

Daniel

I. The Main Idea of Daniel

The book of Daniel demonstrates what the book of Ezekiel taught:

- God is not defeated. God's power is not limited to a certain place.
- He is able to do miraculous things, even in foreign lands.
- He is able to protect those who are faithful to him, even in a land where the government passes laws that are contrary to God's laws.
- And God has a glorious future planned for Israel.

II. Outline of Daniel

The book of Daniel has a chiastic structure (A-B-C-D-D'-C'-B'-A'). Each topic that is introduced in the first four chapters is repeated and developed in later chapters.

- Daniel 1 Daniel *Exiled*
 - Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar's Vision (Statue Representing Four Kingdoms)
 - Daniel 3 **Deliverance** from the Fiery Furnace
 - Daniel 4 Nebuchadnezzar *Humbled*
 - Daniel 5 Belshazzar *Humbled*
 - Daniel 6 **Deliverance** from the Lion's Den
 - Daniel 7-8 Daniel's Visions (Four Kingdoms Represented in Various Ways)
- Daniel 9-12 Daniel's Vision of the End of the *Exile*

III. Interpretive Keys to Daniel

Genre:

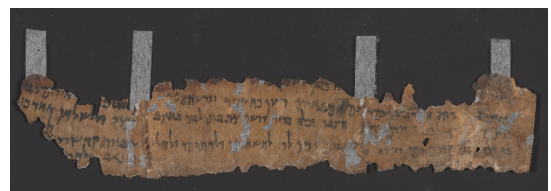
Mostly Narrative, Some Poetry

Historical Note:

- Daniel was taken into exile around 605 B.C., about 20 years before Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Like Ezekiel, he was in exile while many Jews were still back home in Judah.
- However, unlike Ezekiel, the focus in the book of Daniel is on life in exile. Daniel is **not** given messages to send back to the Jews in Judah.

Author: Daniel

- Like Isaiah, many scholars teach that the book of Daniel was not written by the prophet Daniel.
 - The motivation for this is most likely the supernatural characteristics of the prophecies within Daniel. The book records detailed descriptions of events that happened in the Intertestamental Period (400 BC to 4 B.C.). Thus, scholars who don't believe in a God who can predict the future will explain away these prophecies by claiming that the book was written in the 2nd century B.C., after those events took place.
 - Instead, they claim that the book was written long after Daniel was dead and was merely attributed to Daniel. This is similar to how these scholars explain away the Cyrus prophecy in Isaiah.
- However, there are several convincing arguments for believing that the book contains genuine prophecies that were delivered by a Jew named Daniel in the 6th century B.C.
 1. The belief that Daniel did not write the book of Daniel is a relatively recent theory. It was first accepted by mainstream scholarship only in the 1800s when many scholars grew skeptical of the Bible.
 2. The evidence put forward by those who say Daniel did not write the book is flimsy.
 - For example, it is claimed that Ben Sira in ca. 180 B.C. had no knowledge of the book of Daniel, because he does not mention Daniel when he mentions Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets. However, this is an argument from silence and therefore is weak evidence.
 3. Fragments of the book of Daniel have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.
 - Some of these fragments date to the late 2nd century. It is unlikely that a book that had been written in the 2nd century B.C. and was purported to be written by the prophet Daniel (but actually wasn't) would have been accepted by the conservative community who lived at Qumran.
 - A more plausible explanation is that the book was written in the 6th century by Daniel himself and so it was accepted as scripture by all groups within later Judaism.



4. The level of historical accuracy within the details recorded in the book is additional proof that it was written by Daniel in the 6th century B.C.
 - For example, the fact that Belshazzar was functioning as the king of Babylon when it fell to the Persians would not have been something that someone in the 2nd century B.C. would have known.
5. The book of Daniel uses Old Persian words instead of Middle Persian words, which would make sense for someone writing at the time of the beginning of the Persian Empire. Middle Persian, which started around 300 B.C., is not found in the book, which points to an early date for its composition.
6. Ezekial casually alludes to Daniel three times in his book (14:14, 20; 28:3). Thus, the prophet Ezekial knew of Daniel and his audience also knew of Daniel.
 - Daniel was clearly a real person in the 6th century B.C., known for his righteousness (Ezek. 14:14, 20) and his wisdom (Ezek. 28:3).
7. Jesus treated the book as scripture and viewed its prophecies as legitimate.
 - In Matthew 24:15, Jesus himself said that the prophet Daniel wrote about the abomination of desolation (Dan. 11:31 & 12:11) and that the fulfillment of that prophecy was yet to happen: "So when you see the abomination of desolation **spoken of by the prophet Daniel** ..." (also see parallel passage: Mark 13:14).
 - In Matthew 26:64, Jesus quoted from Daniel 7:13-14 and applied the prophecy to himself: "from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."
 - So Jesus accepted the book of Daniel as legitimate. Rejecting the book of Daniel or rejecting Daniel as the author means rejecting some of the truths that Jesus Himself taught.

Language Changes Within the Book

- Unlike any other book in the Bible, the book of Daniel switches languages twice.
- The book begins in Hebrew, but then switches to Aramaic halfway through the verse in Daniel 2:4.
 - Daniel 2:4 *"Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, 'O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.'"*
- The next six chapters are written in Aramaic, but then Daniel switches back to Hebrew at the beginning of chapter 8.
 - Daniel 7:28 *"Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart."*
 - Daniel 8:1 *"In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first."*
- Why?

- Aramaic was the official language of the Persian Empire. Although Hebrew and Aramaic are similar languages, for the people of Judah, Aramaic was the language of foreigners.
- When these shifts in languages are plugged into the outline of the book, it becomes apparent that they fall in the second section (ch. 2) and the second-to-last section (chs. 7-9): corresponding sections of the chiastic structure.
- Overall, the book moves from home to exile to a return home.
 - So possibly the shift to Aramaic in chapter 2 is another literary device used by the author to give the reader the feeling that they are moving farther away from the Promised Land, and then the shift back to Hebrew in chapter 8 contributes to the reader's feeling that they are moving back towards the Promised Land.
 - In other words, the shift in language contributes to the bigger movements within the book.

IV. Key Passages of Daniel

The A-A' Sections

- **Daniel 1 Daniel Exiled**
 - Daniel & his friends are taken into Exile. They stay faithful to the Mosaic law by only eating vegetables (instead of the un-Kosher meat of the Babylonians) and God blesses them for it.
- **Daniel 9-12 Daniel's Vision of the End of the Exile**
 - Chapter 9 – Daniel realizes that the 70 years predicted by Jeremiah are almost over. When he prays to God, the angel Gabriel is sent to predict not only the end of the exile, but also Jesus' atonement.
 - Chapters 10-12 – An angel appears to Daniel and gives him information about events that will take place in the future.
 - Daniel 10:14 "and [I] came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."
 - The prophecy begins with the conquest of Alexander the Great in about 330 B.C. and continues with events during the period of the Greek empires before the rise of the Roman Empire.
 - The prophecy ends with promises that the Jews will be delivered, that the righteous and unrighteous will rise from the dead at the end of time to receive either blessing or punishment.

The B-B' Sections

- **Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar's Vision (Statue Representing Four Kingdoms)**

- Nebuchadnezzar had a significant dream that he wanted someone to interpret. However, to prevent his wise men from giving him a false interpretation, he demanded that the wise men first tell him what the dream was. Only Daniel, through a revelation of God was able to do this and earns the king's honor and a promotion.
- The dream was a statue made of different material, with each section representing one of four major world empires:

Head of Gold =	Babylon
Chest & Arms of Silver =	Medo-Persian
Waist & Thighs of Bronze =	Greece
Legs of Iron =	Rome
Feet of Iron & Clay =	Mixed Post-Roman Empire



- The stone that destroyed the statue and grew into a mountain represented the kingdom of God with Jesus the Messiah ruling over the entire world.

- **Daniel 7-8 Daniel's Visions (Four Kingdoms Represented in Various Ways)**

- Ch. 7 – During the first year of Belshazzar's reign, Daniel receives a heavenly vision that provides more details about the four kingdoms and the heavenly kingdom that Nebuchadnezzar first dreamed about.
- Ch. 8 – During the third year of Belshazzar's reign, Daniel receives another vision. This one gives him further details into the upcoming destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, followed by their destruction by Greece, followed by a king (Antiochus Epiphanies, reigned 175-164 B.C.) who will disrupt worship in the Temple.

The C-C' Sections

- **Daniel 3 Deliverance from the Fiery Furnace**

- Perhaps inspired by his dream, Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden statue of himself and demanded that his subjects bow down to it. When Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego refused, they were thrown into the fiery furnace. Miraculously they were unharmed and an angel (or Christ Himself) stood with them in the fire.

- **Daniel 6 Deliverance from the Lion's Den**

- After the Persians conquered the Babylonians at the end of chapter 5, Daniel retained a high position within the government. But a plot was formed against Daniel by the other high officials, and Daniel had to choose between praying to God or breaking the law. Daniel ended up in the lion's den, but God miraculously delivered him by shutting the mouths of the lions.

The D-D' Sections

- **Daniel 4 Nebuchadnezzar *Humbled***
 - Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. In the dream, he saw a large tree that was condemned by God and chopped down. Daniel explained that God was about to humble Nebuchadnezzar by causing him to act like an animal for 7 years. The events came to pass and Nebuchadnezzar glorified God at the end of it.
- **Daniel 5 Belshazzar *Humbled***
 - Belshazzar irreverently used the vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem for a feast he was hosting. A mysterious hand appeared and wrote a message on the wall. At the suggestion of his wife, Belshazzar called for Daniel and Daniel interpreted the message: because of his pride and his sins against the Most High God that even Nebuchadnezzar came to respect, Belshazzar's kingdom would be taken from him and given to the Medes and Persians. The chapter ends with the fall of Babylon to the Persian army.
- Thus at the heart of the book, we see God's sovereignty over the foreign kings who were over the Israelites. Like Pharaoh at the time of Moses, God proves himself to be more powerful than the greatest kings on earth. The Jews could still place their faith and confidence in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

V. Messianic Elements within Daniel

Daniel 2 – The Stone That Destroys the Kingdoms of the World

Daniel 2:44-45 "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold."

- This stone represented the kingdom of God with Jesus sitting on the throne over the whole earth.

Daniel 3 – The One Like a "Son of the Gods" in the Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3:25 "He answered and said, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.'"

- This is a possible example of a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. It may have been Jesus himself standing in the fiery furnace with these three faithful Jews.

Daniel 7 – The One “Like a Son of Man”

Daniel 7:13-14 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

- This is a *major* Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament. It teaches us the following truths:
 - The humanity of the Messiah is referenced with the description “one like a son of man.”
 - The Messiah is divine. Only God is described in the OT as riding the clouds of heaven.
 - But the Messiah was a separate person than “the Ancient of Days.” Thus, there is a hint in this passage that God is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - The kingdom of the Messiah will never end. This promise is built on the foundation of God’s covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:8-16).
- Jesus identified himself as the fulfillment of this prophecy. In Jesus’ response to the high priest at his trial before his crucifixion, His statement makes it clear that he is the very same person Daniel saw in his vision:
 - Matthew 26:63-64 “But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the **Son of Man** seated at the right hand of Power and **coming on the clouds of heaven.**’”
- The phrase “son of man” would have been a convenient way for Jesus to refer to himself as the Messiah (a.k.a., the king) without arousing the suspicion of the Roman authorities. The Jews would understand that he was identifying himself with the “Son of Man” described in the book of Daniel, but the title would have been seemingly harmless to the Romans.

Daniel 9 – The End of Sin, the Atonement, and Everlasting Righteousness

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.”

- The atonement that Jesus would accomplish in his death, burial, and resurrection is predicted here. As a result, believers today are free from sin and have “everlasting righteousness.”