

ARGUMENT OF DANIEL

by Todd Bolen

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (7:13-14).

Introduction

The book of Daniel is one of two works explicitly written in the exile and obviously directed to a faithful remnant removed from the Promised Land. Unlike the rest of the prophets, Daniel does not call upon the Israelites to repent but rather he encourages them with a message of hope based on God’s sovereign control over the nations. The first half of the book reveals how the Lord protects his faithful remnant under multiple oppressive foreign regimes. The second half of the book is more focused on visions that reveal the future course of history with a grand culmination in the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth presided over by “one like a son of man” that is worshipped by all peoples of every nation and language. Because the book presents itself as revealing the future in precise details, the accuracy of Daniel has been widely denied in recent centuries. When read as an accurate work of God’s Word, the message of Daniel is one of the most glorious and encouraging in all of Scripture. For that reason, it is no wonder that the New Testament understands Jesus and his future kingdom in light of this book.

Author

According to tradition, the author of the book was the main subject of the first six chapters and the recipient of the visions of the last six chapters. Daniel was among the nobility

deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC and according to the book's records, he lived under Babylonian rule until the Persian conquest in 539. His final narrative (ch. 6) and vision (chs. 10–12) date to the early years of Persian rule. According to the book, Daniel was a young man trained in the wisdom of Babylon who quickly assumed administrative leadership in the kingdom. His privileged position continued under the reign of Darius the Mede (6:2). Outside of the book, Daniel is noted for his righteousness by the prophet Ezekiel (14:14, 20). Some have suggested that Ezekiel was referring to a renowned Canaanite figure, however, it is inconceivable that Ezekiel would cite a Canaanite idolater as a model of righteousness in the midst of his argument that judgment was necessary upon Judean idolaters. Some reject the possibility that Ezekiel would accord such high status to a contemporary, but it must be noticed that Daniel had already been made ruler over Babylon and placed in charge of its wise men in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1, 48). Thus it is not surprising that Ezekiel, prophesying in Babylon more than a decade later, would hold up the righteous character of Daniel to the Judeans.

Date

The traditional date of the book of Daniel is unanimously rejected by all non-evangelical scholars today. According to the book's internal testimony, Daniel wrote the visions in the second half. While it is possible that the third-person accounts in chapters 1–6 were written by a contemporary of Daniel, tradition ascribes authorship of the whole to Daniel. In any case, it is the first-person accounts that mainstream scholarship today refuses to attribute to Daniel.¹ The primary reason for the critical dating of the book is the presence of highly detailed prophecies of the second century BC. In Collins' words, "The correspondence between Daniel's predictions, especially in chap. 11, and the events of the Hellenistic age is most easily explained

¹ Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 373.

by the supposition that the prediction was written after the fact.”² Scholars believe they can affix a precise date on the basis of prophecies which came to be true (up to 11:35) and prophecies which did not (11:36-45).³ This hypothesis is supported by language and inconsistencies which allegedly betray a late composition. Yet analysis of the arguments indicates that the only valid reason for rejecting sixth-century authorship of the book is a presupposition that predictive prophecies are impossible.

The first indicator of the book’s origin in the sixth century is the book’s own testimony. The work maintains throughout that it was written during the time of the Babylonian empire and the book is full of historical superscriptions which confirm this date (see Table 1 below). The visions do present history after the Babylonian exile, but these are always within the context of being predictive prophecies of the future. If the book was written in the second century, the intention of the author was to deceive his audience into thinking that it originated at a much earlier period. There is no evidence that suggests that a genre existed whereby a writer and his audience would mutually understand that a historical work was in fact fictional. If these prophecies are *vaticinium ex eventu*, the intention of the author as reflected in the book’s argument (see below) was to deceive his audience. In this case, the author’s argument that his God knows the future and is sovereign over the future is only wishful thinking of a human figure and has no divine authority. To say it another way, if Daniel was written in the second century, it has no more value for the person of faith today than does the Book of Enoch or other pseudonymous, apocryphal literature of the Second Temple period.⁴

Scholars have argued that the book’s language supports a date of writing in the second century BC. More careful analysis, however, refutes this argument. The Persian words

² John Joseph Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 25.

³ Sharon Pace, *Daniel*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary, vol. 17 (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2008), 333.

⁴ Longman writes, “The only way that Daniel’s intention as demonstrated in the text can be achieved is by duping the audience” (*Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999], 22–23).

that one finds in the book are *Old Persian*, precisely what one would expect given the book's internal testimony.⁵ Likewise, the Aramaic of the book is more similar to Official Aramaic and not what one would expect from a second century work.⁶ Most significantly, the presence of Greek words have been claimed to be decisive evidence against an early date. However, the fact that all of the Greek words are technical terms for musical instruments certainly allows for the possibility that these were loanwords used for specific instruments carried by Greek traders known to be present in the Babylonian court. Much more important, however, is the remarkable *lack* of Greek words if in fact this book was written in the heyday of Hellenism in mid-2nd century Israel. Miller explains:

By 170 B.C. Greek-speaking governments had controlled Babylon and Palestine for 150 years, and numerous Greek terms would be expected in a work produced during this time. Most of the apocryphal books were either written or translated into Greek in the second or first centuries B.C., displaying the profound influence of Greek upon the language at about the time when some argue Daniel was composed. Kitchen aptly notes that in Daniel, Persian terms are used for government terminology where one would expect a writer of the second century B.C. to have employed Greek expressions.⁷

This argument has not been given the weight it deserves because of scholarly presuppositions which cannot countenance predictive prophecy.

Another argument against the traditional date of Daniel is the use of apocalyptic material in the book. This genre was most commonly used in the second century BC and following. This proposal, however, fails to recognize the reality that the book of Daniel had profound impact upon Second Temple period Judaism, and this could well have included the popularity of the apocalyptic genre. Furthermore, the apocalyptic genre is attested to in the Bible

⁵ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

in the late 8th century in Isaiah 24–27, and in the ancient Near East as early as 1200 BC.⁸ Thus comparative analysis does not preclude an early date for the book.

The numerous copies of the book of Daniel at Qumran, some dating as early as the late second century BC, is difficult to reconcile with the late date. Proponents must assume that the book was written in the mid-160s and then widely accepted and disseminated in less than fifty years. As Ulrich writes: “With regard to date, Daniel^c and Daniel^e are the oldest manuscripts of the book that are extant, dating paleographically from the early Hasmonean period (the late second or beginning of the first century BCE). Thus, they were copied only about a half century after the composition of the book.”⁹ The book of Daniel is the only case where scholars would allow such a short period of time for such a wide distribution, and the arguments they use for assigning earlier dates to other books can be used against their assumptions on this book.

In addition, support for an early date can be seen in Ben Sira. The B manuscript from the Cairo Geniza “would now seem to provide clear literary evidence [350] for the existence of, at least portions, of the Book of Daniel in 190–180 BC.”¹⁰ The portions alluded to include the predictive portions of the second half of the book. Unfortunately, as Fox notes, scholars have not allowed the new evidence to alter their conclusions for “there is simply too much at stake.”¹¹

Finally, the canonical status of the book refutes a late date for the book. All evidence indicates that the book was widely accepted by all Jewish groups early in the Second Temple period, a situation most unlikely if the book was only written after the division of the Jews into numerous factions in the Maccabean period. The book was universally judged to be inspired, accurate, and worthy of inclusion among the sacred writings. Scholars who argue for a late date

⁸ Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, 389.

⁹ Eugene Ulrich, “Daniel, Book of: Hebrew and Aramaic Text,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 171.

¹⁰ Douglas E. Fox, “Ben Sira on OT Canon Again: The Date of Daniel,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49, no. 2 (1987): 349–50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

of the book cannot explain why Daniel was included in the canon when many other apocalyptic, pseudonymous works from the second century were excluded. The best explanation is that the other works were rejected because of their pseudonymous character, but Daniel was accepted because it was known to be the work of the sixth-century Judean man in exile. This conclusion was held throughout the Second Temple period by Jesus and writers of the New Testament (cf. Matt 24:15). It continued to be accepted throughout Jewish and Christian history until the last several centuries when anti-supernatural presuppositions were adopted and it was considered impossible that God knew and could reveal the future. Once this faulty assumption is rejected, there is no reason to deny the book's own testimony that it was the product of revelation in the sixth century.

Occasion and Original Readers

The book of Daniel was written to Jews living in Israel and in the diaspora but who were experiencing exilic conditions by means of the loss of national sovereignty, economic weakness, and religious failures. It was specifically intended to encourage the faithful remnant in light of future persecutions that would require great sacrifice for their faith, even to the point of death. Just as Daniel was observing the fulfillment of Jeremiah's words concerning the exile (9:2), it can be safely assumed that the faithful remnant was reading Daniel's book as the prophecies came to pass through the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods. These predictions, including the reference to the sixty-nine sevens, are the best explanation for the increasing messianic fervor in the first centuries BC and AD. Jesus taught his disciples that they were in the midst of Daniel's prophecies and that they were awaiting the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15). The long-range nature of Daniel's prophecies indicates that these messages were intended for the faithful of all ages as they await the coming of the Son of Man to receive power and authority in the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

Message

The Lord's sovereignty is revealed in his present protection of his people and humbling of the nation's kings, and it will ultimately be displayed in his foreordained destruction of the defiant nations and the establishment of his kingdom on earth.

Outline

Summary of Outline

- I. The Lord protects faithful exiles and humbles arrogant kings in Daniel's lifetime (1:1–6:28).
 - A. The Lord blesses the faithful exiles who honor the covenant (1:1-21).
 - B. The Lord reveals through a faithful exile that God's kingdom will destroy all earthly kingdoms (2:1-49).
 - C. The Lord protects the faithful exiles who worship God only (3:1-30).
 - D. The Lord humbles an arrogant king who ultimately acknowledges the eternal kingdom of God (4:1-37).
 - E. The Lord humbles an arrogant king who defiles the temple vessels (5:1-31).
 - F. The Lord protects a faithful exile and leads a king to acknowledge the eternal kingdom of God (6:1-28).
- II. The Lord will protect his people and destroy arrogant kings until the establishment of his kingdom (7:1–12:13).
 - A. The Lord reveals that the future course of world history culminates in a blasphemous ruler who is destroyed before the establishment of the divine everlasting kingdom (7:1-28).
 - B. The Lord reveals the history of two future kingdoms which culminates in a wicked ruler who will persecute the saints before he is destroyed (8:1-27).
 - C. The Lord reveals that the exile will continue for seventy sevens and culminate in a wicked ruler who will desecrate the temple before everlasting righteousness is established (9:1-27).
 - D. The Lord reveals the history of two future kingdoms, the last ruler of which foreshadows the final great persecutor of God's people (10:1–12:13).

Detailed Outline

- I. The Lord protects faithful exiles and humbles arrogant kings in Daniel's lifetime (1:1–6:28).
 - A. The Lord blesses the faithful exiles who honor the covenant (1:1-21).
 - 1. The Lord gives the exiles and temple treasures into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (1:1-2).
 - 2. Prominent exiles are brought to the king's court for training (1:3-7).
 - 3. Daniel and his friends refuse royal food and wine and are blessed by God (1:8-16).

4. Daniel and his friends demonstrate their divine blessing in wisdom before Nebuchadnezzar (1:17-21).
- B. The Lord reveals through a faithful exile that God's kingdom will destroy all earthly kingdoms (2:1-49).
1. Nebuchadnezzar orders to death all the wise men who cannot reveal his dream and its interpretation (2:1-13).
 2. The Lord reveals the dream to Daniel in response to the prayers of the exiles (2:14-23).
 3. Daniel explains to Nebuchadnezzar that his ability to reveal dreams comes from God in heaven (2:24-28).
 4. Daniel reveals the dream of the large statue to Nebuchadnezzar (2:29-35).
 5. Daniel interprets the dream as revealing the future of earthly kingdoms culminating in the coming of God's kingdom (2:36-45).
 6. Nebuchadnezzar honors Daniel, his God, and his friends (2:46-49).
- C. The Lord protects the faithful exiles who worship God only (3:1-30).
1. Nebuchadnezzar establishes an image and commands all peoples to worship it (3:1-7).
 2. Babylonians accuse Daniel's friends of defying Nebuchadnezzar's order (3:8-12).
 3. Daniel's friends explain their refusal to worship an idol to Nebuchadnezzar (3:13-18).
 4. Nebuchadnezzar throws Daniel's friends into the furnace (3:19-23).
 5. The Lord delivers Daniel's friends from the furnace (3:24-27).
 6. Nebuchadnezzar promotes Daniel's friends and praises their God (3:28-30).
- D. The Lord humbles an arrogant king who ultimately acknowledges the eternal kingdom of God (4:1-37).
1. Nebuchadnezzar praises the Lord in recalling his humiliation (4:1-3).
 2. Nebuchadnezzar explains his dream of the great tree to Daniel (4:4-18).
 3. Daniel reveals that the dream predicts that Nebuchadnezzar will become like a beast until he submits to God (4:19-27).
 4. Nebuchadnezzar describes the fulfillment of the dream when he became like a beast (4:28-33).
 5. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the sovereignty of God and his sanity is restored (4:34-37).
- E. The Lord humbles an arrogant king who defiles the temple vessels (5:1-31).
1. Belshazzar celebrates a banquet and defiles the sacred vessels from the Lord's temple (5:1-4).
 2. A human hand writes an inscription on the wall during the banquet (5:5-6).
 3. Belshazzar searches for a wise man to interpret the writing (5:7-16).
 4. Daniel reminds Belshazzar how the Lord humbled the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar until he recognized the sovereignty of God (5:17-21).
 5. Daniel explains that the inscription was written because Belshazzar has not humbled himself (5:22-24).

6. Daniel reveals that the inscription predicts the destruction of the Babylonian kingdom (5:25-29).
 7. Daniel's prediction is fulfilled that very night (5:30-31).
- F. The Lord protects a faithful exile and leads a king to acknowledge the eternal kingdom of God (6:1-28).
1. Daniel is exalted by Darius because of his exceptional qualities (6:1-3).
 2. Daniel's fellow administrators lay a trap by proposing a decree forbidding prayer except to Darius (6:4-9).
 3. Daniel prays to the Lord in defiance of the king's decree (6:10-15).
 4. Daniel is placed in the lions' den as judgment for his defiance (6:16-18).
 5. Daniel is delivered from death by the Lord to whom he prayed (6:19-23).
 6. Daniel's persecutors are delivered to death by the king (6:24).
 7. Darius decrees that all people must worship the living God whose kingdom is eternal (6:25-28).
- II. The Lord will protect his people and destroy arrogant kings until the establishment of his kingdom (7:1-12:13).
- A. The Lord reveals that the future course of world history culminates in a blasphemous ruler who is destroyed before the establishment of the divine everlasting kingdom (7:1-28).
1. Daniel sees a vision of four beasts and one like a son of man who was given the eternal kingdom by the Ancient of Days (7:1-14).
 - a) Daniel writes down the essence of his dream (7:1).
 - b) Daniel sees four great beasts arise from the sea (7:2-3).
 - c) The first beast is a lion with wings of an eagle (7:4).
 - d) The second beast is a bear in the midst of conquests (7:5).
 - e) The third beast is a leopard with four wings and four heads (7:6).
 - f) The fourth beast is terrifying and powerful (7:7-8).
 - (1) The fourth beast conquers everything (7:7).
 - (2) The fourth beast has ten horns and a boastful one that arises afterwards (7:8).
 - g) The divine court appears with the Ancient of Days on the throne (7:9-10).
 - h) The boastful horn is destroyed while the other beasts continue to live (7:11-12).
 - i) One like a son of man is given the eternal kingdom by the Ancient of Days (7:13-14).
 2. Daniel's dream is interpreted (7:15-28).
 - a) Daniel seeks the interpretation for his dream (7:15-16).
 - b) Summary: The four beasts are four kingdoms, but the saints will possess the kingdom forever (7:17-18).
 - c) Inquiry: The fourth beast and its eleven horns are a future unique kingdom, and a unique king will persecute the saints before his power is destroyed and God's kingdom is established forever (7:19-28).
 - (1) Daniel describes the fourth beast and the boastful horn (7:19-22).

- (2) Daniel learns the meaning of the fourth beast and the boastful horn (7:23-27).
- d) Daniel is troubled by his dream and its interpretation (7:28).
- B. The Lord reveals the history of two future kingdoms which culminates in a wicked ruler who will persecute the saints before he is destroyed (8:1-27).
1. Daniel sees a vision of a ram, a goat, and a horn (8:1-14).
 - a) Daniel describes the time and location of his vision (8:1-2).
 - b) The ram with two horns conquers everything in its path (8:3-4).
 - c) The goat with one horn defeats the ram (8:5-7).
 - d) The goat's horn is broken, four horns arise, out of which a small horn arises which persecutes the saints (8:8-12).
 - e) The time of the vision is given as 2,300 days (8:13-14).
 2. Daniel's vision is interpreted (8:15-27).
 - a) The angel Gabriel explains that the vision concerns the time of the end (8:15-18).
 - b) The identities of the ram and the goat are given (8:19-22).
 - c) The small horn is identified as a wicked ruler who will attack God's people before he is destroyed (8:23-25).
 - d) The angel confirms the veracity of the vision (8:26).
 - e) Daniel is troubled by his dream and its interpretation (8:27).
- C. The Lord reveals that the exile will continue for seventy sevens and culminate in a wicked ruler who will desecrate the temple before everlasting righteousness is established (9:1-27).
1. Daniel recognizes that the time of Jerusalem's desolation is coming to an end (9:1-3).
 2. Daniel confesses the nation's sin and pleads for the Lord to restore Jerusalem and its temple (9:4-19).
 3. The angel Gabriel explains that seventy sevens are decreed for the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem (9:20-27).
 - a) The angel Gabriel gives an answer in response to Daniel's prayer (9:20-23).
 - b) Seventy sevens are required to atone for sin and bring in everlasting righteousness (9:24).
 - c) Sixty-nine sevens are decreed for the reconstruction of Jerusalem (9:25).
 - d) After the sixty-ninth seven, the Messiah will be killed and Jerusalem will be destroyed (9:26).
 - e) In the middle of the seventieth seven, the ruler will desecrate the temple and then be destroyed (9:27).
- D. The Lord reveals the history of two future kingdoms, the last ruler of which foreshadows the final great persecutor of God's people (10:1-12:13).
1. Daniel was so troubled by the vision that he mourned for three weeks (10:1-3).
 2. An angel came to interpret the vision but he was detained for three weeks by angelic conflict (10:4-11:1).

3. The angel interprets the vision of the great war, beginning with the present day in Daniel's time (11:2–12:4).
 - a) Three more kings will rule in Persia and the fourth will incite against Greece (11:2).
 - b) Alexander the Great will conquer the world (11:3).
 - c) Alexander the Great's empire will be divided in four parts (11:4).
 - d) The conflicts of Ptolemy I, Ptolemy II, Antigonus I and Antiochus II are described (11:5-6).
 - e) The conflicts of Ptolemy III and Seleucus II are described (11:7-10).
 - f) The conflicts of Ptolemy IV and Antiochus III are described (11:11-13).
 - g) The victories of Antiochus III and ultimate failure are described (11:14-19).
 - h) The acts of Seleucus IV against the temple are described (11:20).
 - i) The victories of Antiochus IV against Ptolemy VI are described (11:21-28).
 - j) The defeat of Antiochus IV in Egypt leads him to attack Jerusalem and set up the abomination of desolation (11:29-32).
 - k) The Maccabean rebellion against Antiochus IV is described (11:33-35).
 - l) The character, actions, and destiny of the future king are described (11:36-45).
 - m) At the time of the king's defeat, the people of Israel will be delivered and the final resurrection will occur (12:1-4).
4. Daniel seeks clarification on the conclusion of the vision (12:5-13).
 - a) An angel explains that the events will take three and a half times (12:5-7).
 - b) Daniel learns that his revelation is for the righteous remnant (12:8-10).
 - c) The angel explains that the time between the abomination of desolation and the deliverance is 1,290 days (12:11-12).
 - d) The angel exhorts Daniel to trust the Lord until his death, for he will be resurrected (12:13).

Argument

Through its two parts, the book of Daniel asserts that the Lord is sovereign over all kings and nations, both in the present and the future, and because of this, the Lord's people may trust him for their protection and ultimate resurrection. The Lord's sovereignty is on display in his protection of the exiles in Babylon (chs. 1–6) as well as in his knowledge of and judgment upon the future kingdoms in world history (chs. 7–12). The book is carefully crafted so that

foundations are laid in earlier chapters, and later chapters develop these ideas in extraordinary detail. The course of the nations is foundational to the book's message, and its repetition in chapters 2 and 7 not only underscores its importance, but allows for significant expansion. The ability of the Lord to bring down rulers as described in the second half of the book is demonstrated in his humbling of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in the first half. Chapter 8 can only be understood alongside chapter 7, but the reader must note not only the similarities, but also crucial differences. The book spans the entirety of Jeremiah's prophesied seventy-year exile, and it provides not only a model for the behavior of the exiles in the midst of the nations (chs. 1–6), but it reveals that Israel's oppression under the nations will extend beyond the seventy years to a period of seventy "sevens" (ch. 9). The final vision of the book (chs. 10–12) expands upon the revelations in chapters 7 and 8, providing those in exile with warning for what lies ahead as well as hope that the Lord's kingdom will indeed prevail and all of the faithful will be raised to everlasting life.

1. The Lord protects faithful exiles and humbles arrogant kings in Daniel's lifetime (1:1–6:28)

The book of Daniel begins with six chapters that relate in narrative fashion the Lord's protection of his people exiled in Babylon. These stories are rooted in history, as evidenced by the introductory date formulas, presence of historical figures, and correspondence with known historical events. While the first half of the book is integrally related to the second by similar visions, share concerns of the exiles, and a common timeframe, the first is more focused on the historical happenings of Daniel and his friends. In particular, these stories demonstrate the Lord's blessing upon faithful exiles and his humbling of arrogant kings who set themselves up against God. In demonstrating the Lord's ability and willingness to do these things in the present time, the readers are prepared to trust that he will accomplish those very things in the course of world history to come, as demonstrated in chapters 7–12.

A. The Lord blesses the faithful exiles who honor the covenant (1:1-21)

The Lord's sovereignty over all nations is evident from the setting statement of the book. In contrast with a similar event described by Jeremiah which reported "how Jerusalem was taken" (Jer 39:1), Daniel asserts that "the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God" (1:2). Later Nebuchadnezzar will acknowledge that the Lord "sets up kings and deposes them" (2:21), but already the reader knows that the Babylonian king is subject to the divine will. The other prophets already predicted that the Judeans would be carried off into exile in Babylon on account of the nation's sin (e.g., Isa 39:6-7; Jer 13:9; 20:6), and the book of Daniel is wholly concerned with the results of that judgment. The setting statement also prepares the reader for a future episode, with its notice of the temple vessels that were transported to Babylon (1:2). The last Babylonian king is held accountable by the Lord for his desecration of these sacred articles (cf. 5:2-3).

Table 1: Regnal Dates in Daniel

1:1	Third year of Jehoiakim	605 BC
1:21	First year of Cyrus	539 BC
2:1	Second year of Nebuchadnezzar	604 BC
7:1	First year of Belshazzar	552 BC
8:1	Third year of Belshazzar	550 BC
9:1	First year of Darius	538 BC
10:1	Third year of Cyrus	536 BC
11:1	First year of Darius	538 BC

The Judeans carried off by Nebuchadnezzar's first foray to Jerusalem were of royal and noble descent (1:3), but rather than adopt the customs of the king's house in their new land, four of them requested to maintain a simple diet, distinct from the royal fare (1:5-8). Daniel and his friends may have been concerned that the food from the king's table was not prepared in accordance with the dietary restrictions of the Sinaitic Covenant, or they may have been reacting to the possibility that the food had been offered to Babylonian idols. In any case, the official recognized that by itself their request would lead to poorer health than that enjoyed by their

counterparts. The fact that after the trial Daniel and his friends were “better in appearance and fatter in flesh” was a clear indication of God’s blessing upon them for their faithful decision (1:15). The Lord’s blessing extended beyond physical well-being and included the granting of extensive knowledge and understanding (1:16-20). Daniel himself was given the ability to understand dreams and visions. Thus the author communicates that the Lord chose not only to bless but also to use his faithful remnant in exile. This first chapter provides essential background information introducing Daniel and his friends before their trials in chapters 2–6.

B. The Lord reveals through a faithful exile that God’s kingdom will destroy all earthly kingdoms (2:1-49)

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel interprets is foundational for the similar vision in chapter 7, and thus it is fundamental to the book as a whole. Prior to the revelation of the dream, the story establishes a number of points essential to the book as a whole: (1) No man is able to reveal the dream of another man (2:10, 28); (2) Only God/gods can reveal the dreams of a man (2:11, 28); (3) the Lord hears the prayers of the faithful exiles (2:17-19); (4) Daniel was able to reveal the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (2:19); (5) the Lord protected the lives of the exile from the king’s decree that they be killed (2:18);¹² (6) in describing the dream, Daniel was communicating God’s revelation and its meaning (2:28); (7) God is able to reveal the future and he does reveal the future (2:22, 28). Thus not only the report of the dream and its interpretation are foundational to the argument of the book, but the narrative introduction is as well.

As requested by the king, Daniel first describes Nebuchadnezzar’s vision (2:29-35) before providing its interpretation (2:36-45). The dream consisted of a statue composed of four parts made of different materials. The statue was destroyed by a rock which struck the statue’s feet, and which in turn became a mountain that filled the entire earth. The interpretation of the

¹² A parallel to this decree is known from the time of Xerxes when he ordered the beheading of the engineers who designed a bridge that collapsed in a storm. See Ernest C. Lucas, “Daniel,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 532.

dream is that the statue represents four successive kingdoms, the last of which will be struck such that all earthly kingdoms are destroyed and replaced by God's eternal kingdom. The king's response to this dream is remarkable, for he "fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel" (2:46). Both in the revelation of the dream and in the Nebuchadnezzar's response, the book declares God's sovereignty over kings and his ability to bring them down. As in the previous story (ch. 1), Daniel's faithfulness is rewarded, and Nebuchadnezzar promotes him and his faithful praying friends to important administrative positions in the Babylonian empire (2:48-49).

C. The Lord protects the faithful exiles who worship God only (3:1-30)

The story of chapter 3 logically follows from the previous in that (1) Daniel's friends are established administrators in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom; (2) the probable origin for the king's statue has been given; (3) the superiority of the Lord to Nebuchadnezzar's men and gods is recognized. The conflict of the chapter is a natural one for Judean exiles in a foreign land, for their allegiance to the only true God would be tested by the pagan authorities. This same challenge would be faced again by Daniel during the kingdom successive to the Babylonians (ch. 6). Both stories model for all exiles the nature of loyal faith, even in the face of certain death. They also reveal God's power to deliver his faithful people, though the friends recognize that the Lord may choose not to do so immediately (3:17-18). Implicit in their faith is an expectation of a future resurrection, and this prepares the reader for the explicit hope given in 12:2.

The erection of the golden statue by Nebuchadnezzar may be viewed as a response by the king to his dream, with his intention to be the only king and without successors. In this he certainly pitted himself against the Lord who had not only revealed the future but who had forecast the destruction of the statue by a stone of divine origin. Certainly Nebuchadnezzar was

challenging the sovereign will in his demand that all bow down and worship the statue, including those who insist on worshipping the true God alone.¹³

In delivering the exiles from death, the Lord demonstrates his ability and willingness to protect his faithful people in the most severe situation. As in the previous chapter, he also proves his power over the most supreme ruler on the earth. In his response to the deliverance, Nebuchadnezzar explicitly provides all exiles with instructions and hope (3:28-29). First, he recognizes that they were delivered by God and not as the result of accident or coincidence. Second, he commends the three exiles for trusting in God and defying his own command, even to the point of death. Third, he states the necessity of worshipping the true God alone. Fourth, his decree of promotion for the faithful and destruction for those opposed to God is an accurate estimation of the ultimate destiny of all men. Thus this historical event offers encouragement to saints in the future who will face arrogant rulers who set themselves up against the Lord. The explanation of what happens to that ruler is the subject of the following chapter.

D. The Lord humbles an arrogant king who ultimately acknowledges the eternal kingdom of God (4:1-37)

In chapter 2, the Lord revealed his sovereignty over kings who would be opposed to his authority. In chapter 3, a story reminiscent of the tower of Babel where the peoples were united against God, the Lord demonstrated his superiority over all other powers.¹⁴ The fourth chapter addresses the subject of the individual king who raises himself up against the Lord. This prepares the reader for the “little horn” which comes from the fourth beast (ch. 7) and the “little horn” which comes from the third beast (ch. 8). Though never described explicitly as such, Nebuchadnezzar functions in this chapter as a “little horn” from the first beast. His arrogance

¹³ As House notes, Nebuchadnezzar was requiring his Judean subjects to violate the first two commandments. See Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 500–501.

¹⁴ William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 305.

against the Lord and his oppression of the righteous foreshadows the attitudes and actions of future wicked rulers. The command to repent and his ultimate humbling provide warning to and anticipate the judgment of kings who raise themselves up against the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgement of the Lord's kingdom as the eternal one looks ahead to the day when every knee will bow to the Lord (Isa 45:23; Phil 2:10).

Several details in the story further the development of the argument of the book. First, Daniel's ability to interpret dreams supports the presentation that Nebuchadnezzar's vision is a divine revelation. Second, the fulfillment of the vision as interpreted by Daniel also confirms the ability and intention of the Lord to act as he has decreed. This story thus serves as a "near-fulfillment" that justifies the reader's confidence in the book's "far-fulfillments." Third, Nebuchadnezzar's judgment is that he is transformed into a beast, which serves both as an appropriate symbol for his character as well as a connection to the four beasts in chapter 7. Nebuchadnezzar becomes a beast with hair "like the feathers of an eagle" (4:33), suggestive of the wings of an eagle that characterized the first beast of Daniel's later vision (7:4). As does every story and vision in this book, the conclusion reveals the Lord's sovereignty and supremacy.

E. The Lord humbles an arrogant king who defiles the temple vessels (5:1-31)

The story of chapter 4 is echoed in chapter 5, though the details differ. In both chapters a Babylonian king exalts himself against the Lord and in both chapters the Lord pronounces judgment and then executes his sentence. In both stories Daniel is the divine interpreter and in both his words are fulfilled to the letter. In both accounts the kings recognize the accuracy and authority of Daniel's interpretation, though in the second Belshazzar gives no indication of repentance. In the first king, Nebuchadnezzar loses his kingdom for a time but upon his repentance, it is restored to him by the Lord. The second king loses not only his kingdom but his very life that very night. The means of revelation also differs in this story, with Nebuchadnezzar receiving a private revelation, but Belshazzar being confronted publicly by a

supernatural inscription on the wall. Nebuchadnezzar's affront was his general manifestation of pride, but Belshazzar acted in his arrogance to despise the very sacred vessels of the Lord's temple. In both stories, the Lord reveals his intention to destroy kings and kingdoms that set themselves up against him, and in both stories the Lord manifests his ability to accomplish his will. By humbling the first and last Babylonian rulers over the Judean exiles, the Lord declares his power over all authorities that would subjugate his people. God's humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar reveals his ability to bring down kings, and his announcement to Belshazzar declares his authority to bring down kingdoms. Just as he humbled Babylonian kings, so he will one day humble the "little horns" that rise up against him. Just as he gave the Babylonian kingdom over to the Medes and Persians, so he can in turn transfer worldly power on to the Greeks and Romans before establishing his own eternal rule. The Lord who gave the exiles and the vessels of his temple over to the Babylonians can protect all that belongs to him.

F. The Lord protects a faithful exile and leads a king to acknowledge the eternal kingdom of God (6:1-28)

Chapter 6 most closely parallels chapter 3 in terms of emphases and themes. The God who can humble kings and kingdoms (chs. 4–5) is the same one who will protect his people through death. The dating of this story indicates that Daniel's exceptional abilities were recognized by the kingdom that succeeded the Babylonians (6:1). Thus the Lord demonstrates his sovereignty not only over the first beast but also over the second. Daniel's position of power leads some jealous non-Jews to attempt to destroy the old exile (6:4; cf. 3:8). As with Daniel's friends before, the attackers are successful in creating a genuine threat, but ironically the only charge that Daniel can be accused of is faithfulness to the Lord (6:5). By relating these two stories, the author is encouraging his readers to be willing to face death for the sake of righteousness (cf. 1 Pet 2:18-24). Specifically, Daniel is honored for physically keeping his eyes fixed on Jerusalem, the former and future place of God's inhabitation (cf. Ezek 10:1-4; 43:1-7).

Though Daniel never suggests that the Lord promised to deliver him from death, he knows that his salvation is divinely caused. Like his friends, Daniel was protected by an angel sent from the Lord and he was unharmed in any way (6:22; cf. 3:27). In both stories, the Judean exiles are explicitly commended for their faith in God (3:28; 6:23). Whereas in the first story, the Babylonian king orders death for any who speak against Daniel's God, in this one, the Persian king brings that to pass by executing the accusers and their families by giving them the punishment they sought for Daniel. The story and the narrative section of the book conclude with explicit testimony of the major themes of the book (6:26-27). First, Darius declares that the Israelite God is the living God whose eternal kingdom will never be destroyed. Second, he observes that the Lord protects his faithful exiles in times of greatest trial. In this way a Gentile king observes the present faithfulness of the Lord and their necessary implications for the future. The second half of the book reveals great detail about exactly how the Lord will establish his everlasting kingdom and rescue his faithful from the hands of the enemy.

II. The Lord will protect his people and destroy arrogant kings until the establishment of his kingdom (7:1–12:13)

Though the author of the book has obviously intended to organize his work into a chronologically sequenced narrative section followed by a chronologically sequenced vision section, the two parts are also tightly linked together by means of themes and language. The use of the Aramaic language, begun in 2:4, continues through chapter 7, concluding a chiastic arrangement that relates chapters 2 and 7, chapters 3 and 6, and chapters 4 and 5. The vision in chapter 7 closely corresponds in meaning to that given in chapter 2, and the use of the same language and the chiastic arrangement underscores this unity. But chapter 7 is placed at this point, though occurring chronologically earlier (compare 7:1 with 5:30), because it provides a necessary introduction to the remaining visions of the book. Chapter 7 reveals that four kingdoms will exist before the coming of God's kingdom, whereas chapter 8 provides details of just two of those kingdoms. Chapter 9 provides the answer with regard to the timing of the

arrival of God's kingdom, while also revealing that the Israelites must remain faithful for their exile will continue beyond Jeremiah's seventy years. The final vision elaborates on the revelation of chapter 8 with extraordinary specificity, with the particular goal of preparing the exiles to remain faithful during *two* major periods of religious persecution in the future.

A. The Lord reveals that the future course of world history culminates in a blasphemous ruler who is destroyed before the establishment of the divine everlasting kingdom (7:1-28)

The vision of chapter 2 was given to Nebuchadnezzar, but the corresponding dream of chapter 7 is given to Daniel. The centrality of this revelation is thus underscored, and the fact that this time it is given directly to Daniel also points to its importance for the Jewish people. The meaning of this vision is essentially the same as that in chapter 2, and this is borne out by the following correspondences: (1) both visions depict four kingdoms which are replaced by the divine kingdom; (2) the golden head identified as Nebuchadnezzar (2:38) is related to the lion with the wings of an eagle (7:4; 4:33); (3) the second kingdom is depicted in both visions as having two parts; (4) the fourth kingdom in chapter 2 implicitly has ten toes while the fourth beast in chapter 7 has ten horns. This conclusion is supported by the fact that in the interpretation, Daniel is particularly interested in an explanation of the new feature not previously given in chapter 2. Daniel's understanding of the significance of the four great beasts is best explained by virtue of its essential identity with the vision of chapter 2. While scholars disagree on the identification of these kingdoms, nearly all recognize that the same four kingdoms are in view in each of the visions.¹⁵ Daniel's dream reveals additional details about the future kingdoms, with a particular emphasis upon a little horn that arises that has "eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully" (7:8). Instead of a rock coming to demolish a statue, Daniel sees a vision of the divine throne room where the Ancient of Days is seated in glorious splendor (7:9-10). By comparison with the grotesque beasts that symbolized the world

¹⁵ One exception to this is John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 174.

powers, the beautiful human-like scene of God's kingdom provided a sharp contrast. The defeat of the little horn is described in connection with the transfer of "authority, glory and sovereign power" to "one like a son of man" (7:11-14). This individual is worshiped (or served; פָּלַח) by all peoples, including those who speak Hebrew and Aramaic. The kingdom established by this human-like figure is described as eternal and indestructible.

The interpretation of the dream reveals that the four beasts are "four kingdoms," just as the statue depicted four kingdoms. The new feature is the revelation of ten horns and a smaller eleventh horn. This is explained as ten ruling kings after whom comes another king who defeats three rulers. This figure will oppress the saints, but his power will be limited to three and a half times at which point he will be completely destroyed. The kingdom will then be transferred to the people of God. Though the "one like a son of man" is not mentioned here, it is best to understand that the kingdom belongs to the saints and the individual is their representative whom they all worship (7:27). Of great importance to the correct interpretation of the book is the recognition that this little horn proceeds from the *fourth* beast. The following chapter will describe a little horn that comes from the *third* beast, and thus these two must not be equated, though they share similar characteristics.

B. The Lord reveals the history of two future kingdoms which culminates in a wicked ruler who will persecute the saints before he is destroyed (8:1-27)

The vision of chapter 8 occurs two years after that described in chapter 7 and both by virtue of chronology as well as literary placement, the reader is to understand that this vision is successive to chapter 7. In this vision two kingdoms are again represented by animal figures, though different images are portrayed this time. In the interpretation, Gabriel reveals that the ram is Medo-Persia and the goat is Greece. As nearly all agree that these two kingdoms are identical to two of the four revealed in chapters 2 and 7, the identity of three kingdoms are now established: Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The identification of the fourth kingdom, however, is greatly disputed. Resolution of this issue is best approached by a comparison of the

animals in chapter 8 with the beasts of chapter 7. The second beast is said to be raised up on one of its sides, whereas the ram has two horns, one of which is longer than the other. Both of these are characterized as ravenous conquerors of large territories. These two share more common features than any other identification and thus should be equated. The second beast is Medo-Persia, and the symbolism given for both corresponds with historical reality.

The third beast is described as a leopard with four wings and four heads (7:6). In chapter 8, the goat is described as speedy, an image no doubt intended by the portrayal of a winged leopard. The goat has a single horn which is broken and replaced by four smaller horns, a similar image to the leopard with four heads. The identification of these two creatures with the nation of Greece best accounts for the details of the visions. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the bear and leopard sequence corresponds with the ram and goat sequence. Accordingly, the unidentified kingdom must be the fourth. This eliminates suggestions that the second kingdom is Media in distinction to Persia (the proposed third kingdom), and it denies the possibility that Greece is the fourth kingdom. The close connection between the goat with its single horn attacking from the west and dividing into four horns unrelated to the first can be none other than the divided kingdom of Alexander the Great.

The presence of a little horn that comes out from the four horns of the goat is easily misidentified. Because it bears similarities with the little horn revealed in chapter 7, some have concluded that these are referring to the same individual. On the basis of the previous analysis, however, this conclusion cannot stand. The little horn of chapter 8 is an aggressive ruler from the *third* kingdom, whereas the little horn of chapter 7 originates from the *fourth* kingdom. Significant in this regard is the fact that the second kingdom of chapter 8 is not said to be replaced by the divine kingdom, as was declared for the fourth kingdom of chapters 2 and 7.¹⁶ Thus the similarities between the little horns of chapters 7 and 8 are best accounted for not on the

¹⁶ The little horn of chapter 8 is destroyed “not by human power,” but this can be explained as a sickness given by the Lord, such as that which befell Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:23). Indeed, Antiochus IV Epiphanes died of grief after learning of his forces’ defeat (1 Macc 6:8-16).

basis of identification but on the basis of common pride, violent aggression, and animosity towards the Lord and his people. That there is more than one king guilty of these traits has already been established by Daniel's portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. The second half of the book reveals that there is more than one such evil figure who will arise in the future, and one will come from Greece and the other from the fourth kingdom.

It remains to consider the specific actions of the little horn against the Lord's people and his sanctuary. This ruler will attack the saints and persecute them even unto death (8:10). He will appropriate the rights of deity, eliminate the temple sacrifice, and cause a desolation of the temple that lasts 2,300 days. At the end of this time, the sanctuary will be reconsecrated. Though the actions of the little horn of the fourth kingdom bear some similarity (cf. 7:25), there is nothing that demands identity, and the differentiation between the two is clarified in chapter 11. The distinction in times should be noted here as well, for the ruler of the third kingdom desecrates the temple for 2,300 days (6.3 years), whereas the ruler of the fourth kingdom has control over the saints for three and a half times.

C. The Lord reveals that the exile will continue for seventy sevens and culminate in a wicked ruler who will desecrate the temple before everlasting righteousness is established (9:1-27)

Chapter 9 connects the second part of the book not only to the first half, but to the Scriptural history (e.g., 2 Kings) and the prophetic works, especially Jeremiah. Neither the prayer of Daniel nor the angelic response are characterized by the typical features of apocalyptic genre, and this serves to strengthen the unity of the book as a whole. Daniel prays in response to his recognition that the seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah have nearly been fulfilled. This prophecy, recorded in Jeremiah 25:11-12, clearly dates the seventy years from the first exile of Judeans to Babylon to the fall of the Babylonian empire. Daniel had been in exile for nearly seventy years and the dating of his prayer to the first year of Darius the Mede indicates that he had just witnessed the conquest of Babylon. His prayer is thus focused on requesting that the

Lord the end the exile and restore the desolate temple. He recognizes that the exile and destruction were a necessary part of divine justice, and he confesses the sins of the nation. His desire is that God's name be honored by the restoration of his people and his city.

In response to Daniel's request, the angel Gabriel is sent to give the faithful exile understanding concerning the Lord's plans for his people, particularly with regard to the time table. Whereas Daniel anticipated a conclusion to the exile after seventy years, he learns that seventy "sevens" have been decreed for the people of Israel (9:24). The best interpretation of "sevens" is a period of seven years, and thus a timeframe of 490 total years is envisioned. At the end of this period, God's righteous kingdom will be established. However, in keeping with the character of Daniel's prayer, the description of that kingdom is similar to the language used by the prophets, including Isaiah and Jeremiah. Thus the fulfillment of time will bring about an answer to Daniel's request, namely that the sin of the people would be forgiven and righteousness established. Though difficulties attend the exact interpretation of what is involved in this case and the specifics of the chronological timeline, it is clear that the seventy years of Jeremiah are only the beginning of a longer period during which time the city and the people will suffer.

The explanation that Gabriel gives here is not intended to be mysterious. The angel commands Daniel to "know and understand," surely suggesting that this prophecy would be comprehensible to him (9:25). The timeframe given divides the issuing of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem from the coming of the anointed one the prince. This total is given as seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, or a total of sixty-nine weeks. This Messiah is best understood as the one like a son of man introduced in chapter 7 as receiving the kingdom from the Ancient of Days. However, after the sixty-nine weeks, the Messiah will be killed, an idea that Daniel may have understood from Isaiah's prophecies (e.g., Isa 53:5-12). This will lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the (rebuilt) temple by the people of the prince who is to come. It is clear from the context that the prince mentioned here cannot be equated with the Messiah. This period will be characterized by wars and desolations. During the seventieth week, the ruler will end sacrifice at

the (again rebuilt) temple and bring about an abomination that causes desolation. With careful thought, Daniel may have understood that a sequence of time was involved, for a ruler would destroy the city and temple and yet a ruler (a different one?) would end sacrifice and offerings at the temple. Furthermore, Daniel may well have connected this wicked ruler with one of the oppressors of God's people mentioned in chapter 7 or 8. Full resolution of this matter would await further revelation, but this vision establishes that (1) Jerusalem would be rebuilt but this would not be the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning God's kingdom; (2) the Messiah would come during this time but he would be killed; (3) Jerusalem would again be destroyed; (4) the temple would again be rebuilt; (5) the evil ruler would desecrate the temple, but he would also be destroyed himself.

D. The Lord reveals the history of two future kingdoms, the last ruler of which foreshadows the final great persecutor of God's people (10:1–12:13)

Daniel's final vision came to him a few years later and it added significant detail to the revelation that he had already received. Either the vision was so traumatizing that Daniel mourned for three weeks, or the vision came in response to his mourning (10:2). In either case, the timing corresponds with the time that the angel was delayed by the prince of the Persian kingdom (10:13). Gabriel's coming to Daniel was in order "to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future" (10:14). Just as the vision of chapter 8 focused on a particular portion of the vision of chapter 7 (the second and third beasts), so this final vision focuses on a particular portion of the vision of chapter 8 (the third beast/goat).

The vision that unfolds begins in Daniel's present day and concludes with the coming of God's kingdom. In this way it resembles the visions in chapters 2, 7, and 9. The majority of the vision, however, is focused on one portion of the third kingdom. The Persian empire is described briefly in a verse (11:2) before the conquest of Alexander the Great is revealed (11:3). This background is given in order to introduce the four kingdoms that emerge from Alexander's empire (11:4). At this point the narrative slows down dramatically and the conflicts between the

Seleucids (in the north) and the Ptolemies (in the south) are described (11:5-35). The precise and accurate nature of the narrative reveals either a God who intimately knows the future or a writer who has described history after the fact with the intent to deceive.¹⁷ All agree that the narrative through verse 35 corresponds remarkably to history in the Levant from 200 to 165 BC, but as explained above, the only viable possibility is that this was written in advance by Daniel. The angel revealed the conflicts of Ptolemy I, Ptolemy II, Antigonus I and Antiochus II (11:5-6). He moved from this to reporting on the battles of Ptolemy III and Seleucus II (11:7-10) and then Ptolemy IV and Antiochus III (11:11-13). Antiochus III's victories and ultimate failure are then described (11:14-19), with a brief comment about the acts of Seleucus IV against the temple (11:20).

All of this sets the stage for the great persecutor of God's people, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. His battles against Ptolemy VI are recounted (11:21-28) before his defeat in Egypt leads him to attack Jerusalem and set up the abomination of desolation (11:29-32). This may lead the reader to connect this event with the similar event described in 9:27, but the careful reader will note that this vision began with the Persians and is currently describing the Greeks. Thus this figure must be connected with the little horn of chapter 8. Daniel has already learned that this one would take away the daily sacrifice and cause the temple to be trampled underfoot (8:9-14). This interpretation is confirmed by 11:35-45 which describe a ruler after Antiochus IV. Thus if Antiochus IV is equated with the 9:27 figure, he must also be equated with the 11:36-45 king, and this creates insurmountable problems, as will be seen below. The careful interpreter will observe that the writer has prepared the reader for multiple anti-God kings on the basis of (1) the reports of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar (chs. 4-5); (2) the two visions of the four kingdoms (chs. 2, 7); and (3) the depiction of the little horn of the third beast (ch. 8). Chapter 11 ties the

¹⁷ The suggestion that the author was communicating in a genre familiar to readers who would have understood that he was not intending to deceive is a scholarly creation to avoid recognizing supernatural involvement without rejecting spiritual value. It, however, is clear that if this vision came from God, it has power; if it derived from the thinking of man, it is of no more value than the reflections of any man or woman today.

pieces together in revealing *two* future blasphemous rulers, one from the third kingdom (Antiochus IV) and one from a future kingdom.

The other possibility is to identify the king of 11:36-45 with Antiochus IV, but not only are there significant differences with the description of 11:21-35, but the narrative of 11:36-45 does not fit Antiochus IV historically. In other words, if 11:36-45 are a prophecy of Antiochus IV, they were a failed prophecy. Scholars who deny the possibility of predictive prophecy conclude that the writer wrote the book between the events of 11:2-35 and 11:36-45, and only the latter portion was predictive. This explains why these events do not correspond with history. It does not, however, explain how alleged contemporaries of Daniel in the 160s accepted the failed prophecy, canonized it, and widely disseminated it.¹⁸ This scholarly view not only requires blatant intentional deception, but also an educated class that was unable to recognize failed prophecy in their own day.

The better option is to recognize that 11:36-45 describe not Antiochus IV but a later ruler who resembled him in some ways but was not identical to him. This approach is supported by the following lines of evidence. First, changes of reference throughout the chapter are frequent and are “not consistently indicated in this chapter.”¹⁹ Second, the figure of verse 36 is introduced simply as “the king,” a term never used exactly this way of Antiochus IV in 11:21-35. Third, the phrase “the time of the end” in verses 35 and 40 is a signal to the reader that this is not a reference to the second century BC. Fourth, the figure is clearly not the king of the north because he is attacked by the king of the north (11:40). Fifth, this ruler is connected to the final resurrection by means of the phrase “at that time” in 12:1. In short, all interpreters who hold that this book is more than the musings of an old man must recognize that there is a gap somewhere

¹⁸ See comments above concerning the quick and widespread dissemination of the book as revealed in evidence from Qumran.

¹⁹ Chisholm gives a number of examples. See Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 324. Sadly, after citing several important lines of evidence that indicate that Antiochus IV is not the subject of 11:36-45, Chisholm rejects the view and claims that he is. Responding to the claim that the prophecy must be viewed as failed (as all critical scholars do), Chisholm proposes that the prophecy did not fail because it was not intended to be taken as precisely as it was written.

between Antiochus IV in 11:32 and the resurrection in 12:2. The jump *cannot* be at 12:2 as Chisholm concludes, because of the phrase “at that time” (וּבְעֵת הַהִיא), which is stated twice in 12:1. Thus it must come at 11:36 or possibly at 11:40. The options for the interpreter are either that a figure after Antiochus IV is described or that the author mistakenly thought that the general resurrection would follow immediately upon the heels of Antiochus IV’s death. The view that 11:36–12:1 recapitulates the career of Antiochus IV is simply not viable based upon the text.

The figure of 11:36-45 resembles Antiochus IV in many ways, just as both kings follow in the patterns of the arrogant kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Indeed, Antiochus IV is called a “little horn,” as is this final figure, so it is only natural that the two share similar characteristics. The argument of the book has demonstrated that the little horn of the third beast is distinct from the little horn of the fourth beast, and thus the reader is prepared for this distinction. Indeed, readers at least as early as Hippolytus have recognized the distinction in these two figures.²⁰ Furthermore, Jesus understood that the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel was still in the future (Matt 24:15). He would have no basis for such a conclusion if Antiochus IV was described in 11:36-45 and thus was equal to the figure in 9:27 and the little horn of chapter 7. For in this case all specific predictions in the book of Daniel would have already been fulfilled or would have failed with the exception of the general resurrection and the arrival of God’s kingdom. Even this, however, would have to be considered as wishful, but failed, thinking since the resurrection did not occur “at that time” and the stone of God’s kingdom did not crush the fourth empire. Jesus’ interpretation requires that the little horn of chapter 7 be identified with the ruler of 9:27 and 11:36-45 and be an individual who had not appeared in history before Jesus’ crucifixion. This interpretation is confirmed by Paul (2 Thes 2:3-12) and John (Rev 13:1-10), who both anticipate an ultimate evil ruler who is crushed by God’s kingdom. When understood in light of the Psalms, especially Psalms 2 and 110, it is clear

²⁰ Ernest C. Lucas, “Daniel, Book of,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. (London and Grand Rapids: SPCK and Baker Academic, 2005), 156.

that the “one like a son of man” is the Davidic ruler who will defeat all forces arrayed against the Lord and usher in God’s kingdom.

In response to a question, the angel explains that the time between the abomination of desolation and the deliverance is 1,290 days (12:11-12). The discrepancy between this figure and the 1,260 days (12:7; cf. Rev 11:3; 12:6) and the 1,335 days (12:12) is difficult to determine, but what is clear is that the Lord knows exactly how the course of history will unfold and how it will be brought to a glorious conclusion with the destruction of the kingdoms that fight against the Lord and the establishment of his eternal kingdom headed by a divine figure who is “one like a son of man.” For this reason, Daniel and the other exiles can take courage, knowing that all is in God’s hands and that they will be raised at the resurrection to receive their reward at the end of days (12:13).

Summary

The book of Daniel encourages the Jewish exiles by demonstrating God’s sovereignty over kings and kingdoms present and future. The first half of the book recounts how Babylon and Persia were completely subject to the Lord’s will, for he could protect his people from the greatest kings and he could humble and destroy those same rulers. Nebuchadnezzar was given a vision that revealed the course of history, beginning with Babylon and culminating with God’s kingdom. The essence of this dream was shown again to Daniel in the chapter 7, the hinge of the book. Here the Lord revealed two new characters: “one like a son of man” who rode the clouds and a “little horn” that that would defy the Most High and oppress his people. These two figures are developed in the angelic response given in chapter 9, but must be distinguished from the “little horn” of the third kingdom revealed in chapter 8 and presented at greater length in chapter 11. The culmination of all kingdoms is revealed in nearly every chapter of the book, as some kings recognize the supremacy of God’s eternal kingdom and other visions depict it being established at the time it destroys the last human kingdom. The message of the book highlights that the Lord “sets up kings and deposes them” and that “in the time of those kings, the God of

heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” but “will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (2:21, 44).

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Daniel 2 takes place in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (2:1), while Daniel 1 assumes that the prophet has already completed a three-year training period under this king. 10 Further, Nebuchadnezzar secured the throne in 605, and Babylonian sources do not record the capture of Jerusalem until his seventh year (597 BC). Since Daniel 1:1 claims that 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. c. The modern argument for late dating Daniel is based on supposed inevitable mistakes that a second century B.C. writer made when writing about a period 400 years before, in the sixth century B.C. In our own day, it would be as if someone wrote a story about the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock while mentioning speedboats and computers. i. There is also a linguistic argument made against the Book of Daniel, claiming that certain Canon Argument Because Daniel appears in the LXX and was considered part of the Jewish Canon, some have argued that a late dating does not allow enough time for full acceptance into that canon. In contrast, the Books of the Maccabees, which were written around that time, only appear in some of the Septuagint manuscripts - evidence that there hadn't been enough time to decide on their canonicity. Linguistic Argument The writer of Daniel appears to be fluent in both Hebrew and Aramaic.