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Establishing the Prophetic Validity of the Book of Daniel



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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Book of Daniel contains some of the most detailed prophecies in the Bible. It foretells the rise and fall of kingdoms, the coming and death of the Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the future restoration of Israel, and events surrounding the end of the age. Several of our companion studies use these prophecies to demonstrate the supernatural origin of the Bible, but those arguments depend upon the prophecies actually having been written before their fulfillment. Thus, before relying upon Daniel as prophetic evidence, we must establish when the book was written and whether its accounts accurately reflect the historical world in which Daniel claims to have lived.

Daniel's account begins around 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem and carried Daniel and other young Jewish men to Babylon, beginning the Babylonian captivity (Daniel 1:1-6).[1] Daniel spent much of the remainder of his life serving the Babylonian and later Medo-Persian governments while receiving revelations from God about the future. His account follows him through the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, the fall of Babylon, and the beginning of Medo-Persian rule under Darius the Mede and Cyrus. The book

presents Daniel as a historical Jewish exile who personally witnessed the sixth-century events he records.

Daniel also describes in remarkable detail rulers and events that arose centuries after his lifetime, making the date of the book's composition central to any examination of its prophetic validity. If Daniel was written only after the events it claims to predict, those passages would not be prophecies at all, but history presented as though it had been revealed beforehand. On the other hand, if the book was written before those events, the accuracy of its predictions provides powerful evidence that God revealed future history to Daniel and that the Bible is His supernatural Word. The debate over Daniel's date is therefore inseparable from the larger question of whether genuine prophecy occurred.

Daniel has traditionally been dated to the sixth century BC because that date corresponds with the book's own account of its author and historical setting. His final recorded vision occurred in the third year of Cyrus, around 536 BC (Daniel 10:1), and the book would have been completed during or shortly after that period. From antiquity onward, Jews and Christians understood Daniel to be a real prophet who lived during the Babylonian captivity. First Maccabees refers to Daniel's deliverance from the lions as an established historical event (1 Maccabees 2:59-60), and Josephus identifies Daniel as a prophet whose writings foretold future events and the times of their fulfillment.[2] Daniel is therefore understood to have recorded events he personally experienced and prophecies God revealed to him before their fulfillment. This remained the normative position throughout Judaism and Christianity for roughly two millennia, and many conservative scholars have continued to defend the sixth-century date.[3]

However, a competing position began gaining influence in relatively modern times. The scholars who hold this view are commonly called "critical scholars" because they use the historical-critical method to question the authorship, dates, sources, and historical claims of biblical books. In this study, the term refers specifically to scholars who reject Daniel's sixth-century authorship and do not accept the book's testimony about its own origin as authoritative.

Some are unbelievers who openly reject the Bible's supernatural claims and oppose its message. Others identify nominally as Jewish or Christian but still treat the Bible as fallible human literature whose claims may be rejected whenever they conflict with their preconceived assumptions about reality.

Their unifying characteristic is that they approach the Bible with the anti-supernatural assumption that God did not reveal future history through biblical prophets. They consequently bring this same skepticism to Daniel and reject divine revelation as the explanation for its accurate knowledge of later events. Instead of first allowing the evidence to determine when the book was written, they require a naturalistic explanation and then search for a date that allows Daniel's prophecies to be treated as history written after the events. Their conclusion controls their interpretation of the evidence rather than arising from it.

This approach grew out of the rationalism of the European Enlightenment during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Enlightenment thinkers increasingly rejected the authority that Christianity and the Bible had long exercised over Western thought and elevated autonomous human reason as the final judge of truth. The problem was not their use of reason, which is a gift from God and an essential part of honest investigation, but their claim that human reason could operate independently of God and determine beforehand what He could have said or done. Once that assumption was accepted, miracles, divine revelation, and predictive prophecy could be dismissed without first examining the evidence for them. They were rejected not because they had been disproved, but because they did not fit the restricted view of reality that these thinkers had already chosen to accept.[4] [5]

This rationalistic approach was eventually applied directly to the Bible through what became known as "higher criticism." While a similarly named discipline known as *textual* criticism compares surviving manuscripts to determine the original wording of a biblical text, *higher* criticism investigates questions such as who wrote a book, when it was written, what sources were used, and whether its

reported events occurred. These can be legitimate historical questions, but many of the scholars who shaped modern higher criticism did not approach them from a neutral position. Baruch Spinoza rejected the traditional understanding of biblical revelation, while later German scholars such as Johann Eichhorn and Wilhelm de Wette treated biblical books primarily as products of developing human religion rather than divine revelation. By the nineteenth century, this approach had become deeply established within European universities and was increasingly influencing biblical scholarship elsewhere.[6] [7]

Higher criticism presented itself as the liberation of biblical study from religious dogma, but it introduced dogmas of its own. God could not reveal the future, miracles could not be accepted as historical explanations, and the Bible's testimony about its authors could not be trusted unless modern scholars approved it. Under this approach, the critic's reconstruction of a biblical book was treated as more reliable than the book's own testimony about its author and historical setting. A scholar could reject the author identified by the text and propose unknown writers, later dates, invented sources, and multiple stages of editing, even when no surviving manuscript or ancient historical record provided direct evidence for any of them. The conclusions produced under these restrictions were then presented as objective scholarship, although the most important conclusion had already been decided: the supernatural explanation given by Scripture would not be allowed.

When this method was applied to Daniel, its detailed knowledge of later rulers, kingdoms, wars, and political events presented an obvious problem. Since critical scholars had already ruled out the possibility that Daniel received this information through divine revelation, they concluded that the accurate portions of the prophecies must have been written after the events occurred. They interpret much of Daniel 11 as a description of the Greek period and identify Antiochus Epiphanes as the final ruler whose career the writer supposedly knew from recent history. This is the critical interpretation of the prophecy, not a concession that Daniel's predictions actually end with Antiochus.

Antiochus was a Seleucid ruler who desecrated the Temple and

attempted to suppress Jewish worship beginning in 167 BC. His actions provoked a Jewish revolt led by Mattathias and his sons, whose followers became known as the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 1:41-64; 2:1-48). Critical scholars consequently place the composition of Daniel during this crisis, usually between 167 and 164 BC, and argue that an unknown Judean writer recorded recent history and presented it as prophecy spoken centuries earlier by Daniel. Because their proposed date falls during the Maccabean revolt, this position became known as the "Maccabean date" or the "Maccabean theory" of Daniel's composition.[8]

Although this theory gained prominence through modern higher criticism, its central argument was not new. Porphyry, a third-century AD pagan philosopher and determined opponent of Christianity, had already claimed that Daniel did not write the book bearing his name. Although Porphyry's work *Against the Christians* no longer survives, Jerome still had access to it when he wrote his commentary on Daniel in the early fifth century AD. Jerome explains that Porphyry devoted the twelfth book of *Against the Christians* to attacking Daniel's prophecies. He then addresses Porphyry's arguments throughout his commentary, especially in his discussion of Daniel 11.[9]

Porphyry claimed that an unknown writer living during the reign of Antiochus had recorded recent history and presented it as ancient prophecy, but he offered no manuscript, historical record, or Jewish tradition identifying such a writer. Jerome rejected this accusation and defended Daniel as genuine prophecy. Modern higher critics later revived Porphyry's argument under the influence of Enlightenment rationalism. They recast its anti-prophetic assumptions in academic language, and what began as a pagan attack upon Daniel eventually became the dominant position within critical scholarship.[10]

However, even if we accepted the critical date, it would not remove the prophetic character of Daniel. Daniel 9:25-26 provides an accurate 483-year countdown to the coming of the Messiah, foretells that He would be put to death shortly afterward, and predicts the later destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Jesus Christ arrived and was crucified in the first century AD, and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem

and the Temple in 70 AD, an event described in detail by Josephus.[11] All of these events occurred centuries after the latest date assigned to Daniel by critical scholars. Consequently, moving Daniel's composition into the second century BC still fails to explain these fulfilled prophecies or eliminate the supernatural conclusion that the late date was designed to avoid.

More importantly, the historical evidence gives us no reason to concede the critical date in the first place. Manuscript discoveries, the Septuagint, ancient Jewish testimony, archaeology, Babylonian cuneiform records, and linguistic evidence all point toward a much earlier composition. Daniel also preserves accurate details about Babylonian and Persian rulers, government, religion, language, and geography that naturally fit the sixth-century world in which he claims to have lived. Some of this information disappeared from later historical accounts and was recovered only through modern archaeological discoveries. The presence of these details is exactly what we would expect from a sixth-century eyewitness, but it creates serious problems for the theory of an unknown Judean writer composing the book approximately four hundred years later.

We will begin by examining the evidence establishing that Daniel existed before the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ were fulfilled. We will then consider the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, Josephus' account of Alexander the Great, the Jewish canon, archaeological discoveries, Babylonian and Persian records, linguistic evidence, and Ezekiel's references to Daniel. We will also answer the principal objections used to defend the late date. This evidence will show that the Maccabean theory did not arise because an ancient source identified a second-century BC author or because archaeology exposed Daniel as historically unreliable. It arose because critics decided that Daniel's accurate prophecies could not have been written before the events they describe.

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CHAPTER 2

DANIEL'S PROPHECIES PREDATE THEIR FULFILLMENTS

Determining when Daniel was written is essential to any examination of its prophetic validity. As noted, critical scholars place its composition between 167 and 164 BC because they interpret much of Daniel 11 as a description of events surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes. By assigning the completed book to the closing years of those events, they can treat its detailed knowledge of them as history written afterward rather than prophecy revealed beforehand.[1]

That proposed date does not explain all the prophetic evidence within Daniel, nor does it fit naturally with the book's early manuscript history. Daniel foretells events that occurred long after the Maccabean period, while the Dead Sea Scrolls and the ancient Greek translation show that the book was copied, circulated, translated, and preserved at a remarkably early time. The first line of evidence establishes that Daniel remained prophetic even under the critical date. The second shows that the book's history reaches back beyond the surviving manuscripts and translation through which it was transmitted.

Even with a Maccabean Date, Daniel Remains Prophetic

Daniel 9 presents a chronological prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah. After Daniel prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem, the angel Gabriel revealed that a determined period of sixty-nine "weeks" (483 years) would begin with a command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and would end with the coming of "Messiah the Prince." The prophecy then announced that after the sixty-nine weeks, the Messiah would be "cut off" and the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed:

> **25** Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. **26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary**; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.
>
> -Daniel 9:25-26

The prophecy establishes a definite timeline and sequence. Jerusalem would be restored and rebuilt; after the 483 years, the Messiah would come and then be cut off; and the city and the sanctuary would afterward be destroyed. As demonstrated in our companion study, *The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline for the Arrival of the Messiah*, the sixty-nine weeks lead directly to the time of Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified several days after the countdown ended, and the Roman armies later destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.[2] Josephus describes the burning of the Temple and the devastation of the city during that conquest.[3]

These events occurred approximately two centuries after the latest date proposed by critical scholars for Daniel's composition. Thus, moving the book from the sixth century BC into the Maccabean period

may allow critics to treat some of its prophecies concerning the Greek kingdoms as history written after the events, but it does nothing to explain Daniel 9, whose fulfillment still remained approximately two centuries in the future.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Support Daniel's Early Date

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide physical manuscript evidence for Daniel's existence in the centuries before Christ. These ancient writings were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in caves near Qumran, along the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. The collection includes biblical manuscripts, commentaries, religious regulations, hymns, prayers, and other Jewish writings copied over several centuries. Portions of every book of the Old Testament except Esther were found among them.[4]

Before these discoveries, the principal surviving Hebrew manuscripts used to establish the text of the Old Testament were medieval. The Aleppo Codex dates to approximately 930 AD, while the Leningrad Codex dates to approximately 1008 AD. The biblical manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls reached back approximately one thousand years earlier, providing direct witnesses to the Hebrew and Aramaic text as it existed before and around the time of Christ.[5]

Fragments from eight manuscripts of Daniel were found in Caves 1, 4, and 6 at Qumran. Although none is a complete scroll, together they preserve portions of Daniel 1-11. They represent different copies rather than fragments from one manuscript, showing that Daniel was reproduced repeatedly within the ancient Jewish manuscript tradition.[6]

The date of a surviving manuscript is not the same as the date when the book itself was written. A manuscript proves that the text existed when that particular copy was produced, but the work necessarily existed earlier. The scribe needed a previous manuscript from which to copy the text, and that manuscript may itself have descended from still earlier copies. The date assigned to a surviving fragment

consequently marks one point within the book's history, not its beginning.

This distinction is especially important in the case of 4Q114, also known as 4QDaniel^{c}. This fragmentary manuscript preserves portions of Daniel 8-11, including material that critical scholars assign to the final stage of the book's supposed composition during the 160s BC. Earlier analysis of its handwriting generally placed the manuscript around 125-100 BC.[7]

However, recent scientific testing has moved the possible date considerably earlier. A major radiocarbon study published in 2025 dated the parchment to a range between 230 and 160 BC.[8] The significance of that range becomes apparent when it is compared with the critical date for Daniel. Critics claim that the book reached its completed form in the 160s BC, but the date range for 4Q114 begins more than sixty years before that period and ends only a few years after it. The parchment could have been produced before, during, or immediately after the very years when critics claim that Daniel was first completed.

Furthermore, 4Q114 was not the original manuscript of Daniel. It contains the kinds of mistakes that occur when a scribe copies an existing text, showing that its words were taken from an earlier manuscript.[9] Daniel must consequently have existed before this surviving copy was produced. The new dating places 4Q114 so close to – and potentially before – the proposed Maccabean composition that the critical theory is left without a plausible amount of time for the manuscript history that stands behind it.

Long before this recent scientific testing, the Qumran manuscripts had already led many scholars to reject the Maccabean date. In 1969, based upon the manuscript evidence then available, Old Testament scholar Roland K. Harrison concluded that the second-century dating of Daniel was "absolutely precluded by the evidence from Qumran."[10] The more recent dating of 4Q114 has made Harrison's conclusion even more forceful by placing a copied manuscript containing portions of Daniel 8-11 so close to – and potentially before – the period in which critical scholars claim that those chapters were first completed.

The Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts also allow us to examine how faithfully the text of Daniel was preserved. Scholars can compare portions of Daniel copied more than two thousand years ago with the text preserved in the much later medieval Masoretic manuscripts upon which our modern Old Testament translations are largely based. Alfred Mertens describes the result:

> The Daniel fragments from Caves 1 and 6 reveal, on the whole, that the later Masoretic text is preserved in a good, hardly changed form. They are thus a valuable witness to the great faithfulness with which the sacred text has been transmitted.[11]

Where direct comparison is possible, the Qumran manuscripts show that the Hebrew and Aramaic text of Daniel was transmitted with remarkable faithfulness across the centuries. The Dead Sea Scrolls consequently provide evidence that not only supports an early date for Daniel, but also confirms that the text translated in our modern Bibles reliably represents the ancient book.

Daniel's Translation into Greek Supports an Early Date

Further evidence that Daniel was already established as Scripture among the Jewish people by the second century BC comes from its inclusion in the Septuagint (LXX), the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Translation began in the third century BC so that Greek-speaking Jews could read the Scriptures in their own language. The Torah was translated first, followed by the other books over a period of time. Daniel was among those books, and its Greek translation is commonly dated to the second century BC.[12] [13]

The significance of this translation is difficult to overlook. Before Daniel could appear in the Greek Scriptures, the book first had to exist in Hebrew and Aramaic, be copied and circulated, reach Greek-speaking Jewish communities, and already be received and venerated as Scripture widely enough for them to want it in their own language. Its translation into Greek was not the beginning of this process, but

the result of it. Thus, by the time Daniel appeared in Greek, the book had already passed through an extensive earlier history of recognition as Scripture and transmission.

This presents a formidable problem for the Maccabean theory. Critical scholars would have us believe that in the 160s BC, an unknown Judean writer composed Daniel and deliberately presented his own work as the revelations of an ancient prophet who had lived approximately four centuries earlier. Yet before that same century had ended, this fraudulent work had somehow deceived the Jewish community at large into receiving it as authentic prophecy, lost every trace of its true origin, spread beyond the community in which it first appeared, and become sufficiently venerated as Scripture to be translated for Greek-speaking Jews. Instead of revealing a newly invented book struggling to gain acceptance, the Greek translation shows that Daniel had already been so broadly received and revered as Scripture that Jewish translators were carrying it into another language for the wider Jewish world.

Conclusion

The critical theory fails in the very purpose for which it was constructed. Moving Daniel into the Maccabean period does not eliminate its prophetic character, because Daniel 9 still foretells events that occurred approximately two centuries later. At the same time, the Greek translation by itself leaves the Maccabean theory with an implausibly compressed period in which Daniel had to gain recognition and spread beyond its original setting. The Qumran evidence makes that timetable even less credible by placing a copied manuscript of Daniel so close to – and potentially before – the critical date, while the existence of multiple copies reveals an established manuscript tradition already underway. Placing the book's origin in the second century BC leaves no convincing explanation for this early history of acceptance, copying, circulation, and translation.

This reconstruction survives only because its conclusion was assumed from the beginning. Since genuine prophecy cannot be

allowed, Daniel must be dated after the events the critics believe it describes; once that date is imposed, the book's rapid acceptance and transmission must be treated as though they present no serious difficulty. Yet the critics have not explained Daniel's prophetic accuracy. They have only exchanged the straightforward testimony of the book for an anonymous author, a false identity, an undocumented deception, and an entire history of acceptance and transmission that their theory requires to have unfolded almost overnight – while still leaving Daniel prophetic. The evidence points instead to the far more natural conclusion that the Jews received Daniel as the work of an ancient prophet because that is what it was, and that its prophecies were written before the events they foretold.

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CHAPTER 3

ANCIENT JEWISH RECOGNITION OF DANIEL

The Maccabean theory requires more than just a late date for the Book of Daniel. It requires an unknown writer living in the Maccabean period to have presented his own work under the identity of a prophet who had lived approximately four centuries earlier. For this theory to succeed, the true origin of the book must then have disappeared completely while the Jewish people came to accept its central figure as a genuine ancient prophet and its contents as authentic prophecy. If such a massive deception occurred, we should expect some trace of disagreement, suspicion, or competing knowledge about the book's origin within ancient Jewish sources.

No such evidence exists. No surviving Jewish source identifies a second-century author, records the appearance of a new book during the Maccabean revolt, or preserves any controversy over Daniel's identity and authorship. Instead, during the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel refers to Daniel as a man already known for his righteousness and extraordinary wisdom. Centuries later, First Maccabees refers to Daniel as a historical servant of God whose deliverance from the lions had occurred in Israel's past. A writing discovered at Qumran calls him "Daniel the prophet" and cites his book as an authoritative source. Josephus describes Daniel as one of the greatest prophets,

affirms the accuracy of his predictions, and records that his prophecies were shown to Alexander the Great. Daniel was also received as Scripture within the Jewish canon. These later witnesses span the period from the Maccabean era into the first century AD – the very centuries in which some memory of Daniel's alleged second-century origin should have survived. Yet throughout this period, the Jewish sources consistently treat Daniel as an ancient prophet and his book as a record of genuine prophecy.

Ezekiel's Contemporary Testimony of Daniel

The earliest biblical testimony concerning Daniel outside the book bearing his name comes from the prophet Ezekiel, who lived during the same period of the Babylonian captivity. Daniel was taken to Babylon around 605 BC, while Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives deported approximately eight years later, in 597 BC. Both men lived in Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and their lives and ministries overlapped. Ezekiel's prophetic ministry began around 593 BC and continued through at least 571 BC, a historical setting widely recognized by biblical scholars.[1]

This makes Ezekiel's testimony particularly important to the question of Daniel's historicity. While the Maccabean theory places the composition of Daniel approximately four centuries after the events described in the book, Ezekiel, writing during the Babylonian captivity itself, refers to Daniel three times (Ezekiel 14:14, 14:20, and 28:3). If these references concern the Daniel described in the Book of Daniel, they establish that he was already a recognized historical figure in the sixth century BC, long before the Maccabean period. The critical theory must then explain how Ezekiel could have referred to Daniel as an already established historical figure centuries before the supposed Maccabean writer allegedly gave him that identity.

The significance of this evidence becomes even greater when we examine what Ezekiel actually says about Daniel. In Ezekiel 14, God pronounces judgment upon Jerusalem and identifies three men whose

righteousness was so exceptional that even their presence could not deliver the nation from judgment:

> Though these three men, Noah, **Daniel**, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.
>
> -Ezekiel 14:14

God repeats this identification in Ezekiel 14:20, again placing Daniel alongside Noah and Job as an example of extraordinary righteousness. Daniel is presented as a man whose faithfulness to God was already established and whose reputation was sufficiently well known for Ezekiel's audience to understand the comparison. His name required no explanation.

This description corresponds directly to the Daniel we encounter in the book bearing his name. Daniel remained faithful to God despite being taken into captivity as a youth, refused to defile himself with the king's food, and received wisdom and understanding from God (Daniel 1:8, 17). His continued faithfulness eventually led to his punishment of being thrown into the lions' den, where God ultimately delivered him (Daniel 6). Thus, Ezekiel's description of Daniel's righteousness agrees with the character consistently portrayed throughout Daniel's own account.

Ezekiel also refers to Daniel's extraordinary wisdom. Addressing the ruler of Tyre, the prophet declares:

> Behold, **thou art wiser than Daniel**; there is no secret that they can hide from thee:
>
> -Ezekiel 28:3

Here, Daniel is recognized for wisdom associated with the knowledge of hidden things. This corresponds especially well with the account in Daniel 2, where God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation to Daniel after the Babylonian wise men are unable to disclose it. Daniel then explains the dream to the king and is

appointed to a position of authority over the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:19-30, 46-48). Ezekiel's reference to Daniel's extraordinary wisdom agrees with the very ability for which Daniel had become distinguished in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Josephus likewise recounts Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and describes him as a man who enjoyed the esteem of both kings and the people during his lifetime.[2]

In sum, we have an ancient Jewish prophet writing during the Babylonian captivity who identifies Daniel as an already established example of righteousness and extraordinary wisdom – the same two qualities for which the biblical Daniel was known. The events that established Daniel's reputation under Nebuchadnezzar had already occurred by the time Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry. Therefore, his testimony provides contemporary evidence that the central figure of the Book of Daniel was a real man whose reputation was established in the sixth century BC. His historical existence cannot then be explained as the invention of an unknown Judean writer living approximately four centuries later.

This presents a serious problem for the Maccabean theory. Ezekiel's historical setting remains firmly in the Babylonian captivity, so the critical response has generally been to argue that he was referring to a *different* figure – a character named Danel found in ancient Canaanite literature.[3]

To support this, some critics point to a difference in the Hebrew spelling of Daniel's name. Ezekiel spells the name without the Hebrew letter *yod*, which appears in the Book of Daniel. However, variations in the spelling of the same person's name are found elsewhere in Scripture, so this difference alone provides no basis for identifying Ezekiel's Daniel with a different individual. Even John Day, a scholar who argues that Ezekiel was referring to the Canaanite Danel, acknowledges that the spelling variation presents no linguistic obstacle to identifying him with the biblical Daniel.[4]

Another problem is that the Canaanite Danel participated in the worship of pagan gods, including Baal and El.[5] This creates a serious contextual problem for identifying him as the character mentioned

alongside Noah and Job in Ezekiel, since a central theme of Ezekiel's book is God's condemnation of Israel for worshiping the gods of its pagan neighbors and His warning of coming judgment upon the nation for that very reason (Ezekiel 6; 8; 14; 20). In the midst of this condemnation, God identifies Daniel alongside Noah and Job as an example of exceptional righteousness. Would it make any contextual sense for God to hold up a worshiper of the very pagan gods whose worship Ezekiel condemns, when the biblical Daniel was a faithful servant of the God of Israel who lived during Ezekiel's own lifetime?

The identification becomes even more difficult when we consider Ezekiel 28:3, where Daniel is recognized for extraordinary wisdom and the ability to understand hidden things. This description corresponds directly to Daniel 2, where God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation to Daniel after the Babylonian wise men are unable to do so. The surviving *Tale of Aqhat*, which preserves the account of the Canaanite Danel, provides no comparable account of him possessing this ability. Even Day acknowledges that this Canaanite tale does not explicitly identify Danel as a wise man.[6] Consequently, why should we look to a figure from Canaanite mythology when Ezekiel's description corresponds so closely to the Daniel who was already serving in Nebuchadnezzar's court and was already well-known for this exact trait?

Thus, the biblical Daniel provides a natural explanation for all three references in Ezekiel. Ezekiel's descriptions of Daniel's righteousness and extraordinary wisdom correspond directly to the man portrayed in the Book of Daniel. More importantly, Ezekiel's contemporary testimony establishes that Daniel was already a well-known figure during the Babylonian captivity, precisely when the Book of Daniel places him – approximately four centuries before the proposed Maccabean date.

Daniel Revered as an Ancient Hero in First Maccabees

First Maccabees records the Jewish revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes and the Seleucid rulers during the second century BC. Near

the beginning of the revolt, the elderly priest Mattathias gathered his sons and urged them to remain faithful to God even at the cost of their lives. As he approached death, he reminded them of earlier servants of God whose faithfulness had been rewarded. His examples included Abraham, Joseph, Phinehas, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Daniel's three companions, and Daniel himself:

> **59** Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, by believing were saved out of the flame. **60** **Daniel** for his innocency was delivered from the mouth of lions.
>
> -1 Maccabees 2:59-60

This reference is important because First Maccabees arose from the same historical world in which critical scholars claim that Daniel was first written. Its account continues through the death of Simon in 134 BC, so the completed work necessarily came after the 160s BC when critics place Daniel's composition. Yet its author does not treat Daniel as a recently invented literary character or the Book of Daniel as a new work produced during the revolt. Daniel and his three companions are placed alongside established figures from Israel's history, and their deliverances are presented as familiar examples of God's faithfulness in earlier generations.

Under the critical reconstruction, an unknown writer had recently invented or falsely appropriated these stories and attributed them to a sixth-century prophet. Yet within the historical tradition arising from the Maccabean period itself, Mattathias is portrayed as invoking Daniel's deliverance as an accepted event from Israel's ancient past. The author offers no explanation because none was needed. His readers were expected to recognize Daniel immediately and to understand the reference to the lions' den.

According to the critical theory, Daniel had been written only several decades before First Maccabees. Yet by the time First Maccabees was written, every memory of Daniel's alleged second-century origin had somehow disappeared, its unknown author had been forgotten, and his deception had gone entirely undetected. Most

incredible of all, Mattathias could invoke Daniel's deliverance without explanation, placing him alongside Abraham, Joseph, David, and Elijah as a genuine, universally accepted hero whom every Jewish reader was expected to recognize.

Daniel Recognized as a Prophet at Qumran

The Daniel manuscripts examined in the previous chapter establish that the book was being copied at Qumran. Another writing discovered there answers a different question: How did this ancient Jewish community regard Daniel and his book? A document commonly known as the Florilegium, identified as 4Q174 and generally dated to the late first century BC, introduces material drawn from Daniel 12:10 with the statement that it is written in "the book of Daniel the prophet."[7]

This wording identifies both the book and its recognized author. The writer does not refer anonymously to a recent apocalypse or to traditions loosely associated with Daniel. He cites an existing book, identifies Daniel as its prophet, and introduces its words with a formula used for authoritative scriptural writings. The Qumran community therefore regarded Daniel as a genuine prophet and his book as an authoritative source of divine revelation.

The date makes this recognition especially significant. Little more than a century after the period in which critics claim that Daniel was written, the Qumran community was not struggling to determine the origin or authority of a recently composed book. Daniel's identity as a prophet required no explanation or defense, his name carried recognized authority, and his written words could be cited to explain what God had revealed about the future. The Qumran evidence consequently shows that Daniel was not only being copied and circulated, as the previous chapter established, but was being received and quoted as "Daniel the prophet."

Josephus Confirms Daniel's Antiquity

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus provides another important witness to the ancient understanding of Daniel. Writing during the first century AD, Josephus recounts the events of Daniel's life, identifies him as the author of prophetic writings, and describes the fulfillment of his predictions. Far from treating Daniel as a symbolic character or the literary identity of an unknown Maccabean writer, Josephus presents him as a real Jewish exile who lived during the Babylonian captivity.

After recounting Daniel's visions, Josephus explains why he considered Daniel exceptional among the prophets:

> One of the greatest of the prophets … for he did not only prophesy of future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time of their accomplishment … He also wrote and left behind him what made manifest the accuracy and undeniable veracity of his predictions.[8]

Josephus then emphasizes that the events occurred according to what Daniel had recorded "many years before they came to pass." His testimony addresses the central issue in the debate over Daniel's date. Josephus understood Daniel's writings as predictions recorded long before their fulfillment, not as descriptions of recent history disguised as ancient prophecy.

Josephus wrote centuries after Daniel, but he remains one of our most important witnesses to ancient Jewish history and belief. His testimony shows that the common Jewish understanding of his time identified Daniel as both the historical subject and the author of the book bearing his name. He gives no indication that another authorship theory existed among the Jews or that Daniel's prophetic identity had ever been disputed.

Daniel Shown to Alexander the Great

Josephus also preserves a much earlier tradition that further demonstrates Daniel's established recognition among the Jews. Around 332 BC, Alexander the Great defeated the Persian forces controlling the eastern Mediterranean and brought the land of Israel under Greek rule. Josephus records that when Alexander approached Jerusalem, the Jewish high priest Jaddua met him and showed him a prophecy from the Book of Daniel that Alexander understood as foretelling his own overthrow of the Persian Empire:

> And when the Book of Daniel was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended.[9]

Josephus states that largely because of how much this impressed him, Alexander responded favorably to the Jews and permitted them to continue living according to their ancestral laws. The prophecy shown to him likely included Daniel 8, where a male goat from the west defeats the ram representing Media and Persia, after which the angel explains that the goat represents Greece and its great horn represents its first king (Daniel 8:5-8, 20-21). Christians today still believe this goat did represent Alexander.

While some critics dismiss the meeting in Jerusalem because it is not mentioned by the surviving accounts of Greek historians, the broader historical setting of Josephus' account is firmly established. Alexander conquered Tyre and Gaza in 332 BC and then continued south into Egypt.[10] Israel was located precisely within the territory brought under his control during this campaign, and it is no stretch to understand that Alexander would have been there. Alexander's presence in the general region and his conquest of the land of Israel are not in question. Nothing about Alexander's location or control of the territory makes the meeting historically implausible. The criticism is ultimately circular: Josephus' account is rejected because a Book of Daniel shown to Alexander in 332 BC would destroy the Maccabean

date, and the Maccabean date is then preserved by rejecting Josephus' account.

Thus, Josephus' report places an existing Book of Daniel in the hands of the Jewish priesthood more than a century and a half before the date proposed by critical scholars. According to this ancient Jewish testimony, Daniel was already preserved by the priesthood, recognized as authentic prophecy, and applied directly to the unfolding events of world history. The high priest did not introduce it as an obscure or disputed work, but presented it to Alexander himself as a divine prediction of the very conquest he was carrying out.

Daniel's Unchallenged Place in the Jewish Canon

Far from treating Daniel as an uncertain or disputed work, the Jewish people accepted it as one of the inspired books of the Old Testament. That recognition was not extended to every Jewish religious writing, but was reserved for the books they received as Scripture and as the Word of God. Daniel's unchallenged inclusion in that collection creates another major problem for the Maccabean theory. If Daniel was a fraudulent second-century work written under the identity of an ancient prophet, how did it enter the Jewish canon without a single surviving objection or any memory of its true origin?

Roger Beckwith, a highly respected church historian and one of the leading modern authorities on the formation of the Old Testament canon, conducted an extensive examination of the historical evidence surrounding the books received as Scripture by the Jewish people. After considering Daniel's place within that evidence, Beckwith reached a conclusion that leaves no room for the claim that the book entered the canon late or under suspicion:

> The book was always taken by the Jews at its face value … [and] had an unchallenged place in the Jewish canon.[11]

Josephus provides important ancient testimony concerning the limits of that canon. In *Against Apion*, he explains that the Jews

possessed twenty-two books regarded as divine and that the prophets recorded the history following Moses down to the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes. He acknowledges that other histories had been written after that time, but states that they were not regarded as possessing the same authority because the succession of prophets had ceased.[12]

Josephus' twenty-two books correspond to the same collection of writings found in the thirty-nine books of the Christian Old Testament. The difference in number results from combining books that are now counted separately, such as the twelve Minor Prophets, which were counted as one book. Although Josephus does not identify each of the twenty-two books by name, his central claim is unmistakable: the sacred books accepted by the Jews were written during the recognized prophetic era, which he says extended only to the reign of Artaxerxes in the fifth century BC – the period associated with Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi. Other histories were written afterward, but the Jews did not receive them with the same divine authority because the succession of the prophets had ended.

If Daniel had originated during the Maccabean period, as critical scholars claim, it would have appeared approximately two centuries after this prophetic era had closed. By Josephus' own standard, it could not have belonged among the inspired books of Scripture. Yet Josephus does include Daniel within that earlier prophetic collection, repeatedly identifies Daniel as an ancient prophet, and declares that his predictions were recorded long before their fulfillment. Daniel's recognized place within the Jewish canon consequently contradicts the very possibility of a Maccabean origin.

The distinction becomes even more difficult for the critical theory when Daniel is compared with Jewish writings that actually did originate during or after the Maccabean period. First Maccabees and other later works were preserved and valued by the Jewish people, but they were not included in the inspired Hebrew canon. Daniel was.[13] If Daniel had arisen during the same period under the false identity of an ancient prophet, it should have failed the very standard that excluded these other later writings. Instead, the Jewish people univer-

sally revered Daniel as genuine ancient prophecy while preserving no dispute over its admission, no memory of another author, and no awareness that the book had appeared centuries after the prophetic era had ended.

Does Daniel's Place Among the Writings Support a Late Date?

Although Daniel held an unchallenged place within the Jewish canon, critical scholars have attempted to turn its location within that canon into evidence for a late date. The Hebrew Scriptures are traditionally arranged in three principal divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. In this traditional Jewish arrangement, Daniel appears among the Writings rather than the Prophets. Critics argue that the collection known as the Prophets must have been closed before Daniel was composed, leaving the book to be placed in the only division that remained open when it supposedly appeared during the Maccabean period.

Yet this assumption collapses as soon as the contents of the two divisions are compared. It wrongly treats the Writings as a later collection reserved for books composed after the Prophets, when the books within those divisions prove that they were not arranged according to date. David wrote many of the Psalms around 1000 BC, approximately five centuries before Zechariah delivered his prophecies after the Babylonian exile. Yet Psalms appears among the Writings, while Zechariah appears among the Prophets. The two divisions often overlap in time, proving that a book's placement within them cannot determine when it was written.

Furthermore, the Writings contain extensive prophecy. The Psalms alone foretell the reign of God's Anointed King in Psalm 2, the Messiah's resurrection in Psalm 16, His suffering and death in Psalm 22, and His exaltation to the right hand of God in Psalm 110. Peter explicitly calls David a prophet in Acts 2:30. This evidence rules out any rigid boundary between books that contain prophecy and books that do not. "The Prophets" is the name of a division within the Hebrew

Bible, not an exclusive category containing every prophet and every prophetic writing. A book filled with prophetic visions can therefore appear among the Writings without contradiction.

Daniel's life and the character of his book also provide understandable reasons for its placement among the Writings. Unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Daniel spent most of his life serving within the governments of Babylon and Medo-Persia rather than publicly delivering God's messages to Israel. His book reflects that different role by combining accounts of his government service and life in foreign courts with prayers, historical events, and symbolic visions of the future. Its placement among the Writings is entirely consistent with these distinctive features and does not require the book to have been composed centuries later.

Most important of all, as noted earlier, the ancient Jewish sources speak directly about how Daniel was regarded. The Qumran Florilegium calls him "Daniel the prophet," while Josephus identifies him as one of the greatest prophets and places his writings within the earlier period when inspired prophecy was still being recorded.

To preserve the Maccabean date, critics would have us disregard this explicit testimony and impose upon the Jewish canon a rule that the Jews themselves never followed – that a prophet and his prophecies could not appear among the Writings. This approach not only overrules what ancient Jews said about Daniel, but redefines their own canonical divisions in a way that contradicts how they understood and used them. A modern reconstruction is thereby allowed to dictate what the Writings supposedly meant while the testimony of the Jewish people who received, arranged, and preserved those sacred books is set aside. Daniel's placement among the Writings cannot bear the weight critics place upon it and provides no evidence that his book originated during the Maccabean period.

Conclusion

The evidence examined in this chapter is incompatible with the claim that Daniel originated during the Maccabean period. If the book had

first appeared at that time, the earliest Jewish witnesses should preserve some indication of its recent origin, its unknown author, or the process by which it came to be accepted as ancient prophecy. Instead, wherever Daniel appears in the surviving Jewish record, he is already honored as a figure from Israel's ancient past, recognized as a prophet, and received as the author of genuine prophecy. The historical transformation required by the Maccabean theory – from a recently written book bearing a false identity to revered ancient Scripture – appears nowhere in Jewish history. It exists only within the critical reconstruction.

Rather than allowing the Jewish people who received, preserved, and interpreted Daniel to inform us how they understood its origin, critics dismiss their testimony because it conflicts with the late date required by their predetermined rejection of prophecy. The late date is then used to reinterpret the evidence, and that reinterpretation is offered as proof of the late date. The result is a circular reconstruction that can be maintained only by rejecting the consistent ancient Jewish testimony that contradicts it.

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CHAPTER 4

DANIEL'S KNOWLEDGE OF BABYLON AND ITS FALL

Having examined how ancient Jewish sources understood Daniel and his writings, we now turn to the Book of Daniel itself and the detailed knowledge of sixth-century Babylon found throughout its narratives. Its accounts repeatedly reflect specific features of Babylonian government, royal authority, professional classes, and religious customs. The book also attributes the construction and magnificence of Babylon directly to Nebuchadnezzar. These precise details are difficult to explain if one assumes that Daniel was written in Judea during the Maccabean period, approximately four centuries after the events it describes and long after the Babylonian Empire had ceased to exist.

The significance of this evidence does not depend upon any single accurate detail, since a later author could have learned individual facts from earlier records or traditions. Its strength lies in the consistent pattern found throughout Daniel. The author repeatedly demonstrates familiarity with the institutions and customs of Babylon while accurately distinguishing them from those of the Medes and Persians. Some of this information disappeared from later historical memory and became known again only through the recovery and study of ancient inscriptions and archaeological remains.

The question is which historical setting best explains this knowl-

edge. Did an unknown second-century writer successfully reconstruct a civilization that had vanished centuries earlier, or does the book reflect the firsthand knowledge of the sixth-century author it claims to represent? Daniel's description of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, its royal court, its professional classes, and its religious practices provides substantial evidence that its author was intimately familiar with the ancient world he described.

Nebuchadnezzar's Construction of Babylon

Daniel 4:30 records Nebuchadnezzar looking upon his capital and declaring, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Daniel portrays Nebuchadnezzar as the great builder of Babylon, a king who took enormous pride in the magnificence of his capital. This description agrees with Babylonian inscriptions recovered through modern archaeology, which confirm that Nebuchadnezzar undertook an extensive building program that transformed Babylon into one of the most magnificent cities of the ancient world.

Excavations at Babylon have uncovered the remains of Nebuchadnezzar's extensive construction projects, including his royal palaces, defensive walls, the Ishtar Gate, and the Processional Way. His own inscriptions confirm his responsibility for much of this work. A clay cylinder preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art records his construction of a new outer wall around the city, which he describes as a work that no previous king had accomplished. Another cylinder preserved in the British Museum records his restoration and expansion of the royal palace, along with the construction of a new fortress north of the city. The bricks used throughout Babylon also bear Nebuchadnezzar's name and royal titles, providing additional physical evidence of his extensive building program.[1] [2]

The importance of this evidence is that Nebuchadnezzar's extraordinary role in rebuilding Babylon had largely disappeared from later historical knowledge. Even modern historians did not fully recognize the extent of his building program until archaeological

excavations uncovered the ruins of Babylon and the king's own cuneiform inscriptions. Yet Daniel had preserved this very information all along, recording Nebuchadnezzar's own claim to have built "great Babylon." Peter Masters emphasizes the significance of this discovery:

> The author also knew that Babylon had been rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30), another fact that was unknown to later historians until the excavations of more recent times.[3]

What later scholars recovered through excavation was already accurately reflected in Daniel's account, which portrays Nebuchadnezzar as the king responsible for transforming Babylon into a magnificent imperial capital.

The question for the Maccabean theory is not whether a later writer could have learned an isolated fact about Babylon, but how an unknown Judean author, writing approximately four centuries after Nebuchadnezzar, came to preserve information about his building program that later historians had largely lost. Daniel records the king boasting of his accomplishments in his own capital, and Nebuchadnezzar's surviving inscriptions independently confirm the substance of that boast. This historical knowledge fits naturally with Daniel's account of a writer who lived in Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, while the Maccabean theory must explain how such information survived and reached an unknown writer centuries later.

Babylonian Wise Men and the Magi

Another important example of Daniel's knowledge of the ancient Babylonian world concerns the different classes of wise men who served Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel identifies several distinct classes of religious and scholarly specialists, describes their responsibilities, and records the authority exercised by those appointed over them. In Daniel 2:2, when Nebuchadnezzar demanded an interpretation of his troubling dream, he summoned these men before him:

> Then the king commanded to call **the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans**, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.
>
> -Daniel 2:2

The distinction between these groups is important because Babylonian records confirm that such specialists occupied recognized positions within the religious and scholarly institutions of the ancient empire. Some interpreted dreams and omens, others examined the movements of heavenly bodies, and others performed incantations and religious ceremonies. These were established professions requiring specialized training and knowledge. Their members served within Babylonian society, and some held positions in the royal court.

One of these professional titles provides a particularly important connection between Daniel's account and surviving Babylonian records. The Hebrew word translated "astrologers" in Daniel 2:2 is *ashshaphim*, which the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon identifies as probably borrowed from the Babylonian term *āšipu*, a specialist who performed incantations and religious rituals.[4] A Babylonian administrative tablet dated to 593 BC identifies a royal courtier named Nadin as an *āšipu*, confirming the existence of this profession within Nebuchadnezzar's own royal household. Other records from his reign identify six diviners known as *bārû* in 604 BC and a man named Aplaya as a *rab bārî*, meaning "chief diviner," in 574 BC.[5]

Daniel repeatedly identifies these different classes of advisers in Daniel 2:27, 4:7, and 5:7. He also records their hierarchy: Nebuchadnezzar appoints him chief over the governors of the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:48) and later addresses him as master of the magicians (Daniel 4:9). The Babylonian records independently confirm the existence of these specialized professions and positions of authority, including a professional title preserved in Daniel's original language. These records date to Nebuchadnezzar's own reign, approximately four centuries before the proposed Maccabean composition, and confirm Daniel's familiarity with the organization of the royal court in which he claims to have served.

Daniel's familiarity with these ancient professional classes leads to another important historical connection. The Hebrew word *ashshaphim*, translated "astrologers" in Daniel 2:2, is rendered *magous* in the ancient Greek translation of Daniel. This Greek word is associated with the Magi, a recognized priestly group of Media and Persia whose members performed religious ceremonies, interpreted dreams, and advised rulers.[6] [7] Interestingly, our English words "magic" and "magician" ultimately derive from the ancient name of the Magi, passing through Greek and Latin before entering English.[8]

The Magi's historical existence is independently confirmed by the Behistun Inscription, commissioned by the Persian king Darius I around 520 BC. In recounting the seizure of the Persian throne in 522 BC, Darius identifies a man named Gaumata as a Magian.[9]

The Bible also preserves a possible reference to the Magi in Jeremiah 39:3 and 13, where the Babylonian official Nergal-sharezer bears the title *Rab-mag*, traditionally understood as "chief of the Magi" or "chief soothsayer." Ancient Babylonian records independently attest the corresponding title *rab mugi*, identifying a high-ranking royal official. Although the precise relationship between this Babylonian title and the Persian Magi remains uncertain, Jeremiah preserves an authentic designation from Nebuchadnezzar's royal administration, providing another example of the Bible's accurate knowledge of the ancient world.[10]

The Magi also appear in the New Testament, where Matthew 2:1-12 records wise men from the east who recognized a star announcing the birth of the King of the Jews and traveled to worship Jesus. The linguistic connection becomes especially interesting here: the ancient Greek translation of Daniel 2:2 uses *magous* for the astrologers, while Matthew 2:1 uses *magoi* for the wise men who visited Jesus – two forms of the same Greek word.[11] [12] How would these eastern wise men have known to expect the coming Messiah of Israel? Their knowledge may have originated with Daniel himself, whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed chief over the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:48). Daniel would have been in a position to teach these men about the true God and His promises concerning the Messiah, and that knowledge could

have been preserved among eastern religious scholars for generations. This offers a possible explanation for how the Magi came to expect the Messiah and recognized the significance of the star.

Returning to Daniel's account, the Babylonian records from Nebuchadnezzar's own reign independently confirm the specialized professions and positions of authority he describes. The Behistun Inscription and Jeremiah's preservation of the title *Rab-mag* provide additional evidence of the Bible's familiarity with the religious institutions and royal offices of the ancient world. The Maccabean theory must explain how an unknown Judean writer, composing Daniel approximately four centuries later, acquired such detailed knowledge of the Babylonian court. Conversely, these historical details fit very naturally with Daniel's account of a writer who personally lived and served within that government.

Belshazzar and the Babylonian Records

One of the most important examples of Daniel's knowledge of Babylonian history concerns Belshazzar, the ruler who appears in Daniel 5 on the night Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. For centuries, the historical records available to scholars identified Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon, while Belshazzar's identity and role in the kingdom had largely disappeared from historical memory. Modern archaeological discoveries have since recovered Babylonian records that establish his existence, identify his father, and explain the unusual arrangement under which he governed.[13]

The recovery of this information began in 1854, when J.G. Taylor discovered four clay cylinders containing inscriptions of Nabonidus while excavating the ancient city of Ur.[14] These inscriptions provide direct testimony from the Babylonian king himself. In one, Nabonidus prays for his own welfare and that of Belshazzar, whom he identifies as his eldest son. One of the surviving cylinders is preserved in the British Museum. The discovery confirmed Belshazzar's existence and identified him as the son of Babylon's last king, consistent with the historical setting of Daniel 5.[15] [16]

The evidence becomes even more significant when we examine Belshazzar's actual position within the Babylonian government. Babylonian records reveal that Nabonidus spent approximately ten years away from Babylon, residing in the Arabian oasis of Tayma, while his eldest son Belshazzar governed in his absence. The ancient *Verse Account of Nabonidus* records that Nabonidus placed his army under Belshazzar's command and "entrusted the kingship to him."[17] The *Nabonidus Chronicle* independently confirms this arrangement, identifying Nabonidus as residing in Tayma while the crown prince remained in Babylonia with the officials and army.[18] Other Babylonian documents record oaths sworn in the names of both Nabonidus and Belshazzar, further demonstrating the crown prince's exceptional authority.[19] Although Nabonidus retained the formal title of king, Belshazzar exercised royal authority on his father's behalf.[20]

This unusual arrangement is reflected in a particularly revealing detail in Daniel 5:16. When Belshazzar sought someone capable of interpreting the mysterious writing on the wall, he promised Daniel a position of extraordinary authority:

> And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, **and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom**.
>
> -Daniel 5:16

Why would Belshazzar offer Daniel the third position in the kingdom rather than the second? The Babylonian records provide a natural explanation. Nabonidus occupied the first position as the reigning king, while Belshazzar exercised authority beneath him as the crown prince. The highest position Belshazzar could offer Daniel would consequently have been third in the kingdom. Daniel 5:29 subsequently records that Belshazzar fulfilled his promise and proclaimed Daniel the third ruler. This seemingly incidental detail

agrees with the unusual arrangement of royal authority independently established by the Babylonian records.

The evidence concerning Belshazzar brings us back to the central point: Daniel preserves the name of a ruler whose role in Babylonian history had largely been forgotten until modern archaeological discoveries, along with an accurate account of the unusual arrangement of royal authority between him and his father. It is difficult to imagine how an unknown Judean writer during the Maccabean period could have recorded these details with such accuracy and precision, approximately four centuries after the events occurred. One might almost think Daniel had actually been there to witness these things for himself.

Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon

Belshazzar's feast, during which he offered Daniel the third position in the kingdom, ended with the fall of Babylon itself. Daniel 5 describes the king drinking wine before a thousand of his lords when a mysterious writing appeared on the palace wall. Daniel was summoned to interpret it and announced that the kingdom had been divided and given to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:25-28). The chapter then records the end of Belshazzar's reign in two consecutive verses:

30 **In that night** was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31 **And Darius the Median took the kingdom**, being about threescore and two years old.

-Daniel 5:30-31

The Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon help explain how Babylon could have fallen so suddenly. The Euphrates River flowed directly through the city, passing through openings in its walls where the river entered and left Babylon. Both historians describe Persian troops lowering the river's water level and entering the city along its exposed riverbed while the inhabitants were celebrating a festival. Their accounts provide details of the conquest that correspond closely with the setting and abrupt conclusion of Daniel 5.

Herodotus records that Cyrus' army diverted water from the river, reducing its depth until Persian soldiers could enter Babylon along its bed. The plan caught the Babylonians by surprise. Because the city was so large, those in its central districts remained unaware that the outer districts had already been captured. They continued dancing and celebrating a festival until they learned what had happened. Herodotus describes a city overtaken while its inhabitants were occupied with a celebration – the same setting Daniel describes on the night Belshazzar's kingdom fell.[21]

Xenophon describes the same method of entry and explains why Cyrus chose that particular night. According to his account, Cyrus learned that a festival had arrived during which the Babylonians were accustomed to drinking and celebrating throughout the night. He ordered the Euphrates diverted into trenches, lowering the water until his troops could pass along the riverbed. Persian soldiers entered while many inhabitants were asleep or drunk and advanced toward the royal palace. After overcoming the guards, they entered the palace and killed the king, whom Xenophon does not name. His account agrees with Daniel's description of a feast ending with the death of Babylon's ruler and supplies further detail about how the city was captured.[22]

The *Nabonidus Chronicle* supplies a Babylonian record of the conquest. It reports that Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army at Opis before advancing toward the capital. Another major city, Sippar, was subsequently captured without a battle, and two days later Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, entered Babylon with Cyrus' army, likewise "without battle." Cyrus himself entered the city later.[23] The Persians had fought the Babylonian army before reaching the capital, but they took Babylon itself without an actual battle. This agrees with the surprise entry described by Herodotus and Xenophon.

The fall of Babylon was a major historical event, but the circumstances of its final night are what make Daniel's account remarkable. His description of a royal feast abruptly ending with Belshazzar's death agrees with later Greek accounts of the conquest, while the surviving Babylonian records confirm the city's sudden capture

without battle. Daniel knew more than the outcome of Babylon's fall – he knew the circumstances under which it happened.

Shushan, Elam, and the Ulai

Daniel's knowledge of the ancient Near East extends beyond Babylon. In a vision dated to the third year of Belshazzar's reign, he describes himself at Shushan, a city east of Babylonia that would later become a major center of Persian government. He identifies both the region in which the city stood and the waterway beside it:

> And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.
>
> -Daniel 8:2

Shushan, known to the Greeks as Susa, was an ancient center of Elam long before the Persian Empire rose to power. Archaeological discoveries and ancient records establish its long association with the Elamite kingdom.[24] Later, Darius I chose Susa as one of the principal royal residences of the Persian Empire and began major construction there soon after 520 BC.[25] Daniel accurately places his vision in the city that would become an important center of the empire whose rise the vision describes.

Daniel's reference to the Ulai River adds another specific geographical detail. A seventh-century BC inscription of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal describes military equipment captured "between the city Susa and the Ulāya River."[26] The British Museum also preserves an Assyrian relief depicting a battle against the Elamites at the River Ulai.[27] These ancient records independently establish the accurate connection between Shushan, Elam, and the waterway named in Daniel's vision.

The setting of Daniel's vision at Shushan therefore provides a fitting final example of his direct knowledge of the ancient Near East. Daniel correctly identifies the city in its ancient Elamite setting, beside

the Ulai, and places his vision of Persia's rise in a city that would later become one of the empire's principal royal residences. Even this brief geographical reference reflects a precise knowledge of the region and a setting remarkably well suited to the events Daniel describes.

Conclusion

Daniel's account reflects a remarkable familiarity with the ancient world it describes. Nebuchadnezzar's building projects, the professional classes of the Babylonian court, Belshazzar's unusual royal authority, the circumstances of Babylon's fall, and the geographical setting of Shushan all find support in surviving historical records. Some of these details had largely disappeared from later historical memory, yet Daniel preserved them accurately, centuries before ancient inscriptions and archaeological discoveries brought them to light again. The strength of the evidence lies in this consistent pattern of historical accuracy across different rulers, institutions, and events.

The Maccabean theory places the composition of Daniel approximately four centuries after the Babylonian events it recounts, yet it must still account for the author's detailed knowledge of that vanished world. Daniel's own account provides a far more natural explanation: he lived in Babylon, served within its royal government, and witnessed the passing of its kingdom. The historical evidence examined in this chapter gives substantial reason to take that account seriously.

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CHAPTER 5

THE ANTIQUITY OF DANIEL'S LANGUAGE

The historical evidence examined in the previous chapter concerns Daniel's knowledge of the Babylonian world. The language of his book provides another way to examine the proposed Maccabean date. Daniel was written in Hebrew and Aramaic and contains words borrowed from Persian and Greek. By comparing these features with surviving ancient writings, we can examine whether they fit the world in which Daniel claims to have lived or the language of a Judean writer approximately four centuries later.

Daniel's Aramaic Reflects an Earlier Period

Daniel's Aramaic can be compared with surviving Aramaic writings from the Babylonian and Persian periods, as well as with later Jewish Aramaic texts. These comparisons allow us to examine whether its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure reflect an earlier form of the language or one that matches a later period. Daniel begins in Hebrew, changes to Aramaic partway through Daniel 2:4, and returns to Hebrew at Daniel 8:1. Aramaic was widely used throughout the ancient Near East, including in government correspondence and administration. The written form used

extensively under the Persian Empire is commonly called Imperial Aramaic.[1]

Kenneth Kitchen, a scholar of ancient Near Eastern history and languages, including Aramaic, undertook a detailed examination of Daniel's vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and sentence structure, comparing them with surviving ancient documents. He found that approximately ninety percent of Daniel's Aramaic vocabulary matches words found in Aramaic and related Semitic writings from the fifth century BC or earlier. The remaining words are either known only from later surviving texts or have not yet been found outside Daniel. The fact that these words have not been found in earlier documents does not mean they were unknown in Daniel's time, since so few ancient writings have survived. Kitchen illustrates this point with an Aramaic word once known only from much later writings that was subsequently discovered in a fifth-century BC papyrus.[2]

Most importantly, Kitchen's examination extended beyond vocabulary to the language's spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. Based on all of this evidence, he concluded that Daniel's Aramaic belongs to Imperial Aramaic – the written language used in government and administration during the Babylonian and Persian periods. In other words, Daniel's Aramaic fits the linguistic world in which he claims to have lived, and Kitchen's findings provide no basis for insisting that it originated during the Maccabean period.[3]

Daniel's Aramaic can also be compared with later Jewish writings. One such work is the *Genesis Apocryphon*, discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which retells portions of Genesis in Aramaic. Its surviving manuscript dates to the first century BC, relatively close to the Maccabean period in which critical scholars place Daniel. Gleason Archer, a professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages, compared its language with Daniel's and identified differences in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. He concluded that Daniel's Aramaic reflects a considerably earlier stage of the language than that found in the *Genesis Apocryphon*.[4]

One of the differences Archer identified concerns word order. He observed that the *Genesis Apocryphon* commonly places the verb near

the beginning of a sentence, while Daniel frequently places it later, sometimes after the object. Kitchen also identified this contrast. He noted that Daniel's word order resembles a seventh-century BC Aramaic inscription from the Assyrian Empire. He also observed that Daniel's word order is consistent with the more flexible word order of fifth-century BC Aramaic documents from Egypt.[5]

These observations give us substantial reason to question the Maccabean date. If Daniel was written in Judea during the Maccabean period, why does its language correspond to Imperial Aramaic rather than the later Jewish Aramaic of that period? And why do its grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure resemble much earlier Aramaic writings rather than the later Jewish Aramaic of the Genesis Apocryphon?

Daniel's Persian Words Support an Early Date

Daniel also contains a number of words borrowed from Persian, particularly terms associated with government and royal administration. In Daniel 3:2, for example, Nebuchadnezzar summons various classes of officials, several of whose titles are derived from Persian. Kitchen identifies approximately nineteen Persian words in Daniel's Aramaic. Similar Persian vocabulary appears in ancient Aramaic administrative documents from the Persian period, when scribes adopted terms associated with the offices and practices of their Persian rulers.[6]

The presence of these words fits naturally with Daniel's account of actually serving under both the Babylonian and Persian governments. Following Babylon's fall to Cyrus in 539 BC, Daniel continued serving under the new Medo-Persian administration, and his final recorded vision occurred around 536 BC (Daniel 6:28; 10:1). A writer completing his account during this period would have been familiar with the terminology used by Persian officials. Kitchen also observed that Persian words readily entered Aramaic through government and administration. This explains how Daniel could have adopted Persian terminology soon after the conquest,

without requiring a lengthy period for those words to become established in the language. And when describing events from Nebuchadnezzar's earlier reign, Daniel could have used the Persian administrative terminology familiar to him when he completed his book.[7]

Of greater importance is the particular Persian vocabulary Daniel preserves. Kitchen found that Daniel's Persian words reflect the older forms of the language known as Old Persian, rather than the later forms found in Middle Persian.[8] He also identified several specialized administrative titles that are not known to have remained in use after the Persian period. When Daniel was translated into Greek for its inclusion in the Septuagint, probably during the second century BC, the translator rendered four of these titles inaccurately, even though he translated several other administrative titles reasonably well. This suggests that the meanings of those older terms had already become unfamiliar.[9]

Daniel's Persian vocabulary fits the period when Persian administrative terms were entering Aramaic, and several of its titles preserve older Persian forms. If an unknown Judean writer composed Daniel in the 160s BC, how would he have known these specialized titles from centuries earlier? And why did a Greek translator working around the same time apparently struggle to understand four of them? These details are difficult to explain under the Maccabean theory, but fit naturally with Daniel's account of serving in the Persian government and being familiar with its terminology.

Daniel's Greek Words Also Support an Early Date

The Persian vocabulary examined in the previous section provides an important point of comparison for another argument concerning Daniel's date – the presence of Greek words in the book. Critical scholars have long argued that these words point to a time after Alexander the Great's conquests, when Greek language and culture spread throughout the Near East. However, a closer examination of which Greek words appear in Daniel, how they could have reached

Babylon, and how they compare with the book's Persian vocabulary may actually point toward an earlier date rather than a later one.

Three musical terms in Daniel's Aramaic are widely recognized as Greek in origin: the words translated "harp," "psaltery," and "dulcimer" in the KJV. They appear together in the account of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, where the list is repeated in Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, and 15:[10]

> That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, **harp**, sackbut, **psaltery**, **dulcimer**, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:
>
> -Daniel 3:5

The presence of these terms raises the question of how Greek musical instruments and their names could have reached Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. The answer is actually quite simple. Contact between the Greek world and the ancient Near East was already established long before Alexander's conquests. Kitchen documented Greek trade in the region centuries earlier, as well as Greek mercenaries serving alongside Babylonian forces during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Records from Babylon also identify people called "Ionians" – people from Asia Minor, including Greeks – among the foreign workers who received provisions during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. These records show that people and goods from the Greek world were reaching Babylon during the period Daniel describes.[11]

There is also direct evidence that musicians from other lands were present in Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Babylonian records identify musicians from Ashkelon, an ancient city on the Mediterranean coast in what is now southern Israel, among those receiving provisions.[12] Although these particular musicians were not identified as Greek, their presence shows that foreign musicians were brought into Babylon. Musical instruments and their names could travel with such people, providing a natural explanation for how foreign musical terms entered the vocabulary of the royal court.

The surviving linguistic evidence also shows that Greek words

entered Aramaic before Alexander's conquests. Kitchen identified the Greek word *stater*, a term for a type of coin, in Aramaic documents from Egypt dating to approximately 400 BC. These documents specifically identify it as Greek money. Although they were written later than Daniel's lifetime, they establish that Aramaic speakers were borrowing Greek words before the Hellenistic period. The presence of Greek vocabulary in Daniel consequently provides no reason, by itself, to place its composition after Alexander.[13]

One of Daniel's musical terms provides a further reason to consider an earlier origin. The Aramaic word translated "harp" resembles the Greek *kitharis*, a form found in the writings of the ancient Greek poet Homer centuries before Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel preserves this older form rather than *kithara*, which became more common later.[14] A study of the Greek-derived words in Daniel 3 also suggests that several preserve features of Greek dialects spoken in the Near East before the Hellenistic period. These features support the possibility that the words entered Aramaic considerably earlier than the Maccabean period.[15]

While the Greek-derived words in Daniel are few and mostly associated with musical instruments, its Aramaic contains approximately nineteen Persian words, including specialized administrative titles.[16] If an unknown Judean writer composed Daniel in the 160s BC, after generations of Greek rule, why would he use so many older Persian administrative terms while including so little Greek vocabulary? And why would the Greek words he did use be concentrated primarily in a list of musical instruments rather than appearing throughout his descriptions of royal government?

The Greek terms are understandable in the world Daniel describes. Contact with Greek-speaking people had already reached Babylon, foreign musicians served in the city, and we know that Greek words entered Aramaic before Alexander. When this evidence is considered alongside Daniel's older Persian administrative vocabulary and the early forms identified in some of its Greek terms, the language fits naturally with Daniel's account of serving in the Babylonian and Persian governments centuries before the Maccabean period.

Conclusion

The linguistic evidence examined in this chapter provides substantial support for an early date for the Book of Daniel. Its Aramaic reflects features of the language used during the Babylonian and Persian periods and differs in important respects from later Jewish Aramaic. Its Persian vocabulary preserves older administrative titles, some of which had apparently become unfamiliar by the time Daniel was translated into Greek. The relatively few Greek-derived words, mostly associated with musical instruments, are also understandable in a Babylonian court that had contact with the Greek world long before Alexander's conquests.

The Maccabean theory must account for this combination of linguistic features. Why would a Judean writer in the Maccabean period preserve older Aramaic forms and specialized Persian titles while using so little Greek vocabulary after generations of Hellenization? Although individual words cannot establish a book's date, the consistent pattern throughout Daniel is significant. Its language fits naturally with the historical setting it describes and adds to the evidence that Daniel's account originated centuries before the Maccabean period.

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CHAPTER 6

ANSWERING THE OBJECTIONS TO DANIEL'S EARLY AUTHORSHIP

The preceding chapters have presented a substantial case for the sixth-century BC composition of the Book of Daniel. The testimony of ancient Jewish sources, Daniel's detailed knowledge of Babylonian history and government, and the linguistic evidence all point toward an early origin. We have also examined the Maccabean theory itself and addressed several of the arguments used to support it. The evidence already considered presents serious difficulties for the claim that Daniel was written during the second century BC.

We now turn to several remaining objections that critics use to defend the Maccabean date. Some concern the interpretation of Daniel's prophecies, while others challenge the book's knowledge of sixth-century history. We will examine each objection in its proper context, explain why critics consider it significant, and determine whether it provides a sound basis for rejecting Daniel's early date.

The Four Kingdoms of Daniel

One of the principal arguments for the Maccabean date concerns the identity of the four successive kingdoms described in Daniel 2 and 7. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar sees a great image with a head of gold, a

chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron. Daniel identifies Nebuchadnezzar with the head of gold and explains that three more kingdoms will follow his. Daniel 7 presents a related vision in which four beasts represent four kingdoms. Although both visions begin with Babylon, the identity of the kingdoms that follow is disputed.

The question is whether Media and Persia should be counted as two separate kingdoms or as one combined empire. Critical scholars commonly identify the four kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. Under this interpretation, Greece is the fourth and final kingdom. The traditional interpretation, which we follow, identifies them as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The difference is important because it changes which empire is represented by the fourth kingdom and how far into history the visions extend.

Critics identify the fourth beast in Daniel 7 as Greece largely because of the ruler who emerges from it. The beast has ten horns, and another, smaller horn arises among them. This "little horn" speaks against God and persecutes His people (Daniel 7:8, 21-25). Critical scholars identify him as the Greek Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews led to the Maccabean revolt. They also identify the horn described in Daniel 8:9-12, 21-25 as Antiochus. Since Daniel 8 explicitly identifies the kingdom from which that horn arises as Greece, critics argue that the similar descriptions in Daniel 7 and 8 point to the same ruler. They consequently identify Greece as the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7. Under this interpretation, both visions describe Antiochus' persecution of the Jews during the Maccabean period. Critics maintain that the author was describing events that had already occurred or were unfolding in his own lifetime, rather than predicting them centuries in advance, and use this interpretation to support a second-century BC date for Daniel.[1]

To examine this argument, we must first consider how Daniel describes the kingdom that succeeded Babylon. When Belshazzar's kingdom falls, Daniel 5:28 declares that it is given to "the Medes and Persians." Daniel 6:8, 12, and 15 likewise refer to the law of the Medes and Persians as the law governing the new administration.

These passages present Media and Persia together as the power that replaced Babylon. Daniel 8 provides an even more direct explanation when the angel identifies the kingdoms represented by the ram and the goat:

> **20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.** 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.
>
> -Daniel 8:20-22

The angel identifies Media and Persia with a ram that has two horns. The horns distinguish the two peoples, while the ram represents the empire they form together. Greece is represented by a separate animal that defeats the ram. Daniel had already referred to the Medes and Persians together in his account of Babylon's fall, and here he represents them together again in a vision that names Greece as the power that follows them. Daniel himself identifies Media and Persia as one empire, with Greece following it. The second kingdom in Daniel 2 and the second beast in Daniel 7 must therefore represent the combined Medo-Persian Empire.

The historical record also fits this sequence. Cyrus, the Persian king, defeated Astyages, the ruler of Media, around 550 BC, bringing Media under his control. When Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC, the Medes were already part of his empire. Babylon was conquered by a power that included both Medes and Persians, rather than by an independent Median kingdom that was later replaced by Persia.[2] Daniel's references to Darius the Mede raise a separate historical question, which we will examine later in this chapter. This ruler's appearance in the narrative, however, does not by itself establish that Daniel intended Media and Persia to represent two successive world empires.

Daniel 7 also provides a clear reason to identify Greece with the third kingdom. The third beast is a leopard with four wings and four

heads (Daniel 7:6). Although Daniel 7 does not name this kingdom, Daniel 8 provides the information needed to identify it. In that vision, a goat defeats the ram representing Media and Persia, and the angel explicitly identifies the goat as "the king of Grecia" (Daniel 8:20-21). The goat's great horn represents the first king of the Greek Empire, Alexander the Great. When that horn is broken, four horns arise in its place, which the angel explains represent four kingdoms emerging from the Greek nation (Daniel 8:21-22). After Alexander's death, his generals fought for control of his empire, and four principal kingdoms eventually emerged: Macedonia and Greece under Cassander, Thrace and much of Asia Minor under Lysimachus, Syria and the eastern territories under Seleucus, and Egypt under Ptolemy.[3]

The four heads of the leopard in Daniel 7 correspond to these four successor kingdoms, just as the four horns of the goat represent them in Daniel 8. The leopard's four wings reinforce the repeated number four and also convey the extraordinary speed of Alexander's conquests. Daniel 8 likewise describes the Greek goat moving so swiftly that it "touched not the ground" (Daniel 8:5). In little more than a decade, Alexander conquered the Persian Empire and extended his rule as far as northwestern India, all before his death at the age of thirty-two.[4]

Both visions therefore follow the same historical sequence: the winged leopard and the swift-moving goat portray Alexander's rapid conquests, while the four heads and four horns portray the division of his empire after his death. These matching descriptions, together with the angel's explicit identification of Greece in Daniel 8 and Greece's historical succession after Medo-Persia, identify Greece as the third kingdom in Daniel 7.

The identity of the fourth kingdom is especially important to the question of Daniel's date. As noted already, the critical interpretation places Greece fourth and identifies the little horn of Daniel 7 with Antiochus Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews occurred during the Maccabean period. But if Rome is the fourth kingdom instead, the vision extends beyond the Greek Empire and the events critics believe the author was describing in his own time. The question, then, is

whether Daniel's description of the fourth kingdom corresponds to Rome, the empire that succeeded the Greek kingdoms.

Daniel 2:40 describes the fourth kingdom as "strong as iron" and says that it will break and subdue other kingdoms. Daniel 7:7 describes the fourth beast in similar terms: it is "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly," with great iron teeth that it uses to devour and break other powers. The repeated iron imagery connects the fourth kingdom in the two visions, and both descriptions emphasize its overwhelming military strength. Rome's rise perfectly fits this description along with the historical sequence established by the preceding kingdoms. Rome gradually conquered the Greek successor kingdoms, defeating Macedonia and extending its control across the eastern Mediterranean. In 64 BC, the Roman general Pompey brought Syria, the former center of Seleucid power, under Roman rule. The following year, Roman forces captured Jerusalem and brought Judea under Roman control. Thus, Rome succeeded the Greek kingdoms and established its authority over the land of Daniel's people.[5]

The identification of Rome also clarifies the distinction between the little horns in Daniel 7 and 8. Daniel 8 identifies its goat as Greece, while Daniel 7 places its little horn among the ten horns of the fourth beast. The similarities between the two horns do not, by themselves, establish that they represent the same ruler. Identifying Greece as the third kingdom allows Daniel 8 to describe Antiochus within the Greek Empire while Daniel 7 continues beyond that empire to the fourth kingdom.

The Maccabean interpretation depends on counting Media and Persia separately so that Greece becomes the fourth kingdom and Antiochus can be identified with its little horn. Yet Daniel explicitly represents Media and Persia as two horns on one ram, identifies Greece as the power that follows them, and describes Greece with symbols that correspond to the third beast in Daniel 7. Rome then fits the position and description of the fourth kingdom. The critics' four-kingdom argument therefore provides no sound basis, on its own, for assigning Daniel a second-century BC date. The sequence presented in these visions extends beyond Antiochus and the Maccabean period.

Daniel 11 and the Death of Antiochus Epiphanes

Daniel 11 contains a detailed prophecy of the kingdoms and rulers that would affect Israel in the centuries following Daniel's lifetime. It begins with Persia, describes the rise of a powerful Greek king and the division of his empire, and then follows the conflicts between the Greek kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. Israel lay between these rival powers, and their wars repeatedly affected the Jewish people. The prophecy eventually describes Antiochus Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews led to the Maccabean revolt (Daniel 11:21-35).

Critical scholars argue that the author wrote during the Maccabean period and described much of this history after it had already happened. They point particularly to Daniel 11:40-45, which they interpret as predicting another Egyptian campaign by Antiochus and his eventual death near Jerusalem. The historical record, however, places Antiochus' death in Persia in 164 BC and provides no confirmation of the final Egyptian campaign they believe these verses describe (1 Maccabees 6:1-16). Critics conclude that the author accurately recorded events up to his own lifetime but made an unsuccessful prediction about what would happen next. They use this argument to support a date for Daniel shortly before Antiochus' death.[6]

Before examining that claim, it is important to recognize that Daniel had already described Antiochus' downfall in an earlier vision. Daniel 8 identifies Greece as the kingdom represented by the goat and describes a later ruler who would persecute God's people (Daniel 8:20-25). We understand this ruler to be Antiochus Epiphanes, and the prophecy concludes by declaring that "he shall be broken without hand" (Daniel 8:25). This describes his eventual death without being killed by a human adversary. According to 1 Maccabees 6:8-16, Antiochus became ill and died in Persia after learning of his armies' defeats. His death from sickness, rather than at the hands of an enemy, precisely fulfilled Daniel's prophecy of his demise. Even S.R. Driver, a biblical scholar who accepted the Maccabean theory of Daniel's authorship, understood this verse to refer to Antiochus' death.[7]

This brings us to the central issue in the critical objection to Daniel 11:40-45. Critics interpret these verses as a prediction of Antiochus' final campaigns and death, then argue that Daniel was mistaken because those events did not happen as they believe the passage describes. The weakness of their argument is that it depends entirely on Antiochus still being the ruler in view – *an interpretation we actually reject*. In actuality, Daniel 11 traces a succession of rulers over several centuries. As we explain in our companion study, *The Daniel 11 Prophecy: History from the 5th-1st Centuries BC, Detailed in Advance*, the account continues beyond Antiochus and the Maccabean period into the Roman era. We understand verses 36-39 to describe Herod the Great, verses 40-43 to describe Octavian's conflict with Mark Antony and Cleopatra and Rome's conquest of Egypt, and verses 44-45 to return to Herod and the final years of his reign. The historical evidence and the reasons for these identifications are examined in detail in that study.[8]

Therefore, while Antiochus' death in Persia is an established historical fact, it precisely fulfills the prophecy of his downfall in Daniel 8:25. Under the interpretation we have presented, his death has nothing to do with the events described at the end of Daniel 11. Critics must first establish that Antiochus is still the subject of the prophecy before using the circumstances of his death as evidence against Daniel's accuracy. His death in Persia, by itself, provides no basis for concluding that Daniel made a failed prediction or that the book was written during the Maccabean period.

Daniel 9 and the Identity of the Anointed One

Another objection to Daniel's sixth-century authorship concerns the prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27. As we examined earlier in this study, Gabriel gives Daniel a timetable leading to the coming of "Messiah the Prince," who would afterward be "cut off." The prophecy also foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. We understand these events to concern Jesus Christ and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. Critical

scholars, however, argue that the passage describes events surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC. They identify the anointed one who is cut off with Onias III, a Jewish high priest who was murdered during Antiochus' reign. If that interpretation is correct, Daniel 9 would describe events belonging to the Maccabean period rather than foretelling the coming and death of Christ.

The critical interpretation begins with the meaning of the word "Messiah." The Hebrew word means "anointed one" and can refer to a king or a high priest. Critics also distinguish the anointed figure mentioned in Daniel 9:25 from the one who is cut off in verse 26. In the interpretation presented by S.R. Driver, a biblical scholar who accepted the Maccabean theory, the first figure is Cyrus, the Persian king who permitted the Jews to return from exile. The second is Onias III, who had been removed from the high priesthood and was murdered around 171 BC. Second Maccabees 4:33-38 records that Onias was killed by Andronicus at the urging of Menelaus, who had taken over the high priesthood. Critics then connect the remaining events in Daniel 9 with Antiochus' attacks on Jerusalem, his interruption of Temple worship, and the desecration of the sanctuary.[9]

Driver's interpretation also assigns specific dates to the seventy weeks. He begins with Jeremiah's promise that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, around 587 BC, and places the end of the first seven weeks – forty-nine years – at Cyrus' decree in 538 BC. He then understands the following sixty-two weeks to extend from Cyrus to the murder of Onias in 171 BC. The final week covers the period from Onias' death to 164 BC, encompassing Antiochus' persecution of the Jews. In this way, Driver attempts to account for the entire prophecy within the events leading up to and surrounding the Maccabean revolt.[10]

There is, however, a substantial problem with this timetable. Sixty-two weeks of years amount to 434 years, but only 367 years separate Cyrus' decree in 538 BC from Onias' death in 171 BC. Driver openly acknowledges that his interpretation is short by sixty-seven years. Because he regards this part of Daniel as a later account of historical events rather than a prophecy given centuries in advance, his "solu-

tion" is to suggest that the alleged Maccabean author simply miscalculated the earlier chronology. Other interpreters have proposed different solutions, including counting the first seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks from the same starting point, so that the two periods overlap rather than follow one another.[11] However, neither approach changes the underlying problem: the sixty-two weeks specify 434 years, but the proposed interval between Cyrus and Onias contains only 367. Identifying Onias as the anointed one therefore does not establish that the prophecy's timetable was fulfilled during the Maccabean period.

On the other hand, our interpretation begins with the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8, which we date to Nisan of 444 BC. We understand the seven weeks and the following sixty-two weeks as totaling one period of sixty-nine consecutive weeks leading to the appearance of "Messiah the Prince." Using the required 360-day prophetic years, as explained in our companion study, the sixty-nine weeks amount to 173,880 days and lead to the month of Nisan in 33 AD, when Jesus publicly presented Himself to Israel at the Triumphal Entry. Several days after the sixty-nine weeks ended, Jesus was crucified, fulfilling Daniel 9:26's prophecy that the Messiah would then be "cut off." The dates, calculations, and reasons for identifying these events are thoroughly examined in our companion study, *The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline for the Arrival of the Messiah*.[12]

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple provides another important distinction between the two interpretations. Antiochus' forces damaged Jerusalem and *desecrated* the Temple, but the structure itself remained standing. In fact, the Jews subsequently purified and rededicated it, restoring it for worship during the Maccabean revolt (1 Maccabees 4:36-59). Daniel 9:26, however, foretells that the city and the sanctuary would be *destroyed*. This could only be fulfilled in 70 AD, when the Roman forces under Titus devastated Jerusalem, burning and completely dismantling the Temple. Josephus provides a detailed description of that destruction in his account of the war.[13] This destruction also occurred after the coming and death of Jesus

Christ in 33 AD, precisely as Daniel foretold – confirming our interpretation.

In the end, the Maccabean interpretation fails to account for both Daniel's timetable and the events he foretold. It leaves sixty-seven years missing from the sixty-two weeks, a discrepancy Driver explains by suggesting that the supposed Maccabean author miscalculated. It also identifies Antiochus' attacks on Jerusalem and desecration of the Temple as the fulfillment of Daniel's prediction that the city and sanctuary would be destroyed, despite the fact that Antiochus destroyed neither. By contrast, our interpretation follows the sequence Daniel gives: the sixty-nine weeks lead precisely to the appearance of Jesus Christ, He is then cut off, and Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed afterward, in 70 AD. Dating the book to the Maccabean period cannot account for the sixty-seven missing years or turn Antiochus' desecration of the Temple into the destruction of the city and sanctuary that Daniel foretold.

Darius the Mede

The final historical objection concerns Darius the Mede, whom Daniel identifies as the ruler who became king over Babylon when it fell to the Medes and Persians. To understand the objection, we must first recognize who conquered Babylon and what happened when the Babylonian Empire fell.

Cyrus the Great was the Persian king who established the empire that succeeded Babylon. Around 550 BC, he defeated Astyages, the king of Media, bringing the Medes under his control. In 539 BC, his forces conquered Babylon, ending the Neo-Babylonian Empire and bringing its territories under Persian rule. The *Nabonidus Chronicle*, a contemporary Babylonian historical record, confirms these events and identifies Cyrus as the ruler whose army captured Babylon.[14] The Cyrus Cylinder, an inscription produced after the conquest, also identifies Cyrus as the conqueror and new ruler of Babylon.[15]

Daniel agrees that the Babylonian kingdom passed to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:28), but introduces another ruler at the time of

its fall. Daniel 5:30-31 records the death of the final Babylonian ruler Belshazzar and states that Darius the Median took the kingdom at approximately sixty-two years of age. Daniel 9:1 identifies him more specifically as Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who "was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans." Chapter 6 then describes Darius organizing the government, appointing officials, and elevating Daniel to a position of authority. Daniel 6:28 specifically names Cyrus the Persian alongside Darius, recording that Daniel prospered during their reigns. This is important because Daniel recognizes Cyrus, whom the Babylonian records independently identify as the conqueror of Babylon. The historical question is who Darius was and how his authority related to that of Cyrus.

The difficulty raised by critical scholars is that the surviving Babylonian and Persian records identify Cyrus as the conqueror and ruler of Babylon in 539 BC, while no contemporary record has been found that securely identifies Darius the Mede as a separate king who ruled Babylon at that time. Richard N. Frye, writing in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, alleges that this is a historical problem in Daniel's account and argues that the author confused the sequence of Persian rulers.[16] The objection cannot be resolved by identifying Darius the Mede with the well-known Persian king Darius I, since that ruler did not ascend the Persian throne until 522 BC, approximately seventeen years after Cyrus conquered Babylon.[17]

However, the Babylonian records provide information about the administration established immediately after the conquest that is important to this question. The *Nabonidus Chronicle* identifies a man named Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, as the commander whose forces entered and conquered Babylon without a battle. Gutium was a region in the mountains east of Mesopotamia, associated in this period with territory under Median and Persian control. The chronicle also records that an official named Gubaru appointed district officers in Babylon under Cyrus' authority. It subsequently records Ugbaru's death.[18]

These names have played an important role in attempts to identify Darius the Mede. Some scholars have proposed that Ugbaru and the Gubaru mentioned in the chronicle were the same person, while

others have distinguished between them. Babylonian administrative documents also identify a governor named Gubaru who exercised extensive authority over Babylon and surrounding territories during the reigns of Cyrus and his successor Cambyses. Rüdiger Schmitt, writing in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, distinguishes this later governor from the commander who captured Babylon and subsequently died. The relationship between these similarly named officials has consequently been a matter of scholarly disagreement.[19]

One possible explanation is that Darius was appointed by Cyrus to govern Babylon. Daniel 9:1 describes Darius as a man who "was *made* king over the realm of the Chaldeans," wording consistent with someone receiving authority over the Babylonian territory rather than the entire Persian Empire. As we've already noted, Cyrus appointed Gubaru to govern Babylon.[20] The *Nabonidus Chronicle* records that Gubaru then appointed district officials to administer the conquered territory.[21] This provides an important historical parallel to Daniel 6:1, which describes Darius appointing officials to govern his kingdom. Although these records do not definitively establish that Gubaru was Darius or that he held the title of king, they demonstrate that the governing arrangement described in Daniel fits the historical circumstances following Cyrus' conquest of Babylon.

Other explanations have also been suggested. Some scholars have proposed that Darius was another name or royal title for Cyrus himself, which would require understanding Daniel's references to Darius and Cyrus as references to the same ruler.[22] Others have identified Darius with Cyaxares II, a Median ruler described by the Greek historian Xenophon in his account of Cyrus. However, Xenophon's account differs from the contemporary Babylonian records, and the existence of this particular Median king has not been independently established.[23] None of these proposals has produced a universally accepted identification that accounts for all the details Daniel provides, including Darius' Median ancestry, his father Ahasuerus, and his approximate age.

This historical objection consequently remains an unresolved question rather than a demonstrated error in Daniel. What we know for

sure is that the contemporary records establish that Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC and that officials acting under his authority governed the conquered territory. Daniel identifies Darius as a Median ruler who received authority over the Babylonian kingdom, but the surviving records have not established precisely who he was. An appointed ruler under Cyrus remains a possible explanation, although the evidence is insufficient to identify him with certainty. The absence of a confirmed identification leaves a genuine historical question, but it does not establish that Daniel invented Darius or that the events he describes could not have occurred.

Conclusion

After first examining the historical and prophetic evidence for Daniel's early authorship, we have now considered the principal objections raised against it. These objections concern both the interpretation of Daniel's prophecies and the accuracy of its historical accounts. The question is whether they provide sufficient evidence to support the Maccabean date or whether the sixth-century authorship presented by Daniel remains consistent with the available evidence.

The four-kingdom objection immediately illustrates the problem with the critical method of interpretation. Critics must separate Media and Persia into two successive empires, even though Daniel 8 identifies them explicitly as two parts of the same kingdom. Recognizing Medo-Persia as one unified kingdom places Greece third and Rome fourth, extending Daniel's prophetic account well beyond the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. The attempt to make Greece the fourth kingdom consequently depends upon a division that Daniel's own explanation of the vision does not support.

The same kind of problem appears in the critical interpretation of Daniel 11. Antiochus occupies an important place in the prophecy, but critics assume that the later verses continue to describe his life and reign. When the events described in those verses do not match his actual history, they conclude that Daniel made inaccurate predictions

instead of recognizing that the prophecy has moved on to discuss subsequent rulers and events, including the rise of Rome.

The problem with their objection concerning Daniel 9 is even more significant. Critics identify the anointed one who is cut off with the priest Onias III, but their proposed chronology outright fails to account for the actual period specified in the prophecy. They also connect the prophesied destruction of the city and the sanctuary with events that resulted in neither being destroyed. Daniel's sixty-nine weeks instead lead to the coming of Jesus Christ in 33 AD, followed by His death and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. This interpretation accounts for the accurate chronology and the specific events foretold in the prophecy. Furthermore, these events occurred approximately two centuries after the date critics assign to Daniel, leaving their fulfillment unexplained by the Maccabean theory.

The question of Darius the Mede presents a different kind of objection because his precise historical identity remains uncertain. The Babylonian records establish that Cyrus conquered Babylon and governed the conquered territory through appointed officials, an arrangement consistent with Daniel's description of Darius being made king over the realm of the Chaldeans and appointing officials. The absence of a confirmed identification leaves a question that deserves further investigation, but it does not establish that Daniel invented Darius or that the book was written centuries later.

In the end, none of these objections undermines the historical and prophetic evidence examined throughout this study, which strongly supports a much earlier composition. They provide no sufficient reason to abandon the sixth-century authorship presented by Daniel himself, and they leave intact the substantial evidence that his prophecies predated their fulfillments.

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CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

We began this study with a simple question: Was the Book of Daniel written by the sixth-century prophet it claims to represent, or was it composed centuries later during the Maccabean period after many of its supposed prophecies had already been fulfilled? The answer matters because Daniel contains some of the most detailed predictions in Scripture. If the book was written after the events it describes, those passages could be explained as history presented in the form of prophecy. However, if Daniel genuinely predates those events, its accurate predictions require a very different conclusion.

The evidence we have examined strongly supports the early date presented by the book itself. The Dead Sea Scrolls show that Daniel was already being copied within the ancient Jewish manuscript tradition at a remarkably early time. The recent radiocarbon dating of 4Q114 places the parchment containing portions of Daniel 8-11 within a range that begins before the period in which critical scholars claim those chapters were first composed. Because 4Q114 is itself a copy containing scribal mistakes, Daniel necessarily had a manuscript history before the production of the surviving fragment. Its translation into Greek presents an additional problem for the Maccabean theory,

since the book had to exist, circulate, gain recognition, and become sufficiently established among Greek-speaking Jews to warrant translation. The surviving evidence reveals an already developing history of transmission rather than the sudden appearance of a newly invented work during the 160s BC.

The ancient Jewish testimony points in the same direction. Ezekiel refers to Daniel during the Babylonian captivity itself and describes him as a man already known for extraordinary righteousness and wisdom – the same qualities for which Daniel is distinguished in the book bearing his name. First Maccabees, arising from the historical world in which critics claim Daniel was first written, treats Daniel as an established figure from Israel's ancient past. The Qumran community refers to "Daniel the prophet" and cites his book as an authoritative source. Josephus likewise identifies Daniel as a historical prophet whose writings foretold events long before they occurred and preserves the tradition that the Book of Daniel was shown to Alexander the Great centuries before the proposed Maccabean date. Daniel's unchallenged place within the Jewish canon creates the same difficulty. The surviving Jewish sources preserve no memory of an anonymous Maccabean author, no controversy over the book's supposed recent appearance, and no competing tradition concerning its origin. Instead, wherever Daniel appears in the ancient Jewish record, he is already known as an ancient prophet.

The historical evidence contained within Daniel itself reinforces this conclusion. The book displays detailed knowledge of the Babylonian world in which its author claims to have lived. Daniel correctly associates Nebuchadnezzar with the magnificent rebuilding of Babylon, information that largely disappeared from later historical memory until archaeological discoveries recovered the king's own inscriptions and building remains. He accurately describes specialized classes of Babylonian wise men and preserves terminology connected with professions known from contemporary records. His account of Belshazzar is especially important. For centuries, later historical sources remembered Nabonidus as Babylon's final king while Belshazzar had largely disappeared from view. Babylonian inscriptions eventually

confirmed Belshazzar's existence, identified him as Nabonidus' son, and revealed the extraordinary authority he exercised while his father was absent. That unusual arrangement explains Daniel's otherwise puzzling statement that Belshazzar could make Daniel only the third ruler in the kingdom.

Daniel's description of Babylon's fall also fits the surviving historical evidence. Greek historians describe the Persians entering Babylon while its people were occupied with a festival, and the *Nabonidus Chronicle* records the city's rapid capture without a battle inside Babylon itself. Daniel places Belshazzar at a royal feast on the night his kingdom fell. His geographical knowledge is equally specific, as seen in his placement of Shushan within Elam and beside the Ulai River, details independently reflected in ancient Near Eastern records. These are not isolated coincidences. Across different rulers, institutions, places, and events, Daniel consistently demonstrates familiarity with the sixth-century world he describes. The Maccabean theory must explain how an unknown Judean writer living approximately four centuries later repeatedly preserved information that later historians had forgotten and modern archaeology had to recover.

The linguistic evidence adds another layer to the same pattern. Daniel's Aramaic reflects features associated with Imperial Aramaic and differs in important respects from later Jewish Aramaic. Its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure fit naturally within the earlier linguistic world reflected in surviving Aramaic documents. Daniel also contains approximately nineteen Persian words, including specialized administrative terms that belong naturally within the Persian governmental setting in which Daniel says he served. Several of these older titles had apparently become difficult for the later Greek translator to understand. At the same time, the relatively few Greek-derived words in Daniel are concentrated largely in musical terminology and can be explained by the documented contact between the Greek world and Babylon long before Alexander the Great. A Maccabean writer living after generations of Greek domination would present us with an unusual linguistic picture: relatively little Greek vocabulary, yet numerous older Persian administrative

terms and an Aramaic style that resembles earlier forms of the language.

We also examined the principal objections used to defend the late date. The attempt to make Greece the fourth kingdom requires separating Media and Persia into successive empires, even though Daniel 8 explicitly portrays them as two horns belonging to one kingdom. Recognizing Medo-Persia as one unified kingdom places Greece third and Rome fourth, extending Daniel's prophetic framework beyond Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabean period. The claim that Daniel 11 contains a failed prediction concerning Antiochus likewise depends upon assuming that Antiochus remains the subject of the later verses. Daniel had already foretold Antiochus' death in Daniel 8, where his actual end corresponds to the prophecy that he would be "broken without hand." The objection therefore arises from a disputed interpretation of Daniel 11 rather than from an established historical error in the text.

Daniel 9 presents an even greater problem for the Maccabean theory. Critical interpretations that identify the anointed one with Onias III fail to account for the chronology specified in the prophecy and attempt to connect the predicted destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary with events in which neither was actually destroyed. By contrast, the sixty-nine weeks lead to the coming of Jesus Christ, followed by His death and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. These events occurred approximately two centuries after the period in which critics place the composition of Daniel. Moving the book into the Maccabean era therefore does not eliminate its prophetic character. Even if the late date were granted for the sake of argument, Daniel would still contain detailed prophecy fulfilled long afterward.

Darius the Mede remains the one historical figure examined in this study whose precise identification cannot presently be established. The surviving records confirm that Cyrus conquered Babylon and administered the conquered territory through appointed officials, providing a historical setting consistent with Daniel's description of Darius being made ruler over the realm of the Chaldeans and

appointing officials beneath him. Several identifications have been proposed, but none can be demonstrated with certainty. At the same time, the inability to identify Darius precisely from the surviving records does not establish that Daniel invented him or that the book originated centuries later.

When all of this evidence is considered together, the Maccabean theory requires far more than a different date for Daniel. It requires a massive deception that apparently no Jew ever recognized, involving an unknown second-century BC Judean who fraudulently wrote under the identity of a sixth-century prophet, reproduced detailed knowledge of Babylonian history and government, preserved older linguistic features and specialized Persian terminology, accurately described rulers and circumstances later lost from historical memory, and produced a work that was then rapidly accepted by the Jewish people as ancient Scripture without leaving any surviving trace of its true origin. It must also explain why ancient Jewish sources consistently remember Daniel as an earlier historical prophet and why the book contains prophecies whose fulfillments extend beyond the very period the late date was designed to explain.

Most importantly, the Maccabean theory arose because Daniel's accurate prophecies were judged impossible before the actual evidence was allowed to determine the book's date. Once genuine predictive prophecy is ruled out in advance, the book must somehow be placed after the events it predicts. The late date then becomes the lens through which every piece of contrary evidence is interpreted. Yet moving Daniel into the second century BC creates historical, manuscript, linguistic, canonical, and prophetic problems of its own, while still failing to explain Daniel 9 and the prophetic events fulfilled centuries later.

The evidence examined throughout this study instead points consistently toward the world Daniel himself describes. The book reflects the knowledge of someone familiar with sixth-century Babylon and the early Persian period, ancient Jewish testimony remembers Daniel as a historical prophet, the manuscript evidence pushes the history of the book backward beyond the surviving copies, and its

prophecies extend beyond the Maccabean era into events fulfilled centuries later. We have substantial reason, then, to accept Daniel's own testimony concerning its origin and to recognize that its prophecies were recorded before their fulfillment.

That conclusion carries implications far beyond the dating of one Old Testament book. If Daniel accurately described future kingdoms, rulers, political events, the coming and death of the Messiah, and the later destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple before these things occurred, then we are dealing with something human foresight cannot explain. Daniel's prophetic accuracy points beyond the prophet himself to the God who declares the future before it comes to pass. The Book of Daniel therefore stands not only as an authentic record of ancient history, but as powerful evidence for the supernatural origin and authority of Scripture.

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