

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The book is named after its principal character, Daniel. The practice of naming OT books for their main hero is demonstrated by other books such as Joshua, Samuel, Esther, Job, etc. Such a title does not necessarily indicate authorship, although that may be included as well, as is the case with the book of Daniel.

2. Authorship. The traditional view of both Jews and Christians is that the book was written in the 6th century b.c., and that Daniel was its author. In favor of the correctness of this traditional view are the following points of evidence:

a. The claims of the book. The prophet Daniel speaks in the first person in many passages (chs. 8:1-7, 13-19, 27; 9:2-22; 10:2-5; etc.). He states that he personally received the divine order to preserve the book (ch. 12:4). The fact that there are sections in which the author refers to himself in the third person (chs. 1:6-11, 17, 19, 21; 2:14-20; etc.) is not strange, for in works of antiquity such a usage is frequently observed (see on Ezra 7:28).

b. The author well acquainted with history. Only a man of the 6th century (b.c.), well versed in Babylonian affairs, could have provided some of the historical facts found in the book. The knowledge of these facts was lost after the 6th century b.c., not being recorded in other ancient literature after that time (see p. 748). Relatively recent archeological finds have once more brought these facts to light.

c. The testimony of Jesus Christ. Quoting a passage from the book, Jesus Christ mentions Daniel as author (Matt. 24:15). For every Christian believer this testimony should be convincing evidence.

The book falls into two clearly distinguishable parts, the first (chs. 1-6) mainly historical, and the second (chs. 7-12) mainly prophetic; yet the book is a literary unit. In support of such unity the following arguments can be listed: 1. The various parts of the book are mutually related, one to the other. The use of the Temple vessels at Belshazzar's feast can be understood in the light of the record of how they came to Babylon (ch. 5:3; cf. ch. 1:1, 2). Chapter 3:12 refers back to the political action of Nebuchadnezzar described first in ch. 2:49. In ch. 9:21 reference is made to an earlier vision (see ch. 8:15, 16).

<Page 744>

2. The historical part contains a prophecy (ch. 2) closely related in theme to the prophecies found in chs. 7-12. Chapter 7 develops further the theme of ch. 2. Also the historical and prophetic elements are related. The historical section (chs. 1-6) narrates God's dealings with one nation, Babylon, and its role in the divine plan. This illustrates God's dealings with all nations (see Ed 175-177). Like Babylon, each successive world power portrayed in the prophetic portion had an opportunity to know the divine will and cooperate with it, and each was measured by its fulfillment of the divine purpose. Thus each nation's rise and fall in chs. 7-12 is to be understood in terms of the principles set forth in the historical portion as they related to Babylon. This unifies the book and illuminates the role played by each empire.

The literary unity of the book, demonstrated in the composition, general channel of thought, and expressions used in the two languages (see p. 748), is generally recognized. The arguments adduced for two authors for the book appear pointless.

In Qumran Cave 1 (see pp. 86-88) were three fragments from the book of Daniel. They were published by D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert I: Qumran Cave I* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 150-152. The fragments came either from two scrolls or from one scroll in which chs. 1 and 2 were written by one scribe and ch. 3 by another, containing parts of chs. 1:10-17; 2:2-6; 3:22-30. A comparison of this text with the Masoretic text shows 16 variants, none of which affects the meaning of

the passage. Nine of these 16 variations are spelling variants, each affecting only one letter; two of these seem to be spelling errors; the other seven are variously spelled also in the Masoretic text. Four additions are found: one of the conjunction "and," and one of the particle "that" before an "if"; two words have a vowel letter added.

Once, a vowel letter occurring in the Masoretic text is not found in the fragments. Two verbal endings seem to be scribal errors. The list shows that the differences are so insignificant that they would not be noticeable in a translation. This is a strong proof that the Masoretic text of Daniel is now in substantially the same form as it was at least in the time of Christ.

It is of further interest that the fragment of ch. 2 covers the passage in which the transition occurs from Hebrew to Aramaic (see on ch. 2:4). At that point a space is left between the last Hebrew word and the first Aramaic word, thus making a distinct break between the language sections. It is also noteworthy that, in agreement with the Masoretic text, these fragments do not contain the apocryphal Song of the Three Children (see on ch. 3:23).

Qumrān Cave 4 has produced leather fragments from three Daniel MSS (not yet published in 1976) reported to be well preserved and representing sizable portions of the book. F. M. Cross, in *Biblical Archaeologist*, 19 (1956), 85, 86; Cross, in *Revue Biblique*, 63 (1956), 58.

From Qumrān Cave 6 come several papyrus fragments of Daniel, representing chs. 8:20, 21; 10:8-16; and 11:33-38 (containing nine minor spelling variants), published by M. Baillet in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert III: Les "Petites Grottes" de Qumrān* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 114-116.

3. Historical Setting. The book of Daniel contains (1) a record of certain historical incidents from the life of Daniel and his three friends, who were Jewish exiles in Babylonian government service, and (2) a record of a prophetic <Page 745> dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, interpreted by Daniel, together with records of visions the prophet himself had received. Although the book was written in Babylonia during the Exile and shortly thereafter, its purpose was not to provide either a history of the Jewish exile or a biography of Daniel. The book relates high-light experiences of the statesman-prophet and his associates and was compiled with specific objectives in mind.

First of all Daniel presents brief information concerning the reason for his being found in the public service of the Babylonian king (ch. 1). Having been taken to Babylon in the first captivity in 605 b.c., during the course of Nebuchadnezzar's first Syrian campaign, Daniel and other princes of royal blood were chosen to be trained for government service. The initial 19 years of Daniel's stay in Babylonia were the last years of Judah's existence as a kingdom, albeit subject to Babylon. The futile anti-Babylonian policies of Judah's last kings brought one catastrophe after another upon the Jewish nation.

King Jehoiakim, during whose reign Daniel had gone into captivity, remained loyal to Babylon for a few years. Eventually, however, he acceded to the policy of the pro-Egyptian party in Judah, and rebelled. As a result the country suffered military invasions, its citizens lost their liberty and were taken into captivity, and the king lost his life. His son and successor, Jehoiachin, after a brief reign of only three months, saw the armies of Babylon return to mete out punishment for disloyalty. He, together with thousands of the upper-class citizens of Judah, went into captivity in 597 b.c. His successor, Zedekiah, apparently attempted to remain loyal to Babylon. However, being weak and vacillating, he could not long withstand the overtures of Egypt and the anti-Babylonian sentiment of his chief advisers. As a result Nebuchadnezzar, weary of the repeated revolts in Palestine, decided to put an end to the kingdom of Judah. For two and a half years the Babylonian armies ravaged Judah, took and destroyed the cities, including Jerusalem, with its Temple and its palaces, and led the majority of the inhabitants of Judah into captivity in 586 b.c.

Daniel was in Babylon during these eventful days. He must have seen the Babylonian armies depart for their several campaigns against his homeland, and witnessed their victorious returns and the arrival of captured Jews. Among the captives were the young king Jehoiachin with his family (2 Kings 24:10-16), and later the blinded king Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:7). During these years Daniel must also have been aware of the political agitation that was going on among the exiled Jews, which resulted in Nebuchadnezzar's burning to death some of the chief instigators. It was this agitation that caused Jeremiah to send a letter to his captured compatriots urging them to lead a quiet and peaceful life in Babylonia (Jer. 29).

During all these years Daniel and his three friends quietly and loyally performed their duties as royal officers and subjects of the realm. After their scholarly training they became members of the elite group called wise men, who served the king as advisers. It was then that Daniel had the unique opportunity of explaining to Nebuchadnezzar the dream of future empires (Dan. 2). As a result Daniel was appointed to a position of exceptionally high rank, which he seems to have held for many years. This office gave him the opportunity of acquainting the king with the power of the God of heaven and earth, whom Daniel and his friends served. How long Daniel retained this position is not known. He seems to have lost it before 570 b.c., since his name is not found in <Page 746> a contemporary "Court and State Almanac," written in cuneiform, which lists the chief officers of Nebuchadnezzar's government holding office at that time. No other court and state almanacs for the reign of Nebuchadnezzar are extant. In fact, Daniel is not mentioned in any contemporary non-Biblical source.

The absence of Daniel's name in this document is not strange, since we do not know how long Daniel remained in public office. Only four principal events during Nebuchadnezzar's reign are recorded in the book of Daniel, and Daniel played a role in three of them: (1) the education of the Jewish princes during the king's first three years of reign, including his accession year (ch. 1), (2) the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the king's second regnal year (ch. 2), (3) the dedication of the image in the plain of Dura, with the resulting experience of Daniel's friends in an unspecified year (ch. 3), and (4) Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, announcing that the king would suffer madness for a period of seven years, which probably occurred during the king's last years (ch. 4).

Nothing is known of Daniel's activities during the years of Nebuchadnezzar's incapacity. We likewise do not know what Daniel did after the king regained his faculties and throne, or whether his services were demanded during the reigns of the succeeding kings, Amel-Marduk (the Biblical Evil-Merodach), Nergal-shar-usur, Labashi-Marduk, and Nabonidus. However, he was permitted to observe the mighty empire of Nebuchadnezzar become morally weak and corrupt under kings who were assassins of their predecessors. He also must have watched with more than ordinary interest the cometlike rise of King Cyrus in Persia to the east, since a man by that name had been mentioned in prophecy as Israel's liberator (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). In 553 b.c. (the year in which Cyrus probably became master over the Median Empire) it is also possible that Daniel saw Nabonidus appoint his son Belshazzar to rule over Babylonia, while Nabonidus himself set out to conquer Tema in Arabia. It was during the first three years of Belshazzar that great visions were given to Daniel (chs. 7; 8), and the man who so far had been known only as an interpreter of dreams and visions became one of the great prophets of all time.

The Babylonians demanded Daniel's services once more, during the night of Babylon's fall, in 539 b.c., to read and interpret the handwriting of doom on the wall of Belshazzar's festal hall. After the Persians became masters over Babylon and its empire, the new rulers made use of the talents and experience of the old statesman of a past generation. Daniel again became a chief counselor of the crown. It was presumably he who brought the prophecies of Isaiah to the notice of the king (see PK 557), which prophecies influenced the Persian ruler to issue the decree that ended exile for the Jews and restored to them a homeland and a Temple. During this later term of Daniel's public office there was an attempt on his life by his envious colleagues, but the Lord marvelously intervened and delivered His servant (ch. 6).

Additional important visions were received during these last years of Daniel's life, first under Darius the Mede (ch. 9; see Additional Note on Chapter 6), and then under Cyrus (chs. 10-12).

In any study of the book of Daniel two points call for special examination: a. The historicity of Daniel. Since the first major attacks on the historicity of Daniel were made by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry (a.d. 233-c. 304), the book has been under the fire of critics, at first only sporadically, but during the past two centuries, constantly. As a result the majority of Christian scholars <Page 747> today consider the book of Daniel the product of an anonymous author who lived about the time of the Maccabean revolt, in the 2d century b.c.

These scholars set forth two main reasons for ascribing so late a date to the book of Daniel: (1) Since, as they assert, certain prophecies point to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-c. 163 b.c.), and since, according to their concept, most prophecies—at least those that have been demonstrated to have had an accurate fulfillment—were written after the events described had occurred, Daniel's prophecies, according to their claims, must be dated in the time following the reign of Antiochus IV; and (2) since, according to their contentions, the historical sections of Daniel record certain events that disagree with historical facts known from available sources, these disagreements can best be explained by assuming that the author was removed from the actual events so much in space and time that he possessed but a limited knowledge of what had actually happened in the 7th and 6th centuries b.c., 400 years earlier.

The first of the two arguments has no validity for one who believes that the inspired prophets of old actually made accurate predictions concerning the course of history. The second argument deserves more detailed attention because of the seriousness of the claim that Daniel contains historical inaccuracies, anachronisms, and misconceptions. For this reason a brief discussion of the historical trustworthiness of Daniel is here presented.

It is true that Daniel describes some events that even today cannot be verified by means of available ancient source material. One such event is the madness of Nebuchadnezzar, which is not mentioned in any extant ancient records. The absence of verification for a temporary incapacity of the greatest king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire is not a strange phenomenon in a time when royal records contain only praiseworthy narratives (see on Dan. 4:36). Also enigmatic is Darius the Mede, whose real place in history has not been established by reliable non-Biblical source material. Hints as to his identity are found in the writings of Greek authors and fragmentary information from cuneiform sources (see Additional Note on Chapter 6). The other so-called historical difficulties that puzzled conservative commentators of Daniel a hundred years ago have been solved by the increase of historical knowledge provided by archeology. Some of the more important of these now-solved problems are here listed:

1. The supposed chronological discrepancy between Dan. 1:1 and Jer. 25:1. Jeremiah, who, scholars generally agree, is a trustworthy historical source, synchronizes the 4th year of Jehoiakim of Judah with the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. However, Daniel speaks of King Nebuchadnezzar's first conquest of Jerusalem as taking place in Jehoiakim's 3d year, apparently implying that Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year coincided with the 3d year of Jehoiakim. Before the discovery of contemporary records revealing various systems of reckoning the regnal years of ancient kings, commentators found it difficult to explain this seeming discrepancy. They tried to solve the difficulty either by supposing a coregency of Nebuchadnezzar with his father Nabopolassar (see Vol. III, p. 91), or by assuming that Jeremiah and Daniel dated events according to different systems of reckoning, Jeremiah using a Jewish and Daniel the Babylonian system. Both explanations are today out of date.

The whole difficulty has been solved by the discovery that Babylonian kings, like those of Judah at the time, counted their regnal years according to <Page 748> the "accession-year" method (see Vol. II, p. 138). The year in which a Babylonian king came to the throne was not reckoned as his official 1st year, but merely the year of his accession, and his 1st year, meaning his 1st full calendar year, did not begin

until the next New Year's Day, when, in a religious ceremony, he took the hands of the Babylonian god Bel.

We also know from Josephus (citing Berosus) and a Babylonian chronicle that Nebuchadnezzar was on a military campaign in Palestine against Egypt when his father died and he succeeded to the throne (see p. 756; also Vol. II, pp. 95, 96, 161; Vol. III, p. 91). Hence Daniel and Jeremiah completely agree with each other. Jeremiah synchronized Nebuchadnezzar's 1st regnal year with Jehoiakim's 4th year, whereas Daniel was taken captive in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, which he identifies with Jehoiakim's 3d year.

2. Nebuchadnezzar the great builder of Babylon. According to the Greek historians, Nebuchadnezzar played an insignificant role in the affairs of ancient history. He is never referred to as a great builder or as the creator of a new and greater Babylon. That this honor is usually ascribed to Queen Semiramis, who is given a prominent place in the history of Babylonia, is evident to every reader of classical Greek histories.

Yet the contemporary cuneiform records, unearthed by the archeologist during the last hundred years, have entirely changed the picture derived from classical writers, and have corroborated the account of the book of Daniel, which credits Nebuchadnezzar with the building (rebuilding) of "this great Babylon" (ch. 4:30). Semiramis, called Sammu-ramat in cuneiform inscriptions, it has now been discovered, was a queen mother of Assyria, regent for her infant son Adad-nirari III, and not a queen over Babylonia as the classical sources claimed. The inscriptions have shown that she had nothing to do with any building activity in Babylon. On the other hand, numerous building inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar prove that he became, in a sense, the creator of a new Babylon by rebuilding the palaces, temples, and temple tower of the city, and by adding new buildings and fortifications (see Additional Note on Chapter 4).

Such information none but a writer of the Neo-Babylonian age could have, for it had been completely lost by the time of the Hellenistic era. The presence of such information in the book of Daniel greatly puzzles critical scholars who do not believe that Daniel was written in the 6th century, but rather in the 2d. A typical example of their dilemma is the following statement of R. H. Pfeiffer, of Harvard University: "We shall presumably never know how our author learned that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar ., as the excavations have proved" (Introduction to the Old Testament [New York, 1941], pp. 758, 759).

3. Belshazzar, king of Babylon. On the amazing story of the discovery by modern orientalists of the identity of Belshazzar, see Additional Note on Chapter 5. The fact that the name of this king had not been found in any non-Biblical writings of antiquity, while Nabonidus always appeared as the last Babylonian king prior to the Persian conquest, was regularly used as one of the strongest arguments against the historicity of the book of Daniel. But discoveries since the mid-nineteenth century have refuted all critics of Daniel in this respect and vindicated the trustworthiness of the prophet's historical narrative with regard to Belshazzar in a most impressive way.

<Page 749>

b. The languages of the book. Like Ezra (see Vol. III, p. 320), Daniel was written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic. Some have accounted for the use of two languages in the case of Ezra by assuming that the author took over Aramaic documents with their accompanying historical descriptions, and incorporated them into his books, otherwise written in Hebrew, the national tongue of his people. Such an interpretation does not fit the book of Daniel, where the Aramaic section begins with ch. 2:4 and ends with the last verse of ch. 7.

Following is a partial list of the many explanations of this problem offered by scholars, together with some observations in parentheses that seem to speak against the reasonableness of these explanations:

1. That the author wrote the historical stories for the Aramaic-speaking people and the prophecies for the Hebrew-speaking scholars. (Yet the Aramaic in chs. 2 and 7, both great prophecies, speaks against the correctness of this view.)
2. That the two languages point to two sources. (This view cannot be correct, because the book bears a strong stamp of unity, as even many radical critics have acknowledged; see p. 743.)
3. That the book was written originally in one language, either Aramaic or Hebrew, and parts of it were later translated. (This view leaves unanswered the question as to why only sections were translated into the other language and not the whole book.)
4. That the author issued the book in two editions, one in Hebrew and another one in Aramaic, so that all classes of people could read it; that in the time of the Maccabean persecution parts of the book were lost, and those parts that were salvaged from both editions were put together without any changes. (This view suffers from the fact that it cannot be proved to be correct, and that it deals with too many uncertainties.)
5. That the author began to write in Aramaic at the point where the Chaldeans addressed "the king in Syriack [literally, Aramaic]" (ch. 2:4), and continued in this language as long as he was writing at that time, but that when he resumed writing (with ch. 8:1) he used Hebrew.

The last view appears to lead in the right direction, for the various sections of the book seem to have been written at different times. As a trained government official Daniel spoke and wrote in several languages. He probably wrote some of the historical narratives and visions in Hebrew and others in Aramaic. On the basis of this assumption, ch. 1 was written in Hebrew, probably in the 1st year of Cyrus, and the narratives of chs. 3-6 in Aramaic at various times. The prophetic visions were recorded mostly in Hebrew (chs. 8-12), although the vision of ch. 7 was written in Aramaic. The account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the future monarchies (ch. 2), on the other hand, was written in Hebrew up to the point where the Chaldeans' speech was quoted (ch. 2:4), and then continued in Aramaic from this point to the end of the narrative.

When, at the end of his life, Daniel collected all his writings into one book, he may not have deemed it necessary to translate certain parts in order to unify the book linguistically, knowing that most of his readers were bilingual—a fact evident from other sources.

<Page 750>

It may further be noted that the existence of two languages in Daniel cannot be used as an argument for a late date of the origin of the book. Those who date the origin of Daniel in the 2d century b.c. also have the problem of explaining why a Hebrew author of the Maccabean period wrote part of the book in Hebrew and part of it in Aramaic.

It is true that the orthographic (spelling) peculiarities of the Aramaic sections of Daniel are related most closely to those of the 4th-3d century Aramaic of Western Asia. This would seem to be due to a modernization of the language, a characteristic noticeable also in most of the Hebrew books of the Bible. Orthography cannot reveal the date of writing any more than the latest revision of the English Bible can be taken as proof that the Bible was originally written or translated in the 20th century a.d. The orthographic peculiarities can at most indicate at what time the latest revisions in spelling took place.

Among the Dead Sea scrolls (see Vol. I, pp. 31-34) there are several fragments of Daniel dating from the 2nd century b.c. At least two of these preserve that section of ch. 2 where the change is made from Hebrew to Aramaic, and show clearly the bilingual character of the book at that time (see p. 744).

4. Theme. The book of Daniel might appropriately be called a handbook on history and prophecy. Predictive prophecy is a preview of history; history is predictive prophecy passing in review. The element of prediction enables God's people to see the things of time in the light of eternity, alerts them for effective action at appropriate times, facilitates personal preparation for the final crisis, and provides a firm basis for faith upon fulfillment of the prediction.

The four major lines of prophecy in the book of Daniel set forth in brief outline, against the background of world history, the experiences of God's people from the days of Daniel down to the close of time. "The curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful, One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will" (PK 500). Each of the four lines of prophecy reaches a climax when "the God of heaven" sets "up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (ch. 2:44), when the "Son of man" receives "everlasting dominion" (ch. 7:13, 14), when opposition to the "Prince of princes" is "broken without hand" (ch. 8:25), and when God's people are delivered forever from their oppressors (ch. 12:1). The prophecies of Daniel thus provide a divinely constructed bridge from the precipice of time to the boundless shores of eternity, a bridge over which those who, like Daniel, purpose in their hearts to love and serve God, may pass by faith from the uncertainty and distress of the present life to the peace and security of life everlasting.

The historical section of the book of Daniel reveals, in most striking manner, the true philosophy of history (see Ed 173-184). This section stands as a preface to the prophetic section. By providing a detailed account of God's dealings with one nation, Babylon, the book enables us to understand the meaning of the rise and fall of other nations outlined in the prophetic portion of the book. Without a clear understanding of the philosophy of history as revealed in the narrative of the role of Babylon in the divine plan, the role of the other nations that succeeded Babylon on the screen of prophetic vision cannot be fully understood or appreciated. For a summary of the divine philosophy of history as set forth by inspiration, see on ch. 4:17.

<Page 751>

In the historical section of the book we find Daniel, God's man of the hour, brought face to face with Nebuchadnezzar, the genius of the Gentile world, that the king might have opportunity to know Daniel's God, the Arbiter of history, and to cooperate with Him. Nebuchadnezzar not only was monarch of the greatest nation of the time but was also eminently wise, and had an innate sense of justice and right. He was, in fact, the leading personality of the Gentile world, "the mighty one of the heathen" (Eze. 31:11), raised to power for a specific role in the divine plan. Of him God said, "Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant" (Jer. 27:6). As the Jews went captive to Babylon it was desirable that they be held under a hand that was firm without being cruel (according to the standards of that day). Daniel's mission at the court of Nebuchadnezzar was to secure the submission of the king's will to the will of God in order that the divine purpose might be realized. In one of the dramatic moments of history God brought together these two great personalities. See p. 569.

The first four chapters of Daniel narrate the means by which God secured the allegiance of Nebuchadnezzar. First of all, God needed a man who would be a fit representative of the principles and policies of heaven at the court of Babylon, so He chose Daniel to be His personal ambassador to Nebuchadnezzar. The means God employed to bring Daniel, a captive, to the favorable attention of Nebuchadnezzar, and the means by which Nebuchadnezzar came to have confidence, first in Daniel and then in Daniel's God, illustrate the manner in which God uses men today to accomplish His will on earth. God could use Daniel because Daniel was a man of principle, a man of sterling character, a man whose chief business in life was to live for God.

Daniel "purposed in his heart" (ch. 1:8) to live in harmony with all the revealed will of God. First, God brought him "into favour and tender love" with the officials of Babylon (v. 9). This prepared the way for

the second step, the demonstration of the physical superiority of Daniel and his companions (vs.12-15). Then followed a demonstration of intellectual superiority. "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (v. 17), with the result that they were considered "ten times better" than their closest competitors (v. 20). Thus in personality, physique, and intellect Daniel proved to be markedly superior to his fellow men, and thereby won the confidence and respect of Nebuchadnezzar.

These events prepared Nebuchadnezzar to meet Daniel's God. A series of dramatic experiences-the dream of ch. 2, the striking deliverance from the fiery furnace (ch. 3), and the dream of ch. 4-demonstrated to the king's satisfaction the knowledge, power, and authority of Daniel's God. The inferiority of human knowledge, exhibited in the experience of ch. 2, led Nebuchadnezzar to admit to Daniel, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets" (ch. 2:47). He freely acknowledged that the wisdom of God was superior, not only to human wisdom, but even to the supposed wisdom of his own gods. The incident of the golden image and the fiery furnace led Nebuchadnezzar to admit that the God of heaven "delivered his servants" (ch. 3:28). His conclusion was that no one in all his realm, should "speak any thing amiss against the God" of the Hebrews, in view of the fact that "no other God" can "deliver after this sort" (v. 29). Nebuchadnezzar now recognized that the God of heaven was not only wise but **<Page 752>** powerful, that He was not only omniscient but omnipotent. The third experience-the seven years during which his own vaunted wisdom and power were temporarily removed-taught the king not only that "the most High" is wise and powerful but that He exercises that wisdom and power to rule in human affairs (ch. 4:32). He has wisdom, power, and authority. It is significant that the first act Nebuchadnezzar performed after his reason returned to him was to "praise and extol and honour the King of heaven" and to acknowledge that "those that walk in pride" as he had done for so many years, God "is able to abase" (v. 37).

But the lessons Nebuchadnezzar personally learned over a period of many years largely failed to benefit those who succeeded him upon the throne of Babylon. The last ruler of Babylon, Belshazzar, openly defied the God of heaven (ch. 5:23) in spite of the fact that he was acquainted with the experience of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 22). Instead of working in harmony with the divine plan, "Babylon became a proud and cruel oppressor" (Ed 176), and in the rejection of the principles of heaven wrought its own ruin (Ed 177). The nation was weighed and found wanting (ch. 5:25-28), and world dominion passed to the Persians.

In delivering Daniel from the lions' den, God demonstrated His power and authority before the rulers of the Persian Empire (see ch. 6:20-23; PK 557) as He had previously before those of Babylon. An edict of Darius the Mede acknowledged "the living God" and admitted that He is "stedfast for ever" (v. 26). Even "the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" (v. 8), was obliged to yield before the decrees of "the most High," who "ruleth in the kingdom of men" (ch. 4:32). Cyrus was favorably impressed by the miraculous evidence of divine power exhibited in the deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den (PK 557). The prophecies outlining his role in the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple (Isa. 44:26 to 45:13) also made a deep impression upon him. "His heart was profoundly moved, and he determined to fulfill his divinely appointed mission" (PK 557).

Thus the book of Daniel gives a demonstration of the principles according to which God's wisdom, power, and authority operate through the history of nations for the eventual accomplishment of the divine purpose. "God exalted Babylon that it might fulfil" His "purpose" (Ed 175). It had its period of test; it "failed, its glory faded, its power departed, and its place was occupied by another" (Ed 177; see on ch. 4:17).

All four visions of the book of Daniel are concerned with the struggle between the forces of good and evil on this earth from the time of Daniel to the establishment of the eternal kingdom of Christ. Inasmuch as Satan uses the powers of earth in his effort to thwart God's plan and to destroy God's people, these visions introduce those powers through which he has been most active.

The first vision (ch. 2) deals primarily with political changes. Its primary objective was to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar his role as ruler of Babylon, to make known to him "what should come to pass hereafter" (v. 29).

As if to supplement the first vision, the second (ch. 7) emphasizes the experiences of God's people during the sovereignty of the powers mentioned in the first vision, and forecasts the ultimate victory of the saints and God's judgment upon their enemies (see vs. 14, 18, 26, 27).

<Page 753>

The third vision (chs. 8; 9), supplementing the second, emphasizes Satan's attempts to do away with the religion and people of Christ.

The fourth vision (chs. 10-12) summarizes the preceding visions and covers the ground with more detail than any of the others. It amplifies the subject of the second vision and that of the third vision. The focus of its emphasis is on "what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days" (ch. 10:14), and "the time appointed was long" (v. 1). The narrative outline of history covered in ch. 11:2-39 leads up to "the latter days" (ch. 10:14) and the events of "the time of the end" (ch. 11:40).

The prophecies of Daniel are closely related to those of the book of Revelation. In large measure Revelation covers the same ground but gives particular emphasis to the role of the Christian church as God's chosen people. Thus details that may be obscure in the book of Daniel are often clarified by comparison with the book of Revelation. That part of his "prophecy which related to the last days, Daniel was bidden to close up and seal 'to the time of the end'" (GC 356), when, through a diligent study of the book, "knowledge" of its import would be "increased" (ch. 12:4). Though "that portion of the prophecy of Daniel relating to the last days" was sealed (ch. 12:4; AA 585), John was specifically instructed to "seal not the sayings of the prophecy" of his book, "for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10). Thus, for a clearer interpretation of any portions of the book of Daniel that tend to be obscure, we should search carefully the book of Revelation for light to dispel the darkness.

5. Outline.

1. Historical Section, 1:1 to 6:28.

- A. The education of Daniel and his companions, 1:1-21.
 - 1. The first transportation of captives from Judah to Babylon, 1:1, 2.
 - 2. Daniel and his friends selected to be trained for royal service, 1:3-7.
 - 3. Daniel procures permission to live according to his law, 1:8-16.
 - 4. Successful education and acceptance into the royal service, 1:17-21.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, 2:1-49.
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar disturbed by a dream, 2:1-11.
 - 2. Execution of wise men commanded and countermanded, 2:12-16.
 - 3. Daniel receives knowledge and expresses gratitude, 2:17-23.
 - 4. Daniel communicates the dream to the king, 2:24-35.
 - 5. Daniel interprets the dream, 2:36-45.
 - 6. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God's greatness, 2:46-49.
- C. Deliverance of Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace, 3:1-30.
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar erects an image and demands its worship, 3:1-7.
 - 2. The three faithful Hebrews refuse to worship, 3:8-18.
 - 3. The deliverance from the furnace by divine intervention, 3:19-25.
 - 4. Nebuchadnezzar's confession and decree; the Hebrews promoted, 3:26-30.
- D. Nebuchadnezzar's second dream, humiliation, and restoration, 4:1-37.
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar's confession of God's knowledge and power, 4:1-9.
 - 2. Description of the dream, 4:10-18.

3. Daniel's interpretation of the dream, 4:19-27.
4. Nebuchadnezzar's fall and restoration, 4:28-36.
5. Nebuchadnezzar praises the God of heaven, 4:37.

<Page 754>

- E. Belshazzar's banquet and the loss of the monarchy, 5:1-31.
 1. Belshazzar's desecration of Temple vessels, 5:1-4.
 2. The mysterious handwriting on the wall, 5:5-12.
 3. Daniel's interpretation, 5:13-28.
 4. Daniel receives honor, Babylon falls, 5:29-31.
- F. Daniel's deliverance from the lions' den, 6:1-28.
 1. Daniel's elevation and the jealousy of his colleagues, 6:1-5.
 2. Darius' decree restricting prayers, 6:6-9.
 3. Daniel's transgression of the decree and his condemnation, 6:10-17.
 4. Daniel's deliverance and the punishment of the accusers, 6:18-24.
5. Public recognition of the greatness of Daniel's God, 6:25-28.

II. Prophetic Section, 7:1 to 12:13.

- A. Daniel's second prophetic message, 7:1-28.
 1. The four beasts and little horn, 7:1-8.
 2. Judgment and eternal reign of the Son of man, 7:9-14.
 3. Interpretation of the vision by an angel, 7:15-27.
 4. Impression on Daniel, 7:28.
- B. Daniel's third prophetic message, 8:1 to 9:27.
 1. The ram, he-goat, and horns, 8:1-8.
 2. The little horn and its wickedness, 8:9-12.
 3. The time prophecy concerning the cleansing of the sanctuary, 8:13, 14.
 4. Gabriel interprets the first portion of the vision, 8:15-26.
 5. Daniel's sickness as the result of the vision, 8:27.
 6. Daniel prays for restoration and confesses his people's sin, 9:1-19.
 7. Gabriel interprets the remaining portion of the vision, 9:20-27.
- C. Daniel's fourth prophetic message, 10:1 to 12:13.
 1. Daniel's fast, 10:1-3.
 2. The appearance of "a certain man" and the effect on Daniel, 10:4-10.
 3. The "man's" preliminary talk with Daniel, 10:11 to 11:1.
 4. A vision concerning future historical events, 11:2 to 12:3.
 5. The duration of the "wonders"; personal promises to Daniel, 12:4-13.