

GOD'S PATHWAY THROUGH PROPHECY

INTRODUCING DANIEL

6 Interpretive Questions

INTRODUCTION: No book in the sacred canon is more important than the book of Daniel in relationship to Bible prophecy. Daniel is the key that unlocks the eschatological door of revelation for the rest of Scripture. Much of the book of Revelation cannot be rightly interpreted and illuminated apart from the backdrop of Daniel. The priority and purpose that Daniel holds within the prophetic revelation of God is borne forth in the book itself and cannot be overstated from an interpretive standpoint, *“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: ... And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”* (Daniel 12:4, 9). As future revelation would come, both in the form of God’s general works in history, as well as His special words set forth through the prophets and apostles, the messages of the book of Daniel would become more and more evident. In like manner, as this end time revelation increased, it would only be able to be understood through the light provided in and through the ancient book of Daniel.

In addition, Daniel provides an inspired interpretive control for the study of biblical prophecy. Daniel shows us that all prophetic utterances fulfilled thus far were fulfilled literally and historically. While all of Daniel’s prophecies were yet futuristic at the time of their disclosure, many have already been Sovereignly and Supernaturally fulfilled in literal history. For example, the major prophecy of the book of Daniel is known as Daniel’s prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. The Holy Spirit inspired the prophet to prophecy a period of 70 prophetic weeks. Since Daniel’s original utterances, the first 69 weeks have come to pass with precise, literal and historical fulfillment. This would logically suggest that the final 70th Week is to be understood in a literal and historical manner. In short, if the first 69 weeks occurred literally in real-space-time history, then one is just in anticipating that the final 70th Week shall also occur in literal real-space-time history as well. All who would opt for a spiritualized interpretation of the 70th Week must defend from Scripture why the final week should be treated differently from all preceding weeks. Also, many of the events predicted within the first 69 weeks had immediate typological fulfillments which anticipated the more remote full and final fulfillment which came at the Divinely appointed time. Thus, it should be no surprise if many of the events within the 70th Week have had typological shadows pointing to the full and final last days substance of fulfillment. For these reasons, the book of Daniel must be properly appreciated and apprehended in the study of

biblical prophecy. Such understanding begins with an introductory overview of the book itself.

I. The AUTHOR of the Book – “Who wrote Daniel?”

NOTE: The name “Daniel” means, “God is Judge, or God is my Judge”. Three biblical characters bear this name: 1) a son of David & Abigail (I Chron. 3:1); 2) a post-exilic Ithamarian priest (Ez. 8:2; Neh. 10:6); and 3) the Prophet during Judah’s Babylonian Captivity who wrote the book by that name. This Daniel went to Babylon in 605 B.C. during the first Jewish Deportation and lived there for 72 years as a Patriot, Politician, and Prophet of God (Dan. 1:6; Mt. 24:15). Proofs of his person and authorship are twofold:

A. *Internal Evidence* – The book of Daniel is accredited to Daniel the Prophet no less than six times by the internal witness of the book itself.

1. Dan. 7:1
2. Dan. 7:28
3. Dan. 8:2
4. Dan. 9:2
5. Dan. 10:1-2
6. Dan. 12:4-5

B. *External Evidence* – The internal witness of the book of Daniel finds external attestation from both biblical and extra-biblical sources, including most importantly, the infallible testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself:

1. Matt. 24:15, 21, 30
2. Ezek. 14:14; 28:3
3. I Macc. 2:59-60

II. The AGE of the Book – “When was Daniel written?”

Based upon the clear witness of the text and time of Daniel, the book was penned over a period of 72 years while Daniel was captive in Babylon. Its date of composition is 605 B.C. – 534 B.C. As a sixth century source the message of Daniel is predominately prophetic. This dating system is

understood and supported by the historical background that occasioned the writing and setting of the book in the first place.

In the opening verse of the first chapter Daniel provides important dating data, “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it” (Dan. 1:1). This Jehoiakim was the eldest son of Josiah, and was appointed king by Pharaoh Neco (2 Ki. 23:34-24:6). He ruled the southern kingdom of Judah, Daniel’s homeland, from 609-597 B.C. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon defeated the Egyptians at the famous battle of Carchemish, and then turned on Judah and invaded and subjugated the southern kingdom. At this time Daniel and his Hebrew brethren were exiled to Babylon in the first deportation. From captivity in Babylon Daniel would watch the Babylonians return to besiege his homeland a second time in 598 B.C. A second deportation took place during which time the prophet Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon (Ezek. 1:1-2). He then witnessed the final siege upon the Southern kingdom and the total destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. During this period Daniel saw five Judean kings rise and fall, and saw the prophetic ministries of contemporaries such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk.

III. The AREA of the Book – “Where was Daniel written?”

The theater of Daniel’s life and literary labors was ancient Babylon, the capital city of the Babylonian Empire. Babylon was situated in the Euphrates Valley, the very cradle of all human history near the Garden of Eden on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Ancient Babylon was known as the “City of Gold” (Is. 14:4). Today modern Iraq marks this ancient territory. Thus, Babylon remains at the center of global affairs.

IV. The ADDRESSEES of the Book – “To whom was Daniel written?”

Scripture reveals that Daniel had a twofold audience in mind:

A. *The Immediate Audience* – Daniel’s own Jewish brethren who were captive in Babylon, as well as those Jews yet to come who are to play a central role in the plans of God as His chosen people in the latter days (Dan. 1:1; 9:2, 24; 11:32).

B. *The Remote Audience* – According to both Daniel and Jesus the book was written for the benefits and blessings of all of God’s people in the latter days who will read and understand its message in the light of additional supernatural revelation (Dan. 12:4, 9-12; Matt. 24:15).

V. **The AIM of the Book – “Why was Daniel written?”**

According to the infallible witness of Scripture, the Holy Spirit had at least four reasons for inspiring Daniel to pen His revelations.

A. *The Historical Reason* – Daniel was originally written to both encourage and educate the Jewish people during the Babylonian Captivity regarding their present and prospective circumstances (Dan. 1:1; 9:1-2).

B. *The Prophetic Reason* – To reveal God’s program for the coming ages and provide the interpretive key to help unlock revelation yet to come in the latter days (Dan. 12:4, 8-12).

C. *The Theological Reason* – To demonstrate the undeniable fact that *El Elyon* sits upon the throne of heaven and exercises sovereign supremacy over all kings and kingdoms, nations and peoples, and times and ages for all eternity (Dan. 3:1-6:28).

D. *The Nationalistic Reason* – To demonstrate that God has a specific plan and purpose for the Jewish people, and for the city of Jerusalem that is yet to be fulfilled in the latter days (9:24-27). This plan centers upon those specific individuals known as “Daniel’s people,” and the place known as “Daniel’s city.” Based upon the clear wording of the historically inspired record of Daniel’s revelation, God’s plan involves three future events: 1) A four-hundred-and-ninety-year period of prophecy that shall commence with a decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. 2) The coming of the Prince into the city of Jerusalem, and the cutting off of the Prince. From the decree to the official coming of the Prince into Jerusalem shall constitute 483 of the 490 years, leaving a period of seven years yet to be fulfilled. 3) A final seven-year period that shall start with the cutting of a covenant/treaty between a leader who arises out of a revived form of the ancient peoples responsible for the cutting off of the Prince and the destruction of Jerusalem. This plan which consist of 70 prophetic weeks will complete God’s plan for

Daniel's people. Thus, God's plan for the Jewish people will not be fulfilled in full until Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks is historically, and literally finished. It should be noted, that the clear evidence that the 70th week will be literally fulfilled relative to the literal Jewish people in the literal city of Jerusalem is the fact that the first 69 weeks were so literally fulfilled in relation to the literal Jewish nation within the literal and historical land of Palestine. If the first 69 weeks were literal, it must be assumed that the 70th week shall also be literal.

VI. **The ARRANGEMENT of the Book – “What is Daniel's form and flow?”**

*A. Daniel's **Personal Life** in Captivity – 1:1-21*

1. His **Deportation** to Babylon – vs. 1-7
2. His **Dedication** in Babylon – v. 8
3. His **Distinction** in Babylon – vs. 9-20
4. His **Duration** in Babylon – v. 21

*B. Daniel's **Prophetic Labors** in Captivity – 2:1-12:13*

1. His **Public Revelation** of Dreams and Visions – 2-6
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's Great Image – 2:1-49
 - b. God's first display of sovereignty – The Fiery Furnace – 3:1-30
 - c. God's second display of sovereignty – The Great Tree – 4:1-37
 - d. God's third display of sovereignty – Writing on the Wall – 5:1-31
 - e. God's fourth display of sovereignty – The Lion's Den – 6:1-28
2. His **Personal Reception** of Dreams and Visions – 7:1 – 12:3
 - a. Vision 1 – Daniel's Four Beasts – 7:1-28
 - b. Vision 2 – The Ram and He-Goat – 8:1-27
 - c. Vision 3 – Daniel's 70 Weeks – 9:1-27
 - d. Vision 4 – Conflicts of Spiritual Principalities – 10:1-21
 - e. Vision 5 – Conflicts of Earthly Principalities – 11:1-45
 - f. Vision 6 – Israel's Restraint Removed – 12:1-3
3. His **Providential Restraining** of Dreams and Visions – 12:4-13