

DANIEL

- 1) – The Book of Daniel was written after 300 BC, perhaps as late as 175. Probably written during the second century BC Seleucid persecution to encourage the Jews to remain faithful to their religion. It is probable that the writer's purpose was to denounce the Seleucid Empire by attacking it indirectly by putting the story into the past. He could make Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar surrogate villains for Syria and the Seleucids. His readers would know what he meant and the overlords would have trouble proving it. (An opposite view is taken by some historians that Daniel is a continuation of the history in the Books of Kings.) /// The name Daniel was probably chosen because he was a legendary figure from Ezekiel's time. Ezekiel refers to him three times: 28:3, 14:14, 20. /// It is an historical romance, like Ruth, Esther, and Judith, glorifying God. Evidence for this: **1)** Many anachronisms. EG -- Daniel 1:1. -- Nebuchadnezzar was not yet king of Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (606BC). And Jehoiakim was dead by the time Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem. EG -- Daniel 1:2. --- Shinar was an archaism that no one living in 600 BC would have used. It was a term from Abraham's time and was called Chaldea by the Hebrews in Exile. EG -- Nebuchadnezzar is always spelled with the incorrect "n" in Daniel, never, as in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, with the occasional "r" (the correct spelling). **2)** Treats the Greek period (300 years after the Exile) correctly, but makes many mistakes about the Exilic period: EG -- Daniel is pictured as adviser to Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, who was actually the son of Nabonidus. **3)** Partly written in Aramaic (Chap 2:4 -- 7:28), a language not used greatly by the common people until much later. **4)** In Ezekiel 14:14, Ezekiel equates Daniel with Noah, who lived at the time of the flood, and Job, who lived before the Exodus: it is implausible that Ezekiel would pass over Isaiah and Jeremiah in order to mention a young contemporary.
- 2) 1:6-7 – Belshazzar, eldest son of Nabonidus (not Nebuchadnezzar): “Bel protect the king.” Daniel: “God is the judge.” Renamed Belteshazzar: “Bel (Marduk) protects his life.” Hananiah: “Yahveh is gracious.” Renamed Shadrach: “Aku (a lesser deity) commands.” Mishael: “Who is what God is.” Renamed Meshach: Doubtful meaning, perhaps just a conversion of Hebrew to Babylonian. Azariah: “Yahweh helps.” Renamed Abed-nego: “Servant of Nebo.”
- 3) 2:38-39 – The “head of gold” is Nebuchadnezzar himself. /// “Another kingdom” is the second kingdom, the Median Empire, which existed concurrently but was smaller in wealth, civilization, and military power. The third kingdom is Persia (Cyrus), which did eventually rule almost all territories known to the Jews at that time. The fourth kingdom was the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, 2½ centuries after Nebuchadnezzar.
- 4) 2:41ff – The two iron legs symbolize the two fragments of Alexander's broken empire of interest to the Jews: Egypt under the Ptolemies and Western Asia under the Seleucids. From 300 to 200 BC Judah was under the tolerant Ptolemies, after 200 under the intolerant and cruel Seleucids, when Daniel was written.
- 5) 2:45 – The stone has messianic significance: Zechariah 3:9, 10, 4:7, and Luke 20:17,18. **Between 3:23 and 24, read “The prayer of Azariah (Abednego)” and “The song of the three Jews (holy children – Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego),” in the Apocrypha.**
- 6) 3:24-25 – Rabbinic tradition suggests that the fourth “man” was the angel Gabriel. According to Jews, Gabriel was one of the three angels who announced to Abraham the birth of

Isaac (Gen 18). In the New Testament, he tells Mary she is to bear Jesus. (Luke 1:19-31). Gabriel dictated the entire Koran to Mohammed. In mystic literature, Gabriel greets the righteous at the gates of heaven. Clearly, this legend was meant to apply to the time of writing: it was the Seleucid monarchs, not Nebuchadnezzar, who claimed divine honors. And, it was the Seleucid monarchs, not Nebuchadnezzar, who threatened the Jews with death for practicing their religion.

- 7) 4:4ff – There is no historical evidence that Nebuchadnezzar suffered this strange malady. The writer probably got the idea that Nebuchadnezzar browsed grass from the statues of bulls with human heads and birds' wings that were as characteristic of Assyria as the pyramids of Egypt. In Greek times, when this story was written, all kinds of fanciful tales were made up to account for these composite representations.
- 8) 5:1-6. This drama stimulated Handel's oratorio "Belshazzar," and Walton's "Belshazzar's Feast."
- 9) 5:2 – Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar. (Nebuchadnezzar died in 563, 24 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. He was succeeded by his son, Evil-merodach, who lightened the captivity of Jehoiachin {2 Kings 25:27}. But in 560 he was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Nergal-sha-rezer, who with his successor Labashi-Marduk, kept the Jews in Exile for another generation.) Belshazzar ran the country because Nabonidus was more interested in religion and antiquarian research. Meanwhile, in 550, Cyrus of Persia became a world power by defeating the Medes, Egypt, and Lydia. See Ezra 1:1 and notes.
- 10) 5:25 – According to Jewish tradition, the writing was an anagram and was to be read in Aramaic from right to left and downwards:
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| S | U | T | M | M | ← | Mene: a coin (min) worth 60 shekels↑ |
| I | P | K | N | N | ↓ | Tekel: Aramaic for "shekel" and "to weigh" |
| N | R | L | A | A | | Parsin: "half a min" and "to divide" |
- Interpretation: Nebuchadnezzar was worth a min, Belshazzar a shekel, his successors half a min. And because of his pride and idol-worship he was to be stripped of his kingdom. He was killed that night and Darius the Mede was made ruler over the kingdom. But see Note #11.
- 11) 5:30 – There is no historical record of this Darius. In 538, however, Cyrus at age 62 took Babylon and killed Belshazzar. The writer's knowledge of history was faulty!
- 12) 6:10 – Orthodox Jews still pray toward Jerusalem three times a day, but kneel only in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur -- see Lev 23:27)
- 13) 7:1-8. Vs 4 -- The lion is Chaldea (or Nebuchadnezzar). This is probably the winged lion that gave rise to the notion that Nebuchadnezzar ate grass (4:33) and lost his wings, a sign of loss of power, reverting to a human state. Vs 5 -- the bear is the Median Empire. Vs 6 -- the leopard is Persia. The four heads are the four monarchs. (Note: Eerdman claims that the leopard is the Greek Empire, and on its fall the empire was divided between Alexander's four generals: Seleucus (Syria), Ptolemy (Egypt and N. Africa), and two others took Greece and Asia Minor. Vs. 7 -- The beast was Alexander the Great's Macedonian Empire. It was Alexander's general Seleucus who started a line of rulers who persecuted the Jews unmercifully, Antiochus IV in particular, 8th in line, beginning in 175 BC. Vs. 8 – The ten horns are the kings in the Selucid line, Antiochus the little horn, uprooting three horns, leaving seven, making himself king. The fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire, the Son of Man is Jesus. 2) The new and eternal kingdom is the

ideal Jewish state, represented as a man, whereas heathen and idolatrous kingdoms are the beasts. /// The throne scene in vv 9-10 is probably the basis for the scene in Rev 20:11-12.

- 14) The Ancient is God.
- 15) 8:3-12. The ram with two horns (Media and Persia) is destroyed by a goat with one horn (Macedonia under Alexander).
- 16) 8:16 – Gabriel ("hero of God") is one of four archangels (or 7, or 12, or 70). In the New Testament Gabriel come to Mary. In Jewish legends he appears to Joseph (son of Jacob) as a man and tells him where his brothers are pasturing their sheep; he is the one who buried Moses; he destroyed the army of Sennacherib. Gabriel takes Mohammed on the back of the flying horse Borak to the Seven Heavens above the temple in Jerusalem and later dictates the entire Koran to illiterate Mohammed. /// Daniel is the only book in the Jewish canon in which angels are given names, another sign of its late composition.
- 17) 9:24 – The original 70 years predicted by Jeremiah is altered by Gabriel to 70 weeks of years, or 70 x 7, which carries matters to 96 BC, a date safely in the writer's future. The ideal Jewish state was not established then either, so that date has no significance in Jewish history.
- 18) 9:25-27. Some interpret this to be a reference to Jesus as the Messiah. Most versions now say "anointed one," who is probably an anointed king who will come seven weeks of years (49 years) from Jeremiah's prediction and make it possible to rebuild the temple. This 49 years takes us to 537 BC, a year before Cyrus granted the Jews permission to rebuild the temple. This anointed one is probably Onias III, who, when killed by Antiochus IV sparked the Jewish revolt (Maccabean revolt) against the Seleucids. The peak of the persecution that followed the death of Onias is described in Vs. 27. The abominations were the deliberate sacrifice of swine on the altars, as well as placing statues of Zeus on the altars with the face of Yahweh, both horrible "abominations" to the Jews. See also Matt 24:15, 1 Macc 1:54 for references to the "abomination of desolation." The prince in v.26 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- 19) 10:13 – The late Jewish view was that each nation had a guardian angel. See Rev. 12:7-9 for more on Michael.
- 20) 11:2, 5, 6, 7, 15, 21 – v. 2 Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes. V.3 Alexander. v. 5: The Ptolemies. v.6: Seleucids. v. 7: Probably Ptolemy III, 15: Antiochus III. v. 21: Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- 21) 12:2 -- One of the very first references to an after-life in the OT.
- 22) Chapter 13, Suzanna, Apocrypha pages 1548ff (NRSV).
- 23) Chapter 14, Bel and the Dragon, Apocrypha, pages 1552ff.