Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Daniel
Scripture: Daniel
Code: MSB27

Title

According to Hebrew custom, the title is drawn from the prophet who throughout the book received revelations from God. Daniel bridges the entire 70 years of the Babylonian captivity (ca. 605–536 B.C.; cf. 1:1 and 9:1–3). Nine of the 12 chapters relate revelation through dreams/visions. Daniel was God's mouthpiece to the Gentile and Jewish world, declaring God's current and future plans. What Revelation is to the NT prophetically and apocalyptically, Daniel is to the OT.

Author and Date

Several verses indicate that the writer is Daniel (8:15,27; 9:2; 10:2,7; 12:4,5), whose name means "God is my Judge." He wrote in the autobiographical first person from 7:2 on, and is to be distinguished from the other 3 Daniel's of the OT (cf. 1 Chr. 3:1; Ezra 8:2; Neh. 10:6). As a teenager, possibly about 15 years old, Daniel was kidnaped from his noble family in Judah and deported to Babylon to be brainwashed into Babylonian culture for the task of assisting in dealing with the imported Jews. There he spent the remainder of a long life (85 years or more). He made the most of the exile, successfully exalting God by his character and service. He quickly rose to the role of statesman by official royal appointment and served as a confidante of kings as well as a prophet in two world empires, i.e., the Babylonian (2:48) and
the Medo-Persian (6:1,2). Christ confirmed Daniel as the author of this book (cf. Matt. 24:15).

Daniel lived beyond the time described in Dan. 10:1 (ca. 536 B.C.). It seems most probable that he wrote the book shortly after this date but before ca. 530 B.C. Daniel 2:4b–7:28, which prophetically describes the course of Gentile world history, was originally and appropriately written in Aramaic, the contemporary language of international business. Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah were Daniel's prophetic contemporaries.

Background and Setting

The book begins in 605 B.C. when Babylon conquered Jerusalem and exiled Daniel, his 3 friends, and others. It continues to the eventual demise of Babylonian supremacy in 539 B.C., when Medo-Persian besiegers conquered Babylon (5:30,31), and goes even beyond that to
536 B.C. (10:1). After Daniel was transported to Babylon, the Babylonian victors conquered

Jerusalem in two further stages (597 B.C. and 586 B.C.). In both takeovers, they deported more Jewish captives. Daniel passionately remembered his home, particularly the temple at Jerusalem, almost 70 years after having been taken away from it (6:10).

Daniel's background is alluded to in part by Jeremiah, who names 3 of the last 5 kings in Judah before captivity (cf. Jer. 1:1–3): Josiah (ca. 641–609 B.C.), Jehoiakim (ca. 609–597 B.C.) and Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.). Jehoahaz (ca. 609 B.C.) and Jehoiachin (ca. 598–597 B.C.) are not mentioned (cf. Jeremiah Introduction: Background and Setting). Daniel is also mentioned by Ezekiel (cf. 14:14,20; 28:3) as being righteous and wise. He is alluded to by the writer of Hebrews as one of " … the prophets: who through faith … stopped the mouths of lions" (Heb. 11:32,33).

The long-continued sin of the Judeans without national repentance eventually led to God's judgment for which Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah had given fair warning. Earlier, Isaiah and other faithful prophets of God had also trumpeted the danger. When Assyrian power had ebbed by 625 B.C., the Neo-Babylonians conquered: 1) Assyria with its capital Nineveh in 612 B.C.; 2) Egypt in the following years; and 3) Judah in 605 B.C. when they overthrew Jerusalem in the first of 3 steps (also 597 B.C., 586 B.C.). Daniel was one of the first groups of deportees, and Ezekiel followed in 597 B.C.

Israel of the northern kingdom had earlier fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C. With Judah's captivity, the judgment was complete. In Babylon, Daniel received God's word concerning successive stages of Gentile world domination through the centuries until the greatest Conqueror, Messiah, would put down all Gentile lordship. He then will defeat all foes and raise His covenant people to blessing in His glorious millennial kingdom.

Historical and Theological Themes

Daniel was written to encourage the exiled Jews by revealing God's program for them, both during and after the time of Gentile power in the world. Prominent above every other theme in the book is God's sovereign control over the affairs of all rulers and nations, and their final replacement with the True King. The key verses are 2:20–22,44 (cf. 2:28,37; 4:34–35; 6:25–27). God had not suffered defeat in allowing Israel's fall (Dan. 1), but was providentially working His sure purposes toward an eventual full display of His King, the exalted Christ. He sovereignly allowed Gentiles to dominate Israel, i.e., Babylon (605–539 B.C.), Medo-Persia (539–331 B.C.), Greece (331–146 B.C.), Rome (146 B.C.–A.D. 476), and all the way to the Second Advent of Christ. These stages in Gentile power are set forth in chaps. 2 and 7. This same theme also embraces Israel's experience both in defeat and finally in her kingdom blessing in chaps. 8–12 (cf. 2:35,45; 7:27). A key aspect within the over-arching theme of God's kingly control is Messiah's coming to rule the world in glory over all men (2:35,45; 7:13,14,27). He is like a stone in chap. 2, and like a son of man in chap. 7. In addition, He is the Anointed One (Messiah) in chap. 9:26. Chapter 9 provides the chronological framework from Daniel's time to

Christ’s kingdom.

A second theme woven into the fabric of Daniel is the display of God’s sovereign power through miracles. Daniel’s era is one of 6 in the Bible with a major focus on miracles by which God accomplished His purposes. Other periods include: 1) the Creation and Flood (Gen. 1–11); 2) the patriarchs and Moses (Gen. 12–Deut.); 3) Elijah and Elisha (1 Kin. 19–2 Kin. 13); 4) Jesus and the apostles (Gospels, Acts); and 5) the time of the Second Advent (Revelation). God, who has everlasting dominion and ability to work according to His will (4:34,35), is capable of miracles, all of which would be lesser displays of power than was exhibited when He acted as Creator in Gen. 1:1. Daniel chronicles the God-enabled recounting and interpreting of dreams which God used to reveal His will (chaps. 2,4,7). Other miracles included: 1) His writing on the wall and Daniel’s interpreting it (chap. 5); 2) His protection of the 3 men in a blazing furnace (chap. 3); 3) His provision of safety for Daniel in a lions’ den (chap. 6); and 4) supernatural prophecies (chaps. 2; 7; 8; 9:24–12:13).

Interpretive Challenges

The main challenges center on interpreting passages about future tribulation and kingdom promises. Though the use of Imperial Aramaic and archeology have confirmed the early date of writing, some skeptical interpreters, unwilling to acknowledge supernatural prophecies that came to pass (there are over 100 in chap. 11 alone that were fulfilled), place these details in the intertestamental times. They see these prophecies, not as miraculously foretelling the future, but as simply the observations of a later writer, who is recording events of his own day. Thus, they date Daniel in the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C., chap. 8; 11:21–45). According to this scheme, the expectation of the Stone and Son of Man (chaps. 2,7) turned out to be a mistaken notion that did not actually come to pass, or the writer was being intentionally deceptive. Actually, a future 7 year judgment period (cf. 7:21,22; 11:36–45; 12:1) and a literal 1,000 year kingdom (cf. Rev. 20) after Christ’s second coming when He will reign over Israelites and Gentiles (7:27) is taught. This will be an era before and distinct from the final, absolutely perfect, ultimate state, i.e., the new heaven and the new earth with its capital, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21,22). The literal interpretation ofprophecy, including Daniel, leads to the premillennial perspective.

Many other aspects of interpretation challenge readers: e.g., interpreting numbers (1:12,20; 3:19; 9:24–27); identifying the one like a Son of Man (7:13,14); determining whether to see Antiochus of the past or Antichrist of the far future in 8:19–23; explaining the “seventy sevens” in 9:24–27; and deciding whether Antiochus of 11:21–35 is still meant in 11:36–45, or whether it is the future Antichrist.

Outline

I. The Personal Background of Daniel (1:1–21)

A. Conquest of Jerusalem (1:1, 2)

B. Conscription of Jews for Training (1:3–7)

C. Courage of Four Men in Trial (1:8–16)

D. Choice of Four Men for Royal Positions (1:17–21)

II. The Prophetic Course of Gentile Dominion (2:1–7:28)

A. Dilemmas of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1–4:37)

B. Debauchery and Demise of Belshazzar (5:1–31)

C. Deliverance of Daniel (6:1–28)

D. Dream of Daniel (7:1–28)

III. The Prophetic Course of Israel’s Destiny (8:1–12:13)

A. Prophecy of the Ram and Male Goat (8:1–27)

B. Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9:1–27)

C. Prophecy of Israel’s Humiliation and Restoration (10:1–12:13)

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