

I Have Spoken!

They have invaded us! They have conquered us, stolen from our temple, and captured thousands of our people! That must have been just a few of the thoughts of some of the Israelites who watched Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army march through the streets of Jerusalem after they had defeated Pharaoh Neco and his Egyptian army. Nebuchadnezzar and his army had come to conquer and control the land of Judah. Now he came to humiliate their King Jehoiakim by making him his slave and stealing from the temple. Before Nebuchadnezzar left Judah, he made Jehoiakim a puppet governor to control the land Nebuchadnezzar now claimed for his own. The once proud nation under King David and King Solomon was now in the control of the Babylonian Empire.

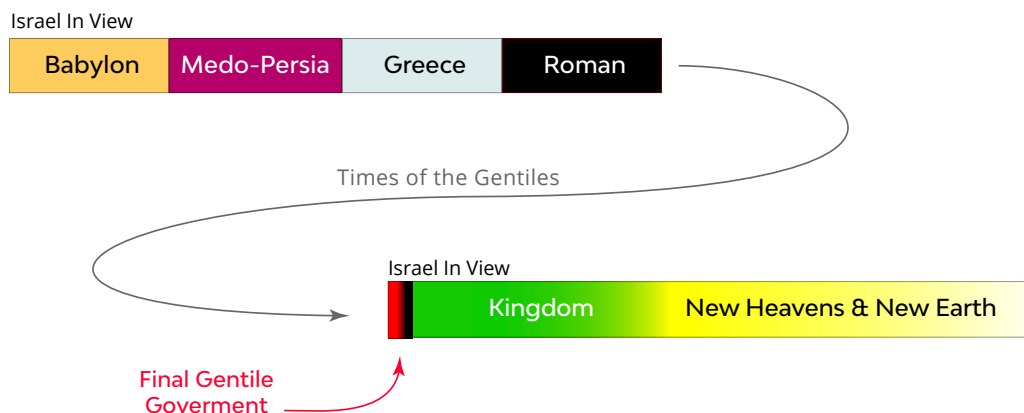
God's Hand. Daniel picks up this historical event in the first two verses.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. (NASB) Daniel 1:1-2

Nebuchadnezzar was an emerging power and Jehoiakim was a wicked king. Daniel begins with two kings, one defeated and the other a conqueror because God helped him win. The Holy Spirit tells us that God "gave" Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar. Psalm 127:1 reminds us that Nebuchadnezzar would not have won without God's help.

Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. (NASB) Ps. 127:1

Daniel Spans The Future History of Israel



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Nebuchadnezzar did not know that he had been helped. He did not know that he was to soon discover God through one of his captives.

Overview. Daniel is about kings and godly men who remained faithful to the true God. It is about dreams and prophecies concerning five nations. It is a book about God, and Satan and demons. It is a book that will give us confidence that the Bible is God speaking to us. We will see the signs of the times and explore the future. When we finish with Daniel, we will continue into Revelation, Lord willing, to understand the events in our future.

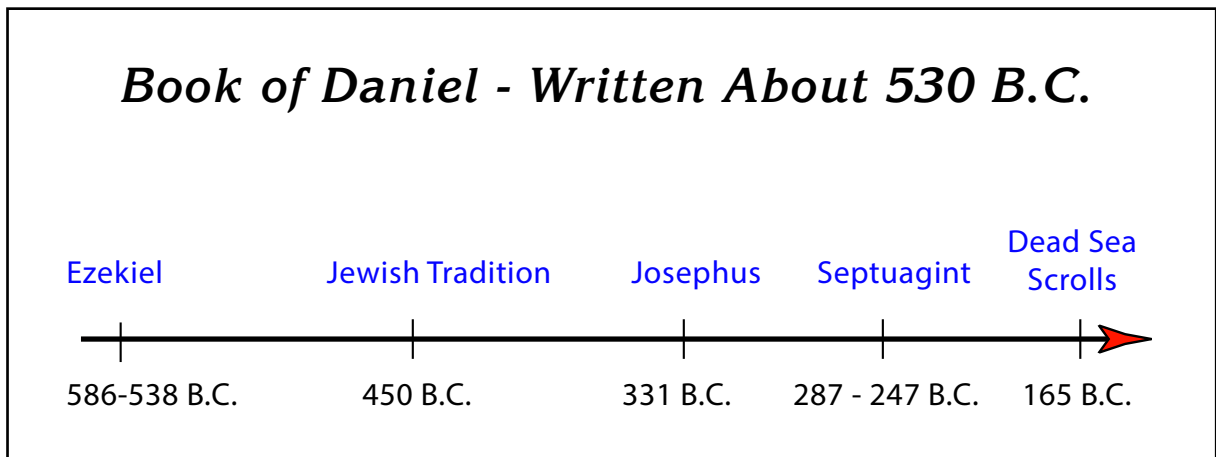
The Battle Ground. Daniel has been a battle ground between those who do not believe in God and those who do. Those who do not believe in God cannot accept miracles and biblical prophecies, including Daniel. So they have attacked the date and authorship of Daniel. They say that the book was written after the historical events occurred.

What has occurred is that they have ignored the facts and

of Jesus' death (33 A.D.). The Dead Sea Scrolls prove at least one prophecy, the prophecy about Jesus' existence on earth, to be real.

The Septuagint. There is another proof that the book of Daniel existed before Jesus was alive on this earth. This proof involves the Septuagint, which is also known as the LXX. The LXX is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. Jewish tradition says that seventy scribes translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek between 285 BC and 247 BC. Since the Septuagint contains the book of Daniel, we know that the book of Daniel existed even earlier in time.

Book of Josephus. Josephus states that the book of Daniel was shown to Alexander the Great when he approached the city of Jerusalem (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, chapter VIII, section 5). History says that Alexander the Great approached Jerusalem around 331 BC. This means that the book of Daniel existed before this event. It predicted that Jerusalem would be conquered by Greece. Some critics will



have refused to answer questions that point to their error. Here are some of the facts.

Dead Sea Scrolls. When was Daniel written? The Dead Sea Scrolls provide the first proof that the book of Daniel existed before 165 BC, since Daniel was found among the manuscripts at Qumran. This early date is the result of radiocarbon dating of the Dead Sea manuscripts of Daniel. They imply that earlier copies of the book with older dates already existed. This is important because Daniel predicted the falls of Babylon (605-539 B.C.), Media-Persia (539-331 B.C.), Greece (331-146 B.C.) and then Rome (331-146 B.C.). Daniel also predicts the time

accept Josephus' other accounts as being accurate, yet dispute this fact.

The Jewish Tradition. Long standing Jewish tradition says that the book of Daniel existed before 450 BC. While this is not solid proof, it is consistent with the next fact.

Ezekiel's Reference. Most critics widely accept the book of Ezekiel as being written between 586 BC and 538 BC. What is fascinating is that the author, Ezekiel, refers to Daniel in Ezekiel 14:14, 20. This implies that Daniel was alive during his time. Daniel claims to be the author (Daniel 12:4) of the book which bears his name and to have lived during the life

of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1-2) and Darius (Dan. 9:1). This implies that Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel and lived to see the fall of Babylon (Dan. 5:30-31).

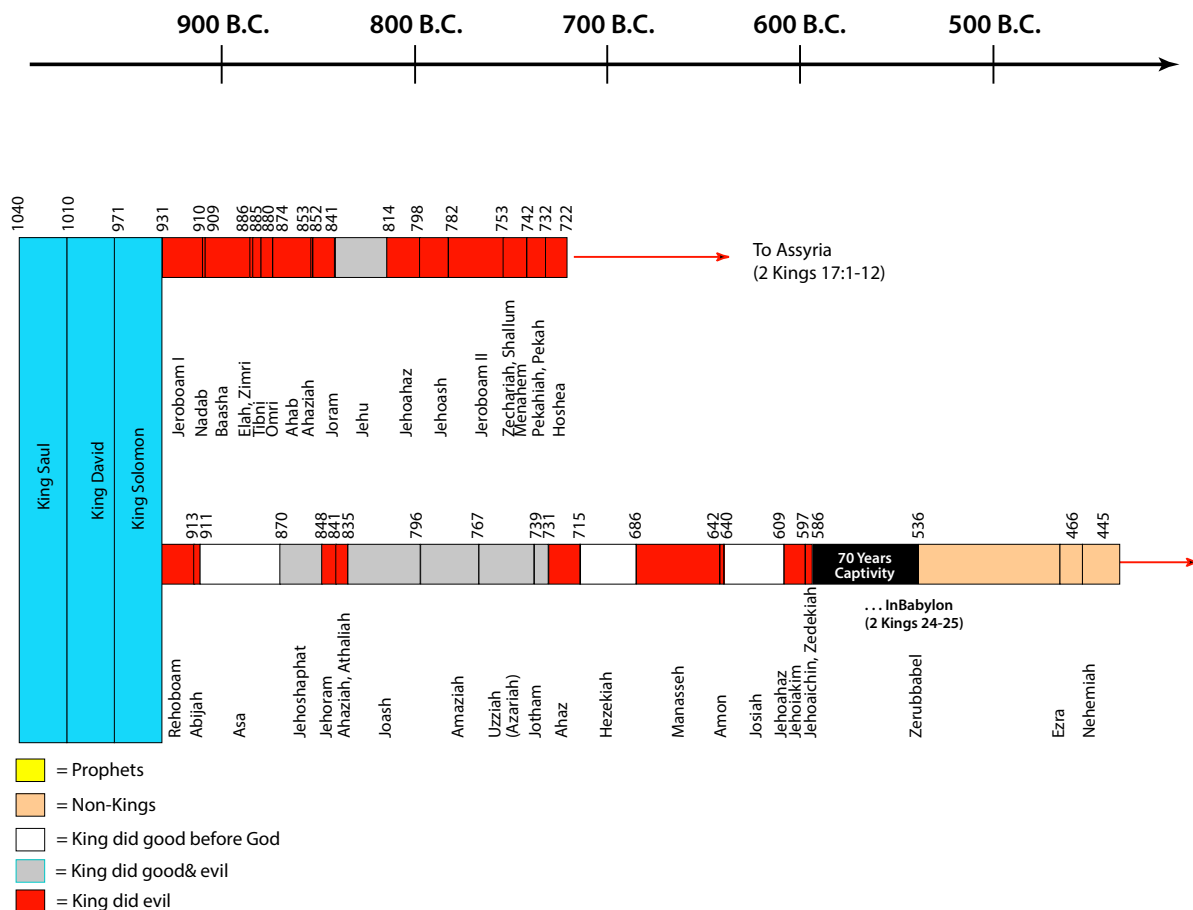
Internal Evidence. For decades, the critics said the proof that Daniel was written near Christ' time is found in the Greek names of musical instruments recorded in the book and in the fact that a portion of Daniel was written in Aramaic. After excavations in Babylonia and Assyria, it has become clear that the musical instruments (lyre, sackbut, and trigon) mentioned in Daniel 3 do not have Greek names (which would argue for a later date for Daniel), but Babylonian names from the seventh century (600 B.C.). These instruments originated in Old Persia and were then assimilated by the Greeks. To the embarrassment of the critics, excavations have also proven that the Aramaic of Daniel was an Imperial Aramaic of the

seventh century (600 B.C.) and not the Aramaic found later. The Babylonians did read and write in Aramaic (Dan. 2:4). With the Dead Sea scrolls and recent archaeological findings, the critics of Daniel are having to reconsider their objections. Future discoveries are proving the criticisms to be in error and not objective.

Substantial historical evidence exists to prove that Daniel was written before the prophecies about Greece, Rome and Jesus were fulfilled.

Warning To Us. The opening verses of Daniel are a warning to us. The nation of Israel had been a divided nation after King Solomon sinned and went after other gods (1 Kings 11:9-13). Two new kingdoms were created after his death as God had decreed. One was a new, smaller kingdom of Israel in the northern part of Canaan and the second kingdom was Judah

The Kings and Prophets



in the southern part. This was the result of King Solomon's sins and not the sins of the people.

The kings of the new Israel and Judah continued ignoring God and worshipping other gods. They "did evil." The chart below shows which kings did evil before God (1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles). The kings of Israel were the worst and so God disciplined them first and brought the Assyrian Empire down to remove the vast majority of the people to a foreign land. The kings of Judah were better, but only two kings were considered to be "good." The last good king was King Josiah - a wonderful king. Listen to this!

And before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him. (NASB) 2 Kings 23:25

God never said this about David or Solomon and He did not say this about any other king. Did you notice the first and last part of the passage? There was no king like him before or after him. He loved God with all his heart, soul, and might. That is what Jesus has called us to do.

And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." (NASB) Matt. 22:37

Josiah destroyed everything that stood between him, the people of Judah and God. But that did not change God's plan to bring Nebuchadnezzar down and destroy Jerusalem and Judah.

However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. (NASB) 2 Kings 23:26

There is a great lesson here for us. God works through leadership. Sinning leaders bring God's discipline on a nation. The principle is the same with fathers and single parents who are

sinning. Sinning church leaders blunt the blessing of the Lord on the church. Oh, the leader can "minister" for the Lord but he/she "ministers" without the Lord's full blessing.

Eventually, God disciplines the leader and maybe the people, the family, or the church. So God gave the kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians and about one hundred years later He gave Judah and its sinning leaders to Nebuchadnezzar. Was this fair? Here is God's answer.

Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves. (NASB) Isa. 3:9

In the following verse, leaven symbolizes sin.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. (NASB) 1 Cor. 5:6-7

The leaders are the models. They set the example and the people follow. The kings sinned and here is what happened in the kingdom of Judah.

For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless gods And they have stumbled from their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in bypaths, Not on a high-way . . . (NASB) Jer. 18:15

God had been calling them to repent but they did not.

Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds. (NASB) Jer. 26:3

So God used Nebuchadnezzar to discipline Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was not a man who followed God. He worshiped other gods, including his chief god Marduk. God used Nebuchadnezzar to bring the Jewish captives to Babylon. Babylon means the "Gate of god" or the "Gate of the gods." They

would be here for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:12-13). God used this man to defeat Jerusalem and bring the Jewish captives to a godless place. Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant (Jer. 25:9) - God's tool. The message for us is that God uses evil nations, terrorists, thieves, murders, to bring us to Himself. God calls us to believe in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? If you do not, God says that you are at war with Him (Rom. 5:10). But you can make peace with God by believing in Jesus Christ.

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (NASB) Rom. 5:1

God says that we must believe that Jesus is God, the only true God. You must believe that you are a sinner and that peace is found only when Jesus forgives your sins. We must also believe that Jesus returned to life. If you do, the war is over. Your sins are forgiven, and now Jesus calls you to submit to Him. Praise the Lord.