

Daniel 1:1-4

"Setting The World Stage"

There are men who make it their life's work to discredit/disprove the bible. & You should know that it's very common for the book of Daniel to come under direct fire from such critics. They want you to think that because the book of Daniel contains so much prophecy (all of which so far has been fulfilled w/pinpoint accuracy) that it was impossible for Daniel himself (who lived some 600 yrs before Christ) to have even written the book...

He prophesied of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire & the Roman Empire (the last 2, centuries before they ever even *became* empires). Actually, he prophesied of the culmination of human history right up until the return & establishing of the Kingdom of God upon the earth... But because he's so accurate in his prophetic detail critics can't conceive that he wrote these things centuries in advance & therefore they put forth that it's more probable that someone wrote the book perhaps around 175 B.C. or sometime in the 2nd century B.C. during the era of the Maccabees (as it's sometimes referred to). (& There are other things that they'll point to [some of the language that's used] that they have trouble with but by & large it's the prophetic aspect of the book that gives them their primary problems).

It's based in kind of a modern rationalism persuasion; a humanistic philosophy that puts forth man's mind as the ultimate. Therefore, if I can't conceive of it & if I can't understand it by my rational mind, then it can't be true... Liberal theologians want to deny miracles, prophecy & the whole bit. You'll see these guys on the history channel explaining away the parting the Red Sea, the plagues of Egypt, a global flood & any other miracle they can get their hands on...

Of course, I'm not sure what they do w/the fact that the Septuagint (which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) contains the book of Daniel & it was put together around 285 B.C., a century or so before they say Daniel was written...

But I don't really want to get lost in defending God's Word, I just want to declare God's Word. To me the issue comes to rest as soon as Jesus quotes the book of Daniel & says that "Daniel the prophet" wrote it. Say what you want, but as far as I'm concerned that just closed the case! In Matt 24 the disciples are asking Jesus what the sign of His coming would be & He said, *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet..."*¹ Ladies & Gentlemen, what further evidence do we need?

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Mt 24:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus referred to Himself most commonly as “the Son of Man”, a Messianic inference found in *the book of Daniel*. Now, if Jesus is wrong on the authorship of Daniel (if He’s mistaken here) than He can’t be God, & if He’s not God He can’t be our Savior! **But He proved who He was (the sinless Son of God sent to die for the sin of the world & save all who would believe upon Him) by laying down His life upon the cross & rising again 3 days later. So if Jesus says Daniel is the author, than that’s all I need. The book of Daniel may confound the critics but it comforts the Christian because it confirms our faith.**

If you believe in a God who *can’t* work miracles, doesn’t know the future & can’t validate Himself by telling the end from the beginning, than you serve a different God than I do. Because for *my* God, nothing will be impossible...

Ok. As I mentioned Daniel lived in the 6th century before the coming of Christ. This was about the time the construction of the Acropolis began in Athens, Buddha was alive & Confucius would be born in this same era... (Obviously on different parts of the planet) but that’s just a bit of a historical barometer to kind of help acclimate you to the global climate of Daniel’s day.

What we’ll discover is that Daniel was a man of purpose, of prayer & of prophecy. He and his friends were men of conviction, of commitment & of courage. Ch’s 1-6 deal w/the man, Ch’s 7-12 deal w/his message (so we have the prophet & his prophecies). Of course there’s some overlap in there but that’s the primary thrusts.

Couple of major themes in the book. #1 Is the Sovereignty of God. God is in control & He determines the course of nations, He establishes governments & His purposes will come to pass. #2 Is what we might understand as how to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. We learn how we can live for God in an otherwise evil/ungodly age. A man who understands the future can live to the glory of God in the present. Not only can we survive in this world, but we can thrive in this world to the praise & glory of God.

Satan hates both of those things. He hates the fact that you know that God is in control & that ultimately He reigns as the Most High God (& there is no other). & He hates that you (not being *of* the world) want to live your life for the glory of God *in* the world... But that’s just too bad because he’s on the losing side of the war, amen?

Vs 1-2

Listen, it’s significant that your bible (& the books found in the bible) doesn’t begin w/the words, “Once upon a time” or “It came to pass in a distant land long ago...” We’re given real names, along w/real places & real times.

These are things that can be validated historically & archeologically (actually it's not archeology that validates the bible, it's the bible that validates the archeology, but you get the idea).

We're told that it was in the 3rd yr of Jehoiakim (king of Judah) that this took place. We're looking to the year 605 B.C. Now critics immediately throw up a red flag here because Daniel says this took place in the 3rd yr, but Jeremiah says it took place in the 4th yr of his reign. So they say, "Ha! We got ya. It's obviously made up, they can't even keep their facts straight." But they forget that Daniel (as we'll see) was carried away to Babylon & trained for 3 yrs in the Ivy league university of Babylon (which was quite advanced). & What we learn in our studies of these 2 different cultures is that when a king ascended to the throne in Babylon they didn't reckon the year of ascension, but we know that the Jews did... In other words if Jehoiakim ascended (& I'm making this up to keep it simple for us [their calendar yr was different than ours]) in May... The Jews would count that as his 1st yr (though it started 5 months into the calendar yr). **The Babylonians wouldn't record that as his 1st yr. They waited until the new year began (in our case, January). Does that make sense? In other words, Jeremiah writes from a Jewish perspective (including the year of ascension). Daniel writes according to the Babylonian way of reckoning (it was his 3rd yr, not counting the few months in the year of his ascension). There's no conflict whatsoever...**

But for decades the prophets had warned the rulers of Judah that their idolatry, immorality, & injustice toward the poor & needy would bring God's judgment upon them. God had even warned them specifically regarding Babylon...

It was 100 yrs earlier than this. Hezekiah was the king of Judah & he fell deathly ill (long story short), he cried out to God to heal him, God did & the king of Babylon at that time having heard that he was sick & that he'd recovered sent ambassadors to Hezekiah w/a gift & a letter congratulating him on his recovery & all... So Hezekiah showed these guys all around; showed them his treasury & all the precious articles that he had in the house of his treasures...

After they left Isaiah (the prophet) came to him & said, "Hey, who were those guys?" The king was all, "Oh, no one really, just some ambassadors from a far country, Babylon." "What have they seen & what did you show them?" "Oh, I showed them everything, I didn't hold back *anything*." That was a big mistake.

Isaiah said to him... **"Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house,**

*and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "*²

Now, historically Nebuchadnezzar didn't have a real beef w/Judah initially. Judah was a rather insignificant nation in the grand scheme of things globally/politically. His problem was w/Egypt. They were the rival super power at the time (as a matter of fact it was Neco, king of Egypt who had placed Jehoiakim on the throne in Judah as a puppet king [which is yet another story altogether]). But the battle was between Egypt & Babylon (of course they each had their allies). History records that Babylon basically destroyed the Egyptian army at the battle of Charchemish. However, either on his way down or on his way back (I'm not sure which) he stopped off & besieged Jerusalem & the *political* significance was that he was subjugating this puppet king that Neco had placed on the throne.

However, the *prophetic* significance was that God had warned the nation of Judah that unless they repented of their idolatry, He would judge them & they would be taken into captivity... (Specifically into Babylon) In 605 B.C. that's exactly what began to happen. Now this wasn't the last time Nebuchadnezzar would confront Jerusalem. He would sack the city 2 more times & ultimately leave it in ruins & it would remain that way until Nehemiah & Ezra would return to restore the city & rebuild the temple.

I say all that to say this. It may've looked like the triumph of pagan gods over the true God of Israel, but in reality (as we read in Vs 2) God was sovereignly judging His people... You see they'd given themselves over to pagan idolatry, so God gave them into the hands of the pagan idolaters.

In other words, even when it looked like things were spinning out of control, God was still very much in control. He told Judah that He was raising up Babylon & that He was going to use them to discipline them if they didn't repent... I'm sure that Nebuchadnezzar felt like he was the man, but what he'd discover is that God was the One who'd raised him up & was using him in the accomplishing of *His* purposes.

God will use entire nations & governments to move the earth according to His plans (we're seeing that even today w/all the eyes of the earth fixated on the middle east, the bible speaks of all of that).

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 39:5-7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

600 yrs from this point God would move of Caesar's heart to have the whole world registered for tax purposes (that was the political reason). The *prophetic* reason was that Mary (who was pregnant w/Jesus) was down in Nazareth, however the scriptures had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (that's a problem) (unless you're God). *God moves on Caesar's heart, he sends out the decree, Joseph & Mary have to head to Bethlehem to register & lo & behold while she's there she gives birth... Who was truly in control? Caesar, or God? Nebuchadnezzar, or God? "The Lord gave Jehoiakim... into his hand."*

But family, don't you find this significant? We have 2 places coming into focus for us & they couldn't be more infinitely contrasted in their spiritual positions. You have Babylon, the birth place of idolatry & false religion (remember the whole "tower of Babel" incident way back in Gen 11?) It's also the place according to Rev 17 that false religion will find it's consummation... Babylon is kind of the Alpha-Omega of idolatry/false religion.

Then on the other hand we have Jerusalem, the place that God established as His dwelling place, the center of true worship (if you will). So we have Satan's dwelling (if you'll allow me that) & God's dwelling. The Promised Land from where blessing flows & a cursed land from where evil spawned & spewed forth in pagan religions & idolatry.

But God isn't "losing the battle", He's giving His people what they wanted... God doesn't particularly care for murmuring, complaining & rebellion against Himself. Remember when during the Exodus the people were complaining because they didn't have meat to eat & God got so sick of hearing about it that He said, "Fine, you want meat, I'm going to give you meat till it's coming out of your nose. *You'll be puking it up you're so sick of it...*" *They weren't content w/how God was tending to them so He gave them what they wanted till they couldn't take it anymore... Here they weren't content to serve the Lord, they wanted to serve idols & do as the pagans around them did. So God sent them to a pagan land to discipline them & purge them of their desire for idolatry.*

Jeremiah would also prophesy exactly how long they were going to be in captivity. It would be 70 yrs. Why 70 yrs? This was due to another major act of disobedience on behalf of the children of Israel... God will always settle accounts w/those who refuse & reject His warnings. The 1st reason they were sent into captivity was due to idolatry, they'd forsaken God & followed after idols (as a nation, not every individual, [God always has a faithful remnant] but that was the pulse of the nation).

The 2nd reason had to do w/another area of disobedience.

God had instructed them that they were to honor the Sabbath. Work 6 days on the 7th day they were to rest. Even so He'd instructed them to give the land a Sabbath rest as well. It would serve as kind of an ancient form of crop rotation (& God had promised to provide double that year so that they wouldn't go w/out during the Sabbath year).

Well, for 490 yrs Israel never one time gave the land its Sabbath year. The way God figured it, they owed the land 70 yrs (that's the math behind every Sabbath year they neglected).

So Nebuchadnezzar besieges the city, & he takes back to Babylon (Shinar is just another name for Babylon) some of the articles of the house of God & he placed them into the treasure house of *his* God. This was a way of saying, "Our god has defeated yours" it was a sign to those in Babylon that their gods were greater than Israel's.

Vs 3-4

He wanted the best of Israel's talent & treasure at his disposal. & This is how we know that Daniel was a descendant of the king, (of noble birth) based upon what we read here & Isaiah's prophecy that we cited earlier.

But this was the policy of the king of Babylon, to train the best of the best out of the nations he'd conquered to serve in his court (his administration). & This would accomplish a # of things for him. It would benefit him to use their knowledge of their own people to strengthen his administration in ruling over or dealing with them. It would keep those nations in check, in that, how do you make sure those whom you've conquered maintain a "stand down" position as opposed to revolting against you? Well, it certainly helps if you have some hostages who are the children of chief governing officials doesn't it? If you realize your own children's lives are on the line, you're more prone to tow the line... & There's not much of a chance of 14yr old young people mounting a rebellion...

Now again, there were no less than 3 deportations of the Jews into Babylon, but what we discover is that Daniel was in the 1st wave. & When we read that he required "young men" the general consensus is that they were anywhere from 13, 14-17 yrs of age... So let's not envision a sad sending off to a foreign land. These were 13, 14, 15 yr old boys being torn from their weeping families & carried off some 750 (give or take) miles!

But they weren't going to be taken & tortured, they were to be trained for royal service. That's one reason he wanted "young" men. They had to be teachable, trainable, the goal was total indoctrination & Babylonian education. They were to study the language & the literature of the Chaldeans.

They would've been taught things like astronomy, mathematics, history, mythological literature, agriculture, architecture (& as already mentioned, a new language). They were seeking to strip them of all previous identity (& we'll see that more next time). The goal was that these young men (by the time they graduated) would have a new world view, a new way of thinking, their values & vision would be different.

Again, that's why he wanted young people. & He wanted people who were good looking, no deformities or defects (w/out blemish), intellectually superior than the average, gifted in wisdom & quick learners. Influential toward others & the best the world had to offer in service of the king. Daniel was in that group.

But guys this is still Satan's plan today. Nebuchadnezzar knew that the true wealth of the world wasn't silver or gold (though he had that). The true wealth is in the world's youth. Young, shapeable, creative minds...

You shape the mindset of the next generation & you control the nation. Satan wants your kids. We see God taken from the schools, opening the minds toward liberalism & the justification of perversion & sin, out w/the "conservative biblical" world view, it's ancient & out of touch w/reality... **Let's teach situational ethics, no absolutes, it's about personal persuasion & how you feel. Identify how you want, sexual preference is of no consequence... There's a push for the minds of the next generation, social media abounding w/the agenda to shape the way they think... Don't be ignorant of your enemy's devices...**

But here are these boys (we don't know how many, 15, 50? We don't know). & They're taken from a comparative truck stop (in the global scheme of things) into the overwhelming Empire of Babylon. A city 225 sq miles, walls some 32 stories high, 80 feet thick (they would compete, 6 lane chariot races on top of the walls). 153 different temples. **A city full of wealth & glitz (made Las Vegas seem conservative) abounding in idolatry, sexual immorality, every conceivable desire at your fingertips... How would your 14 yr old boy handle that? Forget that, how would you handle that? You're away from home, you're being taught day in & day out that this is the social status quo (everyone's doing it), you're thinking God let you down. You've been torn from your family, you've got no accountability... what will you do?**

It's crazy how people want to relax the standards when they're away from home. What would you do? We'll see what Daniel did... next time... The world stage is set. God has a plan for Daniel's life & he will be trained in the crucible of affliction.

Torn from his family & thrown into an atmosphere of godless idolatry & God will use him tremendously (like few in human history).

God has a plan for your life, every day He's training you, teaching you & He wants to use you to impact those around you. Things may at times appear to be out of control, but God is still very much *in* control. You wait, you watch, & you'll see...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for the reminder that You are Sovereign & Your plans, Your purposes will come to pass & we can rest knowing that You have our eternal best interest at heart. We thank You that You are good, that You are a God of love & compassion, yet we also recognize Your righteousness & Your justice. Help us that we not ignore the warnings of Your word, but that we honor You w/our lives. Teach us as we journey through the book of Your servant Daniel.

If you don't know J.C., that is, you've never surrendered your life to J.C. than you should know that God is a God of justice, He is righteous & His righteousness & holiness demands that He settle accounts concerning sin. However, God loves you & has provided a means of forgiveness for you through the bloodshed, the death & resurrection of His own beloved Son. You can turn from your sin & trust in Him today & He will wipe away all your sin & make you new.