

DANIEL

(Ryrie Notes)

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR: Daniel Date: 537 B.C.

The Prophet: Daniel, whose name means “God is my judge,” was a statesman in the court of heathen monarchs. Taken captive as a youth to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C., he spent the rest of his long life there as a governmental official and as a prophet of the true God. He claimed to have written this book (12:4), and **Jesus Christ identified him as a prophet (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)**. Since he did not occupy the prophetic office, the book is found in the third division of the Hebrew Bible, the “Writings,” rather than in the second, the Prophets. **Throughout his life Daniel was uncompromising and faithful to his God.**

Date: The first attack on the traditional sixth century B.C. date for the composition of the book came from Porphyry (A.D. 232–303), a vigorous opponent of Christianity, who maintained that the book was written by an unknown Jew who lived at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.). This view was widely promoted by scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the following reasons: it is alleged that Daniel could not have made these predictions, since they were accurately fulfilled and could therefore have been written only after the events occurred; Persian and Greek words used in the book would have been unknown to a sixth-century Jewish author; the Aramaic used in 2:4–7:28 belongs to a time after that of Daniel; and there are certain alleged historical inaccuracies.

In answer, we observe that predictive prophecy is not only possible but expected from a true prophet of God. Since Daniel lived into the Persian period, he would have known Persian words. The presence of Greek words is easily accounted for, since one hundred years before Daniel, Greek mercenaries served in the Assyrian army under Esarhaddon (683) and in the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar. Recent discoveries of fifth century B.C. Aramaic documents have shown that Daniel was written in a form of Imperial Aramaic, an official dialect known in all parts of the Near East at that time. Alleged historical inaccuracies are fast disappearing, especially with the information provided by the *Nabonidus Chronicle* as to the identity of Belshazzar (5:1) and with evidence that identifies Darius the Mede with a governor named Gubaru (5:31).

In addition, how can the use of relatively few Greek words be explained if the book was written around 170 B.C., when a Greek-speaking government had controlled Palestine for 160 years? One would expect the presence of many Greek terms. Also, the Qumran documents (Dead Sea Scrolls), dated only a few decades before the alleged second-century writing of Daniel, show grammatical differences that indicate they were written centuries, not decades, after Daniel. Further, the scrolls of Daniel found at Qumran are copies, indicating that the original was written before the Maccabean era.

The Times: In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and others as captives to Babylon (see Introduction to Jeremiah). Because of the events recorded in chap. 2 of the book, Daniel was given a place of prominence and responsibility in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. After the king's death, Daniel apparently fell from favor but was recalled to interpret the writing that appeared at Belshazzar's feast (5:13). He was made one of three presidents under Darius (6:1) and lived until the third year of Cyrus (536). His ministry was to testify, in his personal life and in his prophecies, to the power of God. Though in exile, the people of Israel were not deserted by God, and Daniel revealed many details about His plan for their future. He also traced the course of Gentile world powers from his own day to the second coming of Christ.

Contents: Important prophecies in the book include the following: the course of Gentile kingdoms (the future of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, chaps. 2 and 7); details concerning Medo-Persia and Greece (chap. 8); more details concerning Greece (chap. 11); the prophecy of the 70 weeks of years (9:24–27); and the activities of Antichrist (11:36–45). Among the doctrines mentioned in the book are personal separation (1:8; 3:12; 6:10; 9:2–3; 10:2–3), angels (8:16; 9:21; 10:13, 20–21; 11:1), resurrection (12:2), Antichrist (7:24–25; 9:27; 11:36). Favorite stories include those of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (chap. 3), and the lions' den (chap. 6).