

Daniel

A Bible-Class Workbook Commentary
by David A. Duncan



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Foreward

The study of Daniel is an important undertaking, for it is an important witness to the foreknowledge of God. However, it is also an important book to understand because of the large number of misunderstandings in the religious world which are based on passages found in the book of Daniel. It is a primary proof-text for those who believe in the doctrine of Premillennialism, and this doctrine causes a large number of misunderstandings of other passages. It is therefore important to emphasize rules of exegesis in the study of Daniel.

It is my desire to offer this work to assist others in this undertaking. May God bless all who study His word with an attitude of searching for God's truth and desiring to apply God's wisdom and truths to their lives.

David A. Duncan
Orlando, Florida

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Daniel's Visions

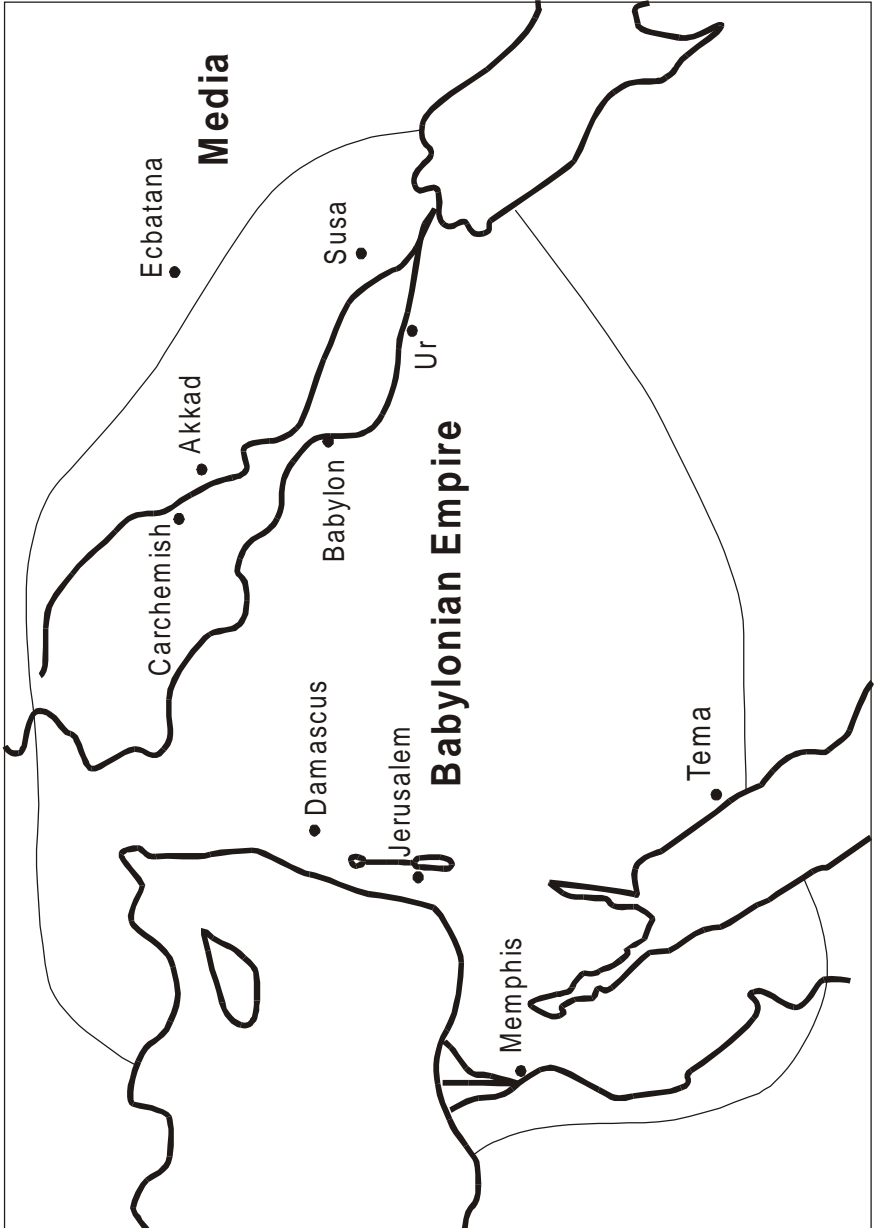
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Background Material: Symbols in Daniel

Symbol	Represents	Scripture
Mountain	Kingdom	Daniel 2:35, 2:44 Revelation 8:8 Isaiah 2:2 Jeremiah 51:25
Horn	Strength, Strong One, King	Daniel 8:3,5,8,9;7:7,8 Psalms 92:10, 132:17 Zechariah 1:18-21
Eyes	Evil Desire	Daniel 7:8 Proverbs 27:20 Ecclesiastes 1:8 1 John 2:16
	Omniscience	Ezekiel 1:18 Zechariah 4:10 Revelation 4:8
Sea	the earth, mankind	Daniel 7:17 Revelation 8:8, 13:1
Beast	kingdom	Daniel 7:17 Revelation 13:1,11
Stars	falling or darkening associated with the "day of the Lord" or Judgment	Daniel 8:10 Isaiah 13:10, 34:4 Joel 2:10, 3:15 Revelation 8:11,12 Matthew 24:29
Seven & its multiples	completeness, totality, perfection	Daniel 9:25, 3:19, 4:16, 23, 25, 9:2, 9:24 Genesis 2:2,3; 4:15 Leviticus 25:4,8 Zechariah 4:10 Psalms 12:6, 119:164 Matthew 18:21ff Revelation 1:4, 5:1, 12:3, 13:1, 17:9, 15:1, 5:6, 15:6, 17:3,7
White	Cleanliness, righteousness, purity	Daniel 7:9 Revelation 19:8, 2:17, 1:13,14, 4:4, 7:9, 20:11 Psalms 51:7 Ecclesiastes 9:8

Background Material: History of Babylon

~3000 B.C.	First mention of Babylon (Genesis 10:10) Babylon established as a center of Nimrod's Kingdom Noah => Ham => Cush => Nimrod ("A mighty hunter before the Lord")
1704-1662 B.C.	Under Hammurabi, the last great king of the first dynasty, the Babylonian empire stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris regions.
1596 B.C.	Babylon Fell to the Hittites
745 B.C.	Babylon comes under Assyrian control Tiglath-Pileser III Sargon II Sennacherib Esarhaddon Ashurbanipal
626 B.C.	Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean Regime Established under Nabopolassar
612 B.C.	Babylon Defeats Assyria
605 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar begins to reign upon Nabopolassar's death. Under Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian empire reaches its height. Historian Herodotus describes Babylon as a city of 200 square miles, built on both sides of the river Euphrates.
539 B.C.	Babylon is taken by Cyrus and comes under control of the Persian Empire -- captives are liberated.
330 B.C.	Babylon is destroyed when the Persian Empire is conquered by Alexander the Great.
today	Uninhabited.



Daniel is also much misused by those who look for prophecies about modern times. It is often used by Premillennialists in an attempt to justify their interpretation of a literal 1000 year reign in the book of Revelation. However, nothing is gained in this attempt, and much is lost. The premillennial concept is just as foreign to the book of Daniel as it is to Revelation and the rest of scripture.

7:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim ...

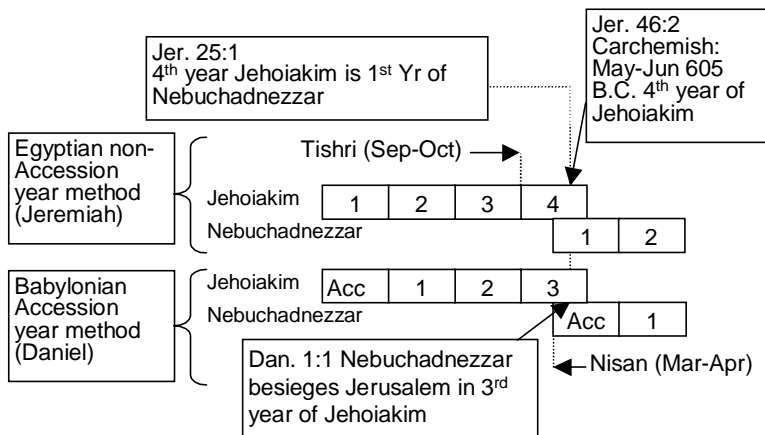
Jeremiah 46:2 allows us to date Jehoiakim's reign relative to the battle of Carchemish, but this also raises questions about Daniel's statement since Jeremiah says that the battle of Carchemish occurred in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, but Daniel says that Nebuchadnezzar took captives in the third year of Jehoiakim. Josephus records that Jewish captives were taken during the time of Nabopolassar's death to Babylon,² and so Daniel would have been a part of this group. The difference of one year may be accounted for in a number of ways. It may have been that Nebuchadnezzar took captive some of the nobility as a method of securing Jehoiakim's loyalty prior to Carchemish. The primary history of this time comes to us from the few verses in the Bible, fragments of Berosus quoted by Josephus, and the Babylonian Chronicles.³ None of these gives a complete history of this time. It will be evident from Daniel 2:1 that Daniel is using an "accession year" method (Babylonian method) where the first year of the king's reign is counted as an accession year, with the next year being counted as the first year of his reign (see notes on 2:1). If Jeremiah is then using a non-accession year method (Egyptian method) -- since Jehoiakim has been placed on the throne by Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:34) -- then the difference is easily accounted for by these two differing methods of accounting.

Critics' Admissions Concerning Daniel",

<http://www.infidels.org/library/magazines/tsr/1998/2/982dan.html>

² Josephus, Against Apion, Master Christian Library, p. 1831

³ D.J. Wiseman, Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings, 1955



Judah began its regnal year in Tishri (Sep-Oct), but the Babylonians began with Nisan (Mar-Apr).

1:2 ... with some of the articles of the house of God, ...

Josephus records concerning Nebuchadnezzar, “but for himself, he adorned the temple of Belus, and the other temples, after an elegant manner, out of the spoils he had taken in this war.”⁴

1:3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, ...

1:4 young men ...whom they might teach the language...

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, “The Greek term translated eunuch is literally one in charge of a bed, a reference to the practice of using eunuchs as keepers of harems (Esth. 2:3, 6, 15).” Eunuchs were often employed in the service of kings and were regarded as trustworthy. Daniel and his 3 friends would receive the best education that Babylon could offer and the provision for a healthy life as well. The training involved an indoctrination into the culture (literature) of Babylon and likely an understanding of their gods.

1:5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of

⁴ Ibid

training for them, so that at the end of *that time* they might serve before the king.

Based on the specialized training they were to receive and their familiarity with another nation (Israel), they would be uniquely qualified to serve as ambassadors or in some administrative capacity. Just as many captives from Israel were in Babylon, so were captives from other nations as well, and these situations could benefit from leaders who understood two cultures.

^{1:6}Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel *the name* Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

It was not uncommon during these times for names to include the name of the nation's god. Israelite names often have a suffix of "el" (shortened form of Elohim, the Hebrew word for God) or "iah" (the shortened form of Jehovah as in Ps. 68:4).

Hebrew		Babylonian	
Daniel	God is my Judge	Belteshazzar	Bel protect his life
Hananiah	Jehovah is Gracious	Shadrach	Friend of the king ⁵
Mishael	Who is what God is?	Meshach	Little Sheep ⁶
Azariah	Jehovah hath helped	Abed-Nego	Servant of Nego

The Babylonian names of at least two honor the gods of Babylon (Belteshazzar and Abednego). Bel is the Babylonian equivalent of the Hebrew word Baal, which means "lord, owner, possessor, or husband"⁷ Marduk, or Bel-Marduk (sometimes Merodach, Hebrew form of Marduk as in Jer. 50:2) was the chief idol of Babylon. The name Abednego likely honors Nebo of which other names are formed such as Nebuchadnezzar. According to Barnes, Nebo probably denoted the planet Mercury which was worshiped by the Chaldeans⁸.

⁵ Barnes Notes on Daniel 1:8, pg 103

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Holman Bible Dictionary

⁸ Barnes Notes on Daniel 1:7, pg. 104

The names given to these four young men were probably in order to make a new start and help them forget their old life. This was not uncommon as is evidenced when a man of Israel took a bride in war from another nation, he was to shave her head, trim her nails and provide new clothing (Deut. 21:10-13).

1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself

It cannot be determined exactly how it would defile Daniel to partake of the king's food and wine. A possibility is that the king's meat often involved some meat (e.g. pork) that would be considered unclean to a Jew or that it may have been prepared in a way that was forbidden to a Jew (e.g. the fat portions, or served with the blood, Lev. 3:17). Or, it may have been that the food and wine from the royal table was connected in some way with idol worship. This attitude by Daniel is a clear indication that he had not only been trained in the ways of the Mosaic Law, but that he was a practiser of it as well. Perhaps, he may have even grown up hearing the public sermons of Jeremiah as some of the princes of Judah did (Jer. 32:32-33; 36:19-21).

1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. ...

It was goodwill indeed that the chief would even consider this request. The objection that he raises is an indication that he desired to grant the wish, but was concerned about his own situation. The king had appointed the food for these, and deviation from the king's command that endangered the king's plans for these young men could also be detrimental to the chief.

1:11 So Daniel said to the steward ...Please test your servants for ten days...

The proposed test allowed the chief's concerns to be dealt with. If the test failed, it might be disadvantageous to Daniel and his friends; therefore this request required a certain amount of faith that God would bless those who seek to serve him. To exhibit this faith during a time where the nation of Judah (who should be trusting in God to deliver them) was teetering on the edge of disaster is remarkable, and may be an indication that Daniel

knew far more about true service to God than did the king of Judah. There were some princes of Judah that understood the danger facing the nation, and sought to obey God (Jer. 36:19, 25)

^{1:14} So he consented with them ... their features appeared better

The indication is that God did bless them in this and this blessing allowed a successful test. This not only allowed them to be pure in their conformance to the Mosaic Law, but also would cause them to be favored by the chief of the eunuchs since their advice was proven to be worthy.

^{1:17} As for these four young men, God gave them ..

The blessings of God extended to far more than just the present situation and is an indication that these blessings continued throughout the 3-year preparation period and that Daniel and his friends were consistent in their service to God.

^{1:18} Now at the end of the days, ... the king interviewed them...

The end of the days, is the end of the 3-year period of v. 5. The way in which were none found like Daniel and his 3 friends, must involve some knowledge that was evident in the interview with the king. This is explained by the preceding verse where Daniel says, “God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning,” and in the next verse also.

^{1:20} And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding ...

Daniel and friends had applied themselves to learning the culture and knowledge of the Babylonians and likely other cultures as well since the Babylonians had conquered many nations and likely amassed knowledge from each one. The statement that they were found to be 10 times better is clearly figurative and is similar to the way we use this type of superlative.

^{1:21} Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

“Thus” means “in this manner” – i.e. a servant to the king. His specific job likely changed during subsequent administrations

since he was not well known to King Belshazzar, but he was still a servant to the king in some capacity (8:1,27).

Questions - Session 1 of Daniel (Chapter 1)

1. Who was king of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem? _____

2. Did Nebuchadnezzar carry off some or all of the temple treasures? _____
3. How long were the selected young men from Judah to be trained? _____
4. Which tribe of Israel was Daniel from? _____
5. How long were Daniel and his friends tested? _____
6. What were they given to eat -- at their request? _____
7. What gift was Daniel given of God, which is not mentioned as being given to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah? _____

8. How long did Daniel remain in the king's service? _____

9. With what group of people was Daniel compared -- as relating to wisdom and understanding? _____
10. Are we told when the four "stood before the king"? _____
If so, when? _____

Thought Questions:

11. Why would Daniel consider the king's meat defiling? _____

12. Does "at the end of 3 years" require a full 36 months? _____

