

[Introduction to Daniel](#)

Author, Date and Authenticity

The book mentions Daniel as its author in several passages, such as [9:2](#) and [10:2](#). That Jesus concurred is clear from his reference to "the abomination that causes desolation," spoken of through the prophet Daniel" ([Mt 24:15](#)), quoting [9:27](#); [11:31](#); [12:11](#). The book was probably completed c. 530 B.C., shortly after the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 539.

The widely held view that the book of Daniel is largely fictional rests mainly on the modern philosophical assumption that long-range predictive prophecy is impossible. Therefore all fulfilled predictions in Daniel, it is claimed, had to have been composed no earlier than the Maccabean period (second century B.C.), after the fulfillments had taken place. But objective evidence excludes this hypothesis on several counts:

1. To avoid fulfillment of long-range predictive prophecy in the book, the adherents of the late-date view usually maintain that the four empires of chs. [2](#) and [7](#) are Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece. But in the mind of the author, "the Medes and Persians" ([5:28](#)) together constituted the second in the series of four kingdoms ([2:36-43](#)). Thus it becomes clear that the four empires are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman. See chart on "Identification of the Four Kingdoms," [7:4](#).

2. The language itself argues for a date earlier than the second century. Linguistic evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls (which furnish authentic samples of Hebrew and Aramaic writing from the second century B.C.; see "The Time between the Testaments") demonstrates that the Hebrew and Aramaic chapters of Daniel must have been composed centuries earlier. Furthermore, as recently demonstrated, the Persian and Greek words in Daniel do not require a late date. Some of the technical terms appearing in ch. [3](#) were already so obsolete by the second century B.C. that translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) translated them incorrectly.

3. Several of the fulfillments of prophecies in Daniel could not have taken place by the second century anyway, so the prophetic element cannot be dismissed. The symbolism connected with the fourth kingdom makes it unmistakably predictive of the Roman empire (see [2:33](#); [7:7](#), [19](#)), which did not take control of Syro-Palestine until 63 B.C. Also, the prophecy concerning the coming of "the Anointed One, the ruler," 483 years after "the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" ([9:25](#)), works out to the time of Jesus' ministry.

Objective evidence, therefore, appears to exclude the late-date hypothesis and indicates that there is insufficient reason to deny Daniel's authorship.

Theme

The theological theme of the book is God's sovereignty: "The Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men" ([5:21](#)). Daniel's visions always show God as triumphant ([7:11](#), [26-27](#); [8:25](#); [9:27](#); [11:45](#); [12:13](#)). The climax of his sovereignty is described in Revelation: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" ([Rev 11:15](#); cf. [Da 2:44](#); [7:27](#)).

Literary Form

The book is made up primarily of historical narrative (found mainly in chs. [1-6](#)) and apocalyptic (revelatory) material (found mainly in chs. [7-12](#)). The latter may be defined as symbolic, visionary, prophetic literature, usually composed during oppressive conditions and being chiefly

eschatological in theological content. Apocalyptic literature is primarily a literature of encouragement to the people of God (see Introduction to [Zechariah](#): Literary Form; see also Introduction to [Revelation](#): Literary Form). For the symbolic use of numbers in apocalyptic literature see Introduction to [Revelation](#): Distinctive Feature.

Outline

- I. Prologue: The Setting (ch. [1](#); in Hebrew)
 - A. Historical Introduction ([1:1-2](#))
 - B. Daniel and His Friends Are Taken Captive ([1:3-7](#))
 - C. The Young Men Are Faithful ([1:8-16](#))
 - D. The Young Men Are Elevated to High Positions ([1:17-21](#))
- II. The Destinies of the Nations of the World (chs. [2-7](#); in Aramaic, beginning at [2:4 b](#))
 - A. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Large Statue (ch. [2](#))
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar's Making of a Gold Image and His Decree That It Be Worshipped (ch. [3](#))
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of an Enormous Tree (ch. [4](#))
 - D. Belshazzar's and Babylon's Downfall (ch. [5](#))
 - E. Daniel's Deliverance (ch. [6](#))
 - F. Daniel's Dream of Four Beasts (ch. [7](#))
- III. The Destiny of the Nation of Israel (chs. [8-12](#); in Hebrew)
 - A. Daniel's Vision of a Ram and a Goat (ch. [8](#))
 - B. Daniel's Prayer and His Vision of the 70 "Sevens" (ch. [9](#))
 - C. Daniel's Vision of Israel's Future (chs. [10-12](#))
 - 1. Revelation of things to come ([10:1-3](#))
 - 2. Revelation from the angelic messenger ([10:4-11:1](#))
 - 3. Prophecies concerning Persia and Greece ([11:2-4](#))
 - 4. Prophecies concerning Egypt and Syria ([11:5-35](#))
 - 5. Prophecies concerning the antichrist ([11:36-45](#))
 - 6. Distress and deliverance ([12:1](#))
 - 7. Two resurrections ([12:2-3](#))
 - 8. Instruction to Daniel ([12:4](#))
 - 9. Conclusion ([12:5-13](#))