

# Introduction to the Book of Daniel

## God and Government, part 1

### Who was Daniel?

Daniel was a Hebrew and a member of the royal family of Judah. We do not know the exact place or year of his birth, but he was probably born in Jerusalem around the year 620 BC. He was about thirteen or fourteen years old when King Nebuchadnezzar captured him at Jerusalem, along with the other Israelites, and carried them off to Babylon. Even though Daniel was already well-educated, he was selected for additional training in the language and literature of the Babylonians. His name, Daniel, which means “God is my judge” was changed to Belteshazzar, which means “whom Bel favours” or “keeper of the treasures of the prince of Bel.” Daniel quickly distinguished himself because of his determination to be faithful to God. He gained the blessings of God and reaped the confidence and favour of those around him. When he interpreted a troubling dream for the hot-tempered Nebuchadnezzar he was promoted to a position of authority over all the wise men of Babylon. He spent the rest of his life as one of the most powerful men in the world, faithfully served several world leaders, and is widely recognised as one of the greatest men of all time.

#### Hebrew Names and Their Meanings

Hebrew Name	Hebrew Meaning
Daniel	God is my Judge
Hananiah	God is gracious; God is gift
Mishael	Who is like God? God is great
Azariah	God is my helper

#### Babylonian Names and Their Meanings

Hebrew Name	Babylonian Name	Babylonian Meaning
Daniel	Belteshazzar	whom Bel favors; keeper of the treasures of the prince of Bel
Hananiah	Shadrach	illuminated by Shad (a sun god)
Mishael	Meshach	who is like Shach (a love goddess)
Azariah	Abed-Nego	the servant of Nego (a fire god)

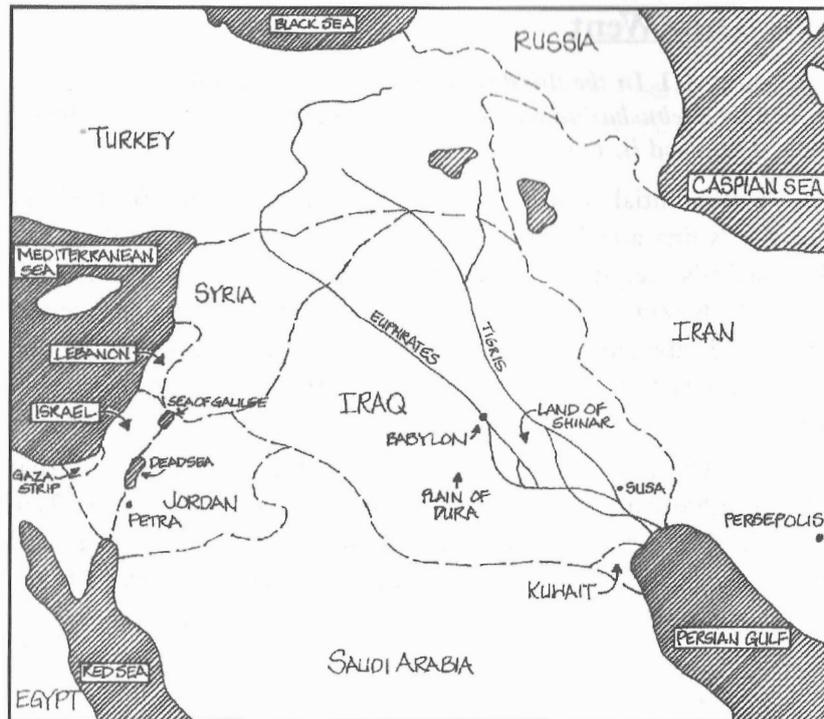
### Babylon

When Noah, his three sons, and their wives came out of the ark they began to multiply and migrate. Noah's son Ham bore a son named Cush. Cush bore a son named Nimrod who settled in a flat, fertile plain between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers called the Land of Shinar (later called Mesopotamia or Chaldea) and also affectionately called “the cradle of civilization” (see map below) . This is the same area where the Garden of Eden was located.

Nimrod established a great kingdom that the Bible says began with the cities of Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh. He is even credited with establishing several great cities in Assyria. He was astute, powerful and wicked. His city of Babylon is mentioned more than three hundred times in the Bible. Because of all the evil in Babylon, some Bible experts have started referring to it as the “City of Satan” as opposed to the “City of God”, that is, Jerusalem.

Nimrod built several towers in the area. The most famous one, called the Tower of Babel was built at Babylon. He made it the focus of his rebellion against God. He welcomed pagan religions, catered to the occult, and promoted sexual gratification and prostitution. He merged his city-states, put them under his control and took over their education systems. Because of the religious harlotry he began at Babylon, the

city is called the “Mother of Harlots”. And because of the love for big government he began at Babylon, the city is recognised as the beginning of world government.



Map of modern-day Middle East with ancient cities such as Babylon.

## The Chaldeans

The Chaldeans were Semitic nomads who lived near the Persian Gulf in what is now Kuwait and south-eastern Iraq. Starting around 1100 BC, there were several different tribes that were wandering in and out of Babylon at will, but by 875 BC, some had permanently settled in Babylon. During the 700s BC, some Chaldean leaders ruled as kings of Babylon. One of their leaders, a man named Nabopolassar, united all the Chaldean tribes and was crowned king of Babylon in 626 BC. He was succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar around 605 BC. Today, the terms “Chaldean” and “Babylonian” mean essentially the same thing.

## The Israelites

The nation of Israel divided into a Northern Kingdom and a Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom retained the name Israel and was taken captive by the Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah and was taken captive by the Babylonians. The people in both kingdoms were called Israelites.

Event	Approximate Date
Egyptian Captivity	1875–1445 BC
Assyrian Captivity of Northern Kingdom (Israel)	722 BC
1st Babylonian Captivity—Jerusalem (Daniel and Friends)	605 BC
2nd Babylonian Captivity—Ten Thousand Jews	597 BC
3rd Babylonian Captivity—Southern Kingdom (Judah) First destruction of Jerusalem	586 BC
Jews from Judah returned in three phases:	
1st Return	536 BC
2nd Return	458 BC
3rd Return	445 BC
Domination by Greece	331–63 BC
Domination by Rome	63 BC–AD 500
Second destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans	AD 70

# Authorship

The author of the book of Daniel identifies himself as Daniel more than a dozen times. But in spite of this, many critics vehemently deny Daniel's authorship. Why? Because they do not believe in the supernatural, and the prophecies that have already been fulfilled are so accurate they have no other explanation. So they declare the book of Daniel is a forgery. But modern Bible-believing experts are not fooled by the critics. We know that the book of Daniel was included in the Septuagint, that a good copy was found with the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, and that Josephus, a Jewish historian, mentions that Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) read it. We know that the prophet Ezekiel lived at the same time as Daniel and he wrote about Daniel. Even the reference of Jesus to the Abomination of Desolation spoken through the prophet Daniel implies that Daniel is the author. So there is little doubt that Daniel is the author and the last recorded event was probably written before 530 BC when, if he was alive, Daniel would have been almost 90 years old.