

Lesson 2

Last week we looked at the best evidence for the authenticity of Daniel - Jesus called him a prophet in Matthew 24, and Jesus said that Daniel prophesied about an event that was yet future at that time - the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Roman Empire.

So from that we know that Daniel was a prophet, we know that the book of Daniel tells us what Daniel prophesied, and we know that Daniel's prophecies did not stop with the Greeks but rather also included some prophecies about Rome.

Later in our study we will see just how detailed those prophecies about Rome are in the book of Daniel, even to the point of telling us how many Roman emperors there would be in the first century.

When we ended we were about to look at some additional evidence outside of the book of Daniel. (We will look at the internal evidence as we get to it.)

The Book of Ezekiel Supports the Early Date View

In Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20, Daniel is listed with Noah and Job as an example of righteousness.

Ezekiel 14:14 - Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

And we also see Daniel in Ezekiel 28.

Ezekiel 28:3 - Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee.

This representation in Ezekiel of Daniel as righteous and wise fits perfectly with Daniel's description in the book of Daniel.

Most of those same modern scholars accept an early date for Ezekiel. So how then do they explain Ezekiel's reference to Daniel if, as they argue, Daniel was written centuries later?

The liberal critics say that Ezekiel was not referring to Daniel but instead to Dan'el - a famous character from Ugaritic mythology.

But is it even remotely believable that a pious Jew such as Ezekiel would refer to a legendary pagan figure as an example of wisdom and righteousness? Dan'el was an idol worshipper who offered blood sacrifices to Baal for weeks at a time. Dan'el was a vengeful drunkard who convinced his daughter to commit murder.

Others say that the person who wrote Daniel in the 2nd century BC simply created an author named Daniel based on the name supplied by Ezekiel. But, of course, that makes no sense at all. Are they really telling us that there was someone else named Daniel, who is completely unknown and yet was listed by Ezekiel next to Noah and Job? Someone so wise that Ezekiel used him as the ultimate example of wisdom in Ezekiel 28, and yet completely unknown outside of those few verses in Ezekiel? Ridiculous!

Others argue that since Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, Ezekiel would not have pointed to someone then living to serve as such an example.

But why not? Why not point to Daniel as an example of righteousness? Why couldn't Ezekiel use both ancient and current examples to show the people that God was still at work among them?

One commentator has said that Noah, Job, and Daniel are spaced about 1500 years apart. That means Ezekiel gave an example of righteousness from three different eras, including from his own era.

Archeology Supports the Early Date View

It has been said that history doesn't repeat itself, rather historians repeat each other. Nowhere is that more true than when it comes to ancient history. Many historians adhere blindly to the historical dogma - without regard to what the evidence shows.

For example, modern critics will tell you that there is no historical evidence that the Exodus ever happened or that Jospeh ever lived. But their problem is that they are looking in the wrong place (or rather the wrong time!) for the evidence.

There is a conflict between the accepted Egyptian chronology and Biblical chronology. Any guesses on which chronology the liberal critics accept without question and which chronology they reject out of hand?

If we assume the accepted Egyptian chronology is right and the Bible is wrong, then nothing fits and no evidence can be found. But if instead we assume the accepted Egyptian chronology is wrong and the Bible is right, then everything suddenly fits, and we can find archeological evidence for the exodus and for Joseph.

You might think that would cause an *honest* Egyptian scholar to rethink his chronology, and maybe it would. But that is hard to test unless you can find an honest Egyptian scholar around somewhere!

Moving back to Daniel, many liberal scholars once said that Belshazzar of Daniel 5 never existed. Here is the opening paragraph of an article published in 1930 by *The Journal of Theological Studies*:

The Book of Daniel depicts Belshazzar as 'the Chaldean king.' It represents him as reigning in Babylon at the time of the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and as being the monarch of that empire. This must still be pronounced a grave historical error.

But guess who really made the grave error! Guess what happened after that article was written! Ancient Babylonian inscriptions were found that mention Belshazzar by name and that confirm the Biblical account. Never bet against the Bible! Archaeology has confirmed the Biblical accounts over and over again.

And that leads us to what has been called the greatest archeological discovery of all time.

In the spring of 1947, in the Judean wilderness near the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea, ancient manuscripts were found that have given us our oldest manuscripts of most of the Old Testament.

Some of the scrolls were a thousand years older than any other copies that we had. Before this find, our earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Old Testament was the Leningrad Codex of AD 916. Thirteen copies of Deuteronomy, twelve of Isaiah, and ten of the Psalms were found. (In Luke 4:17, Jesus was handed a copy of Isaiah, which he then read aloud. The copies found in Cave 4 date back to around the same time.) To date, eleven caves have produced at least four hundred manuscripts.

The Scrolls have had a tremendous impact on the textual study of the Bible - and they have overwhelmingly confirmed the accuracy of the text that we have, and have shown God's providential care in preserving the text.

As one example of how the Scrolls have confirmed the Bible's integrity, a popular theory among liberal critics is that Isaiah is really three books with the first ending at Chapter 39. This theory, which

was first put forth in 1892, initially even claimed that the later chapters of Isaiah (including Chapter 53) were added during the first century. The Isaiah scroll from Qumran has no break between Chapters 39 and 40.

As another example, seven copies of Daniel dating from the Maccabean period have been found in three of the caves at Qumran.

That fact alone makes it very unlikely that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period. Why? Because those in the late date group are forced to believe that the Essenes at Qumran somehow had near original copies of Daniel. A simpler explanation is that Daniel was written much earlier.

One non-Biblical manuscript found in Cave 4 refers to "Daniel the prophet." This fragment has been dated prior to 150 BC. Another sectarian document from the caves uses the imagery of Daniel to describe the final conflict between good and evil.

An honest scholar would accept the clear evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but they literally are unable to believe their own eyes because to do so would be to accept the supernatural source of the Bible.

The linguistic evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls overwhelmingly supports an early date for the book of Daniel.

With the Dead Sea Scrolls we have some scrolls that were unquestionably written during the Maccabean period, and we can compare those scrolls with the book of Daniel by looking at syntax, word order, morphology (structure of words), vocabulary, spelling, and word usage. What does that comparison show?

It shows that Daniel is linguistically older by at least several centuries. It also shows that Daniel was written in the eastern sector of the Aramaic speaking world (which includes Babylon) rather than in Palestine.

If anyone ever tells you that Christian faith is a blind faith that simply ignores all evidence to the contrary - ask them about Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls. If you want to see an example of blind faith ignoring evidence, then simply look at how modern liberal critics deal with Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls!

Josephus Supports the Early Date View

In his book *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus relates a story that, if true, would prove that the book of Daniel existed during the time of Alexander the Great (330 BC). (We discussed this account when we studied Zechariah.)

Josephus tells us that Alexander was angry that the Jews would not give him their allegiance so he went to Jerusalem to punish them. Jewish priests met him and showed him in the book of Daniel how God had said that he would defeat the Persians. This pleased Alexander so much that he spared Jerusalem.

Josephus wrote:

The high priest then showed Alexander the passages in the prophecy of Daniel indicating that a Greek would destroy the empire of the Persians. Alexander, of course, accepted the prophecy as a reference to himself, and declared that God had ordained him to conquer Persia, which he proceeded to do. Furthermore, Alexander not only refused to execute any sanctions against Israel but bestowed upon that nation all kinds of favors and benefits, which was contrary to his usual custom.

History confirms that Alexander marched near Jerusalem on his way to Egypt and that he treated the Jews kindly. How else can we explain why Alexander spared Jerusalem the destruction that he inflicted on Tyre and Sidon?

The consequence of this story is that it means that Daniel was known long prior to the year 334 BC and that even Alexander himself recognized that he was the one Daniel said would destroy the *combined* Medo-Persian power.

In addition, Josephus says that the Jewish canon was completed before 424 BC and that Daniel was a part of the canon. This was not just his opinion, but was the Jewish national position. He also speaks of many other books that were rejected - but not Daniel; Josephus tells us that the book of Daniel was in the Jewish canon long before the modern liberal critic says it was written.

Responses to Late Date Arguments

Another thing we will do as we move through the text is that we will honestly and objectively examine

the arguments raised by those who oppose the early date view.

After all, if our early date position is correct, then we certainly have nothing to fear by confronting the opposing position.

We will deal with most of the late date arguments as we work through the text, but let's deal with a few of them now.

Some Claim That Daniel's Position in the Jewish Scriptures Implies a Late Date

The Old Testament books in the Hebrew Bible are divided into three sections.

(1) The Law (Books of Moses)

(2) The Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets)

(3) The Holy Writings or Hagiographa (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, **DANIEL**, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles)

The liberal critics argue that because Daniel is not found in the second division (the Prophets) but instead is found in the third division (the Writings) it follows that Daniel was a very late addition to the Jewish canon.

But it is a mistake to assume that the books in the third division were written later than the books in the second division. In fact, Job, Ruth, Proverbs, and many of the Psalms (all in the third group) were written before many of the prophetic books in the second group.

Josephus says that no books were added to the canon after 424 BC - the death of Artaxerxes. Jewish tradition says that Malachi was the last written book in the Bible, which would mean that the second division was closed after the third was closed.

Also, the division is not based on the type of *book* but instead is based on the type of *writer*.

The books in the first section were written by Moses.

Those in the second section were written by men who had the prophetic office as well as the prophetic gift.

Those in the third section were written by those who had the prophetic gift but not the prophetic office. That is, the authors in the third group were not "official" prophets. That explains why Ezekiel and Daniel, even though they were contemporaries, are in different divisions.

But what do we mean when we say that Daniel was not an "official" prophet? What we mean becomes clear when we compare Daniel with the prophets from the second division of books.

Daniel does not introduce his book with his name. Daniel has no official position among the Jewish people. Daniel did not live among the exiles as Ezekiel did, but instead Daniel lived at the court of Babylon, and Daniel dealt with heathen kings more than he did with the people of Israel.

Although Daniel is called a prophet by Jesus in Matthew 24, that has more to do with Daniel's inspired prophecies rather than with any special prophetic office that Daniel held. Note that King David is also called a prophet in Acts 2:30, but no one would argue that King David held the office of prophet. One who held the prophetic office served as a spiritual mediator between God and the Israelites. Neither David nor Daniel did that.

And we can turn this argument around on the radical critics! Why was the book of Daniel added to the canon at all if it was not written until 160 BC? Listen to what R. D. Wilson has to say about this:

Now, the radical critics, without any direct evidence to support them, profess to believe that, into the midst of these sacred writings for which men readily died, a forged document of unknown authorship and (according to the critics) full of easily detected errors ... was quietly admitted as a genuine and authentic writing of a prophet hitherto unknown to history. ... They cannot believe in miracles and predictive prophecy ... but they can believe that a lot of obstreperous and cantankerous Jews who through all their history from Jacob and Esau down to the present time have disagreed and quarreled about almost everything, or nothing, could have accepted, unanimously and without a murmur ... a forged and fictitious document, untrue to the well remembered facts of their own experience and to the easily ascertained facts concerning their own past history and the history of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks of whom the author writes.

Paul reminds us in Romans 3:2 that the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God - and they

took that responsibility very seriously.

That Daniel is in the Jewish canon attests to its authenticity.

Some Claim That the Type of Hebrew Used in Daniel Points to a Late Date

The Hebrew language underwent a big change around the time of Nehemiah. The liberal critics claim that Daniel's Hebrew resembles the later type and thus points to a late date for the book.

But even if that were true, it would not prove a late date. The book was undoubtedly copied many times and the language may have been updated to conform to the common dialect just as the KJV has been updated in the NKJV.

And, once again, this argument can be turned around on the critics. It is very telling that the Hebrew portion of Daniel contains no Greek words. That seems very odd if Daniel had been written after nearly 200 years of Greek rule in Palestine.

The political terms in Daniel are largely Persian, which one would expect if the book had been written during the reign of Cyrus.

Also, the Hebrew used in the Dead Sea Scroll sectarian documents does NOT resemble the Hebrew used in Daniel, which seems odd if they were written at about the same time.

One of the most radical critics has written that "from the Hebrew of the Book of Daniel no important inference as to its date can be safely drawn" (which means, if he were honest, he would agree that it supported an early date!).

Any time a liberal critic concludes that no inference can be drawn based on certain evidence it nearly always means that the evidence overwhelmingly supports the early date view!

Some Claim That the Use of Persian Words in Daniel Indicates a Late Date

Several words of Persian origin are present in the Hebrew and especially in the Aramaic parts of

Daniel. The radical critics argue that the Persian language did not penetrate the Aramaic of Babylon until long after Cyrus' conquest.

The Persian term "satrap" is used throughout Daniel as if it were a Babylonian title. The critics say that such usage points to a much later date.

But it is very possible that the term had already become a Babylonian title due to the Persian influence that already existed. Also, as Daniel wrote the book after the fall of Babylon, he might have substituted Persian terms in place of the older Babylonian terms.

Again, this argument can be turned against the late-date crowd.

The first Greek translations of Daniel appeared around 100 BC. Many of the Persian words in these translations were MISTRANSLATED, which seems very odd if the book had been written only 65 years earlier. Clearly, the words had been forgotten or had changed meaning since the time when Daniel was written, which points to an early date for the book.

We will have much more to say on the dating controversy as we work through the text, but now let's start with verse 1.

Chapter 1

Daniel 1:1

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

Where are we, and how did we get here? And who are these two kings?

To answer those questions, we need to start with two other rulers: King Josiah of Judah and Pharaoh Neco of Egypt.

Josiah is first mentioned by name in 1 Kings 13:2 (in a remarkable prophecy against Jeroboam given three centuries before Josiah's birth!) and then in 2 Kings 21:24, when Josiah becomes king after his father, King Amon. 2 Kings 22 tells us how Josiah repaired the temple and found the book of the Law.

Soon after coming to power in Egypt, Pharaoh Neco (who is first mentioned in 2 Kings 23:29) began trying to gain control of Syria-Palestine. In 609, he captured Gaza and Ashkelon. He then led his army northward to help the Assyrians in their battles with the Chaldeans, who had already captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612.

Neco sent envoys to King Josiah, assuring him that his purpose was not to fight with Judah but rather to fight with the Chaldeans of Babylon. In fact, Neco accused Josiah of opposing God.

2 Chronicles 35:21 - But he sent envoys to him, saying, What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.

Josiah, thinking that the independence of Judah was at stake, tried to stop the Egyptians at the pass of Megiddo (the world's most famous battlefield!), but Josiah was defeated and mortally wounded. (2 Kings 23:29)

Neco proceeded to gain control of Syria as far as the Euphrates.

When Neco heard that the people of Judah had crowned Jehoahaz, an anti-Egyptian son of Josiah, as king, Neco summoned Jehoahaz to Syria, deposed him, and took him to Egypt as a prisoner for the rest of his life.

In his place, Neco put Jehoahaz's brother and Josiah's other son, Eliakim, and Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim to show that he was an Egyptian vassal. Neco placed Judah under heavy tribute - 100 talents of silver and one talent of gold. (2 Kings 23:33-34)

In the introduction, I mentioned that of the two kings in verse 1, one of them is one of the most detestable figures in the Bible - and it is not Nebuchadnezzar! Why did I say that? Because in Jeremiah 36, we read how King Jehoiakim literally took a knife to the word of God, cut it in pieces, and threw it in the fire!

In 605, King Nabopolassar of Babylon sent his son Nebuchadnezzar against Neco's army at Carchemish on the Euphrates. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and drove them out of Syria. Jeremiah describes this defeat of Egypt in Jeremiah 46:1-2.

After the Egyptians were defeated in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and the puppet king Jehoiakim went from being a vassal of Egypt to becoming a vassal of Babylon. 2 Kings 24:1 says

that Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar's servant for three years.

Jehoiakim paid tribute from the treasury in Jerusalem, turned over some temple artifacts, and handed over some of the royal family and nobility as hostages. These hostages included Daniel and his three friends. This is the point where we catch up with the opening verses of Daniel. What happened next?

Shortly after this, Nebuchadnezzar's father, King Nabopolassar, died. Nebuchadnezzar quickly rushed back to Babylon and was proclaimed king.

In 601, Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Egypt itself, but Neco withstood him in a bloody battle at Egypt's border. This battle may have encouraged Jehoiakim to revolt against Babylon in 601 despite Jeremiah's warnings. We read about the rebellion in 2 Kings 24:1, and we can read Jeremiah's warnings in Jeremiah 27:8-10.

Jehoiakim rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar decided to move against rebellious Judah. Although this siege began with Jehoiakim on the throne, Jehoiakim was soon taken captive and died. We read about that in 2 Chronicles 36:6-7 and 2 Kings 24:6.

One commentator described the death of Jehoiakim this way: "It seems that Jehoiakim's final 'service' to his country was to expire just in time to let his successors and those he has oppressed face Babylon's wrath."

After the death of Jehoiakim, his 18 year old son Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah) came to the throne during the siege and ended up reigning for only three months. Nebuchadnezzar took the city of Jerusalem in 597 BC. We read about that in 2 Kings 24:11-12.

Jehoiachin and his family were carried off to Babylon, but 2 Kings 25:27-30 tells us that Jehoiachin was later released from prison by the next king, Amel-Marduk.

The king that replaced Jehoiachin was his uncle, Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed Zedekiah. Like his nephew and like his brother, Zedekiah also ignored Jeremiah and also rebelled against Babylon, hoping for help from Egypt.

That rebellion was the final straw for Nebuchadnezzar. In 587 BC, Jerusalem fell, the walls were torn down, and the temple was demolished. Some of the Jewish leaders were executed and others were deported. Zedekiah tried to escape, but he was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon. Only the poor were left to till the soil. We read about that in 2 Kings 25:7-12.

By the time that the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, Daniel had already been a captive in Babylon for nearly 20 years. Daniel was carried away as a teenager when the troubles with Babylon started, and Daniel was in his thirties when Nebuchadnezzar finally had enough and destroyed the city.

And what happened to Nebuchadnezzar after he destroyed Jerusalem? Well, not long after that happened, the mighty Nebuchadnezzar found himself munching grass like an ox for seven years, but now we are getting ahead of ourselves! More on that later.

The liberal critics don't waste any time griping about Daniel. They start complaining with the very first verse!

One critic has written that "Daniel begins with a glaring historical error, for Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim." But is that what verse 1 says - that the city was taken?

Daniel never states that Jerusalem was taken or captured in verse 1 - only that Jerusalem was besieged, and that is exactly what happened at that time. In the middle of his Palestinian campaign after Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar received the news of his father's death. He rushed back to Babylon to assume the throne and apparently abandoned the siege against Jerusalem before he captured the city.

Yes, Nebuchadnezzar got Jehoiakim to hand over some of the temple treasury and some hostages, but that happened to prevent the city from being taken. That is why Jehoiakim switched his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon - to prevent the city from being destroyed. The city was besieged, just as verse 1 says it was.

But what about Jeremiah 46:2? There we are told that the battle that opened the way for a Babylonian invasion of Judah did not occur until the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim's reign. Why then does Daniel 1:1 say that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the *third* year of Jehoiakim's reign?

The answer to that question is simple, but it raises a point that we will see again later in our studies. Babylon used a different dating system than did Jerusalem, and it was different in two ways.

First, the Babylonian calendar began each year in the spring, and the Jewish calendar began each year in autumn. The Babylonian third year thus overlapped the Judean fourth year by about six months.

Second, in Babylon, the year in which a king began to reign was called "the year of accession to the kingdom," which was followed by the first, second, and subsequent years of his rule. Thus, a Babylonian king's third year of reign would correspond to the actual fourth year of his reign.

Daniel may have used the Babylonian system in verse 1. If so, that points to an early date for the book. How could a Jew writing 400 years later have known about the Babylonian system of dating? Wouldn't he have instead just copied the date from Jeremiah?

#daniel