

The Man Daniel and the Purposes of God
Cornerstone Baptist Church of Pine Island, MN
April 2013



Focus I: The Man Daniel
Session #1: The Life and Times of a Prophet of God

1a. Important notes regarding the man, Daniel

1b. His name means -

2b. The span of Daniel's life: born about _____ BC, died about _____ BC

3b. The character of the man Daniel

1c. The estimate of Scripture -

1.) Ezekiel 14:14 speaks to the *virtue* of the man

2.) Ezekiel 28:3 speaks to the *wisdom* of the man

2c. The estimate of history:

The character of Daniel is reflected in the fact that he occupied places of high authority in two successive empires, empires which were hostile to one another - first the Babylonian (2:48) and then the Medo/Persian (6:1-3).

3c. The estimate of a commentator:

Although the known facts of Daniel's life are so few, nevertheless he is revealed as a man of stalwart character and priceless convictions. He is willing at all times to stand up for what he believes, and is a true hero of the Faith. Coupled with this there is a gentle courtesy in his relations with the others, and a simple and humble dependence upon the grace and power of the God whom he worships."

Edward J. Young

2a. Concerning the period of history in which Daniel lived

1b. Daniel was carried away in the first stage of the deportation of Judah to Babylon.

1c. The date: 606/05 BC

2c. The event:

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had defeated Assyria at Carchemish in 609 BC, was establishing suzerainty/vassal relationship with various nations; he had come to Jerusalem, while there heard that his father had died, left to establish himself on the throne; when he did, he left Jehoiakim on the throne as vassal to himself, took several young men of the royal family as hostages and trainees for the king's court. (Cf. Josephus on Alexander's Approach to Jerusalem)

3c. Scripture: Daniel 1:1; 2 Kings 24:1

4c. Thus, Daniel was **in Babylon** when Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne and established the "Neo-Babylonian" empire.

5c. Note: This was in exact fulfillment of an explicit prophecy made by Isaiah about 120 years earlier (Isa 39:5-7).

The Southern Kingdom was carried off in three stages to Babylon:
⇒Stage #1: in 606 BC
Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon puts Judah/Jerusalem under seige; hears of father's death, must return to secure the throne; takes with him young Jewish men to train for leadership (including Daniel and his friends)
⇒Stage #2: in 597, because Judah had withheld the annual tribute payment, King Nebuchadnezzar comes to punish the city, carries off 10,000 of the best people (including Ezekiel, who would be called as a prophet while living in exile in Babylon)
⇒Stage #3: in 586 BC, because Judah had again withheld the tribute, Nebuchadnezzar's army destroys the city *and the temple*, carried off all but the old and infirm to Judah.

- 2b. Daniel was in Babylon on the night that the city fell to the Medo/Persians, and the Babylonian empire came to an end (October, 539 BC).

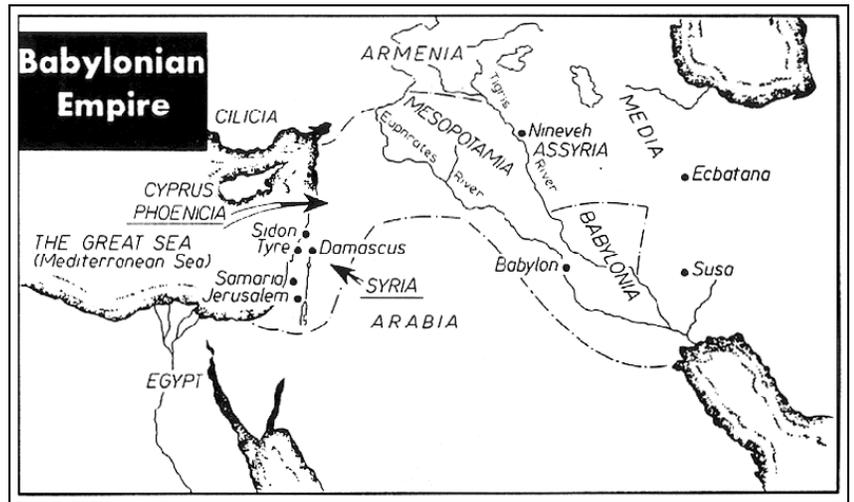
Scripture: *Daniel 5*

Daniel 5 focuses on the final hours of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Nabonidus had gone north to attempt to stop Cyrus the Persian from advancing against Babylon. He was unsuccessful. Belshazzar was holed up behind the massive walls of the capital. To show his disdain for all that was transpiring outside those walls, Belshazzar ordered a massive feast to be prepared. Before that night was over, Belshazzar was dead, and world hegemony had passed to the Medo-Persian empire. About sixty-five years had elapsed since Daniel was carried away captive in chapter 1. The prophet would be in his eighties.

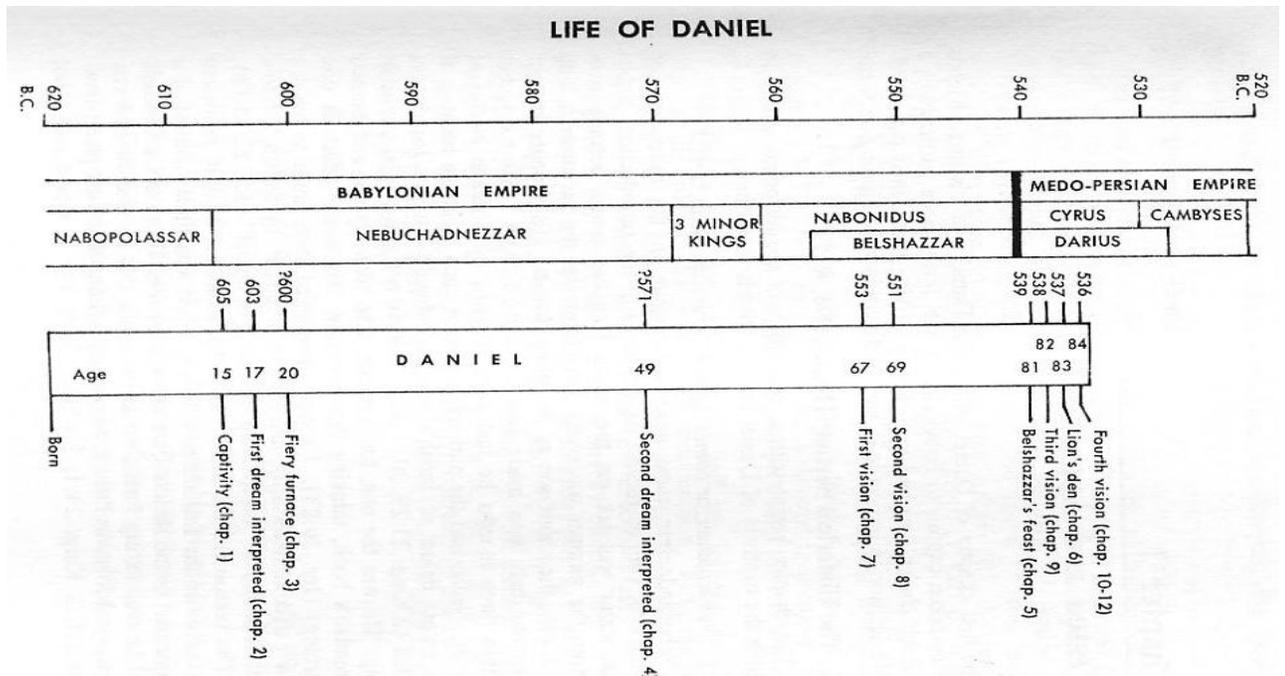
James E. Smith, *The Major Prophets, Old Testament Survey Serie* (1999)

- 3b. Daniel lived in Babylon and prophesied in that place throughout the history of the Neo-Babylonian empire, and then briefly in the Medo/Persian empire which followed.

Scripture: *Daniel 1:21; 6:1-3*



Note: The chart below illustrates the relationship between the life and ministry of Daniel and the extent of the Babylonian empire. Notice also the events of Daniel's life represented toward the bottom of the chart.



3a. IMPORTANT - Concerning the *purposes of God* in allowing Judah to be taken captive to Babylon:

- 1b. Judah's capture and deportation by Babylon were **not** accidents of history; these events constituted deliberate divine punishment upon a rebellious nation.

The Babylonian exile was a period of God's *indignation* against Judah (Dan 8:19; Isa 10:5,25).

- 2b. However, there was a very real danger in this - namely, that the pagan nations who observed, or even participated in, the destruction of Judah by Babylon would assume that YHWH, the God of Israel, was impotent to protect His people, and that thus the name of YHWH would be **disreverenced** among those nations.

Note: This danger was related to 3 related but mistaken concepts universal among pagan nations, to wit:

- 1.) Those nations were **polytheistic**.
- 2.) Those nations were convinced that a battle between two nations was in fact a battle between the **gods of those nations**.
- 3.) Those nations assumed that when Nation A defeated Nation B in battle, it could only be because the gods of Nation A **were more powerful** than those of Nation B -at least temporarily.

- 3b. YHWH took a very important step to avoid such an attitude of contempt on the part of the pagan nations

NOTE: Daniel ministered to the nation of Israel during the days of the Babylonian captivity. He was taken among the first small group of hostages carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC, and he witnessed the arrival of the hordes of captive Jews brought to Babylon in 597 and 586 BC. He heard the distressing accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem and of Solomon's fabulous temple. And it was against the backdrop of these horrible events, and through the experiences of the pagan conquerors and kings who enslaved Israel, that God unfolded the series of historical episodes (Dan 1-6) which finally established the truth that He alone sits in ultimate control of all the events of the universe. . . . The great and blessed teachment of Daniel is not just that our God shall rule, but that He does rule. To be sure, no sin can be laid to His charge, and no man can hide behind the truth of God's rule as an excuse for wickedness. And yet, as inscrutable as it is, it is nonetheless a truth of ineffable blessedness that YHWH God 'liveth forever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation.'

4a. The two-fold purpose of God which He accomplished through Daniel *in the land of exile*

- 1b. YHWH used Daniel to improve the life and welfare of the Jews in the land of Babylon.

How did Daniel do this? YHWH caused Daniel to be taken in the first deportation, to be in the land long before the great number of Jews arrived in 597 BC. When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he was exalted to leadership. When he functioned well in that position, he became indispensable to Nebuchadnezzar. Thus, when Nebuchadnezzar found it expedient to punish Daniel's people (because they had once again withheld the tribute), he nonetheless did so with a measure of restraint that bordered on deference. The only explanation for this is the influence of Daniel.

Leon Wood on Daniel's role in the Babylonian Captivity:
The lot of captives in a foreign land would naturally be expected to be hard and difficult, but this was not case for most Jews in Babylonia....They lived in good farming areas, had their own homes, enjoyed freedom of movement, continued their own institution of elders, priests, and prophets, experienced adequate employment opportunities, and even carried on correspondence with people in their homeland....A principal reason for God's permitting [Daniel] to be taken to Babylon, several years earlier than the main groups of captives, was probably to allow him to achieve such a position before they came. Besides, this, Daniel may have had much to do with effecting the return of the captives to Judah in due time.

Note: Compare – *Joseph/Egypt = Daniel/Babylon*

- 2b. YHWH used Daniel (and his 3 friends) to maintain the honor of the true God in the minds of pagan nations.

How did Daniel and his friends do this?

Again and again, YHWH would contrive a situation in which the gods of Babylon were deliberately and publicly pitted in battle against YHWH, and in every one of those situations YHWH showed Himself gloriously and infinitely superior to the (supposed) gods of Babylon.

Pagans evaluated any foreign deity in terms of the size of the country whose people worshiped him, the degree of prosperity of that country, and the size and success of the army. When Judah had been taken captive by Babylonia, her God did not measure well by any of these standards. To Babylonians, their own deities seemed to be stronger. This was not a pleasing situation to God, and He used Daniel as His special instrument to bring a change.

Leon Wood

Note: In this connection, a very important Biblical concept is introduced in Daniel.

- 1.) What is that concept? *The “times of the Gentiles”*
Note: This concept will be the focus of our study in a later lesson.
- 2.) What is involved in this? *The period of time, prophesied explicitly in Dan 2 & 7, during which the land of Israel will be under the heel of Gentile dominion*
- 3.) Scripture: *Luke 21:24*

5a. The purpose of the book of Daniel

- 1b. The PRIMARY purpose - *to record the means by which YHWH protected His glory, at a time when His name was in the most serious jeopardy of being disreverenced*

This book is not intended to give an account of the life of Daniel. It gives neither his lineage, nor his age, and recounts but a few of the events of his long career. Nor is it meant to give a record of the history of Israel during the exile, nor even of the captivity in Babylon. Its purpose is to show how by His providential guidance, His miraculous interventions, His foreknowledge, and almighty power, the God of Heaven controls and directs the forces of Nature and the history of nations, the lives of Hebrew captives and of the mightiest of the kings of the earth, for the accomplishment of His divine and beneficent plans for His servants and people.

Leon Wood

2b. Four specific SECONDARY purposes of the book of Daniel

- 1c. Daniel provided the Jews of that day with a solid basis for comfort and hope in the midst of very desperate times.
- 2c. Daniel provides a demonstration - historical and prophetic - of God's unending and infinite concern for His covenant people, Israel, even when that nation is under the rod of divine reproof.
- 3c. Daniel provides a scheme of eschatology which is basic to a proper understanding of end-time events.
- 4c. Daniel provides a challenging illustration of what true dedication to God means, and of what God is willing to do through one fully committed to Him.

6a. Concerning the structure of the book of Daniel

1b. There are three basic ways to divide the book of Daniel

1c. According to **emphasis** -

- I. The *Historical* Section (1-6)
- II. The *Prophetic* Section (7-12)

2c. According to **thought development**

- I. An introduction to the book (1)
- II. Events in the life of Daniel and his 3 friends, in relation to the rulers of Babylon (2-6)
- III. Visions of Daniel, concerning the great world empires, and especially in relation to the Kingdom of God (7-12)

3c. According to the **languages used**

- I. The first *Hebrew* section: an **introduction** to the book (1:1-2:4a)
- II. The Aramaic section: the message of YHWH to **pagan** nations (2:4b-7:28)
- III. The second *Hebrew* section: the message of YHWH to the **Hebrew** nation (8:1-12:13)

Note: The use of these 2 languages seems to suggest that Daniel was deliberately targeting two distinct audiences. Freeman states that

Daniel had two distinct, although related, messages to deliver. One was a **message of judgment** concerning the defeat and final overthrow of the Gentile world powers....The other was a **message of consolation and hope** concerning future deliverance for Israel. The first message in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Near East, was appropriate for the prophet's message concerning the future history of the Gentile Kingdoms. The second message, which is exclusively directed to the Hebrew people, is appropriately in Hebrew.

7a. Concerning the AUTHENTICITY of the book of Daniel

- 1b. The issue at stake here - *Was the book of Daniel written in the sixth century BC (as it claims, and as has always been acknowledged) or in the third century BC, during the age of Greek control over Israel (as the critical community insists, in order to neutralize the remarkable predictive prophecies of the book)?*

The book of Daniel has, without question, been the object of more negative criticism than any other book of the Old Testament. Its authenticity was first challenged in the third century AD by the Neoplatonist Porphyry, who alleged that the book was a forgery written during the Maccabean period inasmuch as the history of this period is clearly detailed in the book. Modern criticism, following this rationalistic conclusion, contends that Daniel was composed by an anonymous author during the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes (ca 167 BC) in an effort to encourage the suffering Jews to remain faithful in the midst of their afflictions. This date for the book is established with such certainty in the minds of the critics that we are repeatedly informed by this school that no Old Testament scholar of any repute now maintains that the book was written by Daniel.

H. E. Freeman, *Intro to the OT Prophets*, p 261

Note: Daniel is very much a pivotal book with regard to the reliability of the Old Testament.

The book of Daniel is especially fitted to be a battlefield between faith and unbelief. It admits of no half-measures. It is either Divine or an imposture. To write any book under the name of another, and give it out to be his, is, in any case a forgery, dishonest in itself, and destructive of all trustworthiness. But the case as to the book of Daniel, if it were not his, would go far beyond even this. The writer, were he not Daniel, must have lied, on a most frightful scale, ascribing to God prophecies which were never uttered, and miracles which are assumed never to have been wrought. In a word, the whole book would be one lie in the name of God....Either then we have true miracles and true prophecy, or we should have nothing but untruth."

Newell, quoting Pusey, p 13

2b. A summary of the critical arguments AGAINST the authenticity of the book of Daniel

1c. The predictive prophecies in Daniel are *too* detailed and *too* accurate.

Reply: Who says so!?

But is it not true that those who reject the predictions do so largely because they reject prophecy as such? They feel that the predictions concerning the various world empires are so minutely accurate that they must have been written after rather than **before** the events described. Their position is really not only a denial of the Bible but of theism itself (the belief in a personal God). If there is a sovereign, omniscient God, He has the power to predict the future, and in minute detail if He wishes to do so.

G. Coleman Luck, *Daniel*, p 9

2c. The miracles recorded in the book are childish - almost like fairy-tales - and grotesque.

Reply: Who says so!?

3c. There are three **Greek** words in the book (the names of instruments in Dan 4); thus the book must have been written after the establishment of the Greek empire.

Reply: There were Greek words *before* there was a Greek empire; the presence of Greek words *cannot* be taken as indication that the book was not composed until the days of the Greek empire.

Concerning the languages of the book and their relation to the date of its authorship, Dr Driver [a prominent critic] once wrote, 'The verdict of the language of Daniel is thus clear. The Persian words presuppose a period after the Persian empire had been well established; the Greek words demand, the Hebrew supports, and the Aramaic permits, a date after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great (332 BC).' this statement would now have to be modified. *There is nothing in the language of the book which would in itself preclude authorship in the 6th century BC.*

E. J. Young, *Daniel*, p 23 [emphasis mine]

4c. There are some supposed historical inaccuracies in the book; these are taken as indications that the author lived long **after** the events of the book and made a halting and ineffective effort to represent himself as a contemporary of those events.

Reply: There is no *proven* historical mistake. Many *supposed* historical mistakes have been proven to be entirely accurate. Reasonable explanations exist for remaining *perceived* mistakes, and as our knowledge of Babylonian history fills out, the precise explanation will undoubtedly be determined.

3b. Conclusion concerning the authenticity of the book of Daniel

The book of Daniel purports to be serious history. It claims to be a revelation from the God of heaven which concerns the future welfare of men and nations. If this book were issued at the time of the Maccabees for the purpose of strengthening the faith of the people of **that** time, and the impression was thereby created that Daniel, a Jew of the 6th century were the author, then, whether we like it or no - the book is a fraud. There is no escaping this conclusion. It will not do to say that the Jews frequently engaged in such a practice. That does not lessen their guilt one whit. It is one thing to issue a harmless romance under a pseudonym; it is an entirely different thing to issue under a pseudonym a book claiming to be a revelation of God and having to do with the conduct of men and to regard such a book as canonical. The Jews of the inter-testamental period may have done the first; there is no evidence that they did the second.

E. J. Young, *Daniel*, p 25

4b. The strongest argument in favor of the authenticity and integrity of the book of Daniel - *Jesus quotes it as historical in Matthew 24:15*

Furthermore, and this is decisive, the usage of the NT shows that the NT writers did not look upon this book as a romance. It was none other than our LORD, the incarnate Son of God, who spoke of Himself in terms taken from the book of Daniel. In the light of the decisive and authoritative usage of the NT, one is compelled to reject the idea that Daniel is a mere romance.

Young, *Daniel*, p 25