

INTRODUCTION

In the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) the book of Daniel is found in the collection known as “The Writings.”¹ This location surprises most readers, who think that the book belongs obviously to “The Prophets.” The book of Daniel, however, differs from the prophetic books in two obvious ways. First, it does not contain the typical prophetic introduction “Thus says/declares the LORD.” Additionally, since Daniel must be regarded primarily as a statesman, he did not occupy the office of a prophet. E.J. Young has suggested that Daniel did possess the prophetic gift (*donum propheticum*) but not the prophetic office (*munus propheticum*).² Second, it is not “historical in the sense that the books of Kings are historical, though it begins from a point in history and is clearly concerned with history.”³ The books of Kings present a theological assessment of a very specific period of time, namely 971–562 B.C. The book of Daniel provides a philosophy of history, mapping history’s course from the Neo-Babylonian Empire to the *eschaton*, the end of days.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The Book of Daniel was written by Daniel himself. This conclusion is based on both internal and external evidence. First, the internal evidence. If Daniel is named as the one who received the revelations contained in chapters 7 (v. 2), 8 (v. 1), 9 (v. 22), 10–12 (10:2;

¹The Old Testament consists of the Law (Gen–Deut), Prophets (Josh, Judg, 1–2 Sam, 1–2 Kgs, Isa, Jer, Ezek, and the twelve minor prophets), and Writings (the rest).

²Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 20.

³Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), p. 13.

12:5), and if Daniel is commanded to preserve the words of the scroll (12:4), then Danielic authorship is an easy inference.

The external evidence is simple, yet profoundly important. Jesus speaks of Daniel as having foretold the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). In Matthew 24:15-16 we read, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (cf. Mark 13:14). If Jesus attributes this specific prophecy to Daniel, then, again, Danielic authorship is an easy inference.

According to the text of Daniel, Daniel was deported into Babylonian captivity in 605 B.C. (Dan 1:1-2,6). He completed his civil service in the first year of King Cyrus (539; Dan 1:21) and his prophetic ministry in the same king’s third year (10:1).

Living in the third century A.D., Porphyry wrote a 15-volume work entitled *Against the Christians*. In this work, he concluded that the book of Daniel must be history, not prophecy, since predictive prophecy is impossible. In light then of this assumption, and given that the author of Daniel possessed an extensive knowledge of the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.), Porphyry argued for an anonymous author living in the second century B.C. Following Porphyry’s lead the majority of commentators date the book of Daniel to the period of the Maccabees, that is, the second century B.C. One example will suffice. E.W. Heaton writes, “The immediate occasion which called forth the Book of Daniel was the persecution of the Jews by the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned from 175 to 163 B.C. The writer, a pious scribe living in the middle of the persecution, is addressing his contemporaries through the medium of an ancient sage, about whom he recounts stories and to whom he ascribes visions.”⁴

Proponents of this viewpoint argue that every accurate prediction in Daniel was written after it had already been fulfilled (a *vaticinium ex eventu*), a “prophecy after the fact.” Towner’s commentary reflects this assumption. He writes,

We need to assume that the vision as a whole is a prophecy after the fact. Why? Because human beings are unable accu-

⁴E.W. Heaton, *The Book of Daniel*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 17.

rately to predict future events centuries in advance and to say that Daniel could do so, even on the basis of a symbolic revelation vouchsafed to him by God and interpreted by an angel, is to fly in the face of the certainties of human nature. So what we have here is in fact not a road map of the future laid down in the sixth century B.C. but an interpretation of the events of the author's own time, 167–164 B.C.⁵

Towner is correct when he asserts that “human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance.” But God can and does (Amos 3:7; Isa 43:8-10, 14-21; 44:6-8; 44:24–45:1; 45:21; 48:3-5, 14-16). A sixth-century date for the book of Daniel safeguards the belief in the revelatory nature of Scripture. The second-century date reduces Scripture to mere historical reflection.⁶

PURPOSE

The culmination of Babylonian presence in Judea was the ransacking of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, and the deporting of the populace (587 B.C.).

The Babylonians had vanquished Israel, the people of God. But had they vanquished God? In the sixth century Israel had a history, but would she have a future? If she had a future, would it be detoured as the present had been? The Book of Daniel answers all of these questions.

Had Babylon vanquished God? Hardly. In spite of present circumstances, God had always been in control. God had merely used the Babylonians to manifest his righteousness. Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 gives the proper perspective on the recent course of events. “Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him” (Dan 9:13-14).

⁵W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), p. 115.

⁶See Gordon J. Wenham, “Daniel: The Basic Issues,” *Themelios* 2 (1977): 49-52.

In a relatively short period of time, God would vanquish Babylon. The fall of arrogant Babylon is narrated in Daniel 5, with a warning to that effect in chapter 4.

But is the fall of Babylon merely a function of historical exigencies? Again, the answer is the same. Hardly! The dreams and interpretations found in the Book of Daniel reveal God's sovereign control of human history.

He does as he pleases
with the powers of heaven
and the peoples of the earth.
No one can hold back his hand
or say to him: "What have you done?" (Dan 4:35).

The God of Israel willed the rise and fall of Babylon. After Babylon, he willed the rise and fall of Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the entire context of human history.

Had God been vanquished? Hardly! Nebuchadnezzar said,

His dominion is an eternal dominion;
his kingdom endures from generation to generation
(4:34).

King Darius would add,

He is the living God
and he endures forever;
his kingdom will not be destroyed,
his dominion will never end (6:26).

And Israel, would she have a future? If so, what could she expect? Just as God had delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace (Dan 3) and Daniel from the lions' den (Dan 6), Israel would be delivered from her captivity (9:24-27). God "rescues and he saves" (6:27).

Israel is promised a future in order to fulfill God's sovereign plan for the cosmos. "Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy" (9:24).

But what detours would this future take? Israel is warned that she will endure a grievous persecution under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (8:10,24; 11:33). In fact, the people of God can expect

persecution throughout the remaining course of history (7:8,25). But just as God vindicated the faith of Daniel and his three friends in chapter 1, so he will vindicate all those who endure. “As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High” (7:21-22).

The saints of the Most High will receive God’s eternal kingdom and “will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (7:18). But how can the mortal, and often persecuted, possess this kingdom for ever and ever? Daniel 12:2 promises a resurrection to “everlasting life.”

TEXT

The Septuagint (LXX) inserted a lengthy apocryphal passage after Daniel 3:23, known as the *Song of the Three Young Men*. The apocryphal *Susanna* appeared in the LXX as a thirteenth chapter and the twin narratives *Bel* and *The Dragon* as a fourteenth chapter.

CANONICITY

In the Hebrew Bible the Book of Daniel is found among the Writings not the Prophets. Some have suggested that this is so because the book was composed after the canon of the prophets had been completed. If Malachi is dated to the second half of the fifth century B.C., the prophetic canon would have stood complete by approximately 400 B.C. The composition of Daniel would perhaps then be Maccabean in origin.

Since Daniel served as a statesman in a royal court, and since the Book of Daniel differs from the prophetic books (as was argued in the introduction), placement in the “Writings” is the only choice (Daniel could not have been placed in the “Law” with Genesis through Deuteronomy!). Position in the canon of Scripture is not necessarily an indication of the date of composition.⁷

⁷It is clear, however, that the residents at Qumran considered Daniel a prophet. In 4Q174 2:3 we read “which is written in the book of Daniel the prophet.” Christ referred to Daniel as a prophet in Matt 24:15.

The discovery of several fragments of the Book of Daniel in Qumran Cave 1 testifies to the special esteem in which Daniel was held by this famous Dead Sea community.⁸ New Testament quotation of and allusion to the book of Daniel also bears witness to its authority.

GENRE (DANIEL 1–6)

The events narrated in Daniel 1–6 are typically called Court Tales. The tales are of two types: conflict or contest. Daniel 3 and 6 are the “Tales of Court Conflict.” When the faith of Daniel’s three friends conflicts with Nebuchadnezzar’s edict to “fall down and worship the image of gold” (3:5), they are thrown into the fiery furnace. When Daniel’s commitment to “the law of his God” (6:5) conflicts with the “laws of the Medes and Persians” (6:8), he is thrown into the lions’ den.

Daniel 1, 2, 4, and 5 are “Tales of Court Contest.” When Daniel and his three friends “win” the diet contest, they are found “ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in [the] whole kingdom” (1:20). In Daniel 2, 4, and 5, Daniel alone is either able to interpret a king’s dream (2:27-28; 4:7-8) or read the mysterious writing on the wall (5:15,17). On two occasions after Daniel wins a “contest,” the king rewards him (2:48; 4:16).

GENRE (DANIEL 7–12)

Between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100 a number of literary pieces were composed in the style of what is commonly termed *apocalyptic* – a style or genre for which it is exceedingly difficult to arrive at a satisfactory definition.⁹ In fact, many scholars despair of defining the term and resort rather to listing characteristics of the genre. D.S. Russell has offered this explanation: “The apocalyptic literature is essentially a literature of people who saw no hope for their nation simply in terms of politics or on the plain of history. The battle they

⁸William H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 35-42, 47-48.

⁹See Margaret Barker, “Slippery Words III. Apocalyptic,” *ExpTim* 89 (1977-78): 324-329.

were fighting was on a spiritual level, against ‘spiritual powers of wickedness in high places.’ And so they were compelled to look beyond history to the dramatic and miraculous intervention of God who would set to rights the injustices done to his people.”¹⁰

The New Testament book of Revelation is an apocalypse. In Revelation 1:1 the word translated as “revelation” is the Greek word from which we get such words as *apocalypse* and *apocalyptic*. Most scholars of the Bible categorize or associate the book of Daniel with the Revelation of John. These two books contain horrific images of evil; both rely heavily on symbolism and numbers; but both comfort oppressed readers with the vision of the time when God will intervene and bring all evil to an end once and for all.¹¹

If Daniel 7–12 is truly apocalyptic, and if this genre was popular during the second century B.C., then another reason is commonly adduced for seeing the Book of Daniel as a product of the era of the Maccabees. But this line of reasoning is not sound.

Apocalyptic features are not necessarily evidences for a late date for Daniel. Many of these features are also found in such works as Isaiah 24–27, Ezekiel, and Zechariah — books that predate the popularity of the apocalyptic genre by many centuries.

Since the origins of biblical apocalyptic are within the prophetic tradition,¹² one is hard-pressed to disassociate the book of Daniel from its prophetic predecessors. Youngblood has shown that the major apocalyptic themes of Isaiah 24–27 are paralleled elsewhere — not only in apocalyptic sections of other prophetic books but also in nonapocalyptic sections.¹³ Similar comparisons can also be adduced for the other apocalyptic passages in the Old Testament. Accordingly, it is a misstep to date the book of Daniel based on what are

¹⁰D.S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 14.

¹¹For an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the apocalyptic genre, consult: Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); and John J. Collins, “Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979).

¹²R.F. Youngblood, “A Holistic Typology of Prophecy and Apocalyptic,” in *Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), p. 214. In the words of Youngblood, “Virtually all students of the subject agree on at least two features of Hebrew apocalyptic: it contains a strongly futuristic and/or eschatological dimension, and its ultimate well-spring is Israelite prophecy.”

¹³Youngblood, “Holistic Typology,” p. 218.

perceived to be apocalyptic features. (See also the section “Apocalyptic” later in this Introduction.)

HISTORICITY

A number of historical issues are raised by the text of Daniel.

THE YEAR OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S INVASION

Daniel 1:1 states, “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.” Jeremiah 25:1,9, however, date this same event to the “fourth year of Jehoiakim” (cf. Jer 46:2). This slight chronological difference confirms that the author of Daniel wrote from a Babylonian perspective. How so?

In Judah the calendar year in which a new king came to the throne was reckoned as that king’s first year of reign (nonaccession-year method). In Babylon, however, the year when the new king came to power would simply be called his accession year (accession-year method). The first year of his reign did not begin until the beginning of the next calendar year. This slight difference can best be seen in the following chart.

<u>Judah</u>	<u>Babylon</u>
First Year	The year of the accession to the kingdom
Second Year	First Year
Third Year	Second year
Fourth Year	Third Year

The difference is easily understood. Jeremiah writes from the chronological perspective of Judah, while Daniel from that of Babylon.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S ILLNESS (DAN 4)

Daniel 4 recounts how the great Nebuchadnezzar was stricken with boanthropy, a rare form of mental imbalance in which a man imagines himself to be a cow or bull.

Not surprisingly Babylonian records do not mention this illness. However, a Babylonian priest named Berossus preserved a tradition that Nebuchadnezzar took ill suddenly towards the end of his reign. Harrison conjectures that this tradition “comprised a discreet way of referring to some embarrassing ailment that polite persons refrained from mentioning.”¹⁴

The “Prayer of Nabonidus,” a fragmentary text found in Qumran Cave 4, bears some resemblance to Daniel 4. Accordingly, some scholars have asserted that this text was an earlier form of the “legend” of Nebuchadnezzar’s illness and that the author of Daniel transferred the illness from Nabonidus to Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, Daniel diagnosed the wrong patient! Brownlee, who represents this position, writes, “Many scholars have seen a distorted reminiscence of Nabonidus in the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness. . . . It is therefore a doublet, and an historically inferior one at that, to the Nabonidus story at Qumran.”¹⁵

This opinion confers greater historical confidence to a fragmentary text from Qumran than to the text of Scripture. Instead of viewing this piece from Qumran as a source for Daniel 4 (notice that this opinion also assumes a late date for the book of Daniel), a far more objective view is that at present there is no known connection between the two pieces. In fact, two different ailments are represented in the two pieces. In Daniel 4 Nebuchadnezzar suffers from boanthropy; at Qumran Nabonidus suffers “with a severe inflammation.”¹⁶

BELSHAZZAR

According to Daniel 5, 7, and 8, Belshazzar was the final king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, whereas in extrabiblical Greek sources and in the Babylonian king-lists Nabonidus was ruler in Babylon when it fell to the Persians in 539.

¹⁴R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 1115.

¹⁵Brownlee, *Meaning*, p. 39.

¹⁶For a translation of the “Prayer of Nabonidus,” see Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 266.

Archaeological finds have resolved this difficulty. The picture that emerges from these finds again suggests that the writer of Daniel was historically accurate. The picture has developed as follows. While Nabonidus was in Teima (in the Arabian Desert), his son, Belshazzar, was co-regent, exercising rule in Babylon. In fact, Nabonidus had entrusted the kingship to his son. But as long as Nabonidus lived, Belshazzar could not bear the title “king” in the official records. Belshazzar’s promise recorded in Daniel 5:7 and 16 – “he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom” – indicates that the author knew that Belshazzar was second to his father (cf. 5:29).

In Daniel 5:2,11 (thrice), and 18, Nebuchadnezzar is identified as the **father** of Belshazzar. But since this word can be used metaphorically for one’s predecessor, the author of Daniel is not mistaken. And if Nebuchadnezzar was the (grand)father of Belshazzar, then the author is literally accurate.¹⁷

DARIUS THE MEDE (5:31)

Daniel 5:30-31 reads, “That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.” The problem is that history tells us that the Neo-Babylonian Empire was followed by the Persian Empire headed by Cyrus. Who, then, is this Darius the Mede?

Some have suggested that the Darius of Daniel is pure fiction or that the author of Daniel was so confused that he thought Darius I Hystaspes (522–486) preceded Cyrus (539–530). This explanation will hardly do. Baldwin warns, “To assume that Darius did not exist, and so to dismiss the evidence provided by the book, is high-handed and unwise, especially in the light of its vindication in connection with Belshazzar, who at one time was reckoned to be a fictional character.”¹⁸

J.C. Whitcomb has opined that Darius was an alternate name for Gubaru, who is frequently mentioned in cuneiform texts as governor of Babylon during the period of transition to Persian rule in

¹⁷The Hebrew word for father (*ab*) was also used to refer to a grandfather (Gen 28:13; 32:9), a great-grandfather (1 Kgs 15:10-13), or even a great-great-grandfather (1 Kgs 15:11,24). If the mother of Belshazzar was a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, then the text is literally true.

¹⁸Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 24.

Babylonia.¹⁹ D.J. Wiseman identifies Darius the Mede as Cyrus the Persian. This identification requires that 6:28 be translated, "So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian."²⁰ Wiseman's suggested translation of the conjunction ("and") as "that is" is certainly acceptable and in keeping with other examples found in the book of Daniel (cf. 1:3; 6:9; 7:1).

In 11:1 the Septuagint (LXX) has Cyrus instead of Darius. "This suggests that the Greek translator knew of the double name, and preferred to use the one that was better known to avoid confusing his readers."²¹

In short, plausible suggestions exist for the identity of the enigmatic Darius the Mede. Accordingly one does not have to accuse the author of being either imaginative or historically inept.

CHALDEANS

In Daniel 3:8; 5:30; and 9:1 the author uses the term "Chaldean" in an ethnic sense, referring to a Semitic people who had formerly settled around the Persian Gulf from at least the tenth century B.C. Nebuchadnezzar was a Chaldean. In 2:2,4,5,10; 4:7; 5:7,11 the same term refers to a class of astrologers. This secondary usage, unknown in Babylonian sources, is commonly assumed to be an inaccuracy. Against this assumption, Harrison has noted that this secondary usage was known by the fifth-century B.C. historian Herodotus (1.181).²²

FOREIGN VOCABULARY IN DANIEL

The presence of foreign vocabulary has often been used as proof for the late date of composition. S.R. Driver, for example, remarked, "The verdict of the language of Daniel is thus clear. The Persian words presuppose a period after the Persian empire had been well

¹⁹J.C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 24.

²⁰D.J. Wiseman, "The Last Days of Babylon," *Christianity Today* (November 25, 1957): 7-10. See also David W. Baker, "Further Examples of the *Waw Explicativum*," *VT* 30 (1980): 129-136.

²¹Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 27.

²²Harrison, *Introduction*, p. 1113.

established; the Greek words *demand*, the Hebrew *supports*, and the Aramaic *permits*, a date *after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great*.²³

The Persian words (largely referring to government and administration) found in the text of Daniel indicate that Daniel lived under Persian rule. The three Greek words — denoting musical instruments — merely show cultural contact between the Aegean and Mesopotamia. These contacts can be traced from the dawn of history.²⁴ In fact, the argument based on Greek words ultimately betrays the late-date hypothesis. By the time of Antiochus Epiphanes a Greek-speaking government had been in place in Palestine for a century and a half. Why then have no Greek political or administrative terms found their way into the text of Daniel? The Aramaic of Daniel constitutes a strong argument for a sixth-century period of composition.²⁵

Kitchen concludes the matter with these words: “One would—on the Greek and Persian evidence—prefer to put the Aramaic of Daniel in the late sixth, the fifth, or the fourth centuries B.C., not the third or the second. The latter is not ruled out, but is much less realistic and not so favored by the facts as was once imagined.”²⁶

THEOLOGY

The Book of Daniel possesses a rich theology. The “God of heaven” (2:18,28,37,44), the “Most High” (4:17,25,32,34), the “King of Heaven” (4:37), the “Lord of heaven” (5:23), does as he pleases “with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth” (4:35). “He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth” (6:27). His sovereign sway over all matters of history and the peoples of the earth is a major theme of the author. “He sets up kings and deposes

²³S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1963), p. 508.

²⁴Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Greece and Babylon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967).

²⁵Gleason L. Archer Jr., “The Aramaic of the ‘Genesis Apocryphon’ Compared with the Aramaic of Daniel,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), pp. 160-169.

²⁶K.A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, ed. D.J. Wiseman et al. (London: Tyndale Press, 1965), p. 50.

them” (2:21). He “is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men” (4:17; cf. 2:37-38; 5:21).

The God of heaven is living (6:20,26), righteous (4:37; 9:7,14,16), great and awesome (9:4), merciful and forgiving (2:18; 9:9,18). He possesses wisdom and power (2:20). He is the “God of gods and the Lord of kings” (2:47).

Even though God is transcendent, He is also personal and present. He is called “God of my fathers” (2:23), “their own God” (3:28), “your God” (6:20), “our God” (9:9,14), and “my God” (6:22). He “keeps His covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands” (9:4). Men trust (3:28), serve (3:17; 6:20), and worship (2:23; 4:34,37; 7:27) him. Angels attend to him and stand before him (7:10).

He caused the official of chapter 1 to show favor to Daniel (1:9). He gave “knowledge and understanding” to the four young men of chapter 1 (1:17). He “gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning” (2:21). He “reveals deep and hidden things” (2:22; cf. 2:23,28,47). He saves (3:17,28; 6:20,22,27).

Since he is righteous and just (7:9), he judges the sin of his people (1:2; 9:14,16,18) and that of the world (4:25,32; 5:23,26; 7:10,21-22). “And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (4:37).

Since God is great and awesome (9:4), “No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’” (4:35). He will “set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (2:44). “His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation” (4:3; cf. 4:34). “For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end” (6:26).

The people of God will possess this kingdom (7:22). In fact, the “sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High” (7:27).

THE FIVE KINGDOMS

In Daniel 2, 7, and 8 five kingdoms are symbolically presented. The obvious parallels suggest that these chapters are unified. For example, the second beast of chapter 7 “was raised up on one of its

sides,” suggesting prominence for that side. In chapter 8 a ram with two horns appears; one of the horns was longer than the other. This extra length also suggests prominence or importance.

Given these parallels, the textual identification of four of the five kingdoms is easily understood and is obviously authoritative. The fourth kingdom is not specifically named by the text. But following the great empires of Babylon, Persia, and Greece, the fourth kingdom in all likelihood is Rome.

Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Identification
The head of the statue was made of pure gold (32)	The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle (4)		Babylon (2:38)
Its chest and arms of silver (32)	And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear (5)	A ram with two horns (3)	Medo-Persia (8:20)
Its belly and thighs of bronze (32)	And there was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird (6)	A goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground (5)	Greece (8:21)
Its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay (33)	And there was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth (7)		(Rome)
The rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth (35)	Heavenly Court: Ancient of Days (9-10) One like a son of man (13-14)		God’s Kingdom (2:44-45)

Earliest Jewish interpreters and the Church fathers favor the view that Rome was the fourth kingdom.²⁷ Present-day liberal scholarship

²⁷H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1958); John H. Walton, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” *JETS* 29 (March 1986): 26-27.

and a very small corner of evangelicalism, however, favor the position that the fourth kingdom is the Hellenistic Empire.²⁸

This modern position suggests that either Babylon or Assyria is the first kingdom, Media the second, and Persia the third. The view is doomed from the outset given that Media did not rule over a territory comparable to the other empires, and that the biblical writer associates Media with Persia (Dan 8:20). Additionally, since the fourth beast of chapter 7 is nondescript, that is, it is not likened to any known animal, and the he-goat of chapter 8 is identified as Greece (8:21), then logically the last beast of chapter 7 does not represent Greece.

The proponents of a late date for Daniel, who also typically dismiss the predictive possibility of the text, tend to identify the second, third, and fourth kingdoms with Media, Persia, and Greece. This approach is improper for the simple reason that it does not let the text of Daniel speak for itself. The text has spoken – we must listen.

DANIEL 11

The historical clarity of Daniel 11 is positive proof for the divine origin of the revelation received by Daniel. No man living in the sixth century B.C. could predict with such absolute precision events that would unfold two to four centuries later. Consult the commentary for the details associated with these kings of the south and of the north.

The King of the South	The King of the North
Ptolemy I Soter (322–285) [5a]	Seleucus I Nicator (312–280) [5b]
Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246) [6]	Antiochus I Soter (280–261)
Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221) [7-9]	Antiochus II Theos (261–246) [6]
Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–203) [10-12]	Seleucus II Callinicus (246–226) [7-9]
Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203–181) [14-17]	Seleucus III Soter Ceraunus (226–223) [10]
Ptolemy VI Philometor (181–146) [25-28]	Antiochus III Magnus (223–187) [10-19]
	Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175) [20]
	Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163) [21-45]

²⁸Robert Gurney [“The Four Kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7,” *Themelios* 2 (1977): 39-45] and Walton [“The Four Kingdoms,” pp. 25-36] are two evangelicals who defend this viewpoint.

STRUCTURE

The book of Daniel was composed in two languages – Hebrew and Aramaic.²⁹ The book commences in Hebrew (1:1–2:4a), continues in Aramaic (2:4b–7:28), and concludes in Hebrew (8:1–12:13). This ABA pattern is deliberate. The Aramaic section (B) is addressed to the kings of the earth and therefore written in the international language, the *lingua franca*. The remaining chapters are written in Hebrew because they are addressed to Jews.

The six chapters within the Aramaic section are organized chiasmatically (ABCCBA). This arrangement was first noted by A. Lenglet.³⁰

- A. Nebuchadnezzar's vision of four kingdoms (2)
 - B. God delivers his servants from a fiery furnace (3)
 - C. God's judgment upon the pride of Nebuchadnezzar (4)
 - C'. God's judgment upon the pride of Belshazzar (5)
 - B'. God delivers his servant from a den of lions (6)
 - A'. Daniel's vision of four kingdoms (7)

The first Hebrew section (A) introduces the reader to Daniel and his friends, *dramatis personae* significant to the Aramaic section. The second Hebrew section (A) details what the visions of chapters 2 and 7 will mean for the city of Jerusalem and God's people.

The chiasmic arrangement of chapters 2–7 cuts across the genre distinction noted above. This is just one of the many proofs for the unity of this book.

David W. Gooding has proposed that the author of Daniel arranged his material to stand in two groups with five items in each.³¹

²⁹B.T. Arnold, "The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible: Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 22/2 (1996): 1-16.

³⁰A. Lenglet, "La structure litteraire de Daniel 2-7," *Biblica* 53 (1972): 169-190.

³¹David W. Gooding, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and Its Implications," *TynBul* 32 (1981): 58-59.

GROUP 1	GROUP 2
Ch. 1 – Nebuchadnezzar reverently places God’s vessels in his idol’s temple. Daniel and others refuse to indulge in pagan impurities. Court officials sympathetic. Daniel and his colleagues’ physical and mental powers vindicated. They are promoted to high office.	Ch. 6 – Darius bans prayer to God for thirty days. Daniel refuses to cease practicing the Jewish religion. Court officials intrigue against him. Daniel’s political loyalty to the king vindicated. He is restored to high office.
Ch. 2 – A survey of the whole course of Gentile imperial power. Four empires in the form of a man. The fatal weakness: an incoherent mixture of iron and clay in the feet. The whole Man destroyed by the stone cut out by divine power. The universal Messianic kingdom set up.	Ch. 7 – A survey of the whole course of Gentile imperial power. Four empires in the form of wild beasts. The hideous strength: a frightening mixture of animal destructiveness with human intelligence. The final beast destroyed and universal domination given to the Son of Man.
Ch. 3 – Nebuchadnezzar thinks that ‘no god can deliver (the Jews) out of his hand.’ He commands them to worship his god. The Jews defy him. They are preserved in the furnace. God’s ability to deliver is thereby demonstrated.	Ch. 8 – The little horn: ‘none can deliver out of his hand.’ He stops the Jews’ worship of their God, and defies God himself. God’s sanctuary and truth are finally vindicated.
Ch. 4 – The glory of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is warned that he deserves discipline. He persists in pride, is chastised, and his chastisement lasts for 7 times. He is then restored.	Ch. 9 – The desolations of Jerusalem: Israel’s sins have brought on them the curse warned of in the OT. Jerusalem will be restored, but Israel’s persistence in sin will bring on further desolations lasting to the end of 70 × 7 years. Then Jerusalem will be finally restored.
Ch. 5 – Belshazzar makes a god of his pleasures, but still recognizes the gods of stone etc. The writing on the wall. The end of Belshazzar and the end of the Babylonian empire.	Ch. 10–12 – The king exalts himself above every god, and regards no god. The Writing of Truth. The series of apparent ‘ends’ leading up to ‘the time of the end’ and eventually to The End itself.

DISPENSATIONALISM

In terms of the flow of biblical history, dispensationalists recognize seven different time periods: innocency or freedom, conscience, civil government, promise, Mosaic law, grace, and the millennium.³²

The first dispensation terminated at the time Adam and Eve lapsed into sin, losing their freedom (Gen 1:28–3:6). The next period, which is described in Genesis 4:1–8:14, ended when God brought judgment upon the evil consciences of mankind through the flood. During the third dispensation God gave mankind the

³²The Bible of Dispensationalism is the *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1909.

right to develop human government. Mankind turned this right into rebellion against God by building the Tower of Babel (Gen 8:15–11:9). The fourth interval covers the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and Israel’s sojourn in Egyptian slavery (Gen 11:10–Exod 18:27). God’s promise to Abraham of family, land, and blessing forms the basis for this dispensation. The fifth interval lasted from the time of Moses until the death of Christ (Exod 19:1–Acts 1:26). During the interval of grace man’s responsibility is to accept God’s gift of righteousness. This age will end with man’s rejection of God’s gracious gift, resulting in the tribulation (Acts 2:1–Rev 19:21). The final interval of time is dominated by the personal, visible, and millennial rule of Christ. At the end of this interval a final rebellion will break out and result in the final judgment (Rev 20).

Daniel 2:44 is an important verse in dispensational interpretation. This verse reads as follows: “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”

The view of this commentary is that the victorious kingdom foretold in this passage was set up two millennia ago during the time of the Roman Caesars by Jesus and his apostles, and has been growing and spreading ever since. The reference to “those [vanquished] kingdoms” is best understood as a reference to the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, the quintessential representatives of Gentile world dominion. The “kingdom of God,” which Jesus proclaimed as present in his ministry, is an irresistible spiritual might that has not passed and will not pass to another people.

The dispensational interpretation is quite different, insisting that its fulfillment is wholly future. Dispensationalists identify “those kings” with the ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel 7, which they regard as ten kingdoms which will arise out of a restored (hence future) Roman Empire. “Those kings” will be destroyed during the final dispensation, during Christ’s millennial kingdom.

The difference between the view of this commentary and that of dispensationalists is obvious: in this work this prophecy is fixed to the First Advent of Jesus, while the dispensationalists would fix it to his Second.

Leon Wood’s Daniel commentary fixes this prophecy to Jesus’

Second Advent. Wood suggests that the fifth kingdom of Daniel 2, which he considers to be the earthly and millennial reign of Christ, will be earthly, physical, and temporal (1000 years) in character. Such a conclusion ignores the contrast drawn between the physical and temporal kingdoms of human government and the divine (and hence, by nature, spiritual) and eternal (“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed”) kingdom of God. His view also ignores the simple words of Jesus to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36).

Wood also suggests that Christ’s spiritual kingdom, inaugurated at his first coming, has never filled all the earth. But according to Daniel 2:35 this kingdom is to fill the whole earth. Wood writes, “In fact, today people continue to be born faster than they are being won to Christ. Ground actually is being lost, rather than gained. But Christ’s millennial kingdom will indeed come to fill all the earth. The capital will be established in Jerusalem; Israel will be the special kingdom in the world community; and all the world will be under the supreme rule of the perfect King.”³³ Wood has apparently overlooked the first-century pronouncement of Paul in Colossians 1:6. “All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth.”

Dispensationalists also see the consummation of Daniel 9:24 (“Seventy sevens [weeks] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.”) as still pending. Accordingly, they assert that the seventieth week does not follow immediately upon the sixty-ninth week. Rather, a long parenthesis, that is, an indefinite interval of time, interrupts these two weeks. The prophetic clock stopped ticking with the death of Jesus on the cross (end of the 69th week) and will commence again when the Antichrist leads a great army against the people of God.

³³Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 73.

This gap of now well over 1900 years appears to destroy the natural reading of the weeks as consecutive. More importantly, this view ignores NT passages that support the contention that the First Advent of Jesus easily fulfills the six purpose statements of Daniel 9:24. With regard to the first three—“to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness”—Jesus himself said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28). Apropos of the fourth purpose — “to bring in everlasting righteousness” — the Apostle Paul writes,

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom 3:21-25a).³⁴

The fifth purpose — “to seal up vision and prophecy” — is reflected in the words of Paul found in 2 Corinthians 1:20: “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.”

Finally, dispensationalists understand the sixth purpose statement — “to anoint the most holy” — as a reference to a restored millennial temple.³⁵ At 9:24 in the commentary evidence will be presented for a personal and messianic understanding of “the most holy.” Let it suffice here simply to state that we have no indication whatever that Israel’s temples were anointed — whether the first one or the second one. But at his baptism Jesus clearly was. When Jesus came up out of the waters, he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him (Matt 4:16), fulfilling Isaiah 61:1. “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (cf. Isa 11:2).

³⁴J. Barton Payne, “The Goal of Daniel’s Seventy Weeks,” *JETS* 21 (June 1978): 97-115.

³⁵Robert C. Newman, “Daniel’s Seventy Weeks and the Old Testament Sabbath-Year Cycle,” *JETS* 16 (Fall 1973): 229-234.

MAJOR MILLENNIAL VIEWS³⁶

MILLENNIALISM OR PREMILLENNIALISM

According to this view, at the Second Coming of Jesus, Satan will be bound so that he may not deceive the nations (Rev 20:1-3). Christ will then reign with his resurrected saints for a millennium, a thousand years (Rev 20:4), over the earth. The unbelieving nations that are still on the earth at this time are ruled over by Christ with a rod of iron. Sin and death still exist, but evil is greatly restrained.

Near the end of the millennium Satan will be loosed. He will gather the rebellious nations together for one final assault upon God's people. Fire from heaven will consume these nations and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire.

After the millennium has ended, there follows the resurrection of unbelievers who have died, the great judgment, and then the final states of heaven and hell are ushered in.

A literal reading of Revelation 20:4 is precarious for two reasons. First, a literal reading of apocalyptic material, as the Book of Revelation surely is, is a methodological misstep. Secondly, and more importantly, the belief in a millennial reign of Christ upon the earth conflicts with 2 Peter 3:10-13. Peter states quite clearly that the Second Coming of Christ will be followed at once by the dissolution of the old earth and the creation of the new earth.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

³⁶Excellent discussions of the millennium may be found in: Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 173-193; and Robert C. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980).

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

Proponents of this view suggest that Christ's return will occur in two stages. The first stage is the so-called rapture. At the time of the rapture, resurrected believers (exclusive of Old Testament saints) and glorified believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the descending Lord in the air. This body of believers then ascends with the Lord to heaven to celebrate for seven years the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Dispensationalists assert that this seven-year period is Daniel's seventieth week (Dan 9:24-27). During this seven-year period, a number of events will unfold here on earth: (1) the tribulation predicted in Daniel 9:27 will begin; (2) the antichrist will begin his cruel reign; (3) terrible judgments will fall upon the earth; (4) the 144,000 Israelites of Revelation 7:3-8 will turn to Jesus as Messiah; (5) this believing remnant will preach a twofold message: the coming Davidic Kingdom and the message of the cross; (6) through this Jewish witness an innumerable multitude of Gentiles will be brought to salvation; and (7) the armies of the beast and the false prophet will gather to attack the people of God in the Battle of Armageddon.

At the end of this seven-year period, Christ will come all the way down to earth and destroy his enemies thus ending the Battle of Armageddon. The majority of Israelites then living will turn to Christ and be saved. The devil will be bound, cast into the abyss, and sealed there for a literal thousand years. Now follows the judgment of living Gentiles (Matt 25:31-46) and of Israel. Those Gentiles and Israelites who have turned to the Lord will enter the millennial reign and enjoy its blessings. Those who have failed the test will be cast into everlasting fire.

The saints who died during the seven-year tribulation and the Old Testament saints are now raised from the dead and join the risen and translated saints who constitute the raptured church in heaven.

Christ then begins his millennial reign. At the beginning of this reign no unregenerate people are living on the earth. This is truly a golden age. Worship in the millennium will center around a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Animal sacrifices will be offered in this temple, in remembrance of Christ's death for us.

The resurrected saints mentioned earlier will be living in the new, heavenly Jerusalem, which will be in the air above the earth.

Many of the children born during the millennium will themselves become believers. Those children that turn out to be rebellious against the Lord will be held in check by Jesus. At the end of the millennium, after Satan has been loosed from his prison, he will gather together an army for a final attack upon the saints of God. This rebellion will be smashed, and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. All believers who died during the millennium will be raised.

After the millennium has ended, all the unbelieving dead will be raised, judged, and cast into the lake of fire. This is known as the second death.

The heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling place of the resurrected saints, will then descend to a new earth, where God and his people will dwell together for eternity.

AMILLENNIALISM

This view teaches that the thousand years of Revelation 20:4-6 symbolize the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven. This reign of Christ is not exclusively future but is now in process of realization. At the end of this millennial reign, the Second Coming of Christ will immediately usher in the consummation, final judgment, and the new heavens and earth.

POSTMILLENNIALISM

Like amillennialism, postmillennialism posits that the millennial reign of Christ does not involve a visible reign of Christ from an earthly throne. His reign is not literally a thousand years in duration. The present age will merge into the millennial age when the world becomes Christianized through the preaching of the gospel. The Christianizing of society is a prerequisite to the Second Coming of Jesus, which, in turn, will be followed by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness.

Speaking of this “golden age” of Christianity, Loraine Boettner writes, “This does not mean that there ever will be a time on this earth when every person will be a Christian, or that all sin will be

abolished. But it does mean that evil in all its many forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and that Christ will return to a truly Christianized world."³⁷

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Paul Hanson defines *apocalyptic* writing as follows: "A group of writings concerned with the renewal of faith and the reordering of life on the basis of a vision of a prototypical heavenly order revealed to a religious community through a seer. The author tends to relativize the significance of existing realities by depicting how they are about to be superseded by God's universal reign in an eschatological event that can neither be hastened nor thwarted by human efforts, but which will unfold, true to an eternal plan, as the result of divine action."³⁸

In short, apocalyptic writing is a crisis literature intended to offer comfort and hope to the afflicted. This hope is conveyed through two powerful messages: the whole of history is in God's control, and the goal of history is the Kingdom of God.³⁹

For the apocalypticist, the present age is evil and oppression is commonplace, but ultimate power lies in the hands of God and in the end he will prevail. Kings and kingdoms inevitably arise, but only by the permissive will of God. Their rise is known in advance by God and their fall is a predetermined function of his righteous judgment. Russell writes, "There is a moral factor at work in history and a judgment upon history that is inevitable and decisive. It is a judgment that falls on individuals and institutions alike as inevitably and as decisively as night follows day."⁴⁰

For the apocalyptic visionary, only a short step is needed to come to the conclusion that the goal of history is the Kingdom of God. Russell writes, "They were able to interpret the happenings of his-

³⁷Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), p. 14.

³⁸Paul D. Hanson, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), pp. 27-28.

³⁹Russell, *Divine*, p. 135.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 136.

tory in the light of eternity. They saw meaning and judgment in history because at the end of the process lay the goal, foreordained and predetermined by God, in whose light the whole of history would at last make sense. The real significance of history for them lay in its end, its completion, its fulfillment in the coming Kingdom.⁴¹

Both of these themes are evident in Daniel 2. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream God reveals a sequence of four earthly kingdoms that is predetermined by God's permissive will (2:38). The collapse of the fourth kingdom indicates that the goal of history has been reached—the Kingdom of God. “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (2:44).

Daniel 7 treats the same themes as well. Four beastly kingdoms will arise and dominate the world's stage. The kingdoms represented by the beasts are the same kingdoms represented by the metals in chapter 2. These kingdoms are presented before the tribunal of God's judgment and found wanting (7:10). These earthly kingdoms are then eclipsed by the Kingdom of God. “The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (7:17-18).

The apocalyptic genre is characterized by a number of features. In his fine volume entitled *Apocalyptic*, Leon Morris lists thirteen of these features.⁴² They are:

- (1) *Revelations*. Apocalyptic visionaries typically looked to angels as the source of their information. Consequently, they did not have the same awareness of the immediate presence of God as did the great prophets.
- (2) *Symbolism*. Symbolism (beasts, mountains, stars) and significant numbers (3, 4, 7, 10, 12, 70) abound.
- (3) *Pessimism*. According to the visionaries, this world was in a bad state and it would get worse. Nothing but trouble could be expected for a sinful world.
- (4) *The shaking of the foundations*. As a result of this profound pessimism, the visionaries were convinced that only a cataclysmic destruction could set the cosmos straight.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 137.

⁴²Morris, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 34-67.

- (5) *The triumph of God.* At the heart of the apocalyptic movement is the conviction of the ultimate victory of God.
- (6) *Determinism.* For the apocalyptists it was clear that the course of this world's history is predetermined. This approach did give meaning to the world's agony. The apocalyptists maintained that the hand of God was in it all.
- (7) *Dualism.* Evil and good are set against each other — Satan against God and the heathen nations against God's people. The nations of this world are contrasted with the kingdom of God. This age is set against the age to come.
- (8) *Pseudonymity.* The apocalyptic writer attributes his work to a recognized hero of the faith, such as Ezra or Moses or Abraham or Baruch. Ascribing a work to an illustrious ancient added immensely to the respect accorded the writings.
- (9) *A literary form.* Apocalyptic is a literary device, a way of getting a message across. The message conveyed arose from the author's imagination, and not from actual events of the past.
- (10) *Rewritten history.* Apocalyptists take history and rewrite it in the form of prophecy.
- (11) *Ethical teaching.* The apocalyptists looked for upright conduct. The hope the visionaries held out at the End was for the righteous, not all men. If the End is imminent, men cannot put off repentance.
- (12) *Prediction.* The visionaries were futurists. They were vitally interested in the way God would break into this world of time and sense and bring an end to the present system.
- (13) *Historical perspective.* Apocalyptic visionaries are content to abandon the present and look for the future consummation — a divine breaking in on this present historical process. The historical process they are ready to abandon.

The Book of Daniel certainly evidences many of these apocalyptic features. Apropos of (1), each major unit in Daniel 7–12 features a heavenly being offering words of explanation to Daniel (7:16; 8:15–16; 9:21; 10:5; 12:5). Symbolism (2) is obviously paramount in a book like Daniel. The Book of Daniel shares the perspective of pessimism (3). The world is in a bad state, and it can only get worse. Daniel 12:1 warns, “There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.”

In Daniel the belief in the inevitable triumph of God (5) and determinism (6) are obvious, as has already been noted. Dualism (7) is also significantly attested in Daniel. Demonic resistance to the divine will is mentioned in 10:12-14, and again in 10:20-21. The predicted persecution of the Jews under the terrible reign of Antiochus (8:9-12) is evidence enough of heathen hatred of God's people.

Daniel 7-12 may not abound in ethical teaching (11), but two instances are integral to the texture of the book. First, in Daniel 9, as Daniel confesses his and the nation's sin, the angel Gabriel was dispatched to announce God's long-term solution to the sin problem. Second, in terms of the End, only "those who are wise" and "those who lead many to righteousness" will receive "everlasting life." The others will experience "shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2-3).

The Book of Daniel shares with the apocalyptic genre these seven characteristics. The other six are much more debatable. For example, rewritten history (10) is the assumption of late-date theorists. This is not the view of this commentary. It is a precarious argument to label a book "apocalyptic," and then to assign to it a date of composition based on this nomenclature, when there is much in the book that is not apocalyptic, or when the material can be explained from another perspective, such as prophecy.

To summarize: Daniel shares with apocalyptic literature the twin concerns of God's control and the coming Kingdom of God, as well as a number of important features or characteristics.

These affinities with the apocalyptic genre must be balanced by Daniel's affinities with earlier prophetic literature, the Wisdom literature and the Psalms. N. Porteous is right to claim: "Perhaps the wisest course is to take the Book of Daniel as a distinctive piece of literature with a clearly defined witness of its own, and to take note of the various ways in which it borrows from and is colored by the earlier prophetic literature, the Wisdom literature, and the Psalms and has its successors in the apocalypses, though these often exhibit an extravagance and a fantastic imagination which is less prominent in the Book of Daniel."⁴³

Of the same opinion, Morris writes, "We should not miss the uniqueness of this book. It is like the apocalypses it is true, and there

⁴³As cited in *ibid.*, p. 80.

can be little doubt that many of the apocalyptists copied its form. But its essence is otherwise.”⁴⁴

Daniel’s affinity with earlier prophecy is obvious. For example, both prophecy and Daniel stress God’s moral control of the outcomes of history. In Isaiah 10 the prophet first bemoans the moral collapse of Judah: “Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless” (10:1-2). As a consequence, the prophet then warns: “What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain” (10:3-4). Disaster will come from afar – the Assyrian army, “the rod of my [God’s] anger” (10:5).

In turn, the Assyrians will come into the courtroom of the holy judge of the cosmos. His verdict: guilty! “I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes” (10:12). The prophet then warns of Assyria’s impending destruction: “Therefore, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors; under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame” (10:16).

The prophet Habakkuk provides a second example of this glorious theme. He complains to God of the perversion manifest in Judean society. “The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted” (1:4). The LORD responds to the prophet’s complaint by promising judgment upon Judah – judgment in the form of the Babylonians. “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own” (1:5-6).

In turn, the Babylonians will fall, undone by the consequences of their own sin. Five times in chapter 2 the prophet pronounces a “Woe” oracle against the Babylonians (2:6,9,12,15,19). Each pronouncement warns of impending judgment upon the moral depravity of the Babylonians. For example, hear the third oracle: “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 80-81.

crime! Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (2:12-14).

Every Old Testament prophecy against a foreign nation understands that nation's impending calamity to be a direct result of God's moral determinism for the cosmos. The holy standards of a just God are writ large across the pages of human history.

MATTHEW 24:15

The expression "the abomination that causes desolation" occurs four times in Daniel (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Daniel 8:13 and 11:31 clearly refer to the desecration of the Jewish temple under Antiochus Epiphanes, who erected an altar to Zeus and sacrificed swine upon it. In Matthew 24:15 Jesus is identifying Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 (Matthew agrees with the LXX of 12:11) with certain events about to take place. In all likelihood, Jesus' identification of the latter passage is a typological fulfillment. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70 by the Romans would easily be likened to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus over two centuries earlier. The Romans erected on the temple mount their standards, which bore the image of the emperor, then offered sacrifice to them (Josephus *Wars* 6:316). John Broadus comments, "The Roman military standard, with its eagle of silver or bronze, and under that an imperial bust which the soldiers were accustomed to worship, standing anywhere in the holy city, would be a violation of the second commandment, would be abominable in the eyes of all devout Jews, would in itself desolate the holy place, according to their feeling, and would foretoken a yet more complete desolation."⁴⁵

Since Luke writes for Gentile readers, who would not understand the Jewish expression "the abomination that causes desolation," he paraphrases Daniel. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near" (21:20). Jesus by this Jewish expression meant the threat to Judea and Jerusalem by

⁴⁵John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), p. 486.

hostile armies — the Roman army that would overwhelm Jerusalem. The setting up of an abomination in the temple precinct is a direct result of the pagan attack.

LIFE OF DANIEL

We know nothing of the early life of Daniel, except what is recorded in the book that bears his name. Daniel 1:3 reports that he was one of the youths of royal or noble seed who were exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah.

In captivity he was educated in the language and literature of the Babylonians. He was even given the Babylonian name Belteshazzar (“protect the king”). The Babylonians were grooming him for royal service. But his God, the God of Israel, had a plan for him as well. He bestowed on him the gift of understanding visions and dreams. At the end of his formal training he was found to be superior to all the Babylonian magicians and enchanters in every matter of wisdom and understanding.

Daniel’s public service was in keeping with his education and divine giftedness. He interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams, as recorded in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4. In Daniel 5 he was called upon by Belshazzar to interpret the extraordinary writing on the palace wall. In the last six chapters of the book we have recorded his own visions, all of which relate to the future history of the great world empires and the final triumph of the Kingdom of God.

In addition to his duties as interpreter, Daniel also stood high in the governmental service of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius = Cyrus. He was governor over the whole province of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:48). Belshazzar made him third highest ruler in the kingdom (Dan 5:29). Darius made him one of the three presidents to whom the satraps were to give an account (Dan 6:1-3).

The last recorded vision of Daniel occurred in the third year of Cyrus (536 B.C.), when the prophet was very advanced in years. By tradition Daniel was buried in Susa, though this is admittedly difficult to substantiate.

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