

Daniel

Introductory Comments

- We have 12 Sundays and 12 chapters – will still take some time for introductory matters -- Author; recipients; date; type of literature, etc. – all provide clues for interpretation;

Author

- Authorship is attributed to Daniel – No reason to dispute this; is in fact very plausible...
- Contains several first person accounts (e.g. 9:2, 10:2); along w/ third person narrative about his experiences in Babylon which give the impression of eye-witness accounts;
- In 7:1 we read that having had a dream “He wrote down the substance of his dream...” (D. at least in the habit of recording his experiences in writing);
- Jesus Himself seemed to concur when in Matt.24:15 He refers to “*the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet D.*”

Setting and Date of Writing

A. Setting:

- The book is set in the lands of Babylon – far to the east of Israel;
- The kingdoms of Israel and Judah have been conquered by the armies of Babylon; God’s people have been deported and are in exile;
- (Israel invaded by Assyria in 722 BC; Judah invaded by Babylon 605 BC [*Dan.*], 597 BC [*Ez.*], 586 BC [*temple razed*]);
- The book is set in Babylon and revolves mostly around the experiences of Daniel;

B. Date of Writing:

- The time spanned by these events can be computed from dates given in the text – 1:1, READ (= 605 BC); and 10:1, READ (= 535 BC); roughly 70 years;
- As for the **Date of Writing**,
 - **Traditional date** has been somewhere toward the end of the 6th c. BC (599-500BC);
 - Many scholars reject a date this early and propose a later date for writing sometime in the 2nd c. BC (199-100BC)
- **Q.** WHAT about D. that would cause people to deny the earlier date? **A.** Primarily the detailed descriptions of events that transpired long after the time of D. the man;
- IOW, there is a denial of such a thing as supernaturally inspired long range predictive prophecy; so the prophecies of D. are considered as having been composed “after the fact.”
- Evidence in the book itself (the language used) points to the early date;

Genre – type of literature:

- Each genre/type of literature has its own rules of interpretation: poetry, epistle, narrative, parable, etc.
- D. is a mixture of genre
 - Historical narrative – the basic recording of what happened and when;
 - And a type of prophetic literature called “apocalyptic” – (prophetic so a *predictive* aspect); but...
 - 1) Prediction couched in sometimes bizarre symbolism – things which stand for other things;
 - The book itself leads us to expect this; e.g., ch.7 vv.2-3 and v.17, the beasts = kingdoms; Also the detailed symbolism w/in each beast, 7:7 and 7:24, the horns = kings;
 - Beware of pressing too literally; to acknowledge the symbolic nature of a thing is not to deny its reality;
 - 2) Prediction which has mainly to do w/ the time of the end and the ultimate triumph of God’s Kingdom over those who oppose Him;

Theological Context and Theme

- We've mentioned briefly the historical setting but only the bare facts of invasion and exile;
- We must understand there is a profound theological reality which gives meaning to those facts – that is the covenant of God w/ Israel;
 - Made w/ Abraham in Gen.15, “*On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates’...*” (v.18);
 - The terms of the covenant on Israel’s part was for them to keep the law; if they did, they would prosper in the land; if they did not they would be expelled from the land – Deut.28:58, 64, “*If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name-- the LORD your God...⁶⁴ Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods-- gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.*”
 - It was in fact for breaking the covenant that they’ve suffered destruction; Jer.25:8-11⁸ “*Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: ‘Because you have not listened to my words,⁹ I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.¹⁰ I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp.¹¹ This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*”
 - This is the reality underlying the facts; but this created something of a problem for God regarding the witness of His glory in the world... what?
 - “From the viewpoint of a human observer, it seemed that the religion of the Hebrews had been completely discredited. Their God, Yahweh, had apparently shown himself inferior in power to the mighty gods of Assyria and Babylon; for he seemed unable to deliver his people from the worshippers of Asshur, Bel, and Nebo. When they leveled Yahweh’s temple to the ground and burned its ruins, the Babylonian troops served notice to all the world that their gods were mightier than Yahweh, no matter what titles the Hebrews gave him. Ethical monotheism was exposed to universal scorn as an empty fraud. Therefore, it was essential at this time in Israel’s history for God to display his power in such a way as to prove that he was the one true God and the sovereign Lord of history,” Gleason Archer, *Daniel*, EBC, 3-4;
- It’s not surprising then that the main theme of D. is God’s sovereignty over all the kingdoms of men, and over all creation,
- This expressed repeatedly throughout the book – 5:21, “*the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.*” Or 7:14, “*His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*”