

# Daniel

## 1 Introduction

For reasons that will soon become clear the book of Daniel is one of the most contested portions of the Old Testament, perhaps second only to the early chapters of Genesis. The book derives its name from its author and central character, whose experiences in the court of Babylon form the majority of the first six chapters and the his dreams and visions the last six. Regarding the interpretation of these visions there are almost as many views as there are commentators, so only the most plausible interpretations are referred to here.

## 2 Date

The date of the book of Daniel is one of the most hotly contested themes in OT scholarship. Two main views prevail: a) That the book was written in the second Century BC in Judea in order to encourage the people of Israel undergoing persecution by the Seleucids under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Writing after the event the writer cast his work as a prediction of the future and urged his fellow Jews to remain faithful to their God. b) That it was written in the 6th Century BC in Babylon by a Jewish exile named Daniel who served in the royal court and accurately predicted events that were not fulfilled until the Second Century.

### 2.1 Internal Evidence.

**2.1.1 The Book's Claim to a Predictive Prophecy.** On numerous occasions Daniel claims to be predicting the future (Dan. 2:29; 4:24-25; 5:24-30; 7 - 12). Following the established custom among the Old Testament prophets Daniel was often instructed to seal up his visions, so that after the events had been fulfilled the people might have clear evidence that the prophet had foreseen (Dan. 8:26; 12:4, 9; cf. Isa. 8:16; 29:11; 30:8; Jer. 30:2; 32:14; 36:1-32; Hab. 2:2-3) (Wenham, 1977: 50). Since the time of the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry (c.232 - c.305 AD) the presence of predictive prophecy in Scripture has been denied. Porphyry, an intelligent man, produced a detailed verse by verse study of the book of Daniel in support of his argument for a second century date in volume 12 of his 15 volume work *Against the Christians* which survives in part in Jerome's 5th century *Commentary on Daniel* (Wilken, 1984: 139-143). During the Enlightenment many of Porphyry's arguments were revived and these, together with the conviction that predictive prophecy is impossible, still form the basis of liberal views on the book of Daniel.

**2.1.2 The Book's Claim That the Author Lived in the Sixth Century BC.** Several times Daniel refers to himself as the witness of the events he describes (7:2; 8:1, 15, 27; 9:22; 10:2, 7; 12:5) and claims that he was present in the royal court in Babylon from shortly after his exile from Judea in 605 to around 535 BC (Dan. 1:21; 10:1). The text contains many historical references that would have been unknown to a Second Century writer. These include the assertions that: a) Neo-Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30); b) Belshazzar was the second ruler of the Empire and governed Babylon in his father Nabonidus' place (implied by Belshazzar only being able to offer Daniel third position in the

kingdom - 5:7, 16, 29) (Pfeiffer, 1948: 757-759), and c) that Shushan was to be found in the province of Elam (8:2). In the Persian and Roman periods Shushan gave its name to the province in which it was located (Archer, 1985b: 408-409). In addition to the Daniel's own statements concerning himself we also have the testimony of Jesus in Matthew's gospel (Matt. 24:15). This establishes that he believed Daniel to be the book's author.

Against this it is sometimes argued that the fact that Daniel makes no mention of either the destruction of Jerusalem or the return of the exile in 539 BC counts against his being contemporary with these events. Such an argument carries no real weight as the focus of the book is on events in Babylon, not in Judea. It is not necessary for any piece of literature to be comprehensive in its scope for it to be historically accurate.

**2.1.3 Language.** The most significant feature about the language of the book of Daniel is the encapsulation of an Aramaic core (2:4b - 7:28) inside a Hebrew shell (1:1 - 2:4a; 8:1 - 12:13). It has been noted that Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the Ancient world (cf. 2 Kings 18:26). It was therefore appropriate that messages concerning the Gentile nations contained within the central section of the book be recorded in this language. The beginning and end of the book, which relate specifically to the Jewish nation, are written in Hebrew (Archer, 1985a: 6). The use of different languages is no longer seen as evidence of disunity, but a R.K. Harrison points out:

The device of enclosing the main body of a composition within the linguistic form of a contrasting style so as to heighten the effect of the work was commonly employed in the construction of single, integrated writings in the corpus of Mesopotamian literature (Harrison, 1970: 1109-1110).

Another biblical example of this technique is to be found in the book of Job, that encloses a poetic core (3:1 - 42:6) within a narrative introduction and epilogue (1:1- 2:13; 42:6-17). Ezra is written for the most part in late Hebrew, but also contains Aramaic sections (4:8 - 6:18; 7:12-26).

The presence of Persian and Greek loan words in Daniel (3:5, 15) has long been considered a problem for those who would argue for an early date for the book (so Pfeiffer, 1948: 756-757). However, further study has shown that linguistic arguments alone are inadequate when it comes to dating the book one way or the other (Kitchen, 1970: 79). Our knowledge of the development of the vocabularies of Aramaic and Hebrew from the 6th to the 2nd century BC is too fragmentary to prove that the text of Daniel contains "late" words. However, there are certain factors that favour an early date, such as the mistranslation in the Septuagint (dating from the Second Century BC) of some of the Aramaic words used in Daniel. Such an occurrence is more explicable if the translators were dealing with words with which they were no longer familiar (i.e. if the text of Daniel was from the 6th century) than if they were working on a contemporary manuscript. Persian words found in Daniel are traceable to the Old Persian Period which ended about 300 BC (Kitchen, 1970: 42-44).

The presence of three Greek loan words is easily explained, as all three refer to the names of musical instruments (lyre/zither, harp/trigon and pipe/bagpipes - 3:5, 10, 15). We now know that the Greeks traded extensively throughout the Ancient Near East from at least the 8th Century BC, and Greek mercenaries were common from the 7th Century. These facts, together with Daniel's position in the Royal Court (Dan. 2:49), the diplomatic centre of the

Empire, adequately explain the few loan words that he uses (Kitchen, 1970: 44-50). All of these occurrences are completely consistent with a 6th Century date.

**2.1.4 Apocalyptic Character.** The second half of the book of Daniel is written belongs to a literary genre known as apocalyptic. The characteristics of this genre have been defined by examining documents of the same type and so not every apocalyptic writing necessarily contains all the distinctive features. These are: **1) Revelatory Nature.** This is distinct from the nature of the revelations about the future given to the OT prophets which were intended to communicate the Word of the Lord with the aim of reminding the people of their covenant responsibilities. To this central message the foretelling of the future took second place. In apocalyptic, however, the events of future are themselves the centre of attention. **2) Artificial nature.** In general the visions and dreams the are literary fictions rather than genuine subjective experiences. There is nothing in Daniel to suggest that his visions were artificial - he recorded what he saw. **3) Pseudonymity.** The revelation is presented in the name of a long dead Old Testament character. It is probable that after the end of the prophetic era in order to be taken seriously writers felt it necessary to deceive their readership by ascribing their work to an author who had lived at a time when the Lord was indeed still speaking to his people. In addition it is important to note that outside of the book of Daniel the character of Daniel himself was unknown (see 9.1). In no way could a later writer have appealed to him to lend authority to his work. **4) Pseudo-Prophecy.** Having selected an ancient figure the author often rewrote history down to his own day and so presented it as a fulfilled prophecy. Characteristically the details of the “prophecy” became more vague the nearer one comes to the time of the actual writer of the work, and this is used by modern scholars to establish its date. This principle is often applied to the book of Daniel and it is argued that whilst Daniel 11:21-39 accurately describes the career of Antiochus Epiphanes, verses 40-45 are much less accurate, so indicating the true date when the book was written. However, it is more likely that just as the prophecy in 11:2-3 jumps 130 years, the fulfilment of vv. 40-45 occurs long after the Maccabean Period. Many commentators argue that the fulfilment of these verses is still future (e.g. Archer, 1985a: 146-148). **5) Symbolism.** The visions are cast in the form of complex symbols that often require interpretation (e.g. Zech. 6:1-8; Dan. 7:1, 15-28). **6) Dualism.** A sharp distinction is drawn both between this age and the age to come and between the power of God and the powers of evil that dominate this present age. This dualism becomes more pronounced in later apocalypses. It is discernible in the book of Daniel when it refers to the four human kingdoms (this age) and the rock representing God’s kingdom that will bring the human kingdoms to an end (2:31-35, 44-45a). Daniel also contains references to evil forces that oppose the will of God and require additional effort to overcome them (Dan. 10:13, 20) (see 7.1.3). **7) Lack of Historical Perspective in Eschatology.** Whereas the prophets saw a purpose in history leading eventually to a day of judgement and vindication of the upright, apocalyptic lacks the positive understanding that God is working out his purposes. **8) Pessimism.** The apocalyptic writings are not pessimistic in the sense of losing their faith in God, but rather in their despair of this present evil age in which he does not seem to act. In contrast to this pessimism it is clear that one of the themes of Daniel is the conviction that the God of Israel is also the Lord of history (2:37-38, 44, 47; 4:28-35; 5:18-21; 6:26) (see 7.1.2). **9) Determinism.** The plan of history is already written and cannot be altered and God himself is viewed as waiting for his plans to come to fruition rather than actively working them out. The writers of apocalypses usually assumed that they stand at the end of this history on the threshold of the new age. **10) Ethical Passivity.** Unlike

the writings of the prophets, reminding the people of their covenant obligations, apocalypses were directed to the righteous remnant and usually did not include moral exhortation because the remnant was believed to be those who did uphold the Law (Ladd, 1979: 151-156).

From this brief summary it is obvious that the book of Daniel contains only a few of the features found in the later apocalypses and so cannot be subject to the same generalisations that are applied to them. For example, many scholars who argue for a second century date point often argue that as Daniel contains apocalyptic it must therefore be pseudonymous. Such reasoning ignores the most likely explanation: that apocalyptic literature modelled itself, at least in part, on the book of Daniel not *vice versa*. The existence of other OT passages that contain elements of apocalyptic (e.g. Isa. 25-27; Zech. 9) that cannot be dated as late as the Second Century BC support this view of literary development (Wenham, 1977: 50).

**2.1.5 The Characters of the Kings.** Advocates of the second century date (beginning with Porphyry in the third century AD) argue that a Maccabean writer attempted to use his work to encourage the Jews to remain faithful during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. According to this view the characters of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius were all styled on Antiochus IV. Although there are many similarities between the kings, the differences are more significant, particularly their motives in persecuting the Jews (see Table 1 below). It should also be noted that Antiochus desecrated rather than destroyed the Temple as Nebuchadnezzar had done. Nor was he ever likely to issue a decree protecting the Jews from religious persecution (cf. Dan. 3:28-29).

**Table 1: A Comparison of the Characters of Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochus IV Epiphanes**

<b>Similarities</b>	<b>Nebuchadnezzar / Belshazzar / Darius the Mede</b>	<b>Antiochus IV Epiphanes</b>
Represented as God's instrument on a sinful nation	Dan. 1:1-2 (Nebuchadnezzar)	2 Macc. 5:17-20; 6:12-17
Proud and arrogant	Dan. 4:27, 31 (Nebuchadnezzar)	1 Macc. 1:21; 2 Macc. 5:21
Destroyed the Lord's Temple, removed the sacred vessels and put an end to worship there.	Dan. 1:2 (Nebuchadnezzar)	1 Macc. 1:20-24; 2 Macc. 6:1-2
<b>Dissimilarities</b>		
The reason behind their mistreatment of	The suffering of the Jews was a by-product rather than the purpose of the	Deliberately set out to compel their Jewish subjects to violate their

the Jews.	kings actions. In the case of Darius he is presented as being a victim of the intrigue of his courtiers against Daniel. At other times the Jews had freedom to practice their own religion (Dan. 2:12-13; 3:8-15; 6:3-9; cf. 1:11-16; 3:28-29;6:10b).	consciences by doing things forbidden in the Law (1 Macc. 1:41-64; 2 Macc. 6-7)
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**2.1.6 The Renaming of Daniel and his Friends.** Daniel 1:7 describes how Daniel and his four friends received new names, some containing the names of Babylonian and Sumerian deities (see Table 2). It seems improbable that a Second Century writer would fabricate such a story or allow it to pass without comment in a situation where the preservation of the purity of the Jewish faith was considered so critical.

**Table 2: The Meanings of the Names of Daniel and his Companions**

<b>Jewish Name</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Babylonian Name</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Daniel	My Judge is El	Belteshazzar	May (a god) protect his life
Hananiah	Yahweh has shown Grace	Shadrach	The Command of Aku
Mishael	Who is What El is?	Meshach	Who is What Aku is?
Azariah	Yahweh has Helped	Abednego	Servant of Nego

## 2.2 External Evidence

**2.2.1 Daniel 1:1.** The contents of the first verse in Daniel have been challenged on two counts. It is often claimed that the date given by Daniel for the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign contradicts that given by Jeremiah (so Pfeiffer, 1948: 756) (see Table 3). This objection is easily answered as the Babylonians used the Accession year system of dating (also known as post-dating) and the Judeans the non-Accession year system (or antedating). It is not surprising that Daniel follows the Babylonian system and therefore dates Jehoiakim's reign as being one year less than that given by Jeremiah.

**Table 3: Apparent Contradictions Between Dates Given By Jeremiah and Daniel**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Verse</b>	<b>Judah</b>	<b>Babylon</b>
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Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem	605	Dan. 1:1	3rd year of Jehoiakim	1st year of Nebuchadnezzar
Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem.	605	Jer 25:1	4th year of Jehoiakim	1st year of Nebuchadnezzar
Battle of Carchemish	605	Jer 46:2	4th Year of Jehoiakim	-

The second objection involves the circumstances of Daniel's exile to Babylon. There is no extrabiblical evidence for a siege of Jerusalem in 605 BC, but we do know from the *Babylonian Chronicle* that Nebuchadnezzar was in the area, pursuing the remnants of the Egyptian army after his victory at Carchemish (see Exile 4.1). Although our only evidence for this event comes from Scripture there is no real reason, apart from critical presuppositions, why it could not be an accurate account (Wiseman, 1970: 16-18).

**2.2.2 The Identity of Darius the Mede.** Daniel provides us with a number of facts about Nabonidus' successor to the throne of Babylon: i) His name was Darius; ii) He was the son of Xerxes; iii) he was a Mede (Dan. 9:1), and iv) he began to rule when he was 62 years old (6:1). Despite this no extrabiblical evidence that such a person existed. It is generally agreed that this remains the strongest evidence against a seventh century origin for the book of Daniel (Wiseman, 1970: 9). Two main solutions have been suggested by conservative scholars. Both argue that the name Darius was a honorific title just as "Caesar" and "Augustus" was in the Roman Empire (Hoerth, 1998: 384). a) The first of these explanations sees Darius is another name for Gorbryas (Gubaru), a man who played a significant part both in the capture of Babylon and later its new administration where he served as provincial governor. The use of double throne names is not without precedent (Tiglath-pileser of Assyria=Pul in 2 Kings 15:19-29; cf. 1 Chron. 5:26). Factors which make this identification doubtful are that facts that Gorbryas is never described elsewhere as the son of Xerxes, of 62 years of age or of Median descent. The use of a royal title by a governor of a city is also without precedent and there is no evidence than Gorbryas ever bore such a title at any time in his life. Most seriously of all this identification is contradicted by extant inscriptions which portray Gorbryas as a Persian (Wiseman, 1970: 10-12). b) A more likely theory is that of D.J. Wiseman that Darius was a "throne name" or honorific title for Cyrus. Cyrus was referred to by Nabonidas in 546 as "the king of the Medes", only four years after Cyrus' conquest of the Median Empire. There is also some evidence that Cyrus was descended from the Medes on his father's side and was probably about 62 when he captured Babylon. The name Xerxes (Ahasuerus) may also be an ancient royal title, which would solve the remaining difficulty. While the theory is not without its weaknesses (e.g. Xerxes occurs in Ezra 4:6 and throughout the book of Esther as a real name) it remains the best explanation pending the discovery of further relevant archaeological evidence (Wiseman, 1970: 12-16).

**2.2.3 Acceptance into the Jewish Canon.** The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that Daniel shaped the theology of the Qumran Community. They referred to Daniel as "the Prophet" and accepted his writings as authoritative, indicating that they predated the founding of the community in the Second Century BC (Beckwith, 1985: 78). Writing in the First Century AD the former Pharisee Josephus also called Daniel a prophet (*Antiquities*, 10.249), as "...one of

the greatest of the prophets...” (11.266) and his writings as being “among our ancient books” (10.218).

A number of other citations found in Intertestamental literature are significant (see Table 4 below). If the writer of 1 Enoch borrowed from Daniel then it would demonstrate that that book was considered authoritative prior to 150 BC (Harrison, 1970: 1107). In the same way the writer of 1 Maccabees refers to Daniel and his friends as famous ancestors - hardly the language one would expect if the stories of their deeds had only recently been composed.

**Table 4: Extrabiblical Evidence For a Seventh Century Date For the Book of Daniel**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Quotation (given in full when space permits)</b>	<b>Corresponding Quotation(s) from Daniel</b>
1 Enoch	c. 150 BC	And I looked and saw therein a lofty throne: its appearance was as crystal, and the wheels thereof as the shining sun, and there was the vision of cherubim. And from underneath the throne came streams of flaming fire so that I could not look thereon. And the Great Glory sat thereon, and His raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than any snow. None of the angels could enter and could behold His face by reason of the magnificence and glory and no flesh could behold Him. (14:18-22).	As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgement, and the books were opened. (7:9-10).
1 Maccabees	c. 120 BC	“Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations.... Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions. “And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength (2:51-60).	3:24-26; 6:21-22.
3 Maccabees	c.100 BC	The three companions in Babylon who had voluntarily surrendered their lives to the flames so as not to serve vain things, you rescued unharmed, even to a hair, moistening the fiery furnace with dew and turning the flame against all their enemies. (v.6)	Dan. 3:13-27
		Daniel, who through envious slanders was thrown down into the ground to lions as food for wild animals, you brought up to the light unharmed. (v.7)	Dan. 6:1-24

4 Macc.	c.19 - 54 AD	Thus I have demonstrated not only that men have ruled over the emotions, but also that a woman has despised the fiercest tortures. The lions surrounding Daniel were not so savage, nor was the raging fiery furnace of Mishael so intensely hot, as was her innate parental love, inflamed as she saw her seven sons tortured in such varied ways. (16:2-3)	Dan. 3:1-30; 6:1-24
	(?)	Daniel the righteous was thrown to the lions, and Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were hurled into the fiery furnace and endured it for the sake of God. (16:21)	Dan. 3:1-30; 6:1-24
		He praised Daniel in the den of the lions and blessed him. (18:13)	Dan. 6:1-24
Matt. 24:15	c.70 AD	So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand),	Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11
Hebrews 11:33f	c.60 -90 AD	...who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, <b>shut the mouths of lions...</b>	Dan. 6:1-24
Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> 10.186-263	c.90 AD	[Josephus provides a commentary on the text of Daniel.]	

Bible quotations taken from the *NRSV*.

### 3 Author

The book claims to have been written by a man named Daniel, who was brought from Jerusalem in the year 605 BC (Dan. 1:1-2) and served the kings of Babylon and later Persia until 539 BC (1:21). The first six chapters of the book, written contain a narrative that describes several significant events that took place in Babylon in which Daniel and his three fellow exiles had a part. Wishing to harness the best minds of his subject peoples Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the most promising of the Judean exiles be selected for training for royal service (1:3-5). Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were selected and received new Babylonian names (see Table 2). Like Joseph before them they accepted their new names without protest (1:6-7; cf. Gen. 41:45), but when presented with food from the king's table they refused to eat it. The text is clear that eating such food would have led to defilement for the Hebrews, but the reason for this defilement is less certain. It is most likely that food was rejected because of its source (the Kings table) rather because of its content (unclean or non-kosher meats). In the Ancient Near East accepting table fellowship was indicative of entering into a covenant relationship with your host (Gen. 31:54; Exod 24:9-11; Neh. 8:9-12; cf. Matt. 26:26-28). In order to remain free to serve the Lord, Daniel

and his friends refused to be tempted by the choice food (cf. Gen 3:6) (Baldwin, 1978: 83). This interpretation is further supported by the fact that later in his career Daniel was partaking of choice food, meat and wine (10:3). Presumably only its source is different to that mentioned in Chapter 1. The guard who had been set over the four Hebrews was understandably reluctant to restrict their diet to vegetables as they requested, because he was responsible for their well-being. Daniel wisely suggested that they be allowed ten days to prove their case and, when they did indeed appear better nourished than the other young men, they won the right to not to eat the royal food. At the end of their period of training they were found to be ten times better than all of the magicians and enchanters in the realm of Babylon (1:11-20).

In the year 604 BC, the year after Daniel was taken to Babylon Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. It is unclear whether when he awoke he simply could not remember it or was perhaps seeking to test the powers of his advisors. In any event the court astrologers assured him that no one could interpret a dream unless the contents of the dream were first recounted to them. In a fit of rage Nebuchadnezzar ordered that all the wise men be put to death, including Daniel and his friends, who were not present in the court at that time. When Daniel learnt of the king's decision he went to the king and asked that he might be given time to interpret the dream. Returning to his friends the four joined together in prayer for God's mercy and that night the dream was revealed to Daniel. Appearing before the king Daniel first made clear that God alone could do what Nebuchadnezzar asked (cf. Gen. 41:16). He then went on to recount the dream of a statue and interpret it as foretelling the four world empires that were to come (including that of Babylon), followed by the kingdom of God. After this Daniel was placed over all the wise men of Babylon and remained in the royal court while his friends took up senior administrative posts elsewhere in the Empire (2:1-49).

Nebuchadnezzar had cause to call upon Daniel's services as an interpreter of dreams when once again his other advisors failed. The interpretation showed that unlike the earlier dream this one referred to Nebuchadnezzar personally rather than to his Empire. The king's pride in his accomplishments was about to bring about a period of chastisement during which he would lose his mind and be driven from position of power. Daniel warned the king that the dream would be fulfilled unless Nebuchadnezzar repented of his wickedness (4:1-27). However, his advice was soon forgotten and the dream fulfilled. At the end of seven "times" Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that his life was in God's hands, was restored and gave praise to God (4:28-37). No further events dating from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar are recorded.

In 553 BC Belshazzar was made regent of Babylon by his father Nabonidus. Later in that same year Daniel had a dream of four beasts followed by the establishment of God's rule on earth. The vision deeply affected Daniel and left him drained and troubled (7:1-28). Two years later (in around 551) he had another vision, this time of a Ram and a He-goat. This vision was interpreted by the "man" Gabriel (8:16), who explained that it referred to the events to come in the last days. Again the experience had a dramatic effect upon Daniel, who was left exhausted and ill for days afterward (8:27). During the reign of Belshazzar it would seem that Daniel did not play a prominent role in the royal court. When Belshazzar was confronted with a disembodied hand writing a mysterious message on the palace wall it was left to the queen mother (Belshazzar's mother) (Baldwin, 1978: 122) to remind the court of the deeds of Daniel during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (5:1-13). Daniel was duly called and interpreted the four words written on the wall as a warning that the Empire of Babylon was

about to come to an end. As a reward Belshazzar made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom, the highest honour he could grant, as he himself was only the second ruler. True to Daniel's interpretation before that night was over Belshazzar was dead and Cyrus took the city (5:13-31).

Under the new Persian administration Daniel found himself appointed one of the three administrators in charge of the 120 satraps who ran the affairs of the kingdom. Such was his skill that he aroused the jealousy of his co-workers who devised a plot to use his devotion to the Lord against him, since there were no other grounds for accusing him. They approached the king and effectively outlawed the worship of any God but Cyrus. Daniel quietly disregarded the command and continued in his usual routine of praying toward Jerusalem three times a day. His enemies knew about this and soon brought his activity to the notice of the king, who reluctantly agreed to carry out the death sentence on Daniel, for the Persian monarchs were not above the law. Daniel was protected from the lions by an angel, but the next morning his enemies received the punishment that they had planned for Daniel (6:1-28). Later, in the first year of Cyrus' reign Daniel, realising from his study of the prophet Jeremiah that the seventy years for Babylon had now been fulfilled (Jer. 25:11; 29:10) Daniel turned to the Lord in prayer to fulfil the rest of Jeremiah's injunction which required repentance on behalf of the people of Israel (29:11-14) (see EXILE 6.1). Standing as Israel's representative Daniel prayed a prayer of repentance recalling the covenant and the consequences of breaking it. Calling upon the Lord's great compassion he pleaded that the Lord might turn from his wrath and restore both his people and his city Jerusalem (Dan. 9:1-19). The Lord's answer was brought once more by Gabriel, who spoke of some of the events that were to take place in Jerusalem in the future (9:20-27).

Daniel's last recorded vision took place two years later in about 536 BC, two years after his retirement from the royal court (1:21) by which time Daniel must have been an old man. Following a period of mourning and fasting Daniel was confronted with a vision of a man, whom he alone saw. The experience once again overwhelmed the ageing prophet, but the man touched him and gave him the strength he needed (10:1-20). The man spoke of events yet to come during the Persian Empire and the Greek Empire that followed, looking forward to the day when the dead would rise. Daniel never received the full explanation for what he saw, because what he saw referred to the end times (10:21-12:13). He was truly great among the heroes of old who "...administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions..." (Heb. 11:33).

## 4 *Canonicity*

Writing in 1909 in his book *The Canon of the Old Testament* H.E. Ryle put forward the theory of the three stage development of the Hebrew canon. He argued that first the Pentateuch, then the Prophets and finally the Writings were produced and accepted as canonical. Daniel was placed with the Writings by the Jews because it was not in existence when the other prophetic books were accepted as canonical (Beckwith, 1985: 4). Ryle's theory became widely accepted, but there are now serious doubts about the validity of his arguments. There are other equally plausible reasons why Daniel was not included amongst

the prophets. For example, Daniel may have been viewed as a being one of the books of wisdom, like Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, after all “...the words ‘wise’ and ‘wisdom’ occur in the book twenty-six times.” (Beckwith, 1985: 138). More significantly, we know from Josephus’ description of the Jewish canon, dating from the 1st Century AD, that the book of Daniel was indeed counted as one of the prophets (Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.38-39). As Josephus’ list predated that given by the Masoretes by at least six centuries, so arguments based on the latter’s division of the canon must carry little weight (Archer, 1985a: 7-8).

## 5 Structure

On the simplest level the book of Daniel might be divided by language (see 2.1.3), or by genre: Narrative (chapters 1-6) and apocalyptic (chapter 7-12) (see 2.1.4). Closer examination demonstrates a complex literary structure throughout the book (see Table 5). Such a structure constitutes strong evidence for the book’s unity.

**Table 5: The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel**

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Common Themes</b>	<b>Section 2</b>
<p><b>Chapter 1</b></p> <p>Nebuchadnezzar places God’s vessels in his idol’s temple.</p> <p>Daniel and others refuse in pagan impurities.</p> <p>Court officials sympathetic.</p> <p>Daniel and his colleagues physical and mental powers vindicated.</p> <p>They are promoted to high office.</p>	<p><b>The end of one kingdom and the beginnings of another</b></p>	<p><b>Chapter 6</b></p> <p>Darius bans prayer to God for thirty days.</p> <p>Daniel refuses to cease practising the Jewish religion.</p> <p>Court officials intrigue against him.</p> <p>Daniel’s political loyalty to the king vindicated.</p> <p>He is restored to high office.</p>
<p><b>Chapters 2-3</b></p> <p>A survey of the whole course of Gentile imperial power.</p> <p>Four empires in the form of a man.</p> <p>The fatal weakness: an incoherent mixture of iron and clay in the feet.</p> <p>The whole man destroyed by the stone cut out by divine power. The universal Messianic kingdom is set up.</p> <p>Nebuchadnezzar thinks that “no</p>	<p><b>An overview of human history and the establishment of God’s Kingdom</b></p>	<p><b>Chapter 7-8</b></p> <p>A survey of the whole course of Gentile imperial power.</p> <p>Four empires in the form of wild beasts.</p> <p>The hideous strength: a frightening mixture of animal destructiveness with human intelligence.</p> <p>The final beast destroyed and universal dominion given to the Son of Man.</p> <p>The little horn: “none can deliver out of his</p>

<p>god can deliver (the Jews) out of his hand”.</p> <p>He commands them to worship his god.</p> <p>The Jews defy him.</p> <p>They are preserved in the fiery furnace.</p> <p>God’s ability to deliver is thereby vindicated.</p>		<p>hand”.</p> <p>He stops the Jews worship of their God, and defies God himself.</p> <p>God’s sanctuary and truth are finally vindicated.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 4</b></p> <p>The glory of Babylon.</p> <p>Nebuchadnezzar is warned that he deserves discipline.</p> <p>He persists in pride, is chastised, and his chastisement lasts for seven times.</p> <p>He is then restored.</p>	<p><b>God’s Discipline and Human Pride</b></p>	<p><b>Chapter 9</b></p> <p>The desolations of Jerusalem: Israel’s sins have brought on them the curse warned of in the OT.</p> <p>Jerusalem will be restored, but Israel’s persistence in sin will bring on further desolations lasting to the end of 70 x 7 years.</p> <p>Then Jerusalem will be finally restored.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 5</b></p> <p>Belshazzar makes a god of his pleasures, but still recognises the god of stone, etc.</p> <p>Belshazzar sacrilegiously drinks from the Temple vessels</p> <p>The writing on the wall.</p> <p>The end of Belshazzar and the end of the Babylonian empire.</p>	<p><b>The last and most evil king of the human kingdom</b></p>	<p><b>Chapter 10-12</b></p> <p>The king exalts himself above every god, and regards no god.</p> <p>Antiochus sets up the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary (11:31)</p> <p>The Writing of Truth.</p> <p>The series of apparent “ends” leading up to “the time of the end” and eventually to The End itself.</p>

Based on Gooding, 1981: 43-79.

## 6 Chronology

Archaeological discoveries, particularly that of the *Babylonian Chronicle* mean that we now know a tremendous amount about the events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. A summary of the major events in given in Table 6.

**Table 6: The Chronology of the Book of Daniel**

Date	Events
605	Necho is defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish. Nabopolassar dies (August 16th) and is succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar (in September). While he is being crowned king in

	Babylon his army besieges Jerusalem for the first time. They deport some of the young men of the nobility (including Daniel) and remove some of the gold articles from the Temple (Dan. 1:1-4).
604	Nebuchadnezzar takes control of the Philistine Plain. Judah becomes a vassal of Babylon (2 Kings 24:7).
603	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image (Dan. 2:1-49).
603-599/598	Nebuchadnezzar campaigns in Hattu
601	Nebuchadnezzar is defeated by Necho on the Egyptian border and forced to retreat. Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon along with several other vassal states (against the advice of Jeremiah).
598	Jerusalem is besieged for the second time. Jehoiakim dies during the siege (December 7th) and is succeeded by his son Jehoiachin.
598-597	Royal inscription testifies to Nebuchadnezzar's building activities.
597	After three months the city surrenders to Babylonian forces (March 16th). Nebuchadnezzar deports the king, royal officials, craftsmen and community leaders to Babylon, as well as the golden articles from the Temple. Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah (renamed Zedekiah) becomes Nebuchadnezzar's vassal (2 Kings 24:17).
597-596/95	Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns to Hattu and Tigris.
595-594	Rebellions in Nebuchadnezzar's army. Revolt plans among the exiles spread to Judah. Jeremiah's Letters to the Exiles. Nebuchadnezzar marches to Hattu.
594/593	Campaign to Hattu.
593/592	Royal inscription testifies to Nebuchadnezzar's building activity.
590	Zedekiah rebels against Babylon against the advice of Jeremiah.
589	Jerusalem is besieged for the third time (2 Kings 25:1).
586	Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar in late July/August. Zedekiah is captured, blinded and deported. All but the poorest people in the land go into exile. The city, palace and Temple are burnt and the walls cast down. Gedeliah appointed Governor of Judah.
586-573/72	Nebuchadnezzar besieges Tyre for thirteen years.
568-567	Nebuchadnezzar attacks Egypt.
562	Nebuchadnezzar dies and is succeeded by Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach).
561	Amel-Marduk releases Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:27-30).
560	Amel-Marduk assassinated and his brother-in-law Neriglissar takes the throne.

556	Neriglissar dies and his infant son Labashi-Marduk loses the throne to Nabonidus.
553	Nabonidus makes Belshazzar coregent and departs Babylon for Tema in Arabia. Daniel's dream of the four beasts (Dan. 7:1-27).
550	Cyrus defeats the Medes and becomes king of both the Medes and the Persians. Daniel's dream of the Ram, the He-Goat and the Little Horn (Dan. 8:1-27).
546	Cyrus defeats the army of Lydia and enters southern Babylonia.
543	Nabonidus returns to Babylon to counter Cyrus' advance.
539	Cyrus captures Babylon and Belshazzar is killed, Nabonidus captured. Cyrus issues decree to allow Exiles to return. Daniel's prayer for the restoration of Israel (Dan. 9:1-26). Daniel retires from Royal service (Dan. 1:21).
537	Daniel's visions of future battles and the end times (Dan. 10:1; 11-12).
535-534	Daniel's vision of a man (Dan. 10:1-21).

Table based on Jonsson, 1998: 254.

## 7 Theology

### 7.1 Major Themes.

**7.1.1 The Covenant-Keeping God.** The opening verses of the book make clear that Nebuchadnezzar was able to conquer Jerusalem because the Lord allowed him to (Dan. 1:2), recalling the covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. In his prayer of repentance (directed toward the site of the Temple - Dan. 6:10) Daniel specifically refers to Israel's sin and failure to live up to her covenant obligations (9:4-11a). The EXILE, he acknowledges, was God's judgement on the people which they fully deserved (9:11b-15; cf. Lev. 26:37-39; Deut. 4:27-28; 28:63). However, Daniel knew that that was not the end of the story, for after judgement the Lord promised both forgiveness and restoration (Dan. 9:15-16; cf. Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 4:29-31; 2 Chron. 7:14).

**7.1.2 Universal Rule of Yahweh.** Although the narrative of the book centres around a group of Hebrews in Babylon the book's perspective is not simply concerned either with their fate, or even that of their people; it is universal in scope. God is shown to be working at the very heart of a pagan empire and its rulers are forced to acknowledge that he is Lord of kings and Lord of lords. It is he who raises up and puts down rulers and it is he alone who directs the course of history (as the visions and dreams demonstrate). Although they might have taken the sacred objects from the temple with impunity when they are used in a sacrilegious manner Yahweh proves himself more than capable of defending his honour (5:1-30).

**7.1.3 God's Rule is Not Unopposed.** God's will is opposed both in the heavens and on earth. When Daniel prayed and fasted for 21 days for insight God's answer was given on the first day he prayed. However, we are told that the Prince of Persia opposed God's messenger

until another angel (Michael) was sent to help. Throughout that time Daniel continued to fast, unaware why he had not had an answer to his request (10:1, 12-14). On earth God's will is opposed by kings and rulers, some of whom can be turned to repentance (4:34-35), some of whom cannot (5:1-4, 30; 11:36-38).

**7.1.4 Suffering.** Being a believer in Yahweh does not guarantee a life free from suffering. Israel suffered because of military conquest, but Daniel and his friends had to choose between their faith and an easy life (3:8-23; 6:3-12). Further defeats are foretold for Israel, but God will ultimately vindicate them (7:21-25; 8:23-25; 9:26; 11:36-45; 12:7b) and bring every deed to judgement (5:2-6, 22-30; 6:24; 7:9-10; 12:1-3).

**7.1.5 God is in Control of Human History.** Behind the scenes of history the Lord is working out his purposes (2:44). The kings of the earth rule by his will (2:37-38, 47; 4:28-35; 5:18-21; 6:26) and their end is already known (2:31-35, 44-45)

**7.2 Is Daniel's Theology Unique?** The book of Daniel is sometimes seen as standing alone amongst the Old Testament writings. The following section examines five important themes to see if this is the case.

**Table 7: A Comparison of the Important Elements of Daniel's Theology with Other Old Testament Passages**

Element	Daniel	Other OT References
Angelic Messengers	3:28; 6:22; 7:16; 8:16-17; 9:22; 10:18-19.	Gen. 16:7; 18:2; 19:1; Josh. 5:13-14; Judges 2:1; 1 Kings 19:5; Zech. 2:3; 3:1; 6:12; 9:9; 13:1; 14:5
Resurrection	12:2	Job 19:25-26; Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37; Hos. 13:14
Messiah	7:13; 9:26	Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:11-17; Ezek. 34:23-31; Mic. 5:2; Mal. 3:1; 4:2
Last Judgement	7:9-10; 12:1-2	Psalm 96:10, 12-13; Joel 3:2; Mal. 3:1-5
Book of Life	7:10; 12:1	Exod. 32:32-33; Isa. 4:3; 65:6; Psalm 69:28; Mal 3:16

**7.2.1 Angels.** The Old Testament contains numerous references to angelic activity. Angels at various times met, guided (24:7), ate (Gen. 18:2-8) and even wrestled with the Patriarchs (32:24-30); they pronounced and executed judgement (Judges 2:1-4; 1 Chron. 21:15), fought on behalf of Israel (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 32:21), as well as guiding (2 Kings 1:3, 15) and sustaining the Lord's servants (1 Kings 19:5-8; Psalm 34:7). We see many of the same angelic activities evidenced in Daniel. Angel protected Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

from the fire (Dan. 3:28), shut the mouths of the lions (6:22), gave Daniel strength (10:18-19) and interpreted Daniel's visions (7:16; 8:16-17; 9:22). However, there is at least one new element in Daniel's understanding of angels, that of demographic responsibility. Chapter 10:13 refers to a "prince of the Persian kingdom" who resisted the angelic messenger sent to Daniel. The messenger was assisted by Michael, an angel who has special responsibility for protecting Israel (10:13, 21; 12:1). Also mentioned is the prince of Greece, who will succeed the prince of Persia in opposing the people of God (10:21). Although these passages are popularly understood as teaching that these spirits are geographically territorial rather than demographic, such a teaching can scarcely be supported from this passage. After all Michael, the prince of Israel, came to the aid of the messenger sent to Daniel in Babylon, well outside the geographic border of Israel at any point in that nations history (Page, 1995: 63-65; Payne, 1962: 289).

**7.2.2 Resurrection.** There are a number of passages in the Old Testament that deal with the resurrection of the dead. Hosea 13:14 & Ezekiel 37:11-14 refer to the raising of all Israel, while Isaiah 26:19 refers only to the righteous. Daniel 12:2 is the only reference in the Old Testament in which both righteous and unrighteous are resurrected.

**7.2.3 Messiah.** Daniel continues the developing revelation of the person of the Messiah, who is referred to explicitly in 9:26. While there is no direct connection made with the "son of man" of 7:13 in the book the two figures were equated in the Intertestamental Period (1 Enoch 48:2, 10) and by Jesus (Matt. 23:63; cf. Mark 14:62). The book of Daniel portrays the Messiah as a suffering ("cut off" - 9:26), a common theme in other Messianic passages (Isa. 52:13-53:12). As the "son of man" he is portrayed as having full access to the presence of the Ancient of Days and exercises the prerogatives of deity (7:13-14).

**7.2.4 Last Judgement.** Chapter 7:9-10 provides a vivid illustration of God's judgement metered out against his enemies. We learn from 12:1-2 that this judgement is to take place following the resurrection of the dead (see 7.2.3). Once again, Daniel's revelation adds to and compliments the revelation of the other prophets (see Table 7).

**7.2.5 Book of Life.** Following on chronologically in the process of judgement that Daniel describes, "books" being opened (7:10) though the contents on these books is not mentioned. Chapter 12:1 refers to a book in which the names of the righteous are written. Very similar ideas are expressed very early in the Old Testament when the Lord refers to a book that only contains the names of the righteous (Exod. 32:32-33; cf. Psalm 69:28). Isaiah mentions a record of those worthy of life in the age to come (Isa. 4:3) and Mal 3:16 written at the very close of the Old Testament revelatory period speaks of a "...book of remembrance [that] was written before him of those who revered the LORD and thought on his name." [brackets mine]. So we might conclude that the theology of Daniel is marks a development rather than an innovation in the theological concepts he makes use of.

**Table 8: A Comparison of Two Possible Interpretations of Daniel's Visions of the Four Empires**

<b>Kingdom</b>	<b>Robert J.M. Gurney &amp; John</b>	<b>Gleason L. Archer</b>
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	<b>H. Walton</b>	
Head of Gold / a lion with the wings of an eagle (Dan. 2:32 / 7:4)	<b>Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (605-562).</b> Daniel interprets the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzars as referring to the king <i>himself</i> (Dan. 2:36-38). The lion and the eagle are both used in Scripture to represent the king of the wild animals and king of birds respectively (cf. Ezek. 1:10). Scripture also refers to his kingdom elsewhere as being like a lion (Jer. 4:6-7; 25:38; 47:19; 50:17, 44) and an eagle(s) (Jer. 4:13; 47:22) (Gurney, 1977). The plucking of the eagles wings and the giving to it of a mans heart represents Gods humbling of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:28-37) (Gurney, 1977: 42).	<b>Babylon (605-539).</b> Others accept the identification with Babylon given by Daniel (see left), but include the Neo-Babylonian kings who reigned after Nebuchadnezzar until the time of Cyrus (Archer, 1985a: 46, 85-86).
Chest and arms of silver / a bear raised up on one of its sides (Dan. 2:32 / 7:5).	<b>Median Empire (562-550).</b> The bear lacked the lions great speed, but was still a creature that commanded fear and respect. The two halves of the bear symbolise its period of powerful independent rule (the side that is raised up), while the lower half its later partnership with the Persians, when it was the junior partner. The three ribs in the bears mouth represent the three great victories that this empire won over Urartu, Mannaea and the Scythians. These three kingdoms are mentioned in Jeremiah 51:27-29 (Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz) as being partners with the king of the Medes against Babylon (cf. Isa. 13:17) (Gurney, 1977: 43). The Median Empire was short-lived, a fact possibly hinted at by Daniels cursory treatment of it (Dan. 2:39) (Gurney, 1977: 42). Nevertheless it did pose a considerable threat to Nebuchadnezzars Empire, as is evidenced by the fortifications that he built to defend his northern frontier from them (Ghirshman, 1954: 113).	<b>Medo-Persia (539 - July 331).</b> The bear is lob-sided, symbolising the alliance between Media and Persia that Cyrus initiated. In this alliance Persia was the dominant partner. The three ribs in the bears mouth represent the three great victories that this empire won over Lydia (546), Babylon (539) and Egypt (525) (Archer, 1985a: 25, 47, 86).
Belly and thighs of bronze / leopard with four wings (Dan. 2:32 / 7:6).	<b>Persian Empire (550 - July 331).</b> Before Media could capture Babylon it was overcome by the Persians, led by Cyrus of Elam, a Median vassal state. This is reflected in Isaiah 21:2 where both nations are called to attack Babylon (which falls in v. 9) (Gurney, 1977: 43). Daniel says that this empire would rule over the whole earth (2:39),	<b>Greek Empire (July 331 - 27 BC).</b> Alexander the Great invaded Persia in 334 and by 331 succeeded in conquering it. Following his death in 323 his vast empire was divided between his four generals: Antipater (Macedon-Greece); Lysimachus (Thrace-Asia Minor); Seleucius (Asia), and Ptolemy (Egypt. Cyrenaica and

	<p>an accurate description of the Persian Empire which was greater in extent than any that followed it (Gurney, 1977: 42), its four wings representing the four corners of the earth (cf. Psalm 104:3; Zech. 2:6). The speed of Cyrus victories is symbolised by the choice of animal - a leopard. The four wings also symbolise the four great Persian kings Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes during whose reigns the Empire grew and expanded (Dan. 11:2) (Gurney, 1977: 43-44). This kingdom is also symbolised by the ram from Elam (Cyrus home) with two unequal horns - indicating Persias unequal partnership with Media (8:1-4, 20).</p>	<p>Palestine), symbolised by the four wings and four heads. (Archer, 1985a: 47, 86). The period ended in 27 BC when the last vestige of the Greek Empire in Egypt came under Roman rule.</p>
<p>Legs of iron with feet of iron mixed with baked clay / Terrifying and frightening beast (2:33 / 7:7).</p>	<p><b>Greek Empire July 331 - 27 BC.</b> The Greeks led by Alexander the Great conquered almost the entire Persian Empire, but only exceeded its ancient borders in Greece and East of the Indus River. Unlike the Roman Empire that followed it the Greeks conquered Babylon, Persia and Media, a requirement for it to fulfil Daniel 2:40. Within a few years Alexander died and his empire was split into four (cf. 8:5-8). This is foreseen in the prophecies that fourth kingdom would have two distinct phases, the first characterised by strength (2:33, 40; 7:7, 23; 8:7), the second by division (2:41-43; 8:8). The ten horns (7:7, 20, 24) represent the ten independent states established in the third Century BC: Ptolemaic Egypt; Seleucia; Macedon; Pergamum; Pontus; Bithynia; Cappadocia; Armenia, Parthia and Bactria (Walton, 1986: 32). Three of these horns (Cappadocia, Armenia and Parthia) were defeated by Antiochus the Great (7:8, 20, 24). The little horn (7:8; cf. 8:6-11) refers to Antiochus the Great's son, Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of the Seleucids, and his desecration of the Temple in the Second Century BC (Walton, 1986: 33-34). Significantly, the Greek Empire came to an end in 27 BC, when Rome made Egypt part of its Empire. So the fourth kingdom was destroyed before Christ came to establish the kingdom of God (2:34-35; 7:11-14). The end of the fourth Empire is described in the same terms as the</p>	<p><b>Roman Empire (27 BC -).</b> The power and ferocity of this kingdom matches the might of Imperial Rome. Ten toes / horns find no exact match in the history of the Roman Empire and so many commentators of the dispensational view interpret them as the ten nations of a confederation to be formed in the Last Days - the revived Roman Empire. The little horn is the Antichrist, the world dictator of the last days (Archer, 1985a: 25, 47-48, 86-87, 93-94).</p>

	ruler of the kingdom identified by Daniel as Greece (8:21). Both will be destroyed: Antiochus not by human hands, and the fourth Empire by a stone cut not by human hands (8:25; cf. 2:34).	
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## 8 *The Interpretation of Daniel's Visions*

**8.1 The Identity of the Four World Empires.** As has already been noted, the book of Daniel repeats a number of visions using different imagery. The interpretation of these visions has varied, but fortunately key sections are explained for the reader within the book itself. As Table 8 illustrates the two prophecies given in Daniel 2 and 7 refer to the same four world empires. The book itself identifies the first of these empires as Neo-Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:38). Up to the 18th Century the majority view was that the next three were Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, a view still held by most Conservative scholars. Since the Enlightenment most liberal scholars have argued for Media, Persia and Greece (Yamauchi, 1990: 57-58). Liberals have argued that Media was the second kingdom on the basis of the strong correlation between Daniel 11-12 and the events of the Maccabean period. Characteristically they argue that Daniel was historically inaccurate about Media, which was then thought never to have existed as a world empire (Keil & Delitzsch, 1988: 249), and was writing at the time of the Maccabean revolt. However, a number of Conservatives have recently argued on the basis of new information about the Median Empire that it was the second kingdom. As Table 8 shows this view is worthy of serious consideration.

The pattern of four empires or ages symbolised by metals of decreasing worth occurs in numerous writings from the Ancient Near East (e.g. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 106-201). While it is true that Media did not exist for more than 12 years between the time of the death of Nebuchadnezzar and its defeat by Cyrus, it is probable that Daniel nevertheless used it to complete this recognised four-kingdoms motif. The record of the succession of Darius the Mede (possibly as throne name of Cyrus - 2.2.2) to the throne of Babylon fulfils Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 5:31).

**8.2 Nebuchadnezzar's Madness.** Unlike the other dreams and prophecies of the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a tree contains no reference to the year in which it occurred (cf. Dan. 2:1; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1-2; 10:1; 11:1). From its content we can deduce that it must have taken place toward the end of the King's reign, because it refers to his pride in all his building projects (4:30). Archaeological discoveries have provided a large amount of background information about the career of Nebuchadnezzar, as Table 6 shows. There is no reference to a period of madness in the extant material and neither is there a period of seven years when there was no activity recorded. While the absence of a reference to his illness is explicable, the lack of a seven year gap is not, leading to the obvious conclusion that (if the Biblical record is to be counted as trustworthy) the seven "times" referred to were not periods of years. The largest gap in the records is six years from 568/67 - 562/61. However this

occurred at the very end of the Nebuchadnezzar's reign and as Jonsson points out, the text implies that he lived for a period after his restoration (Dan. 4:26, 36) (Jonsson, 1998: 246-256).

**8.3 Daniel's Seventy Weeks: Three Views.** A number of interpretations have been suggested of the prophecy given to Daniel by Gabriel (Dan. 9:25-27).

**8.3.1 The Seventy Weeks Refer to the Maccabean Period.** This interpretation takes the seventy "sevens" symbolically. As is indicated in Table 9 below the starting date for the prophecy depends on which decree it refers to. The "anointed leader" is Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1) and the "anointed" of v. 26 is taken to refer to the High Priest Onias III (the "Prince of the Covenant" of Dan. 11:22 [?]). In 172 BC Onias was removed from office and killed the following year (2 Macc. 4:34), an event which is viewed as a fulfilment of the anointed one being "cut off" (Dan. 9:27) (Goldingay, 1989: 260-263).

Although this interpretation finds a fulfilment for the "abomination of desolation" in Antiochus' desecration of the temple, it falls short on a number of other counts. First of all, it finds no fulfilment for v. 24 which contains six actions that can easily be shown to have been fulfilled in the ministry of Christ (see Archer, 1985a: 112-113). Secondly, while Antiochus did do extensive damage to the Temple and to the city of Jerusalem (1 Macc. 1:31, 38) he destroyed neither - actions which are specified in the prophecy (Dan. 9:26) (Baldwin, 1978: 171). Antiochus' activities are best seen as foreshadowing a more complete fulfilment in the life of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.

**8.3.2 The Seventy Weeks Point forward to the ministry of Christ.** As is shown in Table 9 below three starting dates for the seventy weeks have been suggested: 539, 458 and 445. Of these only 539 and 445 are possible as Ezra 7:12-16 contains no mention of permission "to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25). Gleason Archer suggests that such a command is implied by Ezra 9:9 (Archer, 1985a: 114), but this could also be interpreted as a reference to the Cyrus Decree in 539, which appears in the opening verses of that book. The attractiveness of the 458 date is obvious, as it appears to accurately predict the time of the crucifixion of Christ. However, the lack of a historic reference to a decree in 458 suggests that it is reached by working back from the start of Christ's ministry and not forward to it and is therefore of little apologetic value. Of the other two dates, both are possible if the weeks are not interpreted as literal years (see 8.3.3). In order to make the 445 BC starting date "fit" some scholars convert the years from lunar years of 360 days to solar years, so taking the "years" symbolically as "prophetic years" and the numbers literally. Such interpretation once again smacks of sophistry in support a preconceived theory. The Cyrus decree of 539 reads:

" 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you - may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.' " (Ezra 1:2-4, *NIV*).

It best fits the evidence as the starting point of a non-literal period of seventy weeks (Baldwin, 1978: 176).

**Table 9: Suggested Interpretations of Daniel’s Prophecy of Seventy “Weeks”**

	<b>Maccabean Fulfilment</b>	<b>Roman Fulfilment's (Depending on the Starting Date)</b>		
Starting Point: “The Decree” v.25	605 (Jer. 25:12) or 586 (30:18-22; 31:38-40)	Cyrus Decree (Ezra 1:1-4) 539 BC	Decree given to Ezra in the 7th year of Artaxerxes (?) (Ezra 7:12-16) 458 BC	Decree of Artaxerxes allowing Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild it. (Neh. 2:1-5) 445 BC
Messiah the Prince v.25	Cyrus	Jesus		
62 Weeks	Cyrus to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (538-170 BC)	Added to 7 weeks to point in the life of Christ.		
Messiah v.26	Onias III High Priest Murdered in 171 BC		483 solar years to AD 27, when Christ began his ministry.	Christ in AD 26. (483 lunar years=471 solar years).
Covenant Maker v.27	Antiochus IV Epiphanes and renegade Jews (1 Macc. 1:11, 41-42)	Jesus		
70th Week	Persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (171-164 BC)	Roman Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (70 AD)		

**8.3.3 The Seventy Weeks are Symbolic.** This view see the Cyrus decree as the starting point of the Seventy Weeks and accepts, like the second view discussed above (see 8.3), that the anointed one refers to Christ whose ministry accurately fulfils the requirements of v.24. Seventy was a number which had a recognised symbolic value both inside and outside Israel (see EXILE 6.1). The fact that the time scale in at least one other prophecy in Daniel was also symbolic (see 8.2) also adds weight to this interpretation. It avoids the chronological

problems discussed above, while still proving to be one of the greatest examples of fulfilled prophecy in Scripture.

## *9 Other References to Daniel*

**9.1 Daniel Elsewhere in the Old Testament.** It is unlikely that Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3 (written in 591 and 586 respectively) refer to the biblical Daniel because at that time he would have hardly started his career and so could hardly be compared with Noah and Job. The name Danel appears as the hero of an epic poem from Ras Shamra (dating from 1500 - 1200 BC) and is more likely that Ezekiel is referring to this character (Pfeiffer, 1948: 754). As Douglas Stuart points out: These three men were famous for living righteous lives in contrast to the prevailing wickedness of the societies of their day (e.g., Gen. 6:5-12; Job 1:1, 22). (Stuart, 1989: 130).

## **9.2 Daniel in Intertestamental Writings**

**9.2.1 Prayer of Azariah.** This prayer was inserted in the text of Daniel 3 between v.23 and 24 and is represented as the prayer Azariah uttered as he stood with his two companions in the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Its content is very similar to Daniel's prayer (Dan. 9:4-19), as well as the prayers of other characters, both in the OT (Ezra 9:5b-15; Neh. 9:5b-35) and in the apocryphal literature. The date of composition for this prayer is unknown.

**9.2.2 Hymns of the Three Holy Children.** This addition to the book of Daniel follows the Prayer of Azariah and records the response of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to the Lord delivering them from the flames. It calls upon all creation to bless the Lord in a manner reminiscent of Psalm 136. The date of this writing is unknown.

**9.2.3 Song of Susanna.** This addition to Daniel is placed after the end of chapter 12, forming chapter 13 in the Septuagint version. Susanna was the wife of Joakim. Her beauty attracted the attention of two of the elders of the Jews in Babylon, who finding her alone while bathing demanded that she commit adultery with them. If she refused they would testify that she had slept with a young man while her servants were away. She refused to comply and put her trust in God to deliver her. The two elders carried out their threat and Susanna was duly condemned to death. In response to Susanna's prayer the Lord sent Daniel, who questioned each of the elders separately. Finding their stories contradictory Daniel turned the tables on the two elders and has them put to death, in accordance with the Law of Moses (Susanna 62; Deut. 19:16-19). The contents place it among the events described in chapter 1, as Daniel is described as a young lad (Susanna 44) and not yet as a courtier.

**9.2.4 Bel and the Dragon.** The first 22 verses of the chapter describe a contest between Daniel and seventy priests regarding the divinity of Bel, an idol worshipped by Cyrus the Persian. Bel's claim to be divine was based on his alleged ability to consume the food and drink brought to him by the priests. Daniel is challenged to prove that Bel was not a god and

the priests that he was. Loosing the contest was to result in death. The priests had the king place the food on the altar and seal the temple. Daniel had his servants sprinkle ashes on the floor of the temple before it was sealed and in the morning the footprints of the priests and their families were visible in the ashes. The priests had entered the temple during the night by means of a secret passage and concerned the food and drink. Enraged by their deceit, Cyrus had the priests executed. The temple was handed over to Daniel who destroyed both it and the idol. The book is clearly unhistorical, because the temple of Bel is known to have been destroyed by Xerxes I, not Daniel (Collins, 1992).

The remaining 20 verses present what is essentially a repeat of the story of the lion's den episode of Daniel 6. Daniel kills a dragon (or snake) that the people of Babylon worship as a god and as a result is thrown into the lion's den for seven days. The prophet Habakkuk is miraculously transported from Judea to bring the prophet food. After seven days Daniel is discovered safe and well and his enemies are fed to the lions, who instantly consume them. As with the first part of the book there is no evidence that it constitutes a historically accurate record, as the Persians never worshipped snakes (Collins, 1992).

**9.2.5 Maccabees.** The books of Maccabees bear witness to the enduring popularity of the stories of Daniel and the den of lions and Nebuchadnezzars fiery furnace (1 Macc. 2:60; 4 Macc. 16:3, 21; 18:13)

## 10 Daniel in the New Testament

**10.1 Direct Quotations.** Jesus reference to the abomination that causes desolation spoken of through the Prophet Daniel (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14) indicates that Daniels words were to have a greater fulfilment that the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Although it is not clear what the abomination was that Jesus was referring to (Carson, 1984: 500-501), Josephus records that as early as 66 AD people were leaving Jerusalem because of the threat of imminent attack by the Roman armies (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.20.1; cf. 4.6.3; 7:3) and viewed the destruction of Jerusalem as the fulfilment of Daniels prophecy (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.6.7). Early Church writers record that Christians took note of Christs warning and fled across the Jordan to the city of Pella before the Roman legions surrounded the city (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3; Epiphanius, *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* 15; *Adversus Haereses* 29:7; 30:2) (Lane, 1974: 466-469).

**10.2 Allusions.** Table 10 shows the number allusions made by New Testament writers to the book of Daniel. The book of Revelation is particularly indebted to Daniel, though it is worth remembering that the writer was drawing on a much wider range of sources than modern Christians are familiar with. It is more accurate therefore to say that the writer did not draw directly from Daniel, but took images from contemporary apocalyptic familiar to his readership (Beasley-Murray, 1992: 17)

**Table 10: Allusions to Daniel in the New Testament**

NT Reference	Allusion to Daniel
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Matt. 24:21	12:1
Matt. 24:30	7:13
Matt. 24:31	7:2
2 Thess. 2:3-4	7:25; 11:36
Rev. 1:14	7:9
Rev. 1:15	10:6
Rev. 1:17	8:17-18
2:10	1:12
4:2, 9	7:9 (cf. 4:34; 12:7)
5:1	12:4
5:6	8:3
5:9	3:4; 5:19
5:11	7:10
9:20	5:23
10:5-6	12:7
11:3	7:25
12:3	7:7
12:4	8:10
13:1-2	7:3-6
13:5	7:8, cf. v.36
13:11	8:3
20:4	7:9
20:12	7:10

(Table based on Archer, 1985a: 11-12)

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