

# **DANIEL - A TEACHER'S GUIDE**

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## **THE CENTRAL QUESTION:**

### **What does this book/story say to us about God?**

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
  - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What picture of God do you see in Daniel? Is it not important to get the historical setting for Daniel? Where were God's people at this time? What do you think the neighboring nations thought of the God of Israel, since He did not (or could not) prevent their being taken captive? God had said again and again that He would have to let His people go. Does it seem that He had let Daniel go?

The book of Daniel has been one of the books most attacked by skeptics and "scholars." If we are to accept Daniel as historically accurate and correct, we are accepting the fact that Daniel himself wrote it. Daniel was born in Jerusalem around 625 BC. He was taken into Babylonian captivity with a small group of elite prisoners mostly from the royal family (Daniel 1:1-6; 2 Kings 20:17,18) following the first invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken to Babylon where they were educated in the best schools in the world. They soon rose to positions near the top of the government. Daniel became well known for his ability to "interpret dreams" with the help of his God.

Many "critical scholars" believe *a priori* that it is impossible, even for God, to predict the future and thus that the book of Daniel must have been written after the events took place that are "prophesied" in the book. Usually they assign a date for the writing of the book of Daniel around the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175- c.163 BC) for two reasons. First, they believe it must have been written "after the fact." Secondly, in the early years of "higher criticism," they believed that Daniel included a number of historical inaccuracies which they explained by the fact that the "real author" lived long after the events which are described.

There are several reasons for believing that Daniel was the actual author of the book bearing his name:

- 1) The book claims that it is written by Daniel. (Daniel 8:1-7,13-19,27; 9:2-22; 10:2-5, etc.)
- 2) The author was well acquainted with the precise details of Babylonian history.
- 3) Jesus recognized Daniel as the author. (See Matthew 24:15)

There are several segments of the book of Daniel found in different caves at Qumran all of which agree essentially with the Daniel that we have, suggesting that the book of Daniel as known in the times of Christ (and even earlier) is the same as the one we have today.

Even though Daniel held a very prominent position in the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Governments we had not yet found a single extra-biblical mention of him as a person until the recent discovery of his grave in Jerusalem in 1995. "Critics" once claimed that there were numerous historical inaccuracies in the book. In more recent times and in the light of

more extensive archaeological information, we now know that Daniel was completely right on all the historical information that can be verified from extra-biblical materials!

After being taken to Babylon, Daniel and his three friends were immediately thrown into a completely heathen environment and given heathen names honoring the “gods” of Babylon. They were expected to “fit right in” and adopt this new society, culture, and religion. Almost immediately there arose the question of what diet they were going to eat and we find ourselves in the middle of Daniel chapter one.

**Background:** “In addition to adapting to the provisions associated with the diet and habits of the king himself, the four Hebrews discovered a thoroughness in the Babylonian attempts to erase from their minds all memory of former religious commitment. To this end, their names, all of which in some way incorporated the name of the true God, were replaced with names containing references to the diverse gods of Babylon: Daniel (‘God is my Judge’) to Belteshazzar (‘Lady protect the king’), Hananiah (‘God has been gracious’) to Shadrach (‘I am very fearful [of god]’), Mishael (‘Who is what God is?’) to Meshach (‘I am of little account’), Azariah (‘The Lord has helped’) to Abed-Nego (‘Servant of the shining one’ [i.e. Nebo]).” (*Believer’s Study Bible* - see Daniel 1:7)

**“AUTHOR:** Daniel

“A contemporary of Jeremiah and his fellow exile Ezekiel, Daniel (lit. ‘God is my Judge’) is unquestionably the author of the book which bears his name. Ezekiel refers to Daniel (cf. Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3; attempts to identify the Daniel referred to in Ezekiel with an Ugaritic ‘Dnil’ have been unconvincing), establishing Daniel’s historicity. Furthermore, Jesus quotes Daniel, calling him a prophet and clearly demonstrating His knowledge that this prophecy came from Daniel (cf. Matt. 24:15). Those who have represented the prophecy as a second-century B.C. forgery have been guided by their own presuppositions rather than by fact. Daniel and his three compatriots, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were forced into exile in 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar descended for the first time upon Jehoiakim’s kingdom of Judah. Daniel was of the royal seed, and there is some evidence that he, together with his friends, was made a eunuch at the time of his deportation (cf. 2 Kings 20:18). This may be gleaned from the following:

- (1) the mention of the master of the eunuchs (1:3) and the chief of the eunuchs (1:7–11, 18), to whom the four Hebrews were committed for preparation for service in the courts;
- (2) the absence of any mention of family life or offspring for Daniel; and
- (3) the prophecy of Isaiah 39:6, 7 (admitting, however, that the term here translated ‘eunuch,’ *saris*, Heb., may sometimes mean simply ‘official,’ as in Gen. 37:36; 39:1; 40:2, 7; 1 Kin. 22:9; 1 Chr. 28:1; Jer. 52:25). Conceivably Daniel was in his late teens or early twenties when this calamity befell him. The Jewish canon listed Daniel in the Hagiographa (i.e., ‘the holy writings’) rather than among the prophets (although Josephus considered him a prophet). Daniel’s principal role as statesman rather than prophet is thereby acknowledged. This in no way reduces the importance of his prophetic utterances, but it does bear testimony to the mixture in Daniel’s book of biography, history, and prophecy. Since Daniel survived the demise of the Babylonian Empire, his prophecy also

encompasses segments of the Persian period of dominance. Consequently, the statesman-prophet Daniel must have lived from 90 to 100 years.

**“DATE:** c. 530 B.C.

“The events which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem and Judah in 586 B.C. were neither sudden nor unannounced. Judah was threatened repeatedly by the Assyrians, and escaped these oppressors only to fall to the burgeoning Babylonian Empire. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, descended upon Jerusalem. Daniel and a few others of noble extraction were taken to Babylon to serve in the king’s court. In 597 B.C., King Jehoiachin, the royal family, and the young priest Ezekiel, together with the treasures of the temple, were deported. Finally, 586 B.C. marked the awesome destruction of the temple and nation. Events contained in Daniel’s prophecy span the time period from 605 B.C. to the third year of the reign of Cyrus, 536 B.C. While portions of the book may have been committed to writing at earlier times, Daniel’s final writing of the treatise was probably done about 530 B.C.

**“THEME:** The Providence of God and the Last Days

“The book features the providence of God among His faithful people, even in exile. It also contains a series of apocalyptic (prophetic) visions, through which future events are revealed to the statesman-prophet. The theme of God’s providence is shown in Daniel’s rise to prominence in Nebuchadnezzar’s court (cf. ch. 2), in the dramatic intervention of one ‘like the Son of God’ in the fiery-furnace trial (cf. 3:25), in Nebuchadnezzar’s temporary insanity (cf. ch. 4), in Daniel’s role as interpreter during Babylon’s ‘last night of glory’ (cf. ch. 5), and in the marvelous delivery of Daniel from the ravenous lions under Darius (cf. ch. 6). The apocalyptic segment is devoted to a series of visions concerning the four great empires of antiquity (cf. chs. 7; 8), the prophecy of Israel’s Seventy Weeks (cf. ch. 9), more visions concerning world governments (cf. ch. 10), visions depicting the course of events in the kingdoms of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (cf. ch. 11), and a prophecy of Israel’s ultimate deliverance from tribulations (cf. ch. 12).

**“SPECIAL PROBLEMS:** Together with Genesis, Daniel has been subject to greater critical attack than any other Old Testament book. Supposed anachronisms, historical inaccuracies, and prophetic impossibilities have been charged against the prophecy. However, subsequent archaeological discoveries have largely vindicated the assertions of Daniel. The critic’s den has been more formidable than the lion’s den in its *a priori* insistence that the Book of Daniel must have a late date (second century), since Daniel could not have predicted the historical events which unfolded later exactly as he described. The incredible discovery of the scrolls in the Qumran caves has demonstrated that the Book of Daniel is much older than many had thought. Although most of Daniel is written in Hebrew, a portion is in Aramaic (2:4b—7:28). Comparative analysis shows that the Aramaic is not the western Aramaic of the later Maccabean period, but the eastern Aramaic of the sixth century B.C. Those portions mainly concerned with Israel were penned in Hebrew, while those mainly concerned with the Gentile empires were written in Aramaic. Together with the Book of

Revelation, Daniel provides invaluable information for the last days of Israel and the earth.”  
(*Believer’s Study Bible*)

“**Authorship.** The authenticity of few books in the Bible has been more furiously assailed by critics than the Book of Daniel. The primary reasons for this negativism are: (1) The book is said to make several historical blunders. (2) The language of the book includes Aramaic, Persian, and Greek words said to be characteristic of a later period. (3) The position of the book in the third part of the threefold division of the Old Testament Canon (Law, Prophets, and Writings) shows that it was written too late to be placed in the collection of the Prophets. (4) The book contains many examples of historical events that occurred long after the time of the traditional date for Daniel.

The arguments for the book’s authenticity however are quite convincing and answer well the negative doubts: (1) The charges of historical blunders have proved false in the past (e.g., the mention of Belshazzar, now firmly established by the discovery of the Nabonidus Chronicle, was once thought to be a mistake). Present problematic passages will eventually likewise be solved. (2) Not only do the international contacts of the Neo-Babylonian Empire account for the presence of foreign words but recent linguistic research has rendered obsolete the argument concerning the supposed lateness of Daniel’s language. (3) Daniel was a statesman as well as a prophet, and could thus easily be included in the writings. (4) Since God is the Sovereign of history, He can inspire men to record accurate predictions of events both near and far. (5) Jesus quoted Daniel as a prophet (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). (6) Daniel’s contemporaries mention him as a person known for his righteousness and wisdom (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3). (7) Ancient authorities, both Jewish and Christian, accepted the book’s authenticity. (8) Taken at face value, the book purports to be a document of the sixth century B.C., written by a prophet of God. There is no good reason to reject Daniel’s authorship of the book.” (*King James Version Study Bible*)

“In 626 B.C., Nabopolassar became king of Babylon and altered the course of ancient history. He quickly overthrew the domination of long-standing rival Assyria, and by the time of his death in 605 B.C. he had eliminated the Assyrian Empire and swallowed it into what became known as the Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean Empire. This course of events had significant implications for Judah, the surviving remnant of the nation of Israel. Judah had been largely under Assyrian domination from about 670 B.C., but now found itself serving a new master. In the same year as Nabopolassar’s death, King Jehoiakim of Judah became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar (see 2 Kings 24:1). Nebuchadnezzar brought his father’s empire to even greater heights, eventually deporting many Jews to Babylon.

“Daniel lived in the midst of all these momentous events. What direct impact he had on the community of exiles cannot be known, but he was a force for good as far as the Babylonians were concerned. Daniel was a close confidant of Nebuchadnezzar throughout the Babylonian king’s reign (605–562 B.C.). Later Daniel served with equal distinction Cyrus, the enlightened Persian ruler who conquered Babylon. One of the first policies Cyrus implemented after subduing Babylon was to allow the Jews to return to their homeland and

rebuild their way of life. It is more than likely that Daniel had some influence on Cyrus's decision. The Book of Daniel is a testimony to how God works out His purposes through His servants even in the courts of pagan rulers (see 2:21; 4:18).

**“Purpose:** Daniel wrote his book with two purposes in mind. First, he wanted to assert that the God of Israel was sovereign, even over the powerful nations that surrounded His people. God's chosen nation had been conquered and dispersed by a mighty empire that did not acknowledge God. What would happen now? Would Babylon's yoke remain forever on Israel's shoulders? Would God's people never see their homeland again? Had God forgotten His promises? Daniel's answer was that Babylon would fall to another empire, which in turn would fall to yet another great kingdom. History would continue in this pattern until God judged all Gentile nations and established His everlasting rule. Daniel's message was obviously meant to uplift and encourage the weary hearts of the exiled Jews.

“Yet Daniel also looked forward to the day when God would restore and reward Israel. Israel was suffering punishment for its disobedience; but when would the punishment end? Daniel's message was both discouraging and encouraging. He predicted trouble ahead; Israel would suffer under Gentile powers for many years. But the encouraging news was that the time of trials would also pass away. The time was coming when God would gather His children to Him again. He would establish His messianic kingdom which would last forever. The God who directs the forces of history has not deserted His people. They must continue to trust Him. His promises of preservation and ultimate restoration are sure.” (*Nelson Study Bible*)

One of the mysteries of the book of Daniel is the identity of “Darius the Mede?” Who was Darius the Mede? Was he a known historical character? We now believe that we have found extra-biblical documentation for the existence of Belshazzar and Daniel, but what about “Darius the Mede?”

“Darius the Mede is not referred to in surviving historical sources outside the Scripture, and there is no interval between Belshazzar and Nabonidus (5:1) and the accession of Cyrus of Persia. Commentators have suggested that ‘Darius the Mede’ could be: a throne name for Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire (v. 28); a title; or a designation for Gobryas, a general who had defected from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus and later captured Babylon. Cyrus made Gobryas governor over the territories the Persians took from the Babylonians.” (*New Geneva Study Bible*)

“Reflection on the content of the historical narratives (Daniel 1-6) reveals that they are not a connected historical discourse, but are independent units placed together for a specific purpose. The narratives do not give a history of Israel under Babylonian or Persian rule, nor do they give a biographical history of Daniel or his friends. The common thread is an emphasis on the way the absolute sovereignty of God operates in the affairs of all nations (2:47; 3:17, 18; 4:28-37; 5:18-31; 6:25-28). Jerusalem may be destroyed with its temple in ruins, God's people may be in exile, and wicked rulers may seem triumphant, but God remains supreme. God is greater than all circumstances, and His people should be true to

Him in whatever situation they find themselves. Depiction of this truth is the controlling principle of Dan. 1–6.” (*New Geneva Study Bible*)

2. What do you think of first when you think of the book of Daniel? Do you think of the “stories” (the history), or the prophecies? Do you believe that God has a full knowledge of all our past, present, and future choices? Even our moral choices? If so, is it still possible to have human freedom? On what basis do we assert our belief in the “supernatural” or the “divine” origin of the book of Daniel? Most modern Old Testament scholars reject the idea of God’s foreknowledge on philosophical grounds, and believe, therefore, that “Daniel” was not written by Daniel at all but by someone in the early second century BC claiming to be Daniel. This would make most of the book historical and not “prophetic.” How would you answer such a person? Why would God bother to predict the future when we so often fail to understand it until the prediction has already come to pass? (See John 13:19; 14:29; 16:1-4) Does it do anything for us to know that God knows the future? Would it have been an encouragement to the Jews to know that God is not caught by surprise in the affairs of men?

There are several prophecies in the book of Daniel, the fulfillments of which extend down to our day and beyond to the end of the world. An example is the statue with feet of iron and of clay suggesting that there would never again be a single world government. It remains a true prophecy until today. (Daniel 2:42-45)

Do you agree with many “scholars” that if even God could predict the future it would eliminate our freedom? The fact that we cannot explain how God knows the future without His predetermining the events of that future is simply an admission that there are things about God that we don’t understand! If we could understand everything about God then He would not be superior to us in any way and would not be God!

The fact that Daniel has been proven correct in every detail that has been verifiable from extra-biblical sources and that at the same time he apparently predicted events far into the future suggests very strongly that there was a supernatural source behind his work! This should be sufficient reason for us to believe the book. Jesus apparently believed the book and that Daniel wrote it. A God who could predict the future thousands of years in advance certainly must understand all that is happening to us and what the consequences will be!

3. There is a great deal of argument about the interpretation of Daniel, even about the size of the book. Should it include the longer version of chapter three (verses 24-90 in Roman Catholic Bibles) and the three stories of Susanna, Bel, and the Dragon? (chapters 13 and 14) The earliest Hebrew/Aramaic copies of the book of Daniel do not include these passages. Furthermore, these passages are available today only in Greek and not in the original Hebrew or Aramaic in which the rest of the book is written. On what basis would you accept the Protestant/Orthodox Jewish version and reject the Roman Catholic version? If you reject these apocryphal portions of Daniel that the Roman Catholics think are inspired do you regard yourself as a “higher critic” of the Bible?

Conservative Christians have traditionally regarded themselves as being totally opposed to “higher criticism.” But when we reject the books of the Apocrypha while accepting the rest

of the Bible as “inspired” we are practicing “higher criticism!” We just need to practice our “higher criticism” responsibly, using the best possible scholarship. We reject the portions of Daniel that are not in the Jewish/Protestant Canon (Daniel 3:24-90 and 13-14) because they are not found in the original languages or in the earliest manuscripts of the book. Reading these passages also suggests that they are not of the same kind of “quality” that we find in the rest of the book. (See handout: **Additions to Daniel**)

4. When were Daniel and his three friends taken into Babylonian captivity? Do we have any hints as to their ages at the time? What kind of background did these young men have? (Daniel 1:3; See also 2 Kings 20:17,18) What do you think was the main reason Daniel and his friends did not want to eat the “food and wine from the king’s table?” (Daniel 1:5; compare Daniel 10:2,3; 1 Corinthians 10:25; Romans 14:1-5) Why do you think Daniel and his friends did so much better than the rest after the three year “university course?” (Daniel 1:17) Why do you think the King brought these young “prisoners” into his own service? Why were their names changed? (See question #1 above)

When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 605 BC he took a number of the most promising young men—especially ones from the royal family—to serve in his court. Daniel and his three friends were among these. They were no doubt well educated and very intelligent young men before they went to Babylon. They were also very young, likely in their teens or early twenties. Contrary to popular opinion, it is almost certainly because the meat, the wine, and the rich foods were offered to the king’s idols before it was brought to them that they refused to eat it. This was a way of rejecting the King’s idols. If they had eaten of the king’s food and then done well in school it would have been assumed that Marduk or Bel, the “god” of Babylon was blessing them. (Compare Daniel 1:5 and 10:2,3) Daniel later apparently ate some of these other foods when they were not offered to the pagan deities.

Much later Paul, in the city of Corinth, suggested that in his day, since true believers recognize that the idols are really nothing at all, it would be a way of rejecting the significance of those idols to go ahead and eat the food offered to them if it did not bother the conscience of some “weaker” saint! (See Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 8 and 10; Romans 14) The fact that Daniel’s advice was contradicted by Paul because the “situation” was different in Paul’s day is a perfect example of “situation ethics” practiced responsibly. Fortunately for Daniel the healthier food was never apparently preferred by the “idols”!

The fact that Daniel and his three friends avoided many of the rich foods and perhaps especially the fact that they avoided the alcohol that was offered freely, probably explains their success in the examinations. Of course they studied very hard as well! Remember that Yahweh was blessing them in every way He could!

When they first came to Babylon, the king assigned them Babylonian names, hoping that they would be fully assimilated into Babylonian society and worship and serve the Babylonian “gods”. Thus they were given names honoring the Babylonian “gods”. Nebuchadnezzar no doubt felt at the time that his “god” Bel had helped him conquer Yahweh and Yahweh’s followers!

The king brought these young men into his personal service because he wanted the very best from the whole world to work for him. Would you have the courage to put your life on the line and refuse to eat the King's food as Daniel did?

5. Why do you think God worked so directly and repeatedly with Nebuchadnezzar? What kind of person was Nebuchadnezzar? Was he accustomed to being obeyed even when he made apparently unreasonable demands? (Daniel 2:3-12) After several unusual experiences with Daniel and his companions, Nebuchadnezzar developed considerable respect for their God. What do you think of Nebuchadnezzar's new approach to worshiping God? (Daniel 3:29) Had his "picture of God" really changed? Did it ever change? (Daniel 4:34-37) Do you expect to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven?

Yahweh apparently worked long and hard to win Nebuchadnezzar. It apparently took considerable effort to bring this proud monarch to his senses. God first revealed and interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's first dream (Daniel 2). Then he rescued Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Finally He threw Nebuchadnezzar out of his palace, took away his sanity, and made him behave like an animal for seven years to help him realize who was the real ruler of this world and the universe (Daniel 4). Was Yahweh using excessive force in this case? Look at the progress that Nebuchadnezzar made in his understanding of Yahweh: Daniel 2:3-12; 3:29; 4:34-37. Many believe that Nebuchadnezzar will be in heaven. If you meet Nebuchadnezzar in heaven, what would you like to ask him?

6. How would you like to live in a country where the king demanded that you worship his "god" in **the** way and at **the** time he commanded or he would throw you into a burning, fiery furnace? (Daniel 3:5,6) What would you think of such a king? Has God ever said, "Either obey Me, or I will throw you into an eternally burning hell?" Has God ever said, "Either obey Me, or I will torture and burn you as long as you deserve and then I'll kill you?"

We think Nebuchadnezzar was a real tyrant for making the demands that he did. He certainly wasn't promoting freedom of religion! The fact that God performed a miracle to overturn Nebuchadnezzar's proud and presumptuous demands doesn't lessen his guilt for commanding people to worship him! (Compare Matthew 4:9,10) Nebuchadnezzar was apparently trying to prevent the prophecy of Daniel 2 from being fulfilled. He wanted his descendants (the golden kingdom) to rule forever and not to be replaced by Medo-Persia, etc.

While we totally reject the demands of Nebuchadnezzar as completely satanic, many people feel that God, because He is Sovereign, has a perfect right to demand this kind of service. Has God ever demanded this kind of service? When and where? In the Garden of Eden when God said, "You must not eat of the fruit of that tree, if you do, you will die the same day" (Genesis 2:17, *GNB*) was He saying, "if I catch you taking that fruit I will kill you?" Was He saying, "I can't really kill you since your soul is immortal, but I will torture you for eternity?" Or was He saying, "Sin is deadly, and if you choose to join the Devil in this rebellion, you are separating yourself from Me, the only source of life and you will die!"



7. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace, who was the fourth person that appeared there with them? Was it “the Son of God” or “a son of the gods”? (Daniel 3:25, Compare *KJV* and *RSV*) Did Nebuchadnezzar have a “photo” of “the Son of God” in his possession? What do you think made him say what he did?

Daniel 3:25:

yDi Hwfrw0=/hB]ytYaAal ; l bj j" arWwAa/gB] aykil j]m' aylrV] h [B]r]a' ayrb]g-hzj ; hna)Ah; r m'aw0 hnE; <sup>25</sup>

*Biblia Hebraica* .ayhil aArb'l] hmD; ha:[ybir]

“...h]ofasi tou tetartou omoiwwa aggel ou qeou.” (*Old Greek Version*)

“...h]ofasi tou tetartou omoia uiw/qeou.” (*Theodotion Version*)

“...et species quarti similis filio Dei.” (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*)

“...the appearance of the fourth *is* like to a son of the gods.” (*Young’s Literal*)

“...the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (*KJV, NKJ*)

“...the fourth looks like a son of God.” [Footnote: an angel] (*NAB*)

“...the appearance of the fourth is like a son of God.” (*Darby*)

“...the fourth looks like a god!” (*TLB, NEB, CEV*)

“... the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” (*ASV*)

“...the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” (*RSV, ASV; NASB, 1995 Update; ESV*)

“...the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” (*NIV*)

“...The fourth one looks like a son of the gods.” (*God’s Word*)

“...The fourth man looks like a son of the gods.” (*NCV*)

“...And the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods!” (*Amplified*)

“...has the appearance of a god.” [Footnote: Aramaic *a son of the gods*] (*NRSV*)

“...the appearance of the fourth resembles one of the gods.” (*Smith-Goodspeed*)

“...the fourth one looks like an angel.” [Footnote: *or a son of the gods; or a son of God.*] (*GNB*)

“...the fourth one looks like the Son of God they told me about!” (*Clear Word*)

“...the fourth one looks like a divine being.” (*Anchor Bible*)

“...the fourth looks like a divine being!” (*New Living Translation; Tanakh*)

“...the fourth looks like a child of the gods!” (*New Jerusalem*)

The Aramaic of this passage says literally, “a son of the gods”. Nebuchadnezzar had obviously never seen a “god” but there must have been something about this “Person” that was most unusual. (See Ellen White Quotes below)

8. What do you think happened to Nebuchadnezzar during those seven years of “exile”? (Daniel 4:29-33) Doesn’t the punishment seem a little harsh? Why do you think this brought Nebuchadnezzar to his senses? Was God responsible for this experience? Does God do this to people in our day?

Based on the whole story as we have it in Daniel 4, it seems clear that God used this very “forceful” method to bring Nebuchadnezzar to his senses. This might be compared to what God did to Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-8; 26:12-15). Was this a violation of Nebuchadnezzar’s freedom? I don’t think so. God was in this case “getting Nebuchadnezzar’s attention” so He could teach him the most important lesson of his life. The impact on Nebuchadnezzar’s life was impressive. Compare Daniel 2:3-12; 3:29; 4:34-37. Apparently this was the only kind of language that Nebuchadnezzar was willing to listen to at this point in time! He was accustomed to using this kind of force on others!

9. Do you think Daniel was foolish to pray so openly to his God during the time of the king’s decree forbidding it? (Daniel 6:10) Would you tend to use more “discretion?” Was Daniel so “stuck in a rut” that he couldn’t change or was he boldly challenging the king’s decree? Or did he have other reasons for his behavior? Would it bother you to work with someone like Daniel? Why do you think the king was willing to sign such a decree? If you were being tried for being a “Christian”, would the evidence declare you “deserving of capital punishment”, “guilty in the first degree”, “guilty in the second degree”, or “not guilty?”

There is no question about the fact that it can be irritating to work with someone who is “always right” even if they don’t make a display of it. It is our human nature to compare ourselves with others and setting one’s self up against such a standard can be very irritating! Daniel would not allow anything to come between him and his God. As far as possible he complied with the king’s decrees, but when those decrees forbade the true worship of God, Daniel was clear on his duty. He did not vary in the least detail from his usual pattern of prayers. He did not want it even to appear like he was hiding his allegiance to the true God. We don’t know why it was so important to him to have his windows open toward Jerusalem, but God certainly honored His friend. This story involving Daniel should be compared to Daniel 3—the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) What would happen in our day if we were a little more concerned with correctly representing God and a little less concerned about people’s opinions about us?

10. What does Daniel’s prayer tell us about him, his attitude toward God and his understanding of why they were in captivity? (Daniel 9:4-19) How does Daniel identify his fellow saints? (Daniel 9:4; compare Revelation 12:17 and 14:12)

Daniel repeatedly identifies himself with the rest of the Jewish people. He recognizes their sins and pleads with God to forgive them. But his real appeal is that God’s own name and reputation are being despised because of what has happened to His people. Daniel appeals repeatedly to God to do something for His own sake! See Daniel 9:15-20: notice the following expressions:

“Jerusalem...is your city, your sacred hill. All the people in the neighboring countries look down on Jerusalem and on your people because of our sins and the evil our ancestors did...Restore your temple...so everyone will know that you are God. Listen to us, O God; look at us and see the trouble we are in and the suffering of the city that bears your name...In order that everyone will

know that you are God, do not delay! This city and these people are yours...I went on...pleading with the Lord my God to restore his holy Temple.” (*GNB*)  
 “Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us... For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary...Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy...For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name... While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill...” (*NIV*)

Daniel was clearly aware that the most important issue of all is God’s reputation. Not that it doesn’t matter what people think of us, but it is a life or death matter what they think of God!! Daniel recognizes that God is “great, and we honor you. You are faithful to your covenant and show constant love to those who love you and do what you command.” (Daniel 9:4, *GNB*)

11. What do you understand was happening in the struggle with Cyrus? Who was the “man dressed in linen”? (Daniel 10:4-6) Was it Gabriel? (see Daniel 8:16 and 9:21; *DA* 234) Who was “the prince of Persia”? (Daniel 10:13) Who was “Michael” who came to help him? (Daniel 10:13,21; see 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and compare John 5:25) What does the name Michael mean? Why does the name “Michael” only appear in the scriptures in passages where He is in direct conflict with Satan? Were Gabriel and Michael pressuring Cyrus or were they protecting Cyrus from the Devil’s pressure, so that he could make up his mind without force?

The description of this Person is very much like some others in Scripture: Revelation 1:13-14; Daniel 7:13. Gabriel seems to be identified by name when he appears (Daniel 8:16 and 9:21). The word translated “prince” in 10:13 never means “king” but is used for all types of other leaders. It is used by Daniel to refer to supernatural beings as well (Daniel 8:11,25; 10:13,21; 12:1). The being here referred to seems to be trying to prevent prophecy from being fulfilled in the return of the Jews to their homeland. This is something that Satan would be most happy to do. (See *PK* 571,572) The name “Michael” means “Who is like God?” or “The One who is like God”. In the New Testament it refers to Christ (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16; John 5:25). The name is used to refer to Christ in particular settings where He is in direct opposition to Satan (See Daniel 10:13,20; 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7). In this setting Michael (Christ) was restraining the Devil, i.e. preventing the Devil from “forcing” Cyrus and thus presumably allowing Cyrus to be free to make a choice to fulfill God’s promise to permit those Jews who wanted to, to go back to Jerusalem.

12. Who are the participants in the judgment scene in Daniel 7:9-14? (compare Job 1 & 2, Zechariah 3:1-5 and Revelation 12:10) At what time in history do you think this is taking place? How many are observing all of God’s actions? Is God being judged in all this

(Romans 3:4) or just us? If you could hear Satan telling his version of your life and your sins, would you vote for yourself?

It should be clear from verses 11-14 that this is a continuation of the previous vision which talks about the time at the end of that vision. Thus this time must come after all the events connected with the earlier parts of the earlier vision. Furthermore, it ends with Someone, who looks like a human being, reigning forever over the whole earth. This could only refer to Christ at the end of the world. So this “judgment scene” must be at or near the end of time.

The “Ancient of Days” is usually recognized as referring to God the Father here and there is no reason to dispute that. Millions of observers are present and these must represent either the angels or the inhabitants of other worlds. Since the times of Job, Satan has made the claim that God is not a good Judge of character. Now the whole universe appears to be observing as the final judgment scene is taking place. If God were trying to deceive or hide anything this certainly wouldn't be the setting in which to do it. Some believe that this is the ante-typical “Day of Atonement” that takes place after the end of the 2300 day-year prophecy which apparently ended in 1844.

God always conducts His business in full view of the entire universe (except us) so it will be apparent that His judgments are not only fair but best. When a decision is made to bring one of us “former rebels” back into the society of heaven, God first allows every person in the universe who has any questions to raise them. This is what was happening in the case of Job. (See Job 1 and 2) When it is all over, everyone will declare that God's ways and His judgments are true and righteous. (Psalms 19:9)

13. Where do you think we are in the prophecies of the book of Daniel?

In the prophecy of Daniel 2 it should be obvious that we are down in the feet of iron and of clay and we have been there for a long time. In the vision of Daniel 7 we are in the period of God's judgment (See #12 above). It would appear that everything has passed except the final events directly connected with the coming of Christ. That would put us in “the time of the end” as described in Daniel 12.

14. One Bible commentator suggests that “When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience.” (TM 114) What would it take to bring this about, and what kind of religious experience would be the result? How could the study of books like Daniel and Revelation produce a great revival? (TM 113) If we were to work out the time schedule of each prophecy and could identify each symbol or item in detail would this guarantee a great revival? Does the Devil know all these details? Has he been changed?

See handout #91a on “**Getting the Message from Daniel and Revelation**”.

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## ***Ellen White Quotes***

*Prophets and Kings* 509:

“From his royal seat the king looked on, expecting to see the men who had defied him utterly destroyed. But his feelings of triumph suddenly changed. The nobles standing near saw his face grow pale as he started from the throne and looked intently into the glowing flames. In alarm the king, turning to his lords, asked, “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?...Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

“How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.”

*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 113, 114:

“In the past teachers have declared Daniel and the Revelation to be sealed books, and the people have turned from them. The veil whose apparent mystery has kept many from lifting it, God’s own hand has withdrawn from these portions of His word. The very name “Revelation” contradicts the statement that it is a sealed book. “Revelation” means that something of importance is revealed. The truths of this book are addressed to those living in these last days...**When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience...A wonderful connection is seen between the universe of heaven and this world. The things revealed to Daniel were afterward complemented by the revelation made to John on the Isle of Patmos. These two books should be carefully studied.**”

*The New Geneva Study Bible*:

“**Daniel 11:36–12:3**: Certain details in 11:36–12:3 cannot be harmonized with the events surrounding the death of Antiochus IV. For this reason some interpreters understand these verses to describe the Antichrist, who like Antiochus IV will persecute God’s people just prior to the Second Advent of Christ (cf. 12:1–3). These verses describe the character of the Antichrist, his activities, and the destiny of God’s people. This understanding requires a time interval between the events depicted in 11:21–35 and those in 11:36–12:3. Consequently, other interpreters have understood vv. 36–39 as a summary of Antiochus’s religious policies; vv. 40–45 as a description of how his ambition leads to his defeat; and 12:1–3 as an anticipation of his defeat. The anticipated invasion of the Holy Land may be presented as a parallel to Nebuchadnezzar’s earlier invasion, using the names of the nations of that time, sparing Israel’s old enemies (v. 41), and climaxing in the anticipated defeat of Egypt itself (vv. 42, 43; cf. Ezek. 29). At his proudest moment Antiochus is destroyed at Mount Zion in the heart of the Holy Land (vv. 44, 45). Antiochus’s defeat in 12:1–3 is described in terms of the absolute end of history. Because the prophecies in 11:40–12:3 have not been fulfilled

historically, it is difficult to discern how literal or metaphorical they are, and their interpretation must be speculative.” (*New Geneva Study Bible*)

*Believer’s Study Bible:*

“The following outline of the Babylonian monarchy can now be established. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. and was succeeded by his son, Evil-Merodach (Babylonian Amel-Marduk; cf. 2 Kin. 25:27), who was then assassinated by Neriglissar, his own brother-in-law. Neriglissar reigned four years, then died in 556 B.C., leaving the throne to his infant son, Labashi-Marduk. After nine months, Labashi-Marduk was deposed by an anti-Marduk priestly revolution, and Nabonidus was made king in 556 B.C. He was a scholar and antiquarian, and a worshiper of the moon-god Sin, rather than of Marduk, the god of Babylon. Most of his time was spent in Tema in northern Arabia trying to placate his god, who he believed had been offended. Although Nabonidus was officially king, he left Babylon and the rule to his son Belshazzar in 550 B.C. Belshazzar promised Daniel a post as “third” ruler in the land (vv. 16, 29). Why not make him second? The answer verifies again the astonishing accuracy of the biblical materials. Nabonidus was first, Belshazzar second, and Daniel would have to be third. Therefore, the events of ch. 5 must be dated in 539 B.C. Nabonidus had fled, leaving Belshazzar to rule in Babylon. Believing the city to be impregnable (Herodotus says they regarded the Persian siege “with indifference,” since they had stocked the city well with provisions), on a day memorializing some noteworthy event, Belshazzar ordered a momentous celebration, which quickly degenerated into a drunken orgy. Amid this celebration the king ordered the use of the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem for the drinking of wine and the praising of pagan deities. According to Herodotus, when the city was taken (by secretly diverting the Euphrates River which ran through it) “there was a festival going on, and they continued to dance and enjoy themselves, until they learned the news the hard way.” (*Believer’s Study Bible*)

“**Daniel 5:25–28** The mysterious writing on the wall was unintelligible to the Babylonians, whether because of a strange script that may have been employed, or simply the terseness and ambiguity of the inscription. The language, as Daniel explained, was Aramaic, but there would originally have been no vowels. These were supplied, under the inspiration of God, by Daniel. Without them, the wise men probably read the inscription as “mina, mina, shekel, and half-shekels,” which made no sense to them. The term *mene* (Aram.) could be the monetary “mina,” or a participle meaning “numbered.” Its repetition produces the sense “thoroughly numbered.” God had set limits on Belshazzar’s kingdom. The term *tekem* (Aram.) could be a monetary unit corresponding to the Hebrew shekel, or a participle meaning “weighed.” As a verbal form it is unusual and could be a combination of the verbs *taqal* (Aram.), “weigh,” and *qalal* (Heb.), “be light.” The final word *upharsin* (Aram.) could also be a monetary unit, a half-mina or half-shekel, or a plural participle from the verb *paras*, “divide,” meaning “and divided.” The ambiguity of these terms may explain the wise men’s inability to decipher them. The message of Daniel’s interpretation is that Belshazzar’s kingdom had been numbered for destruction. The king himself is weighed and found wanting. The kingdom was to be taken away and given to the Medes and the Persians. The word for “Persia” had the same consonants as the word for “divide.” (*Believer’s Study Bible* see Daniel 5:25-28)