

Daniel

“Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” (Dan 7:27)

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. Israel entered into a new phase of history. Having failed in their role as the covenant people—the privilege of manifesting the Name of God Most High to the rest of the nations—Israel fell under the complete domination of those nations. This was not by accident but by the express will of God, who would govern and discipline His nation through sovereign control of those Gentile nations. Daniel’s role was to communicate the essence of God’s immediate sovereignty over Babylon as well as revealing prophetically the rest of history as it pertained to the restoration and exaltation of Israel to its rightful position. Daniel’s political influence and prophetic foresight testify not to his own abilities but to the sovereign God who enabled and informed him.

Authorship

Evidence from the book itself argues strongly that a Judean by the name of Daniel wrote this material while a captive in Babylon. He is referred to by the prophet Ezekiel (14:14, 20; 28:3) and is identified as a prophetic writer by Jesus (Matt 24:15). He is a key participant in many of the events recorded in the book and displays accurate, and sometimes minute, historical and cultural details. Denial of Daniel as author of the book that bears his name is based on presuppositional issues regarding the nature and possibility of predictive prophecy rather than on textual or historical considerations.¹ “Daniel”

¹ For a brief exploration of this issue see Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An*

means “God is my judge” or “God is judging” or “God will judge.” Strictly speaking Daniel serves in the role of a statesman rather than a prophet, even though he received some of the greatest prophecies recorded in Scripture.

Date

The text indicates that Daniel continued in Babylon in some governmental capacity until the first year of the reign of the Persian Cyrus, which was 538 B.C. (1:21). The last dated revelation to Daniel was in Cyrus’s third year, or 536 B.C. (10:1). There is no valid reason to date the book in its essential form later than ca. 530 B.C.²

Historical Setting

In 605 B.C. Babylon, having just conquered Assyria and Egypt at Carchemish and under the leadership of the newly crowned king Nebuchadnezzar, marched on Jerusalem and took captives in what would be the first of three such invasions. The defeat and destruction of Jerusalem, completed in 586 B.C., was the result of centuries of rebellion against Israel’s covenant God, Yahweh. The prophet Jeremiah had warned of the coming judgment and predicted that the resulting captivity would last seventy years (Jer 25:11). Daniel was one of the choice young men taken in the first deportation (1:3–7) and became God’s spokesman regarding Babylon and the nations for the duration of Israel’s exile. From this point on the record of Israel’s experience as God’s priest-nation is bound up with God’s sovereign directing of the nations into which she had been sent as He demonstrates Himself to be the ruler of all the earth for the accomplishing of His good purposes. Biblically this period is known as the times of the Gentiles.

Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 330-32.

² Objections to traditional authorship and dating will be mentioned under *Special Issues*.

Original Readers / Occasion

The first readers of Daniel would have been those recently returned from the Babylonian exile. They stood to be encouraged through Daniel's development of God's sovereignty over the nations on Israel's behalf. However, due to the long range prophecies for the times of the Gentiles every generation of Israel could find itself represented somewhere therein and reap the encouragement born by assurance of God's sovereignty.³

Special Issues

Date and Authorship. Due chiefly to the degree of detail with which Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled certain prophecies during the second century (11:5–35), critical scholarship refuses to date Daniel as a sixth century document, choosing, on pre-suppositional grounds, to view the work as a late pseudepigraphal writing. Other factors are marshaled in support of a date of 165 B.C., but are clearly less of a concern than the prophetic fulfillment issue. These include the use of Persian and Greek words, the presence of apocalyptic in the book, advanced theology (e.g. angels and the resurrection), the book's being included in the Writings rather than the Prophets section of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the use of Aramaic, among others.⁴ These issues are all reconcilable with a sixth century date. The fulfillment issue is philosophical and theological, revolving

³ "The book of Daniel, born of the Exile and the political oppression of the Babylonian conquerors, was especially meaningful to those who lived during the time of the Seleucid oppression and persecution. However, the forward vision of the book of Daniel does not halt with Antiochus, but looks beyond the Seleucids to the Romans (the beast with the large iron teeth) and even further to the time when God would directly intervene and bring all oppressive human governments to an end, a day when the people of God will receive the power of the kingdoms of the earth (Dan. 7:23–25), Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, 341.

⁴ For a concise treatment of these issues see J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament Edition*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1985), 1324-25. See also Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel* in Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman, editor (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 29-53; Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Hermeneutical Issues in the Book of Daniel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (March 1980), 13-21; and Josh McDowell, *Daniel in the Critic's Den* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979).

around the question of whether or not God controls history and has chosen in certain instances to declare beforehand what is going to happen.

Interpretive Problems Involving History. These include issues like the apparent contradiction between Daniel 1:1 and the Babylonian Chronicle with respect to Jehoiakim's reign, failure to mention Nabonidus in Daniel's record of the kings of Babylon, and the identification of Darius the Mede. Again, these are not insurmountable problems and have received reasonable explanations in keeping with the accuracy of Daniel's reporting.⁵

The Aramaic of Daniel. A large section of the book (2:4b—7:28) is written in Aramaic, the language of the Medo-Persian Empire. Some have used this to support the late date of Daniel though the case is far from convincing. The best explanation for the Aramaic section is that this material was particularly appropriate to the needs of the Gentile world in which it was first written.

The Interpretation of Apocalyptic. The communication of a message by means of visions and symbols and directed toward the ultimate outcome of history is often called "apocalyptic." This term has been variously defined. It should be understood as a specific literary genre that has its beginnings in an exilic type setting. Merrill defines it as a "cataclysmic way of perceiving the eventual sovereignty of Yahweh and the elevation of his people Israel as the head of all the nations."⁶ It is important to remember that, since

⁵ See C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 281-85 and John C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959).

⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of Ezekiel and Daniel," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, Roy B. Zuck, editor (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 366. Alexander defines apocalyptic literature as "symbolic visionary prophetic literature, composed during oppressive conditions, consisting of visions whose events are recorded exactly as they were seen by the author and explained through a divine interpreter, and whose theological content is primarily eschatological" (Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel* in Everyman's Bible Commentary series (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 115; see also Alexander's

symbols do not interpret themselves, when the biblical author uses symbols and images he does so within the framework of the intentions of the divine author. This means that the clues for interpreting these elements lie within the totality of a writer's work, as informed by the rest of Scripture. Once the knowableness and inner consistency of the Scriptures are assumed, the interpreter is in a position to ascertain and validate the text's meaning and application. The actual intention of Daniel's futuristic images must correspond to the historic, plain-sense promises made to the patriarchs upon which Israel's national identity and destiny are based. Since Israel has a historically determinable purpose and goal according to the Abrahamic, and Davidic covenants, the interpretation of the prophet's symbols must correspond to and inform that scheme of history. For example, the symbolic description of nations and their rulers must resemble the way things really were and the course of history as it actually unfolds where verifiable.

Message

God is sovereign over all the nations and will accomplish His purposes for the nation of Israel through those nations according to a predetermined and prophetically revealed course of history; therefore Israel should be encouraged.

Outline

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| I. | God sovereignly selects and deploys servants in effecting history. | 1:1—2:4a |
| A. | God prepares and deploys Daniel for his service among the nations. | 1:1–21 |
| 1. | Daniel experiences deportation to Babylon as a result of Israel's judgment. | 1:1–7 |
| 2. | Daniel remains devoted to Yahweh as a testimony of His favor. | 1:8–16 |
| 3. | Daniel receives divine enabling for service in the foreign government. | 1:17–21 |
| B. | God prepares a nation for the ministry of his servant. | 2:1–4a |

"Hermeneutics of Old Testament Apocalyptic Literature," (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968)).

- II. God sovereignly oversees and directs the nations in the outworking of history. 2:4b—7:28
 - A. God reveals His program and exalts His person through the Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar. 2:4b—4:37
 - 1. God displays the course of world history through the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. 2:4b—49
 - a. The king commands a humanly impossible revelation. 2:4b—13
 - b. God grants to Daniel supernatural understanding. 2:14—23
 - c. Daniel reveals the course of world kingdoms beginning from Nebuchadnezzar. 2:24—45
 - 1) Daniel takes God's revelation before the king. 2:24—30
 - 2) Daniel explains God's revelation to the king. 2:31—45
 - a) Daniel recounts the dream of a great image. 2:31—35
 - b) Daniel explains the dream of the great image. 2:36—45
 - i) The gold head is Nebuchadnezzar. 2:36—38
 - ii) The silver chest is an inferior kingdom. 2:39a
 - iii) The bronze belly will rule the earth. 2:39b
 - iv) The iron legs will crush all others. 2:40
 - v) The iron and clay feet will be fragile. 2:41—43
 - vi) God's kingdom will be exalted over all. 2:44—45
 - 3) Daniel is promoted to ruler and administrator. 2:46—49
 - 2. God demonstrates to Nebuchadnezzar that He alone deserves to be worshipped among the Gentiles. 3:1—30
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar commands the worship of his image. 3:1—7
 - b. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, confess that they will worship and serve their God exclusively. 3:8—18
 - c. God vindicates the faith of His servants by preserving them in the furnace. 3:19—25
 - d. Nebuchadnezzar confesses the sovereign power of God Most High. 3:26—30
 - 3. God delivers Nebuchadnezzar from his debilitating pride. 4:1—37
 - a. The king prefaces his praise of God Most High. 4:1—3
 - b. The king recounts his experience of humiliation by God. 4:4—36
 - 1) He relates his dream of the great tree. 4:4—17
 - 2) He requests that Daniel interpret the dream. 4:18—27
 - 3) He reaps the consequences of his pride according to the dream. 4:28—33
 - 4) He recovers his reason and blesses God Most High. 4:34—36
 - c. The king praises God as King of heaven. 4:37

- B. God rejects Babylon and reasserts the propriety of His rule over the Gentile nations. 5:1—6:28
 - 1. God defeats the kingdom of Babylon, thus displaying His sovereignty over the nations. 5:1—30
 - a. Daniel is called to interpret the mysterious writing on Belshazzar's wall. 5:1—12
 - b. Daniel rebukes Belshazzar for his impenitent pride. 5:13—23
 - c. Daniel pronounces the demise of Belshazzar's kingdom. 5:24—30
 - 2. God defeats the decree of Darius, thus displaying His power of deliverance. 5:31—6:28
 - a. Darius is deceived into prohibiting the worship of God. 5:31—6:9
 - b. Daniel is delivered for his faith and service to God. 6:10—23
 - c. Darius declares the universal dominion of God. 6:24—28
- C. God reviews the course of the future kingdoms of the world. 7:1—28
 - 1. Daniel receives a vision of the coming kingdoms of the earth. 7:1—14
 - a. He receives and records the dream in visions. 7:1
 - b. He sees four beasts arising from the Great sea. 7:2—8
 - 1) He sees a lion with eagle's wings, rising up on two feet and with a man's heart. 7:2—4
 - 2) He sees a bear raised on one side with three ribs in its mouth. 7:5
 - 3) He sees a leopard with four wings and four heads. 7:6
 - 4) He sees a beast—dreadful, terrible, and strong. 7:7—8
 - a) It had devouring teeth and trampled with its feet. 7:7a
 - b) It had ten horns, one of which, having eyes of a man and boastful speech, devoured three. 7:7b—8
 - c. He sees the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. 7:9—14
 - 1) He sees the Ancient of Days, seated on a throne of judgment, destroy the horn from the beast. 7:9—12
 - 2) He sees the Son of Man receive an eternal and universal kingdom. 7:13—14
 - 2. Daniel receives interpretation of the vision of the kingdoms. 7:15—28
 - a. Daniel is assured that the saints of God will receive the kingdom. 7:15—18
 - b. Daniel is enlightened regarding the fourth beast and his end. 7:19—27
 - 1) It will produce a ruler who will prevail over the saints until the coming of the Ancient of Days. 7:19—25
 - 2) His dominion will be ended and given to the saints of the most high. 7:26—27
 - c. Daniel is troubled and keeps the matter to himself. 7:28

- III. God sovereignly protects and provides for the covenant nation in the outcome of history. 8:1—12:13
- A. Daniel receives a troubling vision predicting persecution for the holy people. 8:1–27
1. He receives the vision of the ram and the goat. 8:1–14
 - a. The context of his vision is Shushan in Elam. 8:1–2
 - b. The content of his vision is the ram and the goat. 8:3–14
 - 1) A ram with two unequal horns pushes from the east and cannot be stopped. 8:3–4
 - 2) A goat comes from the west and exalts itself above the whole earth. 8:5–14
 - a) It comes swiftly from the west. 8:5
 - b) With one great horn he defeats the ram. 8:6–7
 - c) The great horn is broken and replaced by four. 8:8–8
 - d) From the four a little horn arises with particular viciousness against Israel. 8:9–14
 2. He receives interpretation of the vision of the ram and the goat. 8:15–27
 - a. He is informed by Gabriel that the vision is for the latter time of the indignation. 8:15–19
 - b. He is told that the ram is Medo-Persia. 8:20
 - c. He is told that the male goat is Greece. 8:21–25
 - 1) Its one great king will give way to four kingdoms. 8:21–22
 - 2) From them a king will arise who shall destroy both the mighty and the holy people. 8:23–25
 - d. He seals up the vision. 8:26–27
- B. Daniel makes intercession regarding the restoration of his people. 9:1–26
1. He makes his prayer according to the will of God. 9:1–19
 - a. He is prompted to prayer by Jeremiah’s prophecy. 9:1–2
 - b. He prepares himself for prayer in humility and repentance. 9:3
 - c. He proceeds in prayer by confession and petition. 9:4–19
 - 1) He confesses Israel’s disobedience of their covenant with Yahweh. 9:4–15
 - 2) He petitions God to restore His people and city. 9:16–19
 2. He receives answer to his prayer regarding the will of God. 9:20–27
 - a. It is sent by Gabriel in response to his supplications. 9:20–23
 - b. It concerns the time determined for restoration. 9:24–27
 - 1) Seventy weeks are determined to fulfill Israel’s covenant promises. 9:24
 - 2) From the proclamation to rebuild until Messiah will be sixty-nine weeks. 9:24
 - 3) After sixty-nine weeks Messiah will be cut off and the city destroyed. 9:26

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| 4) | During the seventieth week desolation will occur until its cause is destroyed. | 9:27 |
| C. | Daniel receives a message and vision expanding upon the persecution that would overtake his people. | 10:1—12:4 |
| 1. | He is overcome by the power of the vision. | 10:1–9 |
| 2. | He is informed concerning Persia and Greece by the vision. | 10:10—11:4 |
| a. | He is made aware of the spiritual conflict behind these great powers. | 10:10—11:1 |
| b. | He is informed that three more kings will reign in Persia. | 11:2 |
| c. | He is informed that a mighty king will arise after these whose kingdom will be divided into four parts. | 11:3–4 |
| 3. | He is instructed concerning subsequent kings from the North and South. | 11:5–45 |
| a. | He is informed of a series of warring kings of the North and South. | 11:5–19 |
| b. | He is informed about a particularly evil king of the North who will persecute Israel. | 11:20–35 |
| c. | He is informed about the most vile king of the North of the very end. | 11:36–45 |
| 4. | He is encouraged by a prophecy of the end. | 12:1–4 |
| D. | Daniel receives final instruction concerning his words on the end. | 12:5–13 |

Argument

Daniel's structure is indicated by the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic and back to Hebrew (at 2:4b and 8:1). All three sections emphasize God's sovereign activity in and ultimate control over history. In each section Daniel plays a key role in revealing the Lord's intentions with respect to the kingdoms of men and of Israel.

I. God sovereignly selects and deploys servants in effecting history (1:1—2:4a).

As tragic as Babylon's overrunning of Jerusalem had been, God was not unprepared for what would follow. He made sure that in the first wave of captives there were spiritually prepared men whom He could use in revealing His purposes and in testifying to His name. By bringing Daniel into "the favor and good will of the chief of [Nebuchadnezzar's] eunuchs" (1:9), by giving him and his three friends "knowledge and

skill in all literature and wisdom,” and by granting Daniel understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17) God had set His servants in the most strategic place possible for effecting His purposes. No matter how bleak things may have looked circumstantially, God was working His will using His servants.

II. God sovereignly oversees and directs the nations in the outworking of history (2:4b—7:28).

God’s salvation is open to all people. Even though Israel had failed to fulfill their role as His unique missionary nation (cf. Exod 19:4–6) God was still able to manifest His name among the nations. Two things happen through the events of this section, written in Aramaic for the benefit of the nations: (1) God demonstrates that He alone is the Lord of history and (2) God desires and commands all men, whatever their station, to believe in and worship Him. There is here a powerful display of God’s mercy and grace.

A. God reveals His program and exalts His person through the Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar (2:4b—4:37).

At this time the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful ruler on earth. And yet not even he could foresee, much less control, the future. Since Daniel is able to accomplish the impossible—both tell the king’s dream and then interpret it—the Babylonian monarch receives a compelling manifestation of God’s sovereign control of history (2:4b–49). Though unable to historically verify the succession of world dominating governments after his own, represented by the beasts of his dream (2:24–45), Nebuchadnezzar is sufficiently impressed with Daniel’s supernatural insight to accept the scenario as reliable, so indicated by his promotion of Daniel and his friends to positions of authority (2:46–49). The first of several summary descriptions of God’s sovereignty

occurs in 2:20–23. Also included in this opening incident is a brief prediction of God’s eternal kingdom on earth (2:44).

Not only does God work with nations He is also interested in individuals. Through the miracle of the preservation of Daniel’s friends from the furnace Nebuchadnezzar is rebuked for his impious pride and impudent wrath (3:1–25). The king does confess Yahweh’s sovereignty and acts to protect worship of Him, though this is not necessarily to be taken as a confession of saving faith.⁷ The Lord’s mercy continues to be displayed toward the great Babylonian king through his humiliation undertaken for the purpose of delivering him from his debilitating pride (4:1–37). Once again the outcome is a confession of God Most High as the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth (4:34–37). Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar ever embraced Daniel’s God as savior is never made crystal clear in the text. However his opportunity to come to that point was graciously multiplied.

B. God rejects Babylon and reasserts the propriety of His rule over the Gentile nations (5:1—6:28).

Though God had graciously extended and maintained Nebuchadnezzar’s rule over this “greatest” kingdom (cf. 2:37–39), there is only one eternal kingdom and it was yet to come. The kingdom instrument used to judge Israel for its rebellion is now judged for its wickedness, giving way to the inferior “chest and arms of silver” according to God’s sovereign design. When Belshazzar is judged for his impenitent pride, world dominion passes to the Medo-Persian Empire under the rule of Cyrus whose sub-regent in Babylon was Darius (5:1–31). Darius, like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, falls

⁷ See Merrill, “Theology of . . . Daniel,” 390-91.

captive to the desire to receive the honor and adulation belonging to God alone (6:1–9). Daniel's deliverance from the lion's den results in Darius's confession of God's sovereign dominion, by now the dominating motif of the book (6:10–27). God rules over the realms of man and delivers His servants for the accomplishing of His eternal purposes.

C. God reviews the course of the future kingdoms of the world (7:1–28).

A vision out of sequence (it occurred during the first year of Belshazzar) reviews the course of world kingdoms given in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream but with emphasis on history's culmination in the eternal kingdom of the saints of the Most High. Four beasts from the sea parallel the five parts of Nebuchadnezzar's image (golden head=lion; arms and chest of silver=bear; stomach and thighs of bronze=leopard; legs of iron=dreadful beast; feet and iron of clay=ten horns) (7:1–8; cf. 2:31–35). In Daniel's vision additional information is added to each of the kingdom descriptions and the final resolution of history is much more developed (7:9–27). The second and third beasts will be further developed in the third main section (8:1—12:13) under the symbols of a ram and a goat, but especially the third, which will there be explicitly identified as the realm of Greece (11:2). The most significant additional information in this section concerns the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (7:9–14).

The earthly kingdoms symbolized in the various beasts, though extending into future millennia, are not the culmination of history. God the Father, the Ancient of Days (7:9), will set up His court of judgment and bring all peoples into account (7:9–10). At this time the final manifestation of the dreadful beast, the little horn, will be destroyed (7:11–12). These events will be fully developed in the Book of Revelation. At that time

the Ancient of Days will give eternal dominion over all the earth to the Son of Man (7:13–14).⁸

The interpretation that was given to Daniel of these events (7:15–28) centers on his request to know about the fourth beast, especially the horn with “eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words” since it was so different from all the others (7:19–20). He is told that this beast will indeed be different and will “devour the whole earth” (7:23), ruling over all kingdoms and persecuting the “saints of the Most High” for three and one half years (7:24–25). After that the everlasting kingdom of the saints will be established (7:26–27). Thus, God has revealed the outline for the rest of history with respect to the course of kingdoms and to the culminating crisis leading to the everlasting kingdom of the Most High.

III. God sovereignly protects and provides for the covenant nation in the outcome of history (8:1—12:13).

Written in the Hebrew language, this section contains further development of a portion of the preceding prophecies as an encouragement to Israel with respect to what they would experience among the nations over the next several centuries from the time of Daniel. The section contains information about the entirety of Israel’s future (e.g. 9:20–27) but emphasizes the persecution that Israel would experience under the kingdoms associated with Greece’s dominion.

⁸ For a discussion of the Son of Man see Baldwin, *Daniel*, 148-54.

A. Daniel receives a troubling vision predicting persecution for the holy people (8:1–27).

Only two kingdoms are in view in this section, and only one of those to any extent. The ram and goat represent the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece respectively (8:20–21—ram=bear=silver chest; goat=winged leopard=bronze mid-section). The vision is reported in 8:1–14 and concerns a kingdom of two parts that expands irresistibly from the east (8:4) but then is suddenly and swiftly replaced by a kingdom from the west (8:5–7), only to be divided into four (8:8). One of these exalted itself against heaven and persecuted Israel (8:9–14). In the interpretation Daniel is told that this vision refers to the time of the end (8:15–17). Since the vision begins with Greece but extends to the end, the text gives the crucial interpretive clue for the rest of the book, namely, that there is a near persecutor that embodies the spirit and anticipates the activity of the great persecutor who will appear at the end of time. The near persecutor is in view in 8:23–25. He will come on the scene in the person of Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid dynasty in 175 B.C. However, his later embodiment will “rise against the Prince of princes” as the beast of the Revelation (8:25). This dual reference will be picked up and developed further in chapter 11.

B. Daniel makes intercession regarding the restoration of his people (9:1–27).

The overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus the Great in 539 B.C., indicated by reference to the beginning of Darius’s rule in 9:1, marked the end of the seventy year captivity that Jeremiah had predicted as Daniel understood it (9:2). The lion had been removed and the bear was now in power. This stunning confirmation of the Lord’s prophetic program moved Daniel to intercession for his people’s full restoration to the land, focusing on

Israel's disobedience and Yahweh's sovereign grace (9:3–26). The answer, communicated through the angel Gabriel (9:20–23) reveals the prophetic time-table, not just for Israel's return to the land but for the complete and final establishment of Israel's program, that is, the blessing envisioned in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (9:24–27). It involves seventy weeks of years, or 490 years, beginning from Artaxerxes decree to rebuild Jerusalem given in 444 B.C. (9:25) and includes the time of Messiah's cutting off (9:26). The last week, or seven years, outlines the final assault on the holy city, which will conclude with the consummation of God's intent to establish His eternal kingdom (9:26–27). The fact that an indeterminate period would intervene between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks could not have been deduced from Daniel's perspective, though it has now been revealed.⁹

C. Daniel receives a message and vision expanding upon the persecution that would overtake his people (10:1—12:4).

However certain Israel's ultimate destiny, their intervening experience was to be one of repeated hostility and persecution at the hands of the Gentile nations. Hence, the last major section of Daniel details one significant period of that persecution in order to assure Israel that God was in control of history and would not forsake them. Daniel is overcome by his final vision (10:1–9) communicated by an angel who had been sent to give him understanding of the events in store for his people in the latter days (10:10—11:1). From the specifics of the angelic revelation Daniel, along with the reader, is made aware of the fact that there are hostile spiritual forces at work in the gentile kingdoms

⁹ For a development of the meaning and fulfillment of this prophecy see Harold W. Hoehner, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (January-March 1975): 47-65.

(10:12—11:1). Only the sovereign power and majesty of the Most High is able to guarantee Israel's future.

Chapter 11 is one of the most remarkable prophecies in all Scripture. It is so detailed and exacting in its predictions of the progression of the Seleucid dynasty that it has caused a majority of scholars to discount its genuine predictive element, putting it down to prophecy after the fact (*vaticinium ex eventu*). Daniel is informed that there will be four more rulers in Persia, the last of whom, Xerxes, would provoke Greece (11:2). The mighty king from Greece (11:3) will not leave his realm to an heir but have it divided between four of his generals upon his untimely death (11:3–4). This happened upon the death of Alexander the Great. At this juncture the vision details the struggle between the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt (the South) and the Seleucid dynasty of Syria and Mesopotamia (the North).¹⁰ This struggle climaxes in the victory and rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who cruelly persecutes Israel, defiles the sanctuary and ends Israel's religious observances (11:20–32). This will provoke the Maccabean revolt, which will eventually result in Jewish independence (11:33–35).

The importance of Antiochus lies not only in his persecution of the Jews during the second century B.C., but also in the fact that he anticipates the evil world ruler of the end times who will act by Satanic power against God's people and city. The continuing description of this king (11:36–45) cannot refer to Antiochus. In a characteristic prophetic jump,¹¹ the distant time of the end comes into view and the fierce opponent of

¹⁰ For a discussion of how these events are fulfilled in history see Gleason Archer, "Daniel," in *Daniel-Minor Prophets*, vol. 7 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985; for a brief summary of fulfillment see Pentecost, "Daniel," 1367-73.

¹¹ Cf. Baldwin's comments on this phenomenon which she calls "telescoping" (*Daniel*, 199-202).

God envisioned in the Revelation is set forth. Jesus' end-time discourse to His disciples indicates that the final "abominable desolator" spoken of in Daniel had not yet appeared (Matt 24:15). As terrible as the prospect of this persecutor may be, the good news is that his arrival will also be the time of Israel's deliverance and the judgment of all things (12:1-4).

D. Daniel receives final instruction concerning his words on the end (12:5-13).

Though Daniel had received these visions and interpretations, they were not for him but for those who would come later (cf. 12:4). He is, however, privileged to "overhear" a conversation designed to bring certainty and comfort to those who would see the fulfillment of these things. Specifically, two pronouncements are made indicting that once these events begin they will have a swift termination (cf. 12:7, 11-12). As for Daniel, he will rest until the end, when the resurrection will allow him to experience his prophetic outcome of history without actually participating in the process (12:13).

Conclusion

Daniel's contribution to the Canon lies in the assurance that, though Israel had gone into captivity and would afterward continue under Gentile domination, they still had a future based on God's covenant commitment. Nations would rise and fall, and Israel would be persecuted. However, it would all be under God's sovereign direction and would end in Israel's exaltation to the head of the nations according to the Lord's eternal purposes.

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