DAYBREAK

Section Introduction

Overview for Daniel

Purpose: Daniel wrote to his fellow Jewish captives in Babylon to remind them that God had orchestrated the events of world history according to His sovereign will, and to encourage them with God's promises of restoration in the final stage of His Kingdom.

Author: Authorship of the book has traditionally been credited by Jews and Christians alike to Daniel, a prophet and statesman during the Babylonian and Persian captivity. In the New Testament, Christ himself directly associated the book with the prophet Daniel (see Matthew 24:15).

Daniel, whose name means "God is my Judge," was among the first group of Jews to be exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. His adherence to God for over sixty years in the midst of a strongly polytheistic religious culture gives him a unique standing among Biblical characters. He is one of the few in Scripture with a totally blameless record.

Time Period Covered: The book itself describes the political setting in which it originated. This information indicates a span from the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim extending into the early years of the Persian period, or approximately 605 to 536 B.C.

Date Written: Opinions vary as to the precise date, but many scholars suggest that Daniel probably wrote it shortly after the capture of Babylon in 539 B.C.

Key People: Daniel (Belteshazzar), Nebuchadnezzar, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), Azariah (Abednego), Belshazzar, Darius

Unique Features: The Book of Daniel was originally written in two languages. Hebrew was used in Daniel 1:1 to Daniel 2:4a and chapters 8 through 12, while Aramaic (the common language used in Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian communication) was used in Daniel 2:4 to 7:28.

The book contains both a historical/biographical section (found primarily in chapters 1–6) and a revelatory section (found primarily in chapters 7–12).

The Book of Daniel is the major apocalyptic book of the Old Testament, as Chapters 7-12 foretell the end times. (Apocalyptic literature is typically symbolic, visionary, and prophetic in nature, and was usually composed under oppressive conditions with the intent of encouraging the people of God.) The prophecy of Daniel 12:1 speaks of a time of great distress unsurpassed in history — a period that was called the Great Tribulation by Jesus in Matthew 24:21 and is further referenced in Revelation 7:14. The great nations of the world will rise against the Lord; but God will protect His people, and His Kingdom will prevail and endure forever.

Daniel is one of the few Old Testament books that explicitly references a bodily resurrection. In Daniel's last vision, an angel told him, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

History: Daniel's life and service took place during a turbulent time in world history. Assyria's 125-year domination of the region had ended when Babylon conquered Assyria. Nabopolassar, the first king of the new Babylonian Kingdom, was succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled from 606 to 561 B.C. It was under Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonian empire reached its pinnacle of glory, holding the strongest position of power, wealth, and dominion the world had known to that point.

As Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah the prophets had warned, Israel's continued sinning eventually led to God's judgment, and the Babylonians invaded Judah in 605 B.C. Daniel's exile was part of the first of three deportations (605, 597, and 586 B.C.) carried out by the Babylonians after they subdued Jerusalem.

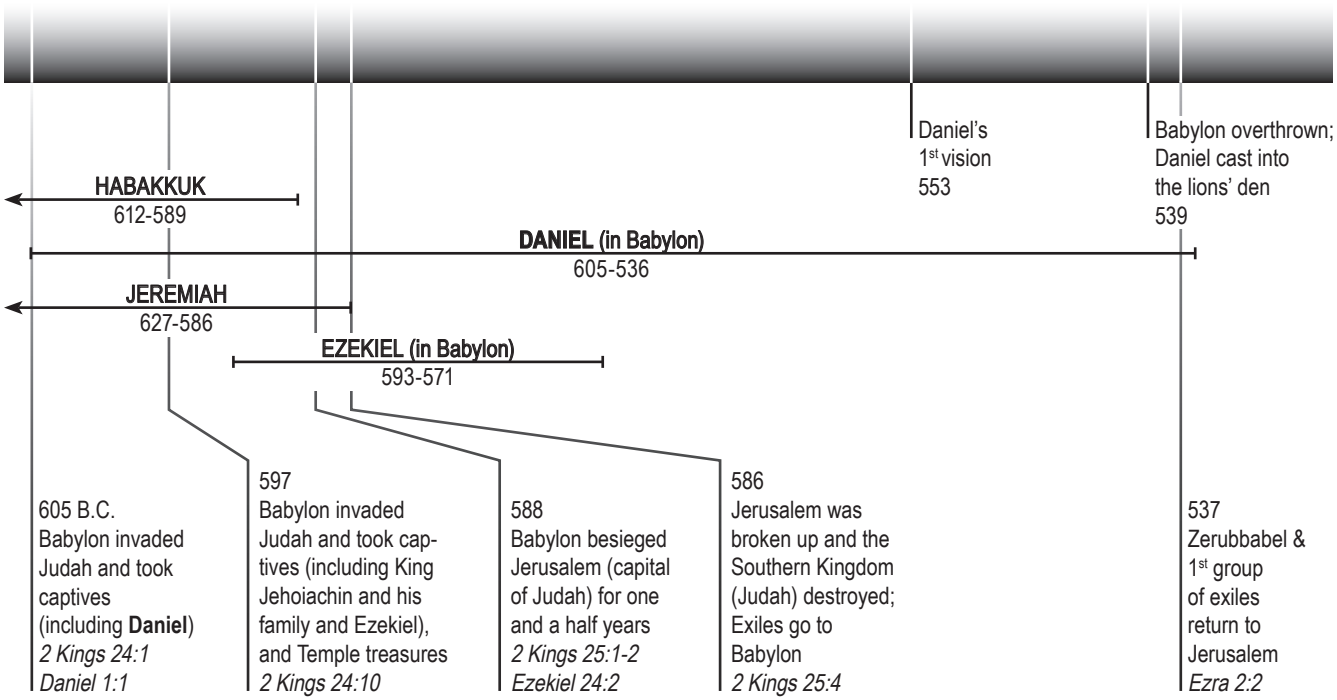
Though the Babylonian empire was short lived in comparison to the Assyrians before them and the Persians after them, it dominated the region during the early days of Daniel. He outlived the Babylonian Empire, which fell to the Medes under Darius.

Setting: Under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon became the capital of the Babylonian empire. It covered approximately 2,200 acres of land and boasted some of the most impressive structures of that era. Babylon's Hanging Gardens, built by King Nebuchadnezzar, are considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The ruins of Babylon lie in modern-day Iraq, about sixty miles south of Baghdad.

Summary: Daniel presents a strong case for the absolute sovereignty of God. This theme is apparent in a variety of situations, including Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions, his fellow exiles' rescue from the fiery furnace, and his foretelling of the Ancient of Days who will one day save His people from the forces of evil (Daniel 3:23–30; 6:19–23; 7:9–22).

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

I. The personal history of Daniel (1:1-21)
   A. The deportation of Daniel (1:1-7)
   B. The decision of Daniel (1:8-16)
   C. The delight of Nebuchadnezzar (1:17-20)
   D. The duration of Nebuchadnezzar (1:21)
II. The prophetic history of the Gentiles (2:1 — 7:28)
   A. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar (the course of Gentile world powers) (2:1-49)
   B. The dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's image (the persecution and preservation of Israel under Gentile dominion) (3:1-30)
   C. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar (the pride of Gentile world powers) (4:1-37)
   D. The destruction of Belshazzar (the final doom of Gentile world power) (5:1-31)
   E. The decree of Darius (the man of sin and his politico-religious system) (6:1-28)
   F. The dream of the four beasts (the course of Gentile world power) (7:1-28)
III. The prophetic history of the Jews (8:1 — 12:13)
   A. The vision of the ram and he-goat (Israel under Medo-Persia and Greece) (8:1-27)
   B. The vision of the seventy weeks (chronology of Israel's prophetic program) (9:1-27)
   C. The vision of Israel's future (the history of Israel in the 70 weeks, cf. 10:14) (10:1 — 12:13)