to Babylon, Daniel served under both Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires, a period of roughly 70 years (606-537 B.C.). Due to his godly character and the plan and influence of God, Daniel obtained favor in high levels of government under two successive empires.

- **Daniel and Joseph**

Clearly, Daniel's character and role within Scripture is similar to Joseph. When we compare them, we find striking similarities which are *by design*. Both Joseph and Daniel were used of God to provide for Israel at critical times in the history of the nation.

Daniel



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ATTRIBUTE	JOSEPH	DANIEL
Character	Excellent, godly (Gen. 39:8-13)	Excellent, godly (Dan. 6:10; 9:1-23; 10:11,19)
Exalted in Gentile government	Ruled under king of Egypt (Gen. 41:42-44; 41:14; 50:18; Ps. 105:20-22)	Ruled under kings of Babylon & Medo Persia (Dan. 2:48-49; 5:29; 6:2)
Revelation given while in exile	Egypt (Gen. 41:25-32)	Babylon & Medo-Persia (Dan. 2:23; 4:19; 5:25; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1,24-27; 10:1)
Interpreted dreams	For Gentile king Pharaoh (Gen. 41:25-32)	For Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:29)
Purpose of	Revealed future:	Revealed future: sequence of Gentile

dreams	sequence of plenty then famine (Gen. 41:26-30)	empires (Dan. 2:36-45)
Captivity resulted in provision for the Jews (Ps. 106:46; Rom. 8:28)	Favor for Jews during famine (Gen. 45:17-18; Ps. 105:17-23)	Favor for Jews during Babylonian captivity (Dan. 9:1-19; 10:13,20)
Supernatural abilities	Attributed to God (Gen. 41:16)	Attributed to God (Dan. 2:20-23,28,30)
Historical timing of revelation	At the formation of the nation of Israel (Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1)	At the close of the sovereign reign of the Davidic kingdom (Jer. 22:30; 36:30; Eze. 21:13) and the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles

Daniel as Author

- **Witness of the Book**

Although the book begins by identifying Daniel in the third-person, ('he') (e.g., Dan. 1:6), from chapter 7 onward, Daniel is referred to in the first-person ('I') (Dan. 7:2,15,28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2,22; 10:1,2,7,11,12; 12:5). Many scholars believe the shift from first to third-person reflects the different emphasis of the portions of the book shifting from historical narrative to visionary revelation.

- **Witness of Scripture**

A strong witness for the authorship of the book of Daniel--which should satisfy the needs of every believer--are the words of Jesus Who attributes the contents of the book to Daniel (Mat. 24:15; Mark 13:14). Jesus only quoted canonical writings. Besides this attribution by Jesus, Daniel is mentioned by Ezekiel (Eze. 14:14,20; 28:3) and almost certainly alluded to by the author of the Book of Hebrews (Heb. 11:33-34).

- **Unity of the Book**

Those who deny Daniel as author usually do so by proposing that different sections of the book were written by a number of different authors, but the unity of the book is evidence against this. Since Daniel refers to himself in the first-person in the latter portions of the book, the unity of the book implies he wrote all of it.

- **Early Interpretation**

If the book of Daniel were a pseudonymous work, then it is difficult to explain how became part of the Hebrew canon when other pseudonymous works were uniformly rejected. The earliest expositors of the book (e.g., Irenaeus, Hippolytus), accept the book as real history with no notion of any fraudulent origin.

Daniel by Michelangelo

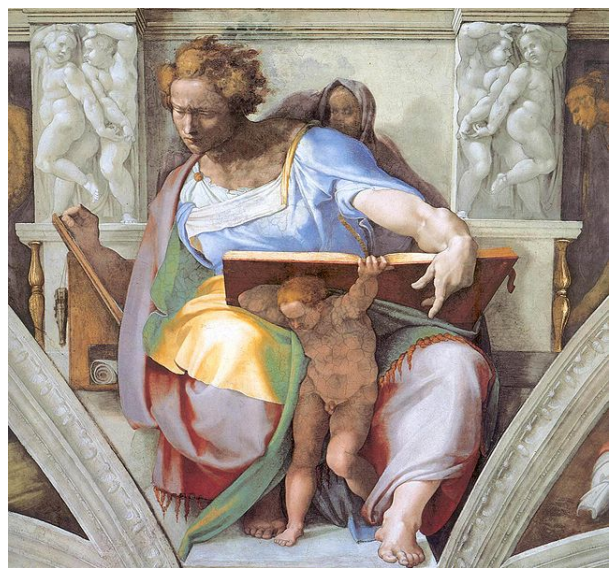


Image provided by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). "The Prophet Daniel" in the Sistine Chapel. This image is in the public domain.

- **Unqualified Name**

The fact that references to Daniel both within the book and elsewhere in Scripture use the simple attribution of "Daniel" is itself strong evidence that the biblical Daniel wrote the book. For who else could be understood without further qualification by mention of the first name "Daniel"?

Critical Views of Authorship

- **Someone Else Wrote Daniel?**

The critical argument: (1) the book of Daniel contains predictions of events of the Maccabean revolt which are too accurate to be true predictions, therefore (2) the book of Daniel must have been written after the events transpired--after the Maccabean revolt (c. 165 B.C.), and (3) the Daniel portrayed within the book as living during the Babylonian captivity died much earlier, so (4) some other author or authors must have written and assembled the book.

- **Daniel Unknown to Secular History**

Like Belshazzar earlier, the lack of any mention in secular historical records to Daniel is taken as an argument from silence that he did not exist.

- **Ezekiel Mentioned A Different Daniel?**

Critics assert that Ezekiel would not have placed Daniel in the same category as the biblical heavyweights Noah and Job in Ezekiel [14:12-14](#). But Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon about 8 or 9 years after Daniel and would have heard of his reputation.

- **A Pagan Dan'el?**

If the critics don't believe that the biblical Daniel is referred to by Ezekiel, who do they believe was in view? Most believe Ezekiel referred to a character named Dan'el mentioned in the *Ugaritic Epic*. But Dan'el of the epic was a *polytheistic idol-worshipper*.

- **An Unknown Pious Seer?**

The most popular suggestion for an individual author besides Dan'el of the *Ugaritic Epic* is some pious visionary of the Maccabean age. Curiously, nobody knows who this individual would be! But this individual has more strikes against him than Daniel. Not only is he unknown to secular history, he is also unknown by the apocrypha, early historians, and the early church.

- **Multiple Authors?**

Rejecting the considerable evidence for the unity of the book, some critics propose that the book of Daniel was compiled and revised by multiple authors. The lack of agreement concerning the number of proposed authors is evidence of the subjectivity of attempting to infer authorship based on grammatical and textual subtleties. Views range from as few as two individuals to as many as ten!

Epic of Aqhat



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