

Introduction to the Book of Daniel

Introductory Matters

Title

The Book of Daniel is named after its central character and author. This pattern is not unique to the Book of Daniel since the biblical books Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were named for the same reason. The Hebrew title of the book is *Daniye'l* or *Dani'el*, which means, “God is my judge,” “God is judging,” or “God will judge.”¹ The Greek title as used in the LXX is the basis for both the Latin and English titles.²

Date

The internal chronological markers found within the book leave little ambiguity concerning when it was written. The book opens in 605 B.C. (1:1) and concludes in 536 B.C. (10:1).³ Given the importance of the message of the book for benefit of the deportees, it is likely that the book was composed not later than 530 B.C. However, “J. D. Michaelis revived Porphyry’s theory in 1771, and it took root in the rationalist intellectual soil of Enlightenment. Since then many scholars who disbelieve in predictive prophecy have insisted that this book must have been the product of the Maccabean revolt (168-165 B.C.). Liberal critics still consider the dating of Daniel to be one of most assured results of modern scholarship.”⁴ However, the arguments used to date the book late are answerable.⁵

¹ Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Daniel,” online: www.soniclight.com, accessed 9 June 2006, 1.

² Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 221.

³ Charles H. Dyer and Eugene H. Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, Swindoll Leadership Library, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2001), 699.

⁴ Constable, “Notes on Daniel,” 3.

⁵ Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1964; reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1994), 423-47.

First, late date advocates believe that because the book is included in the *Kethubiim* section of the Jewish canon rather than the *Naviim*, it must have been written in the post exilic period after the era of the prophets transpired. However, there are logical reasons concerning why the book should appear in the writings section of the Jewish canon that have nothing to do with a late date. For example, while the other prophets focus on oracles, Daniel emphasizes predictions and narrative material. Moreover, unlike the other Old Testament prophets, Daniel does not contain proclamations to God's people, does not emphasize calls to repentance, and does not call attention to his ordination as a prophet. Rather than functioning in the typical role as a prophet, Daniel seems to function as a statesman or a government official.⁶ Moreover, inclusion in the *Kethubiim* really has nothing to do with recency since other early works also appear in this section of Scripture. Among them are Job, Ruth, the Davidic Psalms, and the Solomonic writings.

Second, late date advocates contend that the book must have been written long after the time of Daniel since the work abounds in historical inaccuracies that a writer would not have made had he written at the time of the book's events. However, most of these alleged historical inaccuracies have been resolved. For example, while Daniel 1:1 indicates that Nebuchadnezzar's siege took place in the third year of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2 indicate that it took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. However, this apparent contradiction can be explained in terms of Daniel following "the Babylonian practice of considering the first year of a king's reign as the accession year and the next year as his first official year."⁷

⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1983), 1325.

⁷ J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, 1997), 145.

Furthermore, while the Book of Daniel repeatedly calls Belshazzar a king, ancient king lists reveal Nabonidus to be Nebuchadnezzar's successor without mentioning Belshazzar. However, the 1854 discovery of the Nabonidus Chronicle revealed not only that Belshazzar was the oldest son of Nabonidus, but it also demonstrated that Nabonidus and Belshazzar were involved in a co-regency form of rulership (5:16, 29).⁸ Such a discovery buttresses the early date position. "The record of Belshazzar's coregency had been lost by the time of Herodotus (around 450 B.C.) and was not discovered until recently. Thus Daniel must have been composed *before* 450 B.C., while knowledge of this fact was still available."⁹ Moreover, some have objected that Daniel mistakenly referred to Belshazzar as Nebuchadnezzar's son as indicated in Daniel 5:2, 11, 13, 18, 22. Yet, Pentecost notes that, "it has been demonstrated that the royal successor to the throne was called a 'son' (5:22) even if he had no blood relationship to an earlier king."¹⁰

In addition, the Book of Daniel mentions Darius the Mede (5:31; 6:1; 9:1) despite the fact that evidence of such a person has never been discovered in extra-biblical sources and the extra-biblical material indicates that Cyrus was the successor of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. However, some believe that the writer purposely confused Darius Hystaspes with Cyrus the Great. However, this solution is unlikely since a reader could easily check the chronology of these kings (Ezra 4:5-7). Others equate Darius the Mede with Cyrus. This solution forces Daniel 6:28 to take on the following appositional translation. "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, namely the reign of Cyrus the Persian." However, while Daniel 9:1 indicates that Darius was the son of Ahasuerus, extra-biblical sources indicate that Cyrus was the son of

⁸ Ibid., 147.

⁹ Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 700.

¹⁰ Pentecost, "Daniel," 1325.

Cambyes.¹¹ It seems best to equate Darius with the Babylonian governor Gubaru. Apparently, Gubaru received the royal title Darius when Cyrus appointed him.¹²

Third, late date proponents contend that the Jewish intertestamental material does not cite the Book of Daniel until 180 B.C. Harrison's rebuttal to the contention is sufficient.

The shallowness and erroneous nature of such a position had been amply demonstrated by the Qumran discoveries, which make it impossible to deny the popularity of Daniel at that period, if the numbers of copies and fragments of the composition may be taken as furnishing any indication at all of the situation.

A proper assessment of the evidence provided by Ecclesiasticus should include recognition of the possibility that Ben Sira deliberately excluded Daniel from his list of notables for unknown reasons, as he did also with Job and all the Judges except Samuel, as well as Kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, Mordecai, and even Ezra himself. Ecclesiasticus is clearly limited in its usefulness as a ground of appeal for establishing the historicity of certain well-known Hebrew personages, if, indeed, it should ever be employed at all in this manner. It can be remarked, however, that there are allusions to Daniel and his book in Maccabees (1 Macc. 2:59ff.) Baruch (1:15–3:3), and the *Sibylline Oracles* (III, 397ff.), all of which are at least second-century B.C. compositions, and these works attest to the familiarity of the Daniel tradition at that time.¹³

Fourth, late date proponents claim that there is no clear statement in Daniel indicating Danielic authorship of the book. However, Daniel 2–7 repeatedly makes reference to “Daniel.” The fact that Daniel 1–6 refers to Daniel in the third person in no way disqualifies him from authoring that section of the book since writers often referred to themselves in the third person in the ancient Near East. Not only does the Code of Hammurabi follow this practice but so does the Decalogue itself (Exod 20:2, 7).¹⁴

¹¹ Another potential problem is that 6:26-27 may indicate that Darius became a believer and Isaiah 45:4 indicates that Cyrus was not a believer. (I owe this insight to Wendy O'Neil of the Barnabas Adult Bible Fellowship at Redeemer Bible Church.)

¹² Adapted from Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 147. See also Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 428-29.

¹³ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament: Including a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 1123-24.

¹⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D.J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), 39.

Fifth, late date advocates maintain that the book must have been written in the second century rather than the sixth century since an early date would amount to the writer knowing history in advance.¹⁵ This line of thinking views the prophecies in the book as *vaticinium ex eventu* material. In other words, they represent prophecies after the fact or history disguised as prophecy for the purpose of strengthening the Jewish remnant during the Maccabean revolt. While this practice can be found in twelfth century Akkadian material as well as Jewish Apocalyptic literature written in between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D., it is doubtful that the Book of Daniel follows this practice. Attributing such a practice to the Book of Daniel would devalue inspired material to the level of other fraudulent works.¹⁶ Also, this view emanates from nothing more than an anti-supernatural bias against predictive prophecy (2:28; 10:14).¹⁷

Sixth, the existence of Greek loan words in Daniel causes late date advocates to maintain that the book was written after Alexander the Great spread the Greek language throughout the known world in A.D. 330. However, these words are musical instruments (3:5), which are notorious for crossing international boundaries. Also, it is not surprising that Greek loan words would show up in Daniel since Greeks were enslaved in both Babylon and Persia as early as the seventh century.¹⁸ Interestingly, these Greek words were obsolete thus causing the LXX translators to give them an inaccurate translation. At any rate, if Daniel were written after A.D.

¹⁵ For example, Daniel 8 predicts the rise of the Grecian empire. Moreover, Daniel 11 contains over 100 prophecies that were specifically fulfilled during the intertestamental period.

¹⁶ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 222.

¹⁷ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 350.

¹⁸ Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 700.

330, one would expect to find far more Greek words in the book than the scant amount that actually appear.¹⁹

Seventh, late date advocates hold that the Aramaic in Daniel is late. However, a comparison of Daniel's Aramaic with later Aramaic found in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as Aramaic found in earlier sources indicates that Daniel was written early rather than late.²⁰

Eighth, some late date advocates seek to build their case upon Persian words found in the book. However, this argument represents no argument since Daniel lived and wrote during the Persian era under Cyrus (10:1).²¹

The arguments used to date Daniel late are outweighed by early date arguments. *First*, because the sixth century prophet Ezekiel mentions Daniel (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3), Daniel must have been one of his contemporaries. Attempts to associate Ezekiel's mention of Daniel with a pagan deity are to no avail since Ezekiel emphasizes Daniel's virtuous and exemplary life. It is doubtful that Ezekiel would have connected these notions with a pagan deity.

Second, Daniel evidences a sixth century understanding of history when he locates Shushan in the province of Elam during the time of the Babylonian empire (8:2). Such historical specificity is significant since "from the Greek and Roman historians we learn that in the Persian period Shushan, or Susa, was assigned to a new province which was named after it, Susiana, and the formerly more extensive province of Elam was restricted to the territory west of the Eulaeus River [cf. Strabo, 15:3, 12; 16:1, 17; Pliny, Natural History, 6. 27]."²² Thus, Pentecost correctly

¹⁹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 222.

²⁰ Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 433-36.

²¹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 222.

²² Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 445.

observes, “Daniel’s familiarity with the individuals spoken of in the book and with the historical events and customs mentioned in the book necessitates a sixth-century date for the book.”²³

Third, the late date is untenable since “The four-year time span (168–164) is far too short for a book of that time to be written, copied, circulated, and adopted as truth and then preserved as canon despite the apparent failure of its predictions.”²⁴ *Fourth*, the late date still cannot avoid the implications of futuristic prophecy since Daniel contains prophecies of Rome’s rise to power and Rome came into existence after the Maccabean era. Attempts to enumerate the four beasts of Daniel 7 as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece in order to escape the implications of a futuristic Rome are to no avail since Media and Persia are presented in the book as a single empire (5:28).²⁵

Authorship

The view that one takes regarding authorship of the book is related to his view concerning when the book was written. If the late date is adhered to, then Daniel could not have been the author since the book was composed long after his era. Rather, a Maccabean pseudepigraph, or someone using the pseudonym Daniel in order to attach credibility to his work, wrote the book. Thus, viewing Daniel as the actual author is only tenable if one holds to an early date for the book’s composition. However, because of the legitimacy of the arguments for the early date of the book as discussed above, viewing Daniel as the book’s author is feasible.

Although Nebuchadnezzar may have written some of the book (Dan 4), Daniel’s constant use of the first person shows him to be a likely candidate for the book’s author (7:2; 8:1; 9:2; 10:2; 12:5). In fact, Daniel 12:4 seems to imply that Daniel was the book’s author. The fact that

²³ Pentecost, “Daniel,” 1324.

²⁴ Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 350.

²⁵ For a chart depicting how some attempt to interpret the four beasts of Daniel 7 as preceding Rome, see John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 105.

Daniel 1–6 refers to Daniel in the third person in no way disqualifies him from authoring that section of the book since writers often referred to themselves in the third person in the ancient Near East. Not only does the Code of Hammurabi follow this practice but so does the Decalogue itself (Exod 20:2, 7).²⁶

Christ also attributed authorship of the book to Daniel (Matt 24:15). Contending that Christ was simply accommodating the first century consensus that the book was written by a Maccabean pseudepigraph is unlikely given Christ’s pattern of going against the status quo by correcting inaccurate yet popular interpretations (Matt 5:33-34, 38-39; 15:11-20; 19:9; John 8:24, 44).²⁷ Jewish tradition (*Baba Bathra* 15b) also attributes authorship of the book to Daniel.²⁸ Although some have challenged the unity of the book, this contention seems unlikely since the dominant themes of God’s covenant, sovereignty, eternal kingdom (2:44; 4:3, 34; 6:26; 7:14, 8, 27), and status as the most high (3:26; 4:2, 17, 24-25, 32, 34; 5:18, 21; 7:18, 22, 25, 27) are reiterated throughout the book’s major sections.

Audience(s)

It seems that Daniel addressed two audiences. A mixed audience is apparent due to the fact that the book was written in two different languages. The Hebrew sections of the book (1, 8–12) indicate that it was addressed to the Jewish captives in order to encourage them by reminding them of God’s sovereignty during the “times of the Gentiles.” The Aramaic sections of the book (2–7) indicate that it was also addressed to the Babylonians and the Medo-Persians, which were the two Gentile empires of Daniel’s time. Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of these empires as well

²⁶ Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, 39.

²⁷ Gleason L. Archer, “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. F.E. Gaebelien (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 7:5.

²⁸ Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 283.

as the language of diplomacy since the eighth century. This section of the book was designed to communicate to these Gentiles that God was sovereign over them in spite of the fact that they held Israel in temporary subjugation.²⁹

Scope

The first recorded date in the book (1:1) is 605 B.C. and the last recorded date of the book is the third year of Cyrus (10:1), which took place in 536 B.C. Thus, the scope of the book involves the 69-year time period between these two dates.³⁰ Therefore, the book covers two separate Gentile kingdoms and four separate Gentile administrations. The two Gentile kingdoms are the Babylonian and Media-Persian Empires. The four separate administrations are the Babylonian administrations of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and the Media-Persian administrations of Darius and Cyrus. The specific dates that took place during the scope of the book are summarized on the following chart.

Chapter and verse in Daniel	Chronological date	Biblical date
1:1	605	3 rd year of Jehoiakim
2:1	603	2 nd year of Nebuchadnezzar
5	Sat. night 10/12/539 (Hoehner)	
7:1	553	1 st year of Belshazzar
8:1	551	3 rd year of Belshazzar
9:1	538	1 st year of Darius
10:1	536	3 rd year of Cyrus

Historical Background

There are five pieces of historical information that the reader must grasp in order to fully appreciate the message of the Book of Daniel. *First*, it is necessary to understand Israel's covenant structure. The unconditional land, seed, and blessing promises as given in the

²⁹ Ibid., 285-85; Pentecost, "Daniel," 1324.

³⁰ Pentecost, "Daniel," 1323.

Abrahamic Covenant are later amplified in the land, Davidic, and New Covenants. However, the conditional Mosaic Covenant spells out the blessings (Deut 28:1-14) or curses (Deut 28:15-68) that any Jewish generation will experience based upon their compliance or lack of compliance with the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. While disobedience will invoke the curses of the Mosaic Covenant upon any generation, disobedience cannot cancel God’s covenant program for the next generation or for the nation as a whole due to the unconditional promises found in the Abrahamic Covenant. This covenant structure explains why the book opens with Israel in captivity (Deut 28:49) and why God, throughout the book, promises to preserve the nation.

Second, Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Babylon took place in three stages with Daniel’s captivity representing the first of these three stages. Nebuchadnezzar probably took Daniel and the princes first in order to indoctrinate the best and the brightest Jewish exiles so that they in turn could influence the rest of the nation to adopt the Babylonian way of life.

Nebuchadnezzar’s 3 sieges of Judah			
	1	2	3
Year	605	597	586
Scripture	2 Kings 24:1; Dan.1:1	2 Kings 24:10-16; Ezek. 1:1-2	2 Kings 25:1-2 , Ezek 33:21
Judah’s king	Jehoiakim	Jehoiachin	Zedekiah
Those taken	Daniel & some princes	Ezekiel & majority 10k	Remnant captured, Jerusalem & Temple destroyed

Third, the Book of Daniel inaugurates the “times of the Gentiles.” This era represents the period of time between the inauguration of the Jewish captivity and the Second Advent when Israel has no reigning Davidic king (Dan 2; 7; Luke 21:24; Rev 11:2).

Fourth, Daniel's contemporaries were Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah prophesied about the coming exile. Ezekiel, who was taken in the second deportation, ministered to those who were taken along with him near the Chebar River outside of Babylon. *Fifth*, Daniel had a keen interest in the destiny of Israel since he was both of royal (1:3) lineage and noble birth (1:6).

Genre

The Book of Daniel employs two primary literary genres. Some of the book is composed in straightforward narrative (1; 3–6). However, other sections of the book are composed in biblical apocalyptic (2; 7; 8–12).³¹ Pentecost offers the following characteristics of biblical apocalyptic material.

Apocalyptic literature in the Bible has several characteristics: (1) In apocalyptic literature a person who received God's truths in visions recorded what he saw. (2) Apocalyptic literature makes extensive use of symbols or signs. (3) Such literature normally gives revelation concerning God's program for the future of His people Israel. (4) Prose was usually employed in apocalyptic literature, rather than poetic style which was normal in most prophetic literature.

In addition to Daniel and Revelation, apocalyptic literature is found in Ezekiel 37–48 and Zechariah 1:7–7:8. In interpreting visions, symbols, and signs in apocalyptic literature, one is seldom left to his own ingenuity to discover the truth. In most instances an examination of the context or comparison with the parallel biblical passages provides the Scriptures' own interpretation of the visions or the symbols employed. Apocalyptic literature then demands a careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture to arrive at a correct understanding of the revelation being given.³²

Theological Themes

Several theological themes recur throughout the book of Daniel. *First*, the book communicates God's sovereignty over the Gentile empires during the "times of the Gentiles" (2:21; 4:35; 5:21). Thus, God is more powerful than the Gentile kingdoms subjugating Israel and

³¹ The term "biblical apocalyptic" refers to developing elements of the apocalyptic genre from within the canon. This approach is to be distinguished from attempting to develop the characteristics of apocalyptic literature from outside the canon. This later approach is flawed since any similarities between the biblical and extra biblical material seem outweighed by vast differences between the two. Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 323–48.

³² Pentecost, "Daniel," 1323.

these kingdoms are accountable to Him. *Second*, the book emphasizes consecrated living. *Third*, the book explains both the outworking of the Mosaic and Abrahamic Covenants. The nation will be forced to endure further curses pronounced in the Mosaic Covenant as a consequence of continual disobedience. However, in the end, God will preserve a Jewish remnant and establish the kingdom through Israel in honor of what has been promised to the nation in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Unique Characteristics

The Book of Daniel boasts several outstanding characteristics. *First*, the book heavily involves dreams and visions since nine out of its twelve chapters involve a dream/vision and its interpretation. *Second*, Daniel represents one of the few select Bible characters about whom nothing negative is said. *Third*, Daniel, along with the Book of Ezra, is the only biblical book to be composed in two different languages. *Fourth*, Daniel is the only biblical book that explains how God fulfilled His covenant program during the so call “four hundred years of silence” in the intertestamental period. *Fifth*, Daniel is foundational toward understanding subsequent eschatological aspects of Scripture. The Book of Revelation builds upon an eschatological foundation previously erected by Daniel.

Christ in Daniel

Christ is apparent in Daniel in several ways.³³ *First*, Christ is represented in the smiting stone that is cut without human hands that destroys the preceding Gentile powers (2:34-35, 49). In other words, Christ will return and establish the kingdom through Israel at the end of the “times of the Gentles.” *Second*, the reference to the Son of Man figure (7:13-14) is an obvious

³³ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 223.

reference to Christ (Mark 14:61-62). *Third*, Christ is also evident in Daniel’s prediction of His messianic entrance exactly 483 years after Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem (Dan 9:25-26; Luke 19:42). *Fourth*, Christ may also be evident in the appearance of the angelic visitor (10:5-9) since he is described similarly to how Christ is later depicted by John (Rev 1:12-16).

Structure

Several structural clues make it easier for readers to digest the contents of Daniel. *First*, both major sections of the book involving piety (1–7) and prophecy (8–12) contribute to the major theme of encouraging the exiles by demonstrating God’s sovereignty. Thus, these sections should not be bifurcated but rather viewed as a cohesive whole.³⁴ *Second*, because the book does not necessarily proceed in chronological order, the following chart helps the reader keep track of what empire and king is in power in any given chapter in the Book of Daniel.³⁵

Chapter(s) in Daniel	Empire	King
1-4	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar
5	Babylon	Belshazzar
6	Media-Persia	Darius
7-8	Babylon	Belshazzar
9	Media-Persia	Darius
10-12	Media-Persia	Cyrus

Third, Daniel was a different age in different chapters in the book. The following chart helps the reader keep track of Daniel’s age from one chapter to the next.³⁶

³⁴ Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 701.

³⁵ Charles H. Dyer, class notes of Andy Woods in BE 304 Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2000.

³⁶ Gene A. Getz, *Daniel: Standing Firm* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 2.

Daniel's Age		
CHAPTER	EVENTS	DANIEL'S AGE
1	Taken to Babylonian captivity	15
2	Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's 1 st dream (huge image)	17
3	Daniel's 3 friends cast into the fiery furnace	19 or 20
4	Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's 2 nd dream (huge tree)	45-50
5	Interpreting handwriting of the wall at Belshazzar's feast	Early 80's
6	Delivered from the den of lions	c. 83

Daniel's Age		
CHAPTER	EVENT	DANIEL'S AGE
7-8	Daniel's visions and dreams	mid-60's
9	Daniel's seventy "sevens" prophecy	Early 80's
10-12	Final dreams and visions	mid-80's

Fourth, noting the book's two major divisions is helpful. The first section is mostly written in Aramaic while the second section is written in Hebrew. Furthermore, the first section can be chiastically arranged.³⁷

I. Historic (1-7)

A. Intro "Hebrew" (1)

B. Chiasm "Aramaic" (2-7)

- 1. Gentile History (2)
 - 2. Protection (3)
 - 3. Revelation to a gentile king (4)
 - 3. Revelation to a gentile king (5)
 - 2. Protection (6)

• 1. Gentile history (7)

II. Prophetic (8-12)

A. Ram & Goat (8)

³⁷ Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 704.

- B. 70 weeks (9)
- C. Final vision (10-12)

In the first section, Daniel interprets most of the visions and speaks of himself in the third person. This section is mostly addressed to the Gentile nations subjugating Israel during the times of the Gentiles. In the second major section, an angel interprets the visions and Daniel speaks of himself in the first person. This section exclusively addresses the future of national Israel and therefore is addressed only to that nation.³⁸ *Fifth*, an interrelationship exists between the visions of chapters 2, 7, and 8. This interrelationship is captured on the following chart.³⁹

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Kingdoms represented	Years in power
Head of gold	Lion with eagle's wings		Babylon	605-539 B.C.
Chest and arms of silver	Bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth	Ram with two horns	Media-Persia	538-331 B.C
Belly and thighs of bronze	Leopard with four wings and four heads	Male goat with one great horn, four horns, and one little horn	Greece	331-146 B.C
Legs of iron and feet of iron and clay	Incomparable beast with ten horns and a little horn		Rome	146 B.C. to A.D. 476
Stone that becomes a great mountain	Messiah and saints receive the kingdom		Kingdom of God	

³⁸ Charles H. Dyer, class notes of Andy Woods in BE 304 Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2000.

³⁹ Adapted from *Nelson's Complete Book of Charts and Maps*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 239. For helpful maps showing the geographical dimensions of each of these empires, see Pentecost, "Daniel," 1352-53. Also, for a map showing the key geographical areas mentioned in Daniel, see Constable, "Notes on Daniel," 1.

Message

Daniel encourages the exiles during the “times of the Gentiles” by reminding them of God’s sovereignty over the Gentile empires that are oppressing them, by reminding them of God’s covenant faithfulness through His intention of preserving the nation, and by reminding them of God’s intention to ultimately restore the kingdom to Israel. Just as the Mosaic Law taught the nation how they are to live inside the land, Daniel instructs the exiles regarding how they are to live outside the land by exhorting them to consecrate themselves to God. Thus, the deportees are to leave the results of their lives and their circumstances in God’s hands. They are to trust in Him and His sovereignty as they live from crisis to crisis.

Purposes

Daniel seems to have had several purposes in mind when he wrote his book. *First*, Daniel wrote in order to provide a historical record of the exiles that lived during the captivity. *Second*, he wrote to give Godly examples for the purpose of showing the exiles how they are to live now that they had been exported from the land. *Third*, he wrote to explain how God remained sovereign over the Gentile nations that had taken the nation captive.

Fourth, Daniel wrote to explain that God would honor the Abrahamic Covenant by protecting the nation even as Israel sojourned in Gentile territory during a time of national discipline. *Fifth*, Daniel wrote in order to provide an outline of the “times of the Gentiles” (Dan 2; 7). This era represents the period of time in between the captivity and the Second Advent. During this time Israel will have no reigning Davidic king, will be under divine discipline, and will be trampled upon by Gentile powers (Luke 21:24; Rev 11:2).

Sixth, Daniel wrote in order to provide an outline of God’s prophetic program for Israel spanning from the time of the captivity and to the establishment of the kingdom when the

nation's covenants will be fulfilled (Dan 8–12). Specifically, Daniel wrote in order to explain the circumstances by which the wayward nation would continue to undergo discipline throughout the times of the Gentiles and yet repent during the tribulation period thereby ushering in the realization of her covenant promises and the establishment of the kingdom. *Seventh*, Daniel wrote to encourage the exiles by reminding them of God's covenant faithfulness and sovereignty over their adverse circumstances.

Outline⁴⁰

- I. Historical section (1-7)
 - A. Introductory material (1)
 - 1. Captivity (1:1-2)
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar's conquest (1:1)
 - b) Nebuchadnezzar's treasure (1:2)
 - 2. Selection of the four Hebrew youths (1:3-7)
 - a) Basis of the selection (1:3-4a)
 - i) Physical
 - ii) Intelligence
 - iii) Relational
 - b) Education in Chaldean literature (1:4b)
 - c) Provision (1:5a)
 - d) Three-year course of study (1:5b)
 - e) Name change (1:6-7)
 - i) From Hebrew names (1:6)
 - ii) To Babylonian names (1:7)
 - 3. Daniel's resolve (1:8-16)
 - a) First round (1:8-10)
 - i) Daniel's request (1:8)
 - ii) Commander's response (1:9-10)
 - b) Second round (1:11-16)
 - i) Daniel's request (1:11-13)
 - ii) Commander's response (1:14)
 - iii) Results (1:15-16)
 - 4. God's blessing upon Hebrew youths (1:17-21)
 - a) Divine knowledge (1:17)
 - b) Their successful interview before Nebuchadnezzar (1:18-20)
 - c) Length of Daniel's term of service (1:21)
 - B. Aramaic chiasm (2-7)

⁴⁰ Some of this outline has been influenced by Charles H. Dyer, "Introduction to Daniel" (unpublished class notes in BE 304 Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2000), 4-23.

1. Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2)
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:1)
 - b) Nebuchadnezzar's demand for revelation and interpretation (2:2-13)
 - i) Command and response (2:2-4)
 - ii) Command and response (2:5-7)
 - iii) Command and response (2:8-11)
 - iv) Command for destruction (2:12-13)
 - c) God reveals the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (2:14-30)
 - i) Daniel requests more time (2:14-16)
 - ii) Daniel's prayer to God (2:17-18)
 - iii) God reveals the dream to Daniel (2:19)
 - iv) Daniel praises God (2:20-23)
 - v) Daniel reports the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (2:24-30)
 - d) Dream and interpretation (2:31-45)
 - i) Dream (2:31-35)
 - ii) Interpretation (2:36-45)
 - e) Nebuchadnezzar's reaction (2:46-49)
 - i) Homage (2:46-47)
 - (a) To Daniel (2:46)
 - (b) To God (2:47)
 - ii) Promotion (2:48-49)
 - (a) Of Daniel (2:48)
 - (b) Of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (2:49)
2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace (3)
 - a) The setting (3:1-7)
 - i) The image (3:1)
 - ii) The nationwide summons (3:2-3)
 - iii) The command to worship the image (3:4-6)
 - iv) The nation's obedience to the command (3:7)
 - b) The charge (3:8-12)
 - i) Reiteration of the king's command (3:8-11)
 - ii) The accusation regarding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's violation of the command (3:12)
 - c) The test (3:13-18)
 - i) Nebuchadnezzar's command (3:13-15)
 - ii) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's Godly response (3:16-18)
 - d) God delivers the three Hebrews (3:19-27)
 - i) Cast into the furnace (3:19-23)
 - ii) Protected in the midst of the furnace (3:24-25)
 - iii) Taken out of the furnace (3:26-27)
 - e) Conclusion (3:28-30)
 - i) Nebuchadnezzar praises God (3:28-30)
 - ii) Nebuchadnezzar promotes the three Hebrews (3:30)
3. The dethronement and re-enthronement of Nebuchadnezzar (4)
 - a) Introduction (4:1-3)
 - i) Salutation (4:1)

- ii) Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God (4:2-3)
 - b) Nebuchadnezzar's fear on account of his dream (4:4-5)
 - c) Nebuchadnezzar reports dream (4:6-18)
 - i) To his magicians (4:6-7)
 - ii) To Daniel (4:8-18)
 - (a) The tree grows (4:8-12)
 - (b) The tree is removed (4:13-18)
 - d) Daniel's interpretation (4:19-27)
 - i) Tree (4:19-22)
 - ii) Tree's removal (4:23-26)
 - iii) Concluding exhortation (4:27)
 - e) Fulfillment of the dream (4:28-37)
 - i) Pride (4:28-30)
 - ii) Fall (4:31-33)
 - iii) Repentance (4:34-35)
 - iv) Restoration (4:36-37)
- 4. Handwriting on the wall (5)
 - a) Setting (5:1-4)
 - i) Feast (5:1)
 - ii) Temple vessels (5:2-3)
 - iii) Idolatry (5:4)
 - b) Revelation of the handwriting on the wall (5:5-9)
 - i) The writing (5:5)
 - ii) The responses (5:6-9)
 - (a) Fear (5:6)
 - (b) Inability to decipher (5:7-9)
 - c) Interpretation (5:10-29)
 - i) Daniel's entrance (5:10-16)
 - (a) Queen's request (5:10-12)
 - (b) King's request (5:13-16)
 - ii) Daniel rebukes Belshazzar (5:17-23)
 - (a) Refusal to accept Belshazzar's gift (5:17)
 - (b) Reminder of Nebuchadnezzar's humility (5:18-21)
 - (c) Reminder of Belshazzar's pride (5:22-23)
 - iii) Daniel's interpretation (5:24-28)
 - (a) The writing (5:24-25)
 - (b) The interpretation (5:26-28)
 - iv) Daniel's promotion (5:29)
 - d) Fulfillment of the prophecy (5:30-31)
 - i) Belshazzar's death (5:30)
 - ii) Fall of Babylon (5:31)
- 5. Daniel in the lion's den (6)
 - a) Daniel's position (6:1-3)
 - i) Over 120 satraps (6:1)
 - ii) As one of the three commissioners (6:2)
 - iii) Daniel distinguishes himself (6:3)

- b) The plot against Daniel (6:4-9)
 - i) Daniel's innocence (6:4)
 - ii) Daniel's piety (6:5)
 - iii) The ban against public prayer (6:6-9)
- c) The prosecution of Daniel (6:10-18)
 - i) Daniel's prayer (6:10)
 - ii) Daniel's enemies observe his prayer (6:11)
 - iii) Daniel's enemies accuse him before the King (6:12-15)
 - iv) Daniel thrown into the lion's den (6:16-18)
- d) Daniel's deliverance (6:19-23)
 - i) Darius' question (6:19-20)
 - ii) Daniel announces his deliverance (6:21-22)
 - iii) Daniel's removal from the den (6:23)
- e) Conclusion (6:24-28)
 - i) Daniel's accusers judged (6:24-25)
 - ii) Darius glorifies God (6:26-27)
 - iii) Daniel's ongoing success (6:28)
- 6. Vision of the four beasts (7)
 - a) Setting for the vision (7:1)
 - b) The vision described (7:2-14)
 - i) First beast (7:2-4)
 - ii) Second beast (7:5)
 - iii) Third beast (7:6)
 - iv) Fourth beast (7:7-8)
 - (a) Generically described (7:7)
 - (b) The little horn (7:8)
 - v) The Ancient of Days (7:9-12)
 - (a) Generically described (7:9-10)
 - (b) His judgment upon the fourth beast (7:11)
 - (c) His judgment upon the first three beasts (7:12)
 - vi) Son of Man (7:13-14)
 - (a) Presented to the Ancient of Days (7:13)
 - (b) Inauguration of the kingdom (7:14)
 - c) The interpretation (7:15-27)
 - i) Times of the Gentiles and the messianic kingdom (7:15-18)
 - ii) The fourth beast (7:19-26)
 - (a) Daniel's question (7:19-22)
 - (b) Angelic explanation (7:23-26)
 - iii) The messianic kingdom (7:27)
 - d) Impact upon Daniel (7:28)
- II. Hebrew prophetic section (8-12)
 - A. Vision of the ram and the goat (8)
 - 1. Setting (8:1)
 - 2. Vision (8:2-14)
 - a) Ram with two horns (8:2-4)
 - b) Goat with one horn (8:5-8)

- i) He defeats the ram (8:5-7)
 - ii) His horns change (8:8)
 - (a) First horn broken (8:8a)
 - (b) Four horns grow (8:8b)
 - (c) The growing horn (8:9-14)
 - 3. Interpretation (8:15-26)
 - a) The ram with two horns represents Media-Persia (8:15-20)
 - b) The goat with one horn represents Greece (8:21-22)
 - c) The boastful protruding horn (8:23-25)
 - d) Futuristic time period for the fulfillment of the vision (8:26)
 - 4. Impact on Daniel (8:27)
- B. Prophecy of the 70 weeks (9)
 - 1. Setting (9:1-2)
 - a) Historic setting (9:1)
 - b) Prophetic sending (9:2)
 - 2. Daniel's prayer (9:3-19)
 - a) Confession of past sin (9:3-10)
 - b) Acknowledgment of present judgment (9:11-14)
 - c) Request for future mercy (9:15-19)
 - 3. Arrival of Gabriel (9:20-23)
 - 4. Prophecy of the 70 sevens (9:24-27)
- C. Final panoramic vision (10-12)
 - 1. Setting (10:1-3)
 - a) From a historical perspective (10:1)
 - b) From Daniel's personal perspective (10:2-3)
 - 2. Angelic conflict (10:4-11:1)
 - a) Angel's arrival (10:4-9)
 - i) Angel's description (10:4-6)
 - ii) Reactions (10:7-9)
 - (a) Daniel's companions (10:7)
 - (b) Daniel (10:8-9)
 - b) Angel's explanation (10:10-11:1)
 - i) For his three-week delay (10:10-13)
 - ii) The coming vision (10:14-19)
 - iii) For his combative exit (10:20-11:1)
 - 3. The vision (11:2-12:13)
 - a) Persia (11:2)
 - b) Greece (11:3-4)
 - c) Ptolemies (South, Egypt) and Seleucids (North, Syria, and Mesopotamia) before the time of Antiochus (11:5-20)
 - i) First era (11:5-6)
 - ii) Second era (11:7-9)
 - iii) Third era (11:10-19)
 - iv) Fourth era (11:20)
 - d) Antiochus (11:21-35)
 - e) Antichrist (11:36-45)

- i) Self deification (11:36-37)
- ii) Military supremacy (11:38-39)
- iii) Military activity (11:40-45)
- f) Tribulation and millennium (12:1-13)
 - i) Michael's protection (12:1a)
 - ii) Great tribulation (12:1b)
 - iii) Resurrection (12:2)
 - iv) Reward (12:3)
 - v) Preservation of the prophetic word (12:4)
 - vi) Questions and answers (12:5-13)
 - (a) First-round (12:5-7)
 - (1) Question regarding length of persecution (12:5-6)
 - (2) Answer: 3 1/2 years until the completion of the shattering of Israel (12:7)
 - (b) Second round (12:8-13)
 - (1) Question regarding outcome of these events (12:8)
 - (2) Answer (12:9-13)
 - a. Vision to be fulfilled in the future (12:9)
 - b. Righteous will have understanding (12:10)
 - c. Survivors of the sheep and goat judgment will enter millennial kingdom (12:11-12)
 - d. Daniel to be resurrected (12:13)

Argument

The material given in the first chapter is largely introductory. It sets the stage for themes that will be more fully developed throughout the rest of the book. For example, the theme of God comforting the exiles by demonstrating His sovereignty over the Gentile empires that have subjugated Israel will make little sense unless the reader first grasps how God's sovereignty was challenged by Babylon. Thus, the first chapter explains that Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and his friends captive into the land of Shinar (1:1-2). The name Shinar (1:2) is significant since it represents the location of the first (Gen 11:2) and last (Zech 5:11; Rev 17-18) universal rebellions by mankind against God. Daniel also connects Shinar with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon in order to show that this same spirit of rebellion was alive and well in Daniel's day in the person

of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel also notes that Nebuchadnezzar even went so far in challenging God's sovereignty that he took the sacred vessels out of the temple.⁴¹

Nebuchadnezzar also challenged God's sovereignty by taking the best and the brightest of the exiles for the purpose of indoctrinating them in the Babylonian ways for an extended period of time. His goal was to release them back to their own people so they in turn could influence the rest of the nation to come under the Babylonian system (1:3-7). Nebuchadnezzar's challenge to God's authority is seen in the way he took the Godly names of the four Hebrew youths and renamed them so that their new names reflected Babylonian concepts (1:6-7).⁴² Just as Adam's right to name the animals (Gen 2:19) showed his divinely given authority over earth and the animal kingdom (Gen 1:26-28), Nebuchadnezzar's renaming of the four Hebrew youths demonstrated the authority that he claimed over their lives.

The resolution of Daniel not to eat the king's vegetables (Exod 34:15) is included to show the exiles how they are to live now that they are outside the land (1:8-16). They are to consecrate themselves to God and trust in Him to handle the rest of the issues in their lives. The favor upon Daniel and his friends for exhibiting covenant loyalty shows the exiles the divine favor that will also rest upon them as they consecrate themselves to God during their Babylonian sojourn (1:9, 15). The threat to the commander's life (1:10) for even questioning Nebuchadnezzar's regimen reveals the threat of elimination that Daniel and the nation faced for

⁴¹ The mention of the vessels at this point sets the stage for chapter five when Nebuchadnezzar's successor Belshazzar will profane these vessels thereby causing God to bring to an end the Babylonian empire.

⁴² The meaning of the Hebrew names is as follows: Daniel means "God is my judge," Hananiah means "Yahweh is gracious," Mishael means "who is what God is," and Azariah means "Yahweh has helped." The Babylonian meaning of their new names is as follows: Belteshazzar means "Lady protect the king," Shadrach means "I am very fearful of God," Meshach means "I am of little account," and Abed-nego means "servant [of the god] Nebo." Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Archeological Backgrounds of the Exilic and Postexilic Era Part I: The Archeological Background of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (January-March 1980): 4.

rejecting the king's food. However, the divine blessing upon Daniel and his friends shows God's intention to honor His covenant by preserving a remnant during the exile.

The chapter concludes with the divine blessing upon the four Jewish youths (1:17-21). Three blessings are in view. First, they were granted knowledge. Second, they were found acceptable in the sight of Nebuchadnezzar when he tested them. Third, Daniel was granted longevity of service in the Babylonian and Media Persian Empire.⁴³ These blessings are included to show the exiles how they are to live for God during the deportation. They demonstrate that God will take care of the issues in their lives as they consecrate themselves to Him. These blessings also reveal God's intention of preserving a remnant during the captivity.

The Aramaic chiastic section of the book (2-7) begins with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in 603 B.C. (2:1). Daniel's ability to provide both the revelation as well as the interpretation of the dream stands in contrast to the Babylonian magicians' inability to provide neither of these (2:2-13). Thus, the writer includes this material to show the sovereignty of God over the Babylonian system. While the Chaldeans were ineffective in providing a revelation and interpretation, the divinely gifted prophet Daniel could provide both through his dependence upon God (2:14-30). This section involving Daniel's request for more time as well as his dependence upon God in the midst of a crisis situation is also included to exemplify to the exiles how they too are to live by trusting in God's sovereignty as they move from one crisis situation to the next.

⁴³ These blessings also set the stage for subsequent chapters. For example, Daniel's God given ability to interpret dreams (1:17b) lays a foundation for what follows since nine of the twelve chapters in the book revolve around Daniel interpreting a dream or vision. Also, Daniel's length of service (1:21) sets the tone for the rest of the book since Daniel will be involved in government service for 69 years all of the way from 605 B.C. (1:1) to the third year of Cyrus (10:1) in 536 B.C.

The dream (2:31-35)⁴⁴ and its interpretation (2:36-45) are important since they reveal God's program for Israel during the "times of the Gentiles." Four items about this time period would greatly encourage the exiles. First, they would be encouraged to know that this time period would not last forever but rather would be limited to four specific empires.⁴⁵ Second, they would be encouraged to know that God was sovereign over the empires that were oppressing them. His limitation of their reigns revealed His sovereignty over them. Third, they would be encouraged to know of God's covenant faithfulness as evidenced by His intention to preserve a remnant throughout this traumatic time period. Fourth, they would be encouraged to know of God's purpose to honor the Abrahamic covenant by learning of His intention to ultimately restore the kingdom to Israel (2:35, 44).

The chapter concludes with Nebuchadnezzar paying homage to both Daniel and God (2:46-47) and promoting not only Daniel but also his three friends (2:48-49).⁴⁶ This material is included since it reinforces the theme of God's intention to preserve a remnant through dangerous times. It also reinforces the theme of how God will handle the issues in the lives of

⁴⁴ The vision of the times of the Gentiles as narrated from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective appears as an attractive, dazzling statue since he was the first empire during this time. However, this perspective stands in contrast to God's point of view regarding the times of the Gentiles. When this same time period is narrated from the perspective of God in Daniel 7, it appears as four grotesque beasts.

⁴⁵ In actuality, six empires are in view here. They include Babylon (2:38), Medo-Persia (5:28; 8:20), Greece (8:21), Rome, revived Rome in the future tribulation period (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10.10.4), and the kingdom of God ushered in at the Second Advent. The period of time in between the fourth and fifth kingdoms represents an era of mysterious kingdom rule unknown by the Old Testament prophets (Matt 13). The mystery age doctrine of the church as unfolded by Paul in his 13 letters fits this period between the fourth and fifth kingdoms as well. In addition, Amillennial and Postmillennial interpretations of the final kingdom as being ushered in with Christ's first coming are inadequate since they inconsistently call for interpreting the previous empires in literal and political terms while interpreting the last empire in strictly spiritual terms. Also, see Pentecost's six reasons as to why the smiting stone crushing of the final kingdom of the times of the Gentiles could not have been satisfied at Christ's first coming. Pentecost, "Daniel," 1336.

⁴⁶ Daniel 2:49 sets the stage for what follows in the next chapter. Daniel's three friends ruled throughout the province of Babylon while Nebuchadnezzar remained in the king's court. This verse may offer a possible explanation as to why Daniel was absent in chapter three. Other explanations for Daniel's absence in chapter three include the fact that he was away on business or sick in bed. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 146.

His people as they consecrate themselves to Him throughout the times of the gentiles. Thus, this concluding material further exemplifies how the Jews in the exile are to live.

The second level in the chiasm involves the story of the three Hebrew friends thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (3).⁴⁷ This story again reiterates the theme of God's sovereignty over the Gentile empires since He supernaturally thwarted the attempt of Nebuchadnezzar to kill the three Hebrews (3:15).⁴⁸ It also would encourage the exiles by again showing God's intent of honoring the covenant by supernaturally protecting the nation. Just as God protected the three Hebrews, He would similarly protect the nation throughout the times of the Gentiles.

The story also is included to use the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to exemplify to the rest of the exiles how they are to live throughout the times of the Gentiles. They are to consecrate themselves to God and allow Him to take care of the other issues in their lives just as the three Hebrews had modeled. The willingness of the three Hebrews to completely trust in God's sovereignty in a crisis situation is evidenced by their acknowledgment that whether they would be saved from the fire was entirely God's prerogative (3:16-18). Their subsequent promotion after the completion of this test demonstrates to the rest of the exiles how God will similarly handle the issues in their lives when their priority is consecrated living (3:28-30).

The third level of the chiasm involves the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dethronement and re-enthronement (4).⁴⁹ This story clearly teaches God's sovereignty over the pagan kings during

⁴⁷ For a plausible explanation for the background of this chapter, see Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 706.

⁴⁸ Some say the fourth man in the fire was Christ (3:28). Others say it was Michael who had the responsibility of protecting Israel (12:1). Others say it was just another angel (6:22). There probably is not enough information necessary in order to determine who the fourth man is.

⁴⁹ Because the events of this chapter were recorded in the form of a personal letter by Nebuchadnezzar as he recounted his own experiences, they represent a section of the book not written by Daniel.

the times of the Gentiles since the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's trial⁵⁰ was to teach him to acknowledge the reality of Yahweh's sovereignty (4:17, 25, 26, 30, 31, 35).⁵¹ A record of these events would provide a source of comfort to the exiles by revealing God's sovereignty over the very king that was oppressing them. Thus, the very first oppressive king during the times of the Gentiles was subservient to God. God's sovereignty over the Babylonian system is also seen in how only God's prophet Daniel could interpret the vision while the rest of the Babylonian magicians could not (4:9, 18).

This story also serves as an example regarding how the exiles are to live. Daniel risked his own life in relaying the prophecy to Nebuchadnezzar even though it was unfavorable to the king (4:19). Thus, Daniel consecrated himself to God even at personal risk. He trusted completely in God to take care of him. The exiles should do the same in their times of crisis. God's willingness to preserve Daniel would serve as a comfort to the exiles by showing His intention of preserving a remnant throughout this difficult time period. Just as God preserved Daniel, God would similarly preserve the nation. This theme of national preservation and restoration is also buttressed through the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar to his position of authority after he acknowledged God's sovereignty (Dan 4:36). Daniel's readers would conclude that if God can restore a rebellious pagan king, then He would also one day certainly restore His covenanted nation.⁵²

⁵⁰ The disease that Nebuchadnezzar was inflicted with may have been zoanthropy. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 146; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament: Including a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha*, 1116.

⁵¹ The progression of Nebuchadnezzar's understanding and faith over the course of the preceding three chapters (2:47; 3:29; 4:34) may indicate that he became a believer. Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 709.

⁵² It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar represents a type of Israel in this regard. Just as Nebuchadnezzar was restored after a trauma lasting seven years (4:16, 25), national Israel will similarly be restored after experiencing a trauma called the future tribulation period that will also last seven years (Dan 9:27). (I owe this insight to Bob Eppler of the Barnabas Adult Bible Fellowship at Redeemer Bible Church.)

The events of chapter 5⁵³ line up chiastically with events of chapter 4. However, the contents of chapter 4 differ from those of chapter 5 by showing that God is sovereignly capable of permanently removing an entire empire (5)⁵⁴ just as He is capable of temporarily removing and then restoring a king (4). Because Belshazzar failed to learn the lesson regarding God's sovereign authority that his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar had learned (5:21), God would hand the Babylonian kingdom over to the Medes and the Persians. A record of these events would encourage the exiles by reminding them that all of the oppressive forces that the nation would experience during the times of the Gentiles would only be allowed to assert themselves for a limited duration. Each oppressive empire would only be allowed to stay in power for a specific amount of time.

The queen's recommendation of Daniel to interpret the writing instead of the Babylonian magicians again reveals God's sovereignty over the Babylonian pantheon since only Yahweh can reveal mysteries.⁵⁵ Also, Belshazzar's promotion of Daniel in spite of Daniel's earlier rebuke of the king again exemplifies to the deportees how they are to live in the exile by consecrating themselves to God and trusting in Him to handle the remaining issues in their lives. God's promotion of Daniel also shows how God supernaturally protected him from the king's wrath even after he earlier rebuked the king. This series of events would comfort the exiles by reminding them of God's intention to similarly preserve them even in the midst of hostile pagan powers throughout the times of the Gentiles.

⁵³ According to Hoehner's calculations, the events of this chapter took place Saturday night October 12, 539 B.C. Charles H. Dyer, class notes of Andy Woods in BE 304 Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2000.

⁵⁴ While Belshazzar profaned the vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the Jewish temple (1:2; 5:2-3), the Medo-Persian armies had successfully diverted the water of the Euphrates. This tactic allowed them to enter the city by going underneath its wall. This strategy allowed them to take Babylon without even a battle. Herodotus, *Histories* 1.191.

⁵⁵ For a rendering of the Aramaic phrase that was miraculously written on the wall see Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 710.

The events of chapter 6 line up chiastically with events of chapter 3. Just as God supernaturally acted to protect the three Hebrew friends in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, God once again acted to supernaturally protect Daniel in the lion's den. These stories when taken together would serve as a great source of encouragement to the exiles in the midst of the times of the gentiles. They communicate God's faithfulness to His covenant through the preservation of a remnant is still applicable under the Medo-Persian government just as it was in effect during the preceding Babylonian government.

The story of Daniel and the lion's den also taught Darius a lesson about God's sovereignty (6:26-27). Thus, the story is also included in order to comfort the exiles by reminding them of God's sovereignty over the gentile powers that were oppressing them. Daniel's piety also serves as a further example regarding how the exiles are to live outside the land. Such piety is evident not only in Daniel's devotional life (6:10) but also in his uprightness in his vocation (6:4). In fact, the only way Daniel's enemies could find grounds to attack him pertained to his relationship with his God.

As Daniel consecrated himself to God by persisting in public prayer even when it was illegal to do so,⁵⁶ God not only rescued Daniel from the lion's den but also punished his accusers. The chapter concludes with a reference to Daniel's prosperity during the reign of the Persian king Cyrus. Thus, Daniel's life serves as a textbook example of consecration to God first and foremost while trusting in Him to resolve the remaining issues. The story is included as an example of consecrated living with the hope that the exiles will imitate this same pattern.

⁵⁶ The immutability of Persian law is also alluded to in Esther 1:19; 8:8.

The events of chapter 7⁵⁷ line up chiastically with events of chapter 2. Both chapters refer to the specific nations⁵⁸ that would trample Israel during the times of the Gentiles.⁵⁹ The major difference between the chapters is that this era is narrated from the perspective of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2 and is narrated from the perspective of the prophet Daniel in chapter 7. In other words, an anthropocentric perspective of the times of the Gentiles is given in Daniel 2 and a theocentric perspective of the times of the Gentiles is given in Daniel 7. Thus, this era is represented in the form of a dazzling, attractive statue in chapter 2 and is also represented in the form of four grotesque, disgusting beasts in chapter 7.

Because both chapters communicate the same concept, they both teach the same four encouraging lessons to the exiles. First, the exiles would be encouraged to know that this time period would not last forever but rather would be limited to four empires. Second, they would be encouraged to know that God was sovereign over the empires that were oppressing them. God's sovereignty over these empires is apparent in how He limited each of their durations of power. Third, they would be encouraged to know of God's covenant faithfulness through His intention to preserve a remnant throughout this traumatic time period.

Fourth, they would be encouraged to know of God's purpose to honor the Abrahamic covenant by learning of His plan to ultimately restore the kingdom to Israel (7:18). Just as God miraculously delivered the three Hebrews (3) and Daniel (6), the Son of Man (Mark 14:61-62) will similarly miraculously deliver Israel from the little horn (7:8) or the antichrist during the

⁵⁷ The events described in this chapter took place in 553 B.C. (7:1).

⁵⁸ For an explanation of what the specific characteristics of each of the four beasts represent, see Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 713.

⁵⁹ As previously explained, a total of six kingdoms are in view here. Moreover, as also explained earlier, a consistent interpretation makes the Amillennial and Postmillennial views of the final kingdom untenable. Pentecost's enumeration of the six deficiencies associated with the Amillennial and Postmillennial views of the final kingdom is equally applicable here.

future tribulation period.⁶⁰ Daniel's face turning pale as described at the end of the chapter (7:28) might be explained in terms of a negative impact upon Daniel due to the vision's depiction of evil triumphing over Israel during the times of the gentiles. In other words, Daniel suffered even though the vision also made it clear that evil would only be allowed to run its course temporarily.

Chapters 8–12 comprise the Hebrew section of the book. These chapters describe God's prophetic program for Israel from the time of the exile to the establishment of the kingdom to Israel. This section begins with the vision of the ram and the goat in Daniel 8.⁶¹ This chapter focuses upon the middle two empires of the four kingdoms that Israel would face during the times of the gentiles. These two empires represent Media Persia (8:20) and Greece (8:21). The ram represents the former and the goat represents the latter.

According to the vision, Greece, under the leadership of Alexander the Great, would overthrow the Media-Persian Empire. Shortly thereafter Alexander would meet his demise (323 B.C.) thereby causing his kingdom to be divided among his four generals.⁶² This division would then be followed by the rise of a Seleucid named Antiochus Epiphanes who would desecrate the temple for 1150 days.⁶³ Although he would prosper for a season, he would ultimately meet his demise at the occurrence of the Maccabean revolt on December 25, 165 B.C.

This vision would give further comfort to the exiles by informing them that the two middle empires that would subjugate the nation during the times of the gentiles would only be

⁶⁰ Critical scholars mostly interpret the Son of Man (7:13) as a reference to either Michael and his angelic followers or as a personification of the nation of Israel (7:22, 27). The first view suffers since Michael's followers are called people of the most high and not angels (7:27). The second view suffers since the people are said to worship and serve the Son of Man rather than themselves (7:14).

⁶¹ According to 8:1, Daniel saw this vision on 551 B.C.

⁶² Cassander received Macedonia and Greece, Lysimachus received most of Asia Minor and Thrace, Seleucus received Syria and Mesopotamia, and Ptolemy received Egypt.

⁶³ The 2300 evenings and mornings can be understood as 1150 days since there were two daily sacrifices for the continual burnt offering (Exod 29:38-42; Dan 9:21). Thus, the 1150 days represents the period of time in between the beginning of Antiochus' desecration of the temple (168 B.C.) and when Judas Maccabeus liberated the temple on December 25, 165 B.C.

allowed to reign for a limited period of time.⁶⁴ The 1150 days that Antiochus would be allowed to desecrate the temple are mentioned to show that his reign of terror would not last indefinitely but would rather be limited. Although the vision made it clear that these empires would be allowed to subjugate the nation for a limited period of time, the prospect of this subjugation still sickened, exhausted, and astonished Daniel (8:27). However, because of the limits placed upon their reigns, the exiles could be comforted by the fact that God was sovereign over these two kingdoms.

The exiles could also be comforted upon learning that God intended to honor the Abrahamic Covenant by preserving a Jewish remnant despite the oppressiveness of both Media-Persia and Greece (8:14). Finally, the information about the Maccabean revolt (8:14) is mentioned in order to give another example of consecrated living. Because Judas Maccabeus and those associated with him liberated the temple from Antiochus and the Seleucid dynasty at great personal risk, their lives represent yet another example of how God will work on behalf of his people when they consecrate themselves to Him. Daniel includes this information with the hope that the exiles will follow this same pattern of covenant fidelity and piety.

The prophecy of the seventy sevens (9) took place in 538 B.C. (9:1) after 67 of the 70 years of captivity had transpired (9:2). The largest part of the chapter involves Daniel's prayer. This prayer consisted of confession regarding national covenant violations and a request for divine mercy (9:3-19). This prayer is included to again teach the exiles how they are to live. They are to continue to honor God's covenant and recognize that their success outside the land as well as their eventual hope for restoration to the land is linked to their response to God's covenant.

⁶⁴ The "time of the end" (8:17, 19, 26) in this context refers to the end of the Grecian empire. Thus, this chapter is not a prophecy about the antichrist or even about a dual fulfillment regarding both the antichrist and Antiochus. At best Antiochus here only represents a type of the future antichrist (Dan 9:27; 11:31).

Because Daniel may have suffered from the misguided belief that the kingdom would materialize at the conclusion of the seventy-year captivity, Gabriel is dispatched from heaven (9:20-23)⁶⁵ to give Daniel the prophecy of the seventy weeks (9:24-27).⁶⁶ This prophecy explains to Daniel that the kingdom will not be restored to the nation at the end of the seventy-year captivity but rather will only be restored to the nation at the conclusion of a 490-year cycle.⁶⁷ The inclusion of the seventy weeks prophecy would greatly encourage the exiles by reminding them of God's plan of fulfilling His covenant promises (9:24). God's covenant faithfulness is seen in how He will preserve a Jewish remnant even in spite of the nation's future rejection of her own messiah (9:25-26a), the resulting A.D. 70 judgment under Titus of Rome (9:26b), and persecution of Israel under the antichrist (9:27). Also, because the time period of the prophecy would only last for a duration of 490 years, the exiles would be encouraged to know that God is sovereign over the nations that would oppress Israel since He had limited the duration of their oppression.

The final vision (10–12) takes place in 536 B.C. The vision is preceded by a spiritual conflict that delayed the angelic visitor who was assigned the responsibility conveying the vision's contents to Daniel (10–11:1). One of the demonic beings that resisted the angelic messenger was called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" (10:13). Persia was the kingdom in power at the time Daniel wrote. Another demonic being, whose coming was predicted, is called

⁶⁵ The Book of Daniel highlights the different roles played by Gabriel and Michael relative to Israel. While Gabriel's function was to bring new insight (9:20-27), Michael's function was to preserve the nation (12:1).

⁶⁶ In the preceding prayer, Daniel had been seeking God with regard to the temple, Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. Each of these items is dealt with in the seventy-week prophecy.

⁶⁷ See the appendix for the specifics taught by the dispensational, premillennial interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy. For a helpful chart showing mathematically how exactly 483 years elapsed in between the decree of Artaxerxes and Palm Sunday, see Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 717. To see how the dispensational view compares with other views of the seventy weeks prophecy, see Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 148-49; Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, 106; H. Wayne House and Randall Price, *Charts of Bible Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 142-43.

“the prince of Greece” (10:20). Persia and Greece represented the middle two empires during the times of the gentiles.

The designation of these demons as the “prince of Persia” and “prince of Greece” show that the political entities opposing Israel throughout the times of the Gentiles are demonically energized. Yet, despite such demonic opposition, God is still in control. As the vision will make clear, He will still see to it that He will preserve a Jewish remnant and fulfill Israel’s covenants. Thus, the exiles can be comforted through this reminder that God is sovereign over the nations that would oppress her.

The contents of the vision are found in Daniel 11:1–12:13. The material in Daniel 11 covers the section of the times of the gentiles dealing with Israel’s subjugation to Persia (11:2)⁶⁸ and Greece (11:3-4). The division of Alexander the Great’s Grecian empire among his four generals led to constant conflict between the Ptolemies of Egypt in the south and the Seleucids of Syria and Mesopotamia in the North. These two dynasties repeatedly trampled down the land of Israel as they fought with one another throughout the intertestamental period (11:5-20). Eventually, Antiochus Epiphanes emerged from the Seleucid dynasty. He desecrated the Jewish temple (168–165 B.C.) until the Maccabean revolt curtailed his influence over Israel (11:21-35).⁶⁹ Unfortunately for Israel, Antiochus’ persecution only represented a type of the persecution that the nation would be subjected to under the tyranny of the antichrist during Daniel’s seventieth week (11:36-45).⁷⁰

⁶⁸ The three Persian kings are Cambyses, Pseudo Smerdis, and Darius I. Xerxes is the fourth king who would invade Egypt.

⁶⁹ For a summary of the activities of Antiochus, see Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 719.

⁷⁰ The jump is made here from the time of Antiochus into the distant future under the antichrist since he typologically prefigures the antichrist (11:31; 9:27). Several reasons exist as to why 11:36-45 is speaking of the future antichrist rather than Antiochus. First, although Antiochus’ name means “god manifested,” he did not exalt himself over every god (11:36; 2 Thess 2:4). Rather, he venerated the gods of Egypt as evidenced by the fact that he erected a statue of Zeus in the Jewish temple. *Ibid.*, 720. Second, the details in 11:36-45 do not fit the known facts of

All of this material contributes to the comfort of the exiles by showing them that God will be faithful to His covenant since He will preserve a Jewish remnant even in spite of these horrific waves of persecution. Because the duration of these previously described persecuting empires will be limited, none of them will be allowed to persecute the chosen people indefinitely (11:4). Thus, this limitation again would comfort the exiles by showing God's sovereignty over these persecuting forces. Finally, the information about the Maccabean revolt (11:32) might again be mentioned in order to give the exiles another example of consecrated living. As previously mentioned, Judas Maccabeus and those associated with him liberated the temple from Antiochus and the Seleucid dynasty at great personal risk. Thus, their lives represent yet another example of how God will work on behalf of his people when they consecrate themselves to Him. Daniel again includes this information with the hope that the exiles will follow this same pattern of covenant fidelity and piety.

The theme of the preservation of a Jewish remnant continues into the next chapter (12). Here, God promises to protect (12:1a),⁷¹ resurrect (12:2), and reward (12:3) a remnant of Israel in spite of the great tribulation associated with Daniel's seventieth week (12:1b). So comprehensive will be God's work in preservation of the Jews that it will even encompass the preservation of His prophetic word (12:4). Just as God will preserve these prophecies, he will similarly preserve Israel. The exiles can take great comfort in the fact that no amount of persecution or tribulation can thwart God's national covenant promises from being fulfilled.

history. Constable, "Notes on Daniel," 127. Third, a gap must be placed somewhere since the material of chapter 12 pertains to the distant future (10:14; 12:2). Thus, a gap must be placed at the end of either 11:35 or 11:45. Fourth, prophetic gaps are not only commonplace in the Book of Daniel (2:33; 7:7; 9:26-27; 12:2) but also in prophetic writings in general (Isa 9:6-7; 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).

⁷¹ How comforting it would be for the deportees to realize that the function of the angel Michael is to protect Israel.

Because the second half of the great tribulation will be limited only to three and one half years (12:5-7), the period of persecution under the antichrist is limited to a specific duration and will not be allowed to extend indefinitely (Matt 24:22). Because God has placed limitations upon it, the deportees can take comfort in the fact that He remains sovereign over this terrible time period. The preservation theme is again reinforced through the prediction that a Jewish remnant will survive the great tribulation period, pass through the divine judgment (Ezek 20:34-38; Matt 25:31-46), and enter the kingdom (12:8-12).⁷² Thus, the exiles can be comforted by God's intention to honor the Abrahamic Covenant through His preservation of a Jewish remnant and establishment of the kingdom through Israel. So sure are these promises that even Daniel himself is promised participation in the future resurrection (12:13).

In conclusion, Daniel has assembled his material for the purpose of encouraging the exiles during the "times of the Gentiles." He does so by reminding them of God's sovereignty over the Gentile empires that are oppressing them, by reminding them of God's covenant faithfulness through His intention of preserving the nation, and by reminding them of God's intention to ultimately restore the kingdom to Israel. Just as the Mosaic Law taught the nation how they are to live inside the land, Daniel instructs the exiles regarding how they are to live outside the land by exhorting them to consecrate themselves to God.

⁷² Here is a possible way to harmonize the numbers in 12:11-12. A period of 1260 days will elapse from the desecration of the temple at the mid point of the tribulation until the end of the tribulation. An additional 30 days will be required to gather the Jewish remnant (Matt 24:31), cleanse or recreate the temple, and possibly clean up the debris left over from the tribulation. Then an additional 45 days will be necessary in order for the judgment to take place. The one who makes it through this judgment will be called blessed (Matt 25:34) since he will be allowed to enter into the kingdom age.

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Appendix: The Contribution of Daniel's Prophecy of The 70 Weeks Toward Understanding God's Future Program

The setting

Daniel 9:1- 538 B.C.

Daniel 9:2- Jer 25:11; 29:10; 2 Chron 36:21; Lev 25:1-7

Daniel's misconception

1. The prophecy pertains to the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem (Dan 9:24b)
2. The prophecy encompasses a 490 year time period (Dan 9:24a, 1-2)
3. Each year of the prophecy comprises 360 days
 - a. Rev 11:3 (1260 days); Rev 11:2 (42 months)
 - b. Gen 7:24 (150 days); Gen 7:11 and 8:4 (5 months)
4. At the conclusion of the 490 year time period 6 prophetic events will be fulfilled (Dan 9:24c)
 - a. Finish transgression
 - b. End of sin
 - c. Atonement for iniquity
 - d. Everlasting righteousness
 - e. Seal up vision and prophecy
 - f. Anoint the most holy place
5. The 490-year time period began on March 5, 444 B.C. (Dan 9:25a; Neh 2:3, 5, 8)
6. Exactly 483 years will elapse in between the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the messiah (Dan 9:25b)
 - a. Hoehner: Artaxerxes' decree (March 5, 444 B.C.)-173, 880 days-Palm Sunday (March 30, A.D. 33)
 - b. Anderson: Artaxerxes' decree (March 14, 445 B.C.)-173, 880 days-Palm Sunday (April 6, A.D. 32)
 - c. Perspective on Palm Sunday (Luke 19:37-38, 39-40, 42, 44)
 - d. Hermeneutical impact
7. There is a gap of unspecified duration in between the 483rd and 484th year of the prophecy
 - a. 2 events after the 69th week but before the 70th week (Dan 9:26)
 1. Crucifixion (Dan 9:26a)
 2. A.D. 70 (Dan 9:26b)
 - b. 6 events of Dan 9:24 have not been fulfilled
 - c. Daniel 9:27 not yet fulfilled in history
 - d. Matt 24:15

- e. Other prophetic gaps (Isa 9:6-7; 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-21)
 - f. Church history
8. The final seven years of Daniel's prophecy comprise the future tribulation period (Dan 9:27)
9. Daniel 9:27 provides an overview of the future tribulation period
- a. Sketch
 - 1. 7 years
 - 2. Beginning: treaty (Dan 9:27a)
 - 3. Middle: temple desecration (Dan 9:27b; 11:31; 1 Macc 1-2; 2 Macc 6)
 - 4. End: Second Coming (Dan 9:27c)
 - b. Stage setting events
 - 1. Israel's return in unbelief
 - 2. "Peace process"
 - 3. Rebuilt temple
10. A relationship exists between Daniel 9:27 and Rev 6-19
- 1. Both are describing the same period of time
 - a. Temple (Rev 11:1-2)
 - b. Division of time period into 3 ½ year parts (Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5)
 - c. Antichrist (Rev 13:1-10)
 - d. Antichrist defeated (Rev 13:1-10)
 - e. Christ's return (Rev 19:11-21)
 - 2. Sketch (Dan 9:27)-details (Rev 6-19)
 - 3. Rev 6-19 must be read with Daniel 9:27 in mind
 - a. 7 years?
 - b. Pre-tribulation rapture (Dan 9:24)
 - 4. Revelation adds details before and after Daniel 9:27
 - a. Before: Church Age (Rev 1-3)
 - b. After: Millennium, Great White Throne Judgment, Eternal State (Rev 20-22)