

# LESSON 3

Last week we began by discussing the relation between Daniel and Revelation. We saw how the books act as bookends — Daniel looking forward in history from the Chaldeans, to the Medo-Persians, to the Greeks, and finally to the Romans, and with Revelation looking backward over the same kingdoms.

We then talked about the big controversy over when Daniel was written, describing the early date view and the late date view. And we discussed why it is important when Daniel was written.

We then began looking at the evidence in support of an early date for Daniel, and we started with the most important evidence — Jesus referred to Daniel in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 and called him a prophet. And more than that, Jesus said that some of what Daniel prophesied had not yet occurred, but would occur during the first century lifetime of his listeners.

We also looked at some examples of historical accuracies in Daniel that would be difficult to explain had the book been written centuries after the fact by an obscure Jew in Palestine.

## **The Dead Sea Scrolls Support the Early Date View**

It has been said that history doesn't repeat itself, rather historians repeat each other. Nowhere is that more true than when it comes to ancient history. Many historians adhere blindly to the historical dogma — without regard to what the evidence shows.

For example, historians have long proclaimed that modern man, having emerged from the slime, progressed slowly on the evolutionary ladder until civilizations eventually began to form many millennia later.

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that mankind has always been civilized. We had language from the day of our creation, and cities have existed ever since the city that Cain built in Genesis 4:17.

Which of those views is better supported by the evidence?

Gobekli Tepe is an ancient stone complex that has been found in Turkey, about 500 miles from Istanbul. It is twice as old as the Great Pyramid and thousands of years older than Stonehenge. It has been called the most astonishing archaeological discovery in modern times and perhaps the oldest advanced civilization on Earth.

And perhaps most astonishing of all — but not to Bible students — is that it is located just a few hundred miles from Mount Ararat, and it is filled with carvings of animals — bulls, foxes, cranes, lions, ducks, scorpions, ants, spiders, snakes, and many others.

Moving from Genesis back to Daniel, before the late nineteenth century, many liberal scholars said that Belshazzar of Daniel 5 never existed. But then ancient Babylonian inscriptions were found that mentioned him by name and confirmed the Biblical account.

See Box D on the Lesson 3 Handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)). This is called the Nabonidus Cylinder, and it includes a prayer for Nabonidus' son Belshazzar: "Guard me ... from offending against your divinity. Give me long life. Cause Belshazzar, my eldest son, to revere your great godhead."

Never bet against the Bible! Archaeology has confirmed the Biblical accounts over and over again.

In the spring of 1947, in the Judean wilderness near the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea, ancient manuscripts were found that have helped us reconstruct the his-

tory of pre-Christian Judaism and have also given us our oldest manuscripts of most of the Old Testament. The find has been called the most famous archaeological find of all time!

There are several stories of how the scrolls were discovered. Most of the stories involve an Arab boy named Muhammed-ad-Dhib (Muhammed the Wolf) who was herding goats in the area. When one goat wandered into a cave, the boy threw a rock in and heard a jar brake. Another story had the boy seeking refuge in the cave from a thunderstorm while smuggling goods across the Jordan to Bethlehem. (The second story may be the truth while the first was found more suitable for publication.)

The scrolls were brought to Bethlehem, the nearest market town, and attempts were made to sell them. At the time, the area was divided into armed camps, which made it difficult for the Bedouins to dispose of the scrolls. Eventually they were sold in two lots—one to the Hebrew University and one to a Syrian Orthodox Monastery which later sold them to the Hebrew University for about \$250,000. All of the scrolls from the initial find (Cave 1) are now located in the Shrine of the Book adjacent to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Some of the copies were a thousand years older than any that existed prior to the Dead Sea find. Before this find, our earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Old Testament was the Leningrad Codex of about AD 916. Thirteen copies of Deuteronomy, twelve of Isaiah, and ten of the Psalms were found. (In Luke 4:17 Jesus was handed a copy of Isaiah, which he then read aloud. The copies found in Cave 4 date back to around the same time.) To date, eleven caves have produced at least four hundred manuscripts.

The Scrolls have had a tremendous impact on the textual study of the Bible—and they have overwhelmingly confirmed the accuracy of the text that we have, and have shown God’s providential care in preserving the text.

But why hasn't such news been more widely reported? Let's turn that question around — if the Dead Sea Scrolls had turned up copies of the Scripture that differed dramatically from what we have today in our Bibles, do you think that news would have been widely reported? Of course, it would have been reported then, and it would still be making headlines today.

But instead the Scrolls confirmed the accuracy and fidelity of the Biblical text, and we hear hardly a word about it.

As one example of how the Scrolls confirmed the Bible's integrity, a popular theory among liberal critics is that Isaiah is really three books with the first ending at Chapter 39. This theory, which was first put forth in 1892 by Bernhard Duhm, initially claimed that the latter chapters of Isaiah (including Chapter 53) were added during the first century. The Isaiah scroll from Qumran has no break between Chapters 39 and 40.

As another example, seven copies of Daniel dating from the Maccabean period have been found in three of the caves at Qumran. This fact alone makes it very unlikely that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period.

The late date group are forced to believe that the Essenes at Qumran had near original copies of Daniel to retain their late date theory. A simpler explanation is that Daniel was written much earlier.

One non-Biblical manuscript found in Cave 4 refers to "Daniel the prophet." This fragment has been dated prior to 150 BC. Another sectarian document from the caves uses the imagery of Daniel to describe the final conflict between good and evil.

An honest scholar would accept the clear evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the modern scholars cannot accept it. They literally are unable to believe their own eyes because to do so would be to accept the supernatural source of the Bible.

The linguistic evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls overwhelmingly supports an early date for the book of Daniel.

Look at Boxes A, B, and C on the Lesson 3 Handout. One was written in 1755, one in 1864, and one in 2011. Which is which? Why is it so easy to tell that item A is the earliest and item B is the most recent? Why can we so easily date item C to the Civil War era?

The same sort of analysis can be done with Daniel and those writings from among the Dead Sea Scrolls that we know are from the Macabbean period.

With the Dead Sea Scrolls we have some scrolls that were unquestionably written during the Maccabean period, and we can compare those scrolls with the book of Daniel by looking at syntax, word order, morphology (structure of words), vocabulary, spelling, and word usage. What does that comparison show?

It shows that Daniel is linguistically older by at least several centuries. It also shows that Daniel was written in the eastern sector of the Aramaic speaking world (which includes Babylon) rather than in Palestine.

If anyone ever tells you that Christian faith is a blind faith that simply ignores all evidence to the contrary — ask them about Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls. If you want to see an example of blind faith ignoring evidence, then simply look at how modern liberal critics deal with Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls!

### **The Book of Ezekiel Supports the Early Date View**

In Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20, Daniel is listed with Noah and Job as an example of righteousness. Ezekiel 28:3 says, “Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel.” The representation of Daniel as righteous and wise fits perfectly with his description in the book of Daniel.

Most modern scholars accept an early date for Ezekiel. How then do they explain Ezekiel’s reference to Daniel if, as they argue, Daniel was written centuries later?

The liberal critics say that Ezekiel was not referring to Daniel but instead to Dan'el — a famous character from Ugaritic mythology. Is it even remotely believable that a pious Jew would refer to a legendary pagan figure as an example of wisdom and righteousness? Dan'el was an idol worshipper who offered blood sacrifices to Baal for weeks at a time. He was a vengeful drunkard who convinced his daughter to commit murder.

But since Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, others argue that Ezekiel would not have pointed to someone then living for such a purpose. Why not? Why not point to Daniel as an example of righteousness? Why couldn't Ezekiel use both ancient and current examples to show the people that God was still at work among them?

One commentator has said that Noah, Job, and Daniel are spaced about 1500 years apart. Thus, Ezekiel gave an example of righteousness from three different eras.

### **The First Book of Maccabees Supports the Early Date View**

In this book, Mattathias (the father of the Jewish patriot Maccabean brothers) encouraged his sons in their revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes by recalling how Daniel for his innocence was saved from the mouth of lions.

Mattathias died in 166 BC — a year before the date that critics say Daniel was written. Their explanation? They say that Mattathias never said this!

### **Josephus Supports the Early Date View**

In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus relates a story that, if true, would prove that the book of Daniel existed during the time of Alexander the Great (330 BC).

Josephus tells us that Alexander was angry that the Jews would not give him their allegiance so he went to Jerusalem to punish them. Jewish priests met him and showed him in the book of Daniel how God had said that he would defeat the Persians. This pleased Alexander so much that he spared Jerusalem.

Josephus wrote:

The high priest then showed Alexander the passages in the prophecy of Daniel indicating that a Greek would destroy the empire of the Persians. Alexander, of course, accepted the prophecy as a reference to himself, and declared that God had ordained him to conquer Persia, which he proceeded to do. Furthermore, Alexander not only refused to execute any sanctions against Israel but bestowed upon that nation all kinds of favors and benefits, which was contrary to his usual custom.

History confirms that Alexander marched near Jerusalem on his way to Egypt and that he treated the Jews kindly. How else can we explain why Alexander spared Jerusalem the ravages that he inflicted upon Tyre and Sidon?

The consequence of this story is that it means that Daniel was known long prior to the year 334 BC and that even Alexander himself recognized that he was the one Daniel said would destroy the Medo-Persian power.

In addition, Josephus says that the Jewish canon was completed before 424 BC and that Daniel was a part of the canon. This was not just his opinion, but was the Jewish national position. He also speaks of many other books that were rejected — but not Daniel; it was in the Jewish canon long before the modern liberal critic says it was written.

What do the critics say about all of this? They reject Josephus whenever he contradicts their naturalistic world view, but they enthusiastically accept him on virtually everything else. (They never give the Bible the benefit of the doubt. It is always assumed to be unreliable.)

## **The Use of a Two-Horned Ram to Symbolize Medo-Persia Supports an Early Date**

After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever depicted on coins with his head adorned with the ram's horns of Amen-Ra. A thousand years later, Mohammed called him "Alexander, the lord of the two horns."

One commentator has written:

It is impossible to believe that the writer of Daniel could, in the face of universal attribution of the two ram's horns to Alexander, represent Persia, the power he overthrew, as a two-horned ram (Daniel 8:3,20) unless he had written before the expedition into Egypt.

If you read an article that compared the Eisenhower administration to the days of Camelot, would you conclude that it had been written before or after the Kennedy administration?

## **Responses to Late Date Arguments**

Why should we respond at all to these late-date arguments?

We must not ignore them. If our position is correct, then we certainly have nothing to fear by confronting these opposing positions. Indeed, a failure to confront them might indicate a fear that our own position might not withstand their arguments.

Also, in our outreach to others, we need to be able to answer whatever questions they might have about the book of Daniel.

## **The Claim That Daniel's Position in the Jewish Scriptures Implies a Late Date**

The Old Testament books in the Hebrew Bible are divided into three sections.

- The Law (Books of Moses)

- The Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets)
- The Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, DANIEL, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles) — called the Hagiographa (Holy Writings)

The liberal critics argue that because Daniel is not found in the second division (the Prophets) but rather in the third division (the Writings), it follows that Daniel was a very late addition to the Jewish canon.

But it is a mistake to assume that the books in the third division were written later than the books in the second division. In fact, Job, Ruth, Proverbs, and many of the Psalms were written before many of the prophetic books. Josephus says that no books were added to the canon after 424 BC — the death of Artaxerxes. Jewish tradition says that Malachi was the last written book in the Bible, which would mean that the second division was closed after the third.

The division is not based on the type of book but on the type of writer. The books in the first section were written by Moses. Those in the second section were written by men who had the prophetic office as well as the prophetic gift. Those in the third section were written by those who had the prophetic gift but not the prophetic office — inspired men but not “official” prophets. This explains why Ezekiel and Daniel, though contemporaries, are in different divisions.

But what do we mean when we say that Daniel was not “officially” a prophet?

Daniel does not introduce his book with his name, and he had no official position among the Jewish people. He did not live among the exiles as Ezekiel did, but he lived at the court of Babylon, and he dealt with heathen kings rather than with the people of Israel. Although he is called a prophet by Jesus in the New Testament, that has more to do with his inspired predictions than with any special prophetic office that he held. Note that David is also called a prophet in Acts 2:30. One who

held the prophetic office served as a spiritual mediator between God and the Israelites. Daniel did not do this.

We can turn this argument around on the radical critics! Why was Daniel added to the canon at all if it was not written until 160 BC? Listen to what R. D. Wilson has to say about this:

Now, the radical critics, without any direct evidence to support them, profess to believe that, into the midst of these sacred writings for which men readily died, a forged document of unknown authorship and (according to the critics) full of easily detected errors ... was quietly admitted as a genuine and authentic writing of a prophet hitherto unknown to history. ... They cannot believe in miracles and predictive prophecy ... but they can believe that a lot of obstreperous and cantankerous Jews who through all their history from Jacob and Esau down to the present time have disagreed and quarreled about almost everything, or nothing, could have accepted, unanimously and without a murmur ... a forged and fictitious document, untrue to the well remembered facts of their own experience and to the easily ascertained facts concerning their own past history and the history of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks of whom the author writes.

Paul reminds us in Romans 3:2 that the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God — and they took that responsibility very seriously.

### **The Claim That Jesus ben Sirach's Failure to Mention Daniel Implies a Late Date**

Jesus ben Sirach wrote Ecclesiasticus between 200 and 170 BC. At the end of the book, he reviews Israel's history, mentioning some of the men that God used to lead Israel. Daniel is not on the list.

Further, at one point he states that never had there been born a man like Joseph. (Daniel is similar in many respects to Joseph.) Daniel and Joseph both were exiles, both showed allegiance to God, both were falsely accused, both were vindicated, both interpreted dreams, both became confidants to the king, and both were given a high government position by the king.

The radical critics claim that this omission supports the late-date view.

But Daniel was not the only Old Testament notable that was omitted from this list. Jonah, Mordecai, Ezra, and Job were also left off. (No radical critic uses the omission of Ezra to deny the authenticity of his book.)

One commentator has noted:

It is a remarkable fact that he does not pay any regard to the great men who had exercised their functions outside the bounds of the land of Israel, such as Jonah at Ninevah, Daniel in Babylon, and Mordecai in Persia. In speaking of Abraham, he does not refer to his coming out of Ur of the Chaldees, nor his visit to Egypt. In speaking of Jacob, Joseph, and Aaron, he says nothing of the land of Egypt; nor does he intimate that Moses had ever been in Egypt.

His views might be characterized as Sadducean and nationalistic. When he gives an account of the great men of his nation, he selects ... those who had most distinguished themselves according to his ideas of what constituted greatness.

### **The Claim That Daniel is Mistaken about the Date of Nebuchadnezzar's Siege of Jerusalem**

Such a mistake would indicate a lack of knowledge about the history of the time, and thus would support a late date. But was Daniel mistaken?

**Daniel 1:1-3** — *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to*

*Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. 3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility.*

The Babylonian Chronicle makes no reference to an action by Nebuchadnezzar in Judah during the third year of Jehoiakim or to a siege of Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah 46:2, the battle that opened the way for a Babylonian invasion of Judah did not occur until the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, whereas Daniel 1:1 says that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign.

We need to consider three questions:

- When did Nebuchadnezzar arrive at Jerusalem and besiege it?
- When did he defeat Jerusalem?
- When did he carry away captives and sacred vessels?

Second Kings and Second Chronicles record three separate occasions when Nebuchadnezzar carried away people and articles from the temple.

- **2 Kings 23:36-24:5** and **2 Chronicles 36:5-8** — Jehoiakim gave allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar for three years and then rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar defeated his forces and took Jehoiakim back in chains along with some items from the temple.
- **2 Kings 24:8-16** and **2 Chronicles 36:9-10** — Jehoiachin succeeded Jehoiakim and reigned for three months while the servants of Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Again, the siege was successful, and Jehoiachin and much of the nobility were deported to Babylon.

- **2 Kings 24:17-25:21** and **2 Chronicles 36:11-20** — Zedekiah ruled for a few years and then rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. In the ninth year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem, which fell in the eleventh year of his reign (586 BC). The city was destroyed and most of the leading men were killed. The others were deported, and all articles from the temple were taken.

The best and most likely explanation is that Daniel 1:1-4 is intended to be a brief summary of these three events and is not intended to provide all of the details found in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

There are some additional points to consider.

Jerusalem was *besieged* — not *captured*. One critic has written that “Daniel begins with a glaring historical error, for Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim.” But Daniel never states that Jerusalem was captured at that time — only that it was besieged. In the middle of his Palestinian campaign, Nebuchadnezzar received news of his father’s death. He rushed back to Babylon to assume the throne and apparently abandoned the siege against Jerusalem before he captured the city.

Babylon used a different dating system. At first glance, Daniel 1:1 seems to be in conflict with Jeremiah 25:1 regarding the year of Jehoiakim’s reign when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine. But Jeremiah (writing in Jerusalem) used a different dating system than did Daniel (writing in Babylon). It was different in two respects — either one of which could explain the seeming discrepancy.

The Babylonian calendar began each year in the spring, and the Jewish calendar began each year in autumn. The Babylonian third year thus overlapped the Judean fourth year by about six months. In Babylon, the year in which a king began to reign was called “the year of accession to the kingdom,” which was followed by the first, second, and subsequent years of his rule. Thus, a Babylonian king’s third year of reign would correspond to the actual fourth year of his reign. Daniel may have

used the Babylonian system in verse 1. If this theory is correct it again points to an early date for the book. How could a Jew writing 400 years later have known about the Babylonian system of dating?

### **The Claim That Daniel’s Use of the Term “Chaldeans” Implies a Late Date**

Daniel 2:2 uses the term “Chaldeans” to denote a special class of wise men. However, the word originally had a broader meaning and referred to a particular group of tribes — those, who at this time, had control of the city of Babylon. The late-date proponents claim that only the original meaning was in use during the sixth century.

Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, was a Chaldean. Although “Chaldean” and “Babylonian” are not synonyms, they are sometimes treated that way since many Babylonian rulers were Chaldean. Jeremiah described Nebuchadnezzar’s army as the army of the Chaldeans. The term gradually came to mean a privileged class and then a special class of wise men. The question we must consider is when did this change occur?

The claim that a single word can help date a document is not without merit. For example, if you read an English passage containing the word “sputnik” you would be able to date it after 1957 because it was not until that time that the word passed into the English language.

Daniel uses the term “Chaldean” in BOTH ways — which destroys the liberal theory. In Daniel 1:4 we see the “language of the Chaldeans,” which is clearly an ethnic use of the term. In Daniel 2, 4, and 5 we see another use where the term is used to describe a specific class of wise men. Daniel was aware that “Chaldean” was an ethnic term for the race of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 5:30 refers to Belshazzar as the king of the Chaldeans. Both uses of the term were known when Daniel was written.

Herodotus, who wrote *The Histories* around 450 BC, implied that the term had been used to denote a class of wise men as far back as the time of Cyrus.

One scholar has written:

It is hard to prove a negative. Our knowledge of the Babylonian literature of the time of Daniel is not so complete that we can safely affirm that “Chaldean” never meant the caste of wise men in his time.