



*Daniel*  
דניאל





## *Introduction*

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### **FORGED IN THE CRUCIBLE OF HISTORY**

Daniel is one of the most fascinating and vivid books of the entire Old Testament. It is an example of how we should live in the midst of a world where our faith is not popular or understood. It reflects the blessings that come from a life lived in faith with a heart for serving God.

Taken from his home while just a young man, Daniel was thrust into a pagan culture 500 miles away, his name changed to honor a foreign god and required to serve an aggressive dictator. How did he respond? With grace, love, humility and faith. In return, God blessed him by putting him in a position second only to the king of not one but two competing world kingdoms.

Daniel's prophecies were so detailed and so accurate that some historians are unwilling to accept that they could be of divine origin. These critics try to claim that the book must have been written after the events described, which requires them to neglect a number of historical realities:

- Daniel is one of the most authenticated books in the Bible. Copies were found in four of the caves at Qumran, site of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating as old as 270BC.
- The book of Daniel was translated into Greek as part of the Septuagint in 270BC, after some 70 Hebrew scholars carefully translated the accepted Jewish Scriptures—already ancient by then—into the trade language of the day. Daniel is part of all Septuagint versions, unchanged from the version we are familiar with. This would be impossible had any version of the book been written later.
- Daniel has been quoted from extensively by early writers such as the Maccabees in the 2nd Century BC.
- Jesus referred to Daniel, as did the writer of the Hebrews.
- Ezekiel, writing from Babylon as one of the Jewish captives less than 20 years after Daniel, records that God places Daniel's righteousness on par with that of Noah and Job.

*“Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men —Noah, Daniel and Job —were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.” —Ezekiel 14:13-14*



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### THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF DANIEL

- Historical dates are difficult to pinpoint because there were no modern-style “year” references. Instead, all dates were measured against known events such as the throning of a king (i.e. “in the third year of Zedekiah”) making it hard to identify exactly when something happened. Many commentaries disagree on exact years for the various events of the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ. This is made even more challenging because the Jewish calendar is broken into two versions, the original month order and the religious calendar based on re-ordering of dates as God commanded at the time of the Exodus (the seventh month, Nisan, became the first month). On top of that, different cultures had different ways of measuring events. Babylonians did not count the year in which a king gained his crown as a year of reign, while the Jews of Judah did. So the Jewish account would say in the “fourth year” of a king while the Babylonians would say it happened in the “third year” of that king. Babylonians and some other nations called the first year of a king “the year of accession” or “the year he became king.”
- Most Bible scholars agree that Daniel was taken captive in 605BC, after Nebuchadnezzar’s first siege of Jerusalem (there were three different events culminating in the destruction of the city and temple 19 years later). The Jews were in Babylon for 70 years, eventually released by king Cyrus of Persia.
- Mannasseh’s evil reign of terror was followed by Josiah’s goodness. Mannasseh plunged the nation into its lowest point of spiritual decay, turning the nation away from God and silencing all voices of righteousness. It is said that Mannasseh had the prophet Isaiah sawed in half. His son Josiah, though just a young boy, turned the nation back towards God.

“Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was pleasing in the LORD’s sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right.”  
--*2Chronicles 34:1-2*
- Josiah’s treasurer found the Book of the Law in the neglected temple. Josiah was shocked when he read the Law and saw how far the nation had fallen from God’s commandments. It is clear that he had no knowledge of the Law until this point.



For 25 years Saddam Hussein has sponsored the archeological reconstruction of Babylon at a cost of more than \$750 million. Shown in this Iraqi postcard is a 3/4-size reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate. Pictures of the dragon god Marduk grace the face of the wall. Nebuchadnezzar’s palace and many of the walls have been rebuilt.



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“When the king heard what was written in the law, he tore his clothes in despair.”

--*2Chronicles 34:19*

- Josiah recognized the seriousness of the penalties God was about to bring upon the nation. He asked if it could be averted. God said no, but He would delay it until Josiah's death.

“I will not send the promised disaster against this city and its people until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place.” --*2Chronicles 34:28*

- But even Josiah failed when he went against pharaoh Neco at Carcemish on the Euphrates river while he was battling general Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Neco sent him a message declaring that God gave him this mission, but Josiah refused to believe this and continued fighting anyway.

“But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, “What quarrel is there between you and me, O king of Judah? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.” Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Neco had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo.”

--*2Chronicles 35:21-22*

- Josiah was wounded in the battle even though he was disguised at the time. He died in Jerusalem. The people crowned his younger son Jehoahaz as his successor instead of the rightful son, probably because of anti-Egyptian feelings.

“Then the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoahaz and made him the next king in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, but he reigned only three months.” --*2Chronicles 36:1-2*

- Jehoahaz was deposed by pharaoh Neco after three months and taken to Egypt as a prisoner. Eliakim his older brother was made vassal king instead, and Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim.
- Jehoiakim would reign eleven years. After the final battle of Carcemish was finished, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem. After a brief siege, Jehoiakim surrendered and was put in bronze chains to be taken to Babylon. Apparently at this time Nebuchadnezzar heard about his father's death and changed his mind about Jehoiakim, installing him back on the throne as a vassal king for the next seven years.



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- Five years later, in 600BC, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, possibly believing that Neco would win another battle against the Babylonian king. He burned the scrolls of Jeremiah and listened to the advice of his false prophets instead, who claim that Nebuchadnezzar will leave him alone.

“Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe’s knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes.” –*Jeremiah 36:23-24*
- They were wrong about their predictions, and Jeremiah was right. Nebuchadnezzar was not about to stand for rebellion by a vassal king, and acted to set things straight.

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and captured it, and he bound Jehoiakim in chains and led him away to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the treasures from the Temple of the LORD, and he placed them in his palace in Babylon.” –*2Chronicles 36:6-7*
- Next Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim was made king. He is also called “Jekoniah” and “Coniah” in different books of the Bible. His reign would be very brief.

“Then his son Jehoiachin became the next king. Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, but he reigned in Jerusalem only three months and ten days.” –*2Chronicles 36:8-9*
- Though his reign was short, he was filled with evil. His emphasis on idol worship and evil deeds so upset God that He pronounced a blood curse on the line of Jehoiachin, saying that none of his descendants will ever sit on the throne of David. God says that he will treat this man as if he were childless. This is a significant issue, because the Messiah was to come from that same royal line, and it was long recognized that He would take the throne of David.

“As surely as I live,” declares the LORD, “even if you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear —to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country, where neither of you was born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to.”



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Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know?

O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the LORD says: “Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah.” —*Jeremiah 22:24-30*

- Compare Matthew’s genealogy through Joseph to Luke’s genealogy through Mary. Both come from the line of David, one avoids the blood curse while the other grants a proper title to Jesus. Matthew’s genealogy goes through Jehoiachin and ends with Joseph. Though the father of Jesus, he is not Christ’s birth father and thus Jesus inherits the right to the throne through his father without being blemished by the blood curse. Luke’s genealogy goes to David and then turns off slightly to move through Nathan rather than Solomon, ending up with Mary, the birth mother of Jesus. Thus both parents came from the line of king David, Jesus received the legal right to the throne through his father, but his blood is untouched by the curse on the line of Jehoiachin.
- Jehoiachin is brought to Babylon and kept there as prisoner for 37 years. He is released on the 27th day of the 12th month and enjoys dining at the Babylonian king’s table for the rest of his life, but never returns to Israel. After Jehoiachin is removed, Nebuchadnezzar installs his uncle Mattaniah as king, making him swear an oath of loyalty and changing his name to Zedekiah. At this time the Babylonians take 11,000 more captives to ensure his loyalty, including the prophet Ezekiel.

“In the spring of the following year, Jehoiachin was summoned to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Many treasures from the Temple of the LORD were taken to Babylon at that time. And Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin’s uncle, Zedekiah, to be the next king in Judah and Jerusalem.” —*2Chronicles 36:10*

- Zedekiah reigned eleven years. In his fourth year, he is summoned by Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps to check on his loyalty. At that time Jeremiah sent a letter of encouragement to the captives telling them that they would remain in Babylon for 70 years.

In his ninth year, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and was besieged for 2-1/2 years. Ezekiel was given an interesting prophecy about Zedekiah in which he declares that he will never see his homeland again, will be taken to Babylon, will not see it, yet will die there. How can that be? They appear to be contradictions.



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“Even Zedekiah will leave Jerusalem at night through a hole in the wall, taking only what he can carry with him. He will cover his face, and his eyes will never see his homeland again. Then I will spread out my net and capture him in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Babylonians, though he will never see it, and he will die there. I will scatter his servants and guards to the four winds and send the sword after them.” –*Ezekiel 12:12-14*

- The fulfillment of this prophecy is described in several places, but the most detailed is in Jeremiah 39. This momentous event represents the third and final captivity and the complete destruction of Jerusalem and its holy temple in 587BC. This is the eleventh year of Zedekiah’s reign and the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (the Jews would say it was the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar).

“And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah’s eleventh year, the city wall was broken through. Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-sarsekim a chief officer, Nergal-sharezer a high official and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.

When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled; they left the city at night by way of the king’s garden, through the gate between the two walls, and headed toward the Arabah.

But the Babylonian army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured him and took him to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced sentence on him.

There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and also killed all the nobles of Judah. Then he put out Zedekiah’s eyes and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon.

The Babylonians set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard carried into exile to Babylon the people who remained in the city, along with those who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people.” –*Jeremiah 39:2-9*