

ESTEEMED OF GOD

*A COMMENTARY WORKBOOK ON THE
BOOK OF DANIEL STUDYING THE
PROPHET AND HIS PROPHECIES OF
THE TIME BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS*

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Spiritual “equipment” for the contest of life.

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INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

The Hebrew name means “God is judge,” or “God is my judge.”

If we are to believe that 1:1-4 has some real bearing on the book, Daniel was probably taken captive in the invasion of Jerusalem in 606 B.C.E. and was of royal lineage.

If he was taken in 606 B.C.E. and lived past the Jewish release from captivity and returned to Jerusalem in 536 B.C.E. (as is indicated by his writing in 10:1, during the third year of Cyrus), then he lived 70 years in Babylonia alone. To guess at his age is simply to add the years he lived in Jerusalem to the captivity years plus the years afterwards since it appears that either because of his age or his office he did not return to his own country. If he died soon after authoring chapters 10-12, then he probably died between 80-90 years of age—a good life span for a dedicated man of God.

We will take the position that the Hebrew, Daniel, taken captive in 606 B.C.E., did indeed author the book that bears his name for these reasons:

1. In 12:4, he names himself as the one receiving the revelation and being told to preserve the book.
2. Jesus Himself validates Daniel as the author in Matthew 24:15.
3. Jewish tradition consistently names this Daniel as the author.
4. The first real objection didn't arise until the third century A.D.
A little late in this writer's estimation.

The great message of Daniel to a people in captivity and afterward is that God presides over the kingdoms of men and brings a kingdom of His own, superior to all that go before it.

“The development of world-power over a span of 600 years or more, the succession of judgments of God visited in history upon the enemies of God's people, closing with the establishment of God's kingdom on earth and the accomplishment of redemption through a Redeemer are the ‘secrets’ of God Daniel is commissioned to ‘unveil.’” Paul T. Butler, DANIEL, The Bible Textbook Series.

JUDAH'S TIME LINE BACKGROUND TO DANIEL

- Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29-31), brought forth a great reform that was short-lived.
- Manasseh – Hezekiah's son, set up idols all over the land, including in the temple, and killed resisting Jews. He practiced witchcraft, divination, and offered children in the fire. He made evil Ahab look like a sissy. Jeremiah 15:4 - Jeremiah gives him as THE reason for the captivity. Repented, but too late.
- 626 B.C.E. - Jeremiah called to prophesy.
- Amon – Manasseh's son, so wicked his servants assassinated him.
- 622 B.C.E. - Josiah – Amon's son, took the throne at age 12. While restoring the temple he found the Law and started another reform. The attempted reformation was too little too late. His was an untimely death in battle at Megiddo when he went to battle in spite of God's warning.
- 612 B.C.E. - Nabopolassar came to the throne of Babylon and his son, the General Nebuchadnezzar, led the successful revolt that overthrew Ninevah ending two hundred years of world domination. With the overthrow of Assyria, Egypt tried asserting themselves.
- 609 B.C.E. - Jehoahaz – Josiah's son, put on the throne by the people. After 3 months, he was taken to Egypt by Pharaoh-Necho.
- Jehoiakim – Jehoahaz's brother, placed on the throne by Pharaoh-Necho as an Egyptian puppet.
- 605 B.C.E. - Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Pharaoh-Necho. His father died and he started back to Babylon to secure the throne.
- 606 B.C.E. - **1st Jerusalem invasion**, Jehoiakim becomes a Babylonian puppet, and Daniel is taken captive with other youngsters of the ruling class.
- 597 B.C.E. - Jehoiachin is put on the throne for 3 months, but his rebellion leads to the **2nd Jerusalem invasion** and another group of 10,000 Jews is taken into captivity. Jehoiachin is deported to Babylon, along with Ezekiel. Zedekiah put on throne, tries to ally with Egypt.
- 586 B.C.E. - **3rd Jerusalem invasion**. The temple is destroyed and the city laid waste, 2 Chronicles 36:11-21.
- Till 580 – Jeremiah ministers in Jerusalem and in Egypt.
- 536 B.C.E.- Babylon falls and the first remnant returns to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel.
- 457 B.C.E. - A second remnant returns with Ezra.
- 444 B.C.E. - A third group returns with Nehemiah.

NOTES ON DANIEL CHAPTER ONE

1

1:1 – Daniel here identifies the beginning of his account as the third year of Jehoiakim. Some have taken issue with this due to Jeremiah’s words in Jeremiah 46:2 where he gives the time as the fourth year of the same reign. This should cause no more disturbance than comparing the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke with the account of John in the pages of the New Testament. When studying the crucifixion, time discrepancies are found due to the fact that the first three write according to Jewish timekeeping (starting the day at sundown), while John, possibly writing much later, times his events through the day according to the Roman method of marking time (starting each day at midnight) as we do today.

The Jewish custom of counting a ruler’s reign was to start counting the years of his reign from the very beginning. No doubt this is what Jeremiah, a Jew living in Jerusalem, would have done. The Babylonian custom, however, was to start counting the ruler’s reign at the end of his first full year. His first year (or partial year) was referred to as his “year of ascension.” Daniel, having lived in Babylon for 70 years at his writing, would no doubt have used this method of recording the time. They are both right.

1:2 – We note that Nebuchadnezzar did not devastate the city in this first invasion but simply subdued it and took prisoners. He took back “some” of the vessels from the temple and dedicated those to his own god at home.

1:3-4 – Youths, some of which would have been from the royal families in Jerusalem, were drafted into an apprentice program for serving the king of Babylon. We might say that four special qualifications were named. They were to be:

- 1) without defect (i.e., without handicap, disfiguring scars, mark of disease, etc.),
- 2) good-looking (just being unscarred was not good enough to serve in the king’s court),
- 3) educated (showing intelligence in “every branch of wisdom”),
- 4) and quick-witted (endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge).

1:5-6 - These youths were intended to be separated from their home culture and religion and brought into pagan service in Babylon. They were fed from the king’s

supply of rations and given a crash course in Babylonian education that lasted three years. At the end of that time period they were to be interviewed for use in the “king’s personal service.” An education among Babylonian nobility was nothing to be “sniffed” at. Archaeology has discovered the library of Ashurbanipal that dates to a time just previous to Daniel’s day (704-681 B.C.E.) containing 22,000 volumes of cuneiform clay tablets.

The Babylonians used a base 60 system of numbering (still in use today as we divide hours into 60 minutes and circles into 360 degrees).

In Babylonian tablets, there has been found an amazing knowledge of algebra as well as tablets containing squares, square roots, cubes, and cube roots. The Pythagorean theorem was known by the Babylonians more than a thousand years before Pythagoras.

Their astronomers had assigned fixed positions to the stars, and they could predict lengths of daylight and darkness at any given time.

Long before the days of Daniel, there is evidence that physicians were performing delicate operations on the human eye as well as brain surgery.

The religion of the Chaldeans, which these young people would have had to learn of, had roots going back two thousand years to the Sumerians. There were hundreds of temples within the city of Babylon to any number of pagan gods as well as several ziggurats (giant conical shaped towers with an exterior ramp to the top), and one main one dedicated to the specific god of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, Marduk. At the top of this holy tower it is said that Nebuchadnezzar prepared a room, living quarters for the god, while across the street in front of another shrine stood a twenty foot tall standing solid gold statue of Marduk. Life in the big city would have been a little overwhelming for these Israelite captives.

1:7 – The attempt to paganize the young students was supposed to have been helped by changing their names to incorporate the name of that nation’s deities. The new names for Daniel and his friends carried the meaning of:

Beltshazzar – protect his life

Shadrach – command of Aku (the moon god)

Meshach – who is what Aku (the moon god) is?

Abed-nego – servant of Nebo

1:8-9 – Daniel is convicted that he should not defile himself with the king’s food, either because such has been offered to the pagan gods or because it may have often consisted of those foods which God had instructed Israel to be unclean and not eaten, i.e., unclean animals such as pork and catfish or meat eaten with the blood. Likewise, strong drink and mixed wines were forbidden. We note the manner in which Daniel pursues a solution to this problem. Verse eight says he

“sought permission” not to eat these foods and in verse 12 he says, “please” as he offers a solution and a test to prove his words. He shows incredible wisdom in his manner of approaching that far outdoes many today who think their convictions are an excuse to rudely demand that their wishes be met. We often hear complaints without any courteous solution offered. This is nothing more than “demands.” Daniel was indeed a statesman and shows himself worthy of God’s help.

1:10-14 – Although it may have included miraculous intervention, this writer happens to believe that the favor and compassion that “God granted” in verse 9 was a direct result of Daniel’s appropriate behavior and mannerly request. Even though the overseer feared the king, he was willing to give heed to Daniel’s request because of his respectful handling of the situation. Their request was to be given “pulse” or “vegetables” to eat and water to drink. The original word is the word for things “sown,” thus it was actually vegetables and not meat that they requested. These types of things were not usually offered to the gods as was animal flesh.

1:15-16 – At the end of the test period of 10 days, Daniel and his friends obviously showed the result of eating healthy foods, keeping their familiar diet, and avoiding the stress of strong alcohol and mixed wines. Since his job seems to have been to keep them healthy, the overseer continues to keep them on their requested diet.

1:17-21 – Here it appears that Jehovah intervenes and rewards the convictions, self-control, and work of these young men. They are granted the assistance to excel in their studies. They are given knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom. I draw the conclusion that this is more than just the results of their study because Daniel’s gift was the understanding of visions and dreams. No amount of study could have given him this—it was God’s gift.

After three years they are interviewed and found to be at the very top of their class. In fact, verse 19 says no one was found like them. The natural result was that they became government employees and entered the king’s service. They applied themselves to their work and continued to excel seeming to be ten times better in their counsel than any of the magicians and conjurers the king had. Daniel himself rose to power so that later he was made governor of the city of Babylon itself.

QUESTIONS ON DANIEL CHAPTER ONE

1. Who laid siege to Jerusalem in 606 B.C.E., and what was the outcome?
2. What were the four qualifications the king placed upon his captives entering apprenticeship?
3. What were they ordered to learn, and how long was their training?
4. How were the apprentices cared for during this time of schooling?
5. What problem arose as their training program was to begin?
6. Why was this a problem at all?
7. Describe the boys' manner in dealing with this conflict.
8. How did God assist them in their training program?
9. What was the end result of their convictions and God's help?
10. How many excellent traits of noble character can you suggest from this chapter?