

Daniel Authorship

Introduction

Critics claim that Daniel did not write the book bearing his name in the sixth century BC, but rather someone pretending to be Daniel penned it in the second century BC. This study seeks to show three proofs of authorship by Daniel: literary, archaeology, and the New Testament witness.

I. Internal Evidence

- A. The book claims Daniel as the author in 7:2–12:13 (first person); 8:1; 9:2; 12:5.
- B. While critics date the work after 164 BC, seeing Daniel 9:25-27 as pointing to the Antiochus IV temple desecration of 167-164 BC, the book itself points to a time contemporary to Ezekiel and Jeremiah.
 - 1. "Daniel's familiarity with the individuals spoken of in the book and with the historical events and customs mentioned in the book necessitates a sixth-century date for the book. The minute details included in the book could hardly have been retained accurately by oral tradition for some 400 years, as suggested by those who postulate a late date for the book" (Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983], 1:1325).
 - 2. "Some critics hold that since God's name Yahweh is not used by Daniel and since the name was commonly used in Daniel's day by others, the book must have been written at a later time. However, this objection fails to note that in chapter 9, this name is used eight times (Dan. 9:2, 4, 8, 10, 13-14 [thrice], 20). The name for God an author used in a passage was determined by his content, not by popular custom" (Pentecost, "Daniel," in *BKC*, 1:1325).
- C. Daniel's ministry took place from 605-536 BC, as taught by Daniel 1:21.
 - 1. Accusation: Some claim that Daniel could not have authored the book since 1:21 refers to the time of his death.
 - 2. Response: "However, 1:21 does not state when Daniel died; it states that he 'remained there' (in Babylon) till Cyrus' first year. Cyrus' decree liberated the Jews from their exile in Babylon, thus bringing the 70-year Captivity to a near end. Daniel 1:21 is simply pointing out that Daniel lived through the span of the Captivity. The verse does not specify the time of his death. In fact, he lived on into at least Cyrus' third year (10:1)" (Pentecost, *BKC*, 1:1325).

II. External Evidence

- A. Ezekiel 14:14, 20: Ezekiel notes Daniel as his contemporary on par with Job in the 580s BC (four centuries before 164 BC), so Daniel was well-known—not a myth!
 - 1. Ezek. 14:14 Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, their righteousness would save no one but themselves, says the Sovereign LORD.
 - 2. Ezek. 14:20 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, they wouldn't be able to save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved by their righteousness.

- B. Matthew 24:15: Jesus claimed that the Daniel 9:25-27 temple desecration by the Antichrist was still *future* from his time. This refutes the critical claim that Antiochus was the “Anointed One” before the temple destruction (which never happened in 167 BC).
- C. Critical View of Daniel 9:25-27: Other problems with the critical view of this text include:
1. The seventy “weeks” (= years) add up to 422 or 441 years (not 490).
 2. Antiochus was hardly a Messianic figure! He persecuted the Jews relentlessly rather than save them.
 3. Antiochus IV made no covenant with Israel, so the “Anointed One” must be someone else. Antiochus IV only made decrees to rid the land of Jewish elements.
 4. Prophecy is seen only as an imaginative prediction rather than genuine by those who put this passage into a second-century context.
- D. Confirmed ANE Chronologies: Daniel correctly dates the Babylonian monarchs, as do the writers of Kings and Chronicles.
- E. Seals Attest to Jewish & Babylonian Kings: At least 17 seals from archaeological digs support the monarchies of Israel, Judah, and Babylon, as noted in Daniel’s prophecy.
- F. Supposed Historical Errors: Critics claim that a comparison of Daniel with other writings shows Daniel in error, but the opposite is true:
1. Daniel’s claim that Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s “son” in 5:2, 11, 13, 18 (cf. v. 22) has been deemed false, as they were unrelated. However, a royal successor was often called a “son” without any blood relationship to the earlier king.
 2. Daniel’s Greek and Persian loan words (e.g., musical instruments in 3:4-6) do not indicate a later date during the Persian Era (539-331) or Greek Era (331-164). The Greek kingdom did need to be at its height to influence Babylon, which traded extensively with Greece. Persian loan words appear widely in official documents from the Ancient Near East, so it is not surprising to see them in Daniel.
 3. The Greek historian Herodotus describes the fall of Babylon as similar to Daniel 5, with a surprise attack while the Babylonians were having a party or festival.
- G. Apocalyptic Style: The genre used by Daniel included typical apocalyptic (“hidden”) literary features: secrecy, pessimism, end times, warning without repentance, the triumph of God, and determinism. Liberals claim that this form was not used by others until centuries later, but the facts prove otherwise:
1. The succession of the four kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7–8 goes *beyond* the 164 BC time the critics claim for the book. They still have to explain how Daniel knew the Roman Empire would replace the Greek Empire after the second century BC.
 2. Some critics accept Daniel 1–6 as Daniel’s writing but doubt that he could write the apocalyptic chapter 7. This fails to admit that Daniel 2 is also apocalyptic.
 3. Ezekiel wrote at the same time as Daniel and used apocalyptic language. Therefore, one would have to date Ezekiel later as well.

4. Zechariah's prophecy in apocalyptic form was only a century after Daniel—not many centuries later as the critics claim.
- H. Placement in the Hebrew Canon: Daniel was placed not among the Hebrew Prophets but in the third division of the Hebrew Scriptures called the Writings. Does not this indicate that Daniel appeared later since the Prophets section ends with Malachi around 425 BC? This is unnecessary as Daniel was a government officer rather than an official prophet set apart by God.
- I. Dead Sea Daniel Scroll: The DSS copy of Daniel is dated 200-100 BC. Critics must argue for the extreme unlikelihood or even impossibility for this scroll to have been written in Babylon, copied and distributed in Babylon, accepted as authoritative by the community, and transported to the remote Essene community of the Scrolls within a generation. This would be impossible if the 200 BC date for the DSS Daniel scroll is correct, for the copy cannot be older than a 164 BC original!
- J. Advanced Theology: Critics suppose that Daniel's mention of angels (12:1) and resurrection (12:2) is too early for a sixth-century BC work. But consider the following:
1. Isaiah predated Daniel by a century and taught the resurrection (Isaiah 26:19).
 2. David noted the resurrection nearly 500 years before Daniel (Ps 16:10; cf. Peter's sermon in Acts 2).
 3. Angels appear 800 years before Daniel in Genesis 19 and elsewhere.

III. Conclusion

Do you have any doubts that Daniel wrote the book bearing his name? The internal and external arguments against this work as inerrant Scripture say more about the critic than the book of Daniel itself. Those who insist that God cannot know the future will typically seek to dismiss predictive prophecy to support their bias rather than to let the book speak for itself. This book shows accountability to God by all—including the critic—so its message of God's sovereign rule must be heeded rather than ignored or explained away.