

Daniel - Introduction, Part 3

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COURSE  COMMENTARY 



Date - Close of Ministry

- [Completed at Close of Daniel's Ministry](#)

The events recorded by Daniel span from about 606 B.C., at which time Daniel was taken captive to Babylon (Dan. 1:1), until 536 B.C., the third year of Cyrus when Daniel had his last vision (Dan. 10:1). Although portions of the book were likely recorded in conjunction with the events described, the contents of the entire book were probably finished near the end of Daniel's life, around 530 B.C.

For the biblically minded, this date of composition is easily established by the [authorship](#) and [language](#) of the book. For those who are convinced of the deity of Jesus and accept his attestation of Daniel (Mat. 24:15), there is no need to speculate further.

Maccabean Hypothesis

- [An Important Issue](#)

The issue of when the Book of Daniel was written is critical because the very nature of the Messiah is connected with it. Jesus taught that Daniel was a prophet and his book contained *bona fide* prophecy. If Jesus were wrong on these matters, or intentionally misrepresented the truth, then He was not sinless and could not be Who He claimed to be--God incarnate.

- [The Critical Position](#)

“Porphyry's insight was resisted for well over a millennium, but its validity has been widely acknowledged by modern critics, beginning in the 18th century... Daniel refers to no events later than the time of Epiphanes, and evidently expected the end of history shortly thereafter.”

-- John J. Collins, "DANIEL, BOOK OF," in David Noel Freeman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), 2:30.

Daniel Among Writings

- [The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings](#)

In the original Hebrew arrangement, the Old Testament writings are divided into three major groups: (1) the Law (*Torah*); (2) the Prophets (*Nebiim*); (3) the Writings (*Ketubim*). Critics believe Daniel was written late or was thought to have less authority because the book appears among the Writings rather than the Prophets.

Writings

- [Daniel Lacked a Prophetic Mantle](#)

Although Daniel was given prophetic revelation and Jesus referred to him as a prophet, he didn't wear the prophetic mantle in the same way as other prophets. He did not make public pronouncements on behalf of God to the nation of Israel and never used the signature phrase, "thus says the LORD." His book may have been placed among the Writings in recognition of the

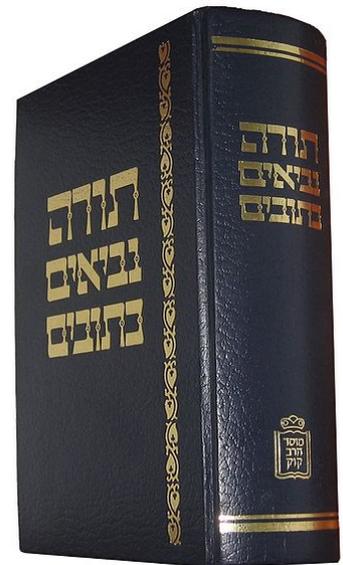
fact that he was primarily a statesman and did not occupy the *office* of a prophet.

Jewish Tanach

Writings

- **The Writings are Early and Authoritative**

The Writings contain works of great authority and antiquity such as Job, the Davidic psalms, and the writings of Solomon. Nobody argues that these books were written late or lack authority because they, like Daniel, are found among the Writings.



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Ecclesiasticus

- **Daniel Not Mentioned**

The Greek apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus contains a lengthy passage mentioning a number of biblical notables. Daniel is not among them. Critics hold that the omission indicates Daniel was unknown to the author, Jesus Ben Sirach.

- **List of Representative Samples**

The passage covers a very large span of time, from Adam to the Babylonian Captivity, but mentions *only 16 names*. Many other notables fail to appear in the list (e.g., Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Samuel, Sampson, Ezra).

- **Hebrew Ecclesiasticus Dependent Upon Daniel**

The discovery of the Hebrew version of Ecclesiasticus provided a more faithful rendering of the book allowing scholars to recognize its literary dependency upon the Book of Daniel. Thus, Ecclesiasticus may provide evidence in favor of the existence of the Book of Daniel at an earlier date.

Early Testimony to Daniel

- **Scripture**

In the OT, Ezekiel, writing in the sixth-century, refers to Daniel on three separate occasions (Eze. [14:14,20](#); [28:3](#)). Especially significant is Ezekiel's use of the name "Daniel" without further qualification. In the NT, the chief witness to the reliability of Daniel is the reference made by Jesus in the gospels to "Daniel the Prophet" and the "abomination of desolation" (Mat. [24:15](#); Mark [13:14](#)). We may add many NT references to the events recorded in Daniel (e.g., Thessalonians, Revelation).

- **Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)**

Among the finds at Qumran are fragments of every chapter of the Book of Daniel except one. A comparison of these fragments from the DSS with the Masoretic Text (MT) underlying our modern Bibles demonstrates that the MT has been carefully preserved. Thus, the text handed down to us over a period spanning about 1,100 years is remarkably reliable. Fragments from cave 4 (4QDan^c) are considered to be the earliest witness to the Hebrew text of Daniel. These fragments have been dated to the late second century B.C. implying at least a pre-second century date for the book's origin. This alone invalidates the critical hypothesis of a Maccabean era date for Daniel.

- **The Jewish Historian Josephus**

First, Josephus describes the Hebrew Scriptures in such a way that he considered the Book of

Daniel to be among the Prophets (not the Writings). Second, Josephus held that Daniel was the author of the work which was in completed form by 332 B.C. when Alexander the Great arrived in Jerusalem. Third, Josephus interprets the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes as fulfilling prophecies made by Daniel in the sixth century

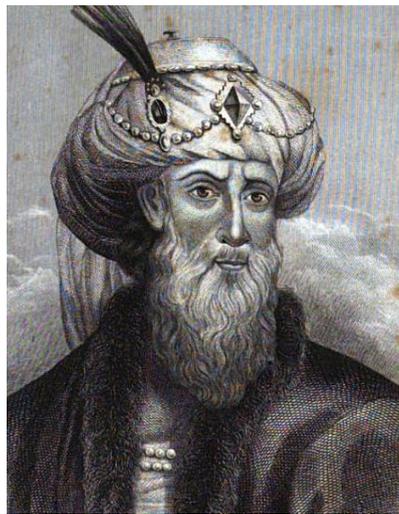


Image provided by [William Whiston](#), *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (1854). This image is in the public domain.

Josephus

Cave of Qumran



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B.C. Josephus, a historian living much closer to the Maccabean era than any of Daniel's critics, knows nothing of a Maccabean origin for Daniel or any alternative author other than the biblical Daniel.

- [The Septuagint](#)

Living much closer to the events, the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek OT) understood Daniel to contain *bona fide* prediction and accepted the book as an authoritative portion of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, four of the Persian "loan words" found in Daniel were mistranslated implying that enough time had elapsed between the writing of Daniel and the Septuagint that the meanings of the words had been lost to the Hebrews.

- [1st Maccabees](#)

The Book of 1st Maccabees, containing a reliable historical account of the events surrounding the Maccabean Revolt, mentions events from the Book of Daniel (1 Maccabees 2:51-60). Elsewhere, 1st Maccabees refers to Daniel by representing the events of Antiochus as being a fulfillment of Daniel's predicted "abomination of desolation" (Dan. [12:11](#) cf. [11:31](#)).

- [Book of Baruch](#)

The Book of Baruch is an apocryphal writing dated as early as the fourth century before Christ and as late as 60 B.C. Baruch 1:10-12 makes mention of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon whose infamous party is recorded in Daniel [5](#). Since no other historical writings of that period mention Belshazzar, the question arises as to how the author of Baruch knew of him? As we mentioned previously, for many years the Book of Daniel was the only writing known that made mention of Belshazzar.

- [Historical Details in Daniel](#)

The author of Daniel had detailed knowledge of sixth-century Babylon and Medo-Persia which was no longer known by the time of the Maccabees such as: (1) coregency of Belshazzar; (2) Babylon rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar; (3) meaning of Persian terms; (4) Babylonian vs. Medo-Persian rule; (5) a Mede over Babylon; (6) Shushan in the province of Elam; (7) revelry at the overthrow of Babylon.