

offer for sins". Again we ask, Is the writer making a comparison between Jesus and the high priests under the Law, or a contrast? The context shows it is the former, for in the previous chapter Jesus is presented as being "not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (4:15).

Later in chapter 5 Jesus is spoken of as having prayed earnestly for salvation "out of death" (v. 7, RV mg.). The conclusion is, again, that Jesus in some sense fulfilled the type by making an offering for his "sin". This "sin" was not, of course, sins which he committed, for there were none, so it must refer to the infirmity of human nature which he bore, mortality and a capacity for sin.

Scripture presents Jesus as one who bore our nature and needed to be saved from it. He not only had our mortality but he had also our capacity to respond to temptation by sinning, though he never actually sinned. Through his life of perfect obedience, culminating in his willing offering of himself upon the cross, he secured both his own salvation from our nature and also the salvation of his followers, which Scripture presents as one work. I do not believe that we diminish him by speaking of him in such terms; rather, we exalt him, for what a wonderful thing it was that one who suffered all the temptations that we have should triumph over them all under such difficulties, and all so that we might be saved from the consequences of our sins!

Higher criticism and the Bible

7. The book of Daniel (Part 1)

David Green

IT HAS BEEN pointed out that there has been "a vigorous and persistent effort . . . to eliminate the supernatural from the Bible, or at least to minimise its importance and to ignore it as much as possible".¹ The higher critics have limited the meaning of "Thus saith the LORD" and "Behold the days come" in making the prophet speak as a "contemporary to his contemporaries".² The same writer describes the method applied by these critics in the following words:

"(1) Reject the *situation* of the prophecy, as defined in its Biblical context, and assign to it a date so near the so-called fulfilment that the element of prediction is largely or wholly eliminated; (2) Tone down the prophecy by cutting out or interpreting away its distinctive features so that prediction becomes vague or general; (3) Treat the predictive element as simply a literary device employed to enable a contemporary or near-contemporary of the events described to speak with the authority of a prophetic voice from the distant past; (4) Insist that, in the case of all the prophetic books, 'later editorial hands undoubtedly labored on the prophecies and brought the book to its present form'".³

Higher-critical thought regarding the book of Daniel

The following quotation from a Bible commentary well illustrates the attitude of the critics in relation to the book of Daniel, as set out above:

"The anonymous apocalypticist assumes the name of Daniel, and writes as if he were living in Babylon at the time of the Exile, and foretelling the events of the ensuing four centuries. In fact . . . he is writing in the second century BC about events, which have already happened, as if they were still to come. The only real element of prediction in the book is that of the impending end of the world".⁴

It reveals much about the attitude of the orthodox churches to the Bible that the *Church Times* describes this particular commentary as "unique" and a "masterpiece", and the *Baptist Times* as being of "wonderful value".⁵

1. *The Unity of Isaiah*, O. T. Allis, Tyndale Press, 1951, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 20, quoting from *The Westminster Study Edition of the Bible*, p. 1163.
4. *One Volume Bible Commentary*, William Neil, Hodder and Stoughton, 1962, p. 272.
5. *Ibid.*, back cover.

A number of points are made about the book of Daniel to support this critical view.⁶ Later in this article we will deal briefly with the allegation that the book contains historical inaccuracies, and in the following article, God willing, with three further allegations:

- 1 that the religious ideas do not belong to the sixth century B.C.;
- 2 that the author uses a late form of Aramaic;
- 3 that because the times of Antiochus Epiphanes are said to be described with remarkable accuracy, the book must have been written about 167 B.C.

General considerations

Before dealing with the allegation that the book of Daniel is historically inaccurate, some general points will be considered.

There is a strong sense of unity to the book of Daniel, the various chapters being linked together with common themes and ideas. For example, Nebuchadnezzar's dream image in chapter 2 is closely connected to the vision of the four beasts in chapter 7.

Daniel claims that he received a number of revelations from God concerning the future. Much of the predictive element of these revelations shows remarkably accurate fulfilment in events well beyond the second century B.C. We will return to this aspect in the next article when considering the final point of criticism listed above.

There are two New Testament references to Daniel that show that Jesus considered him to be a true prophet, who predicted events that would take place in A.D. 70 (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14). In addition, there are allusions in the teaching of Jesus to Daniel 7 that imply its genuineness. Jesus taught that he, as the Son of man, would come again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory to sit upon the throne of his glory (Mt. 16:27; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64), and this is obviously based on Daniel 7:13,14.

Josephus, the Jewish historian (A.D. 30-100), considered Daniel to be a true prophet, inspired by God to reveal future things. He wrote that those who desired to understand "the uncertainties of futurity" should "be diligent in reading the book of Daniel, which he will find among the sacred writings".⁷ Josephus goes on to say that "he [Daniel] was so happy [favoured] as to have strange revelations made to him, and those as to one of the *greatest of the prophets* [our emphasis] . . . we believe that Daniel conversed

with God; for he did not only prophesy of future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time of their accomplishment".⁸

Historical objections considered

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* speaks of the writer of Daniel as having "a sketchy and inaccurate knowledge of the exilic times", and claims that the book contains four errors.⁹ These are listed and replied to as follows:

1. No deportation occurred in 605 B.C.

According to a Babylonian tablet, in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar was sent by his father Nabopolassar king of Babylon against the Egyptians at Carchemish, where he inflicted a disastrous defeat. He followed this up by conquering Syria and all the land south to the Egyptian border (see 2 Kings 24:7). This took place in the third year of Jehoiakim, Tishri reckoning (Dan. 1:1), but the fourth year, Nisan reckoning (Jer. 46:2).¹⁰ On hearing the news that his father had died, he hastened to Babylon, where he ascended the throne on the 7 September 605.

Josephus quotes the Chaldean historian Berossus (writing about 270 B.C.) as saying that Nebuchadnezzar "committed the captives he had taken from *the Jews*, and Phoenicians, and Syrians, and of the nations belonging to Egypt, to some of his friends, that they might conduct that part of the forces that had on heavy armour, with the rest of the baggage, to Babylonia; while he went in haste, having but a few with him, over the desert to Babylon".¹¹ In Daniel 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar is called king before being so, because the account was written at a later date.

From the foregoing, there seems to be no good reason for not believing that there was a limited deportation in 605 B.C. of Jewish young men taken "from the royal family and the nobility" (1:3, NIV).

6. For details see *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, p. 689, IVP, 1970.

7. *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book X, ch. X. 4.

8. *Ibid.* ch. XI. 7.

9. Fifteenth edition, 1994, article, "The Book of Daniel" (Vol. 3, p. 875) and article "Biblical Literature" (Vol. 14, pp. 951-2).

10. Under Tishri reckoning the new year commenced in the month Tishri in the autumn; under Nisan reckoning it commenced in the month Nisan in the spring.

11. *Against Apion*, Book I. 19.

2. The date of the fall of Jerusalem is wrong

This allegation makes little or no sense because Daniel does not give a date for the fall of Jerusalem. No explanatory comments are given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article.

3. Belshazzar did not rule as king (Dan. 5:1), and was the son of Nabonidus not of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 11)

The description of Belshazzar as king does not present a serious problem to the Bible student. Records show that he was regent at Babylon for his father Nabonidus, who was absent from Babylon for a period amounting to more than half his seventeen-year reign. One cuneiform document states that Nabonidus "entrusted the kingship" to Belshazzar.¹² As such he was the second ruler in the kingdom, as is implied by Daniel 5:7,16,29.

More problematical is the statement that Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 11,18,22). It is possible that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, or, since the paternity of Nabonidus is unknown, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar was his father.¹³ In either scenario, Belshazzar would be Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. In Scripture the terms 'son' and 'father' are much wider in scope compared with the way we use them. Jeremiah prophesied that the line of Nebuchadnezzar would continue up to the end of the Babylonian Empire with his son and his son's son (27:7).

4. Darius the Mede is a fictional character; Darius was a successor of Cyrus, not a predecessor

The problem of the identification of Darius the Mede, who "received the kingdom" following the capture of Babylon by the armies of Cyrus (Dan. 5:30,31, NKJV), is a difficult one. The most likely solution is that 'Darius the Mede' is another title for 'Cyrus the Persian'.* This being the case, Daniel 6:28 would be best translated: "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian". The Hebrew conjunction usually translated 'and' is quite often used in an explanatory sense.¹⁴ There are examples of this elsewhere in the book of Daniel (1:3, RV; 6:9; and possibly 7:1).

The phrase, "received the kingdom", does not imply more than that Darius commenced his reign. However, since "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever

He chooses" (Dan 4:25, NKJV), Darius can be said to have received the kingdom from God.

Points that help support this theory¹⁵ are as follows:

- Cyrus was of Median descent on the maternal side.
- Cyrus was about sixty-two years of age when Babylon was captured (5:31).
- The Medes are spoken of as the future conquerors of Babylon in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 13:17; Jer. 51:11,28).
- The title "Darius the Persian" in Nehemiah 12:22 may have been used to distinguish him from Darius the Mede in Daniel.
- Nabonidus in a record dated 546 B.C. refers to Cyrus as "king of the Medes".
- Both the Septuagint and Theodotion have "Cyrus" instead of "Darius the Mede" in Daniel 11:1.¹⁶
- In the Apocryphal book of Esdras, it is Darius who sends Zerubbabel to Jerusalem with the temple vessels; compare 1 Esdras 4:44,45,57 and 5:2,6 with Ezra 1:7-2:2. However, the writer of 1 Esdras is confused in thinking that Darius fulfilled what Cyrus had promised.

Other objections are sometimes raised, as follows:¹⁷

5. The use of the description 'Chaldean' as a caste term is appropriate only to a later age.

Herodotus, who wrote his history about 440 B.C., speaks of the Chaldeans as "priests of Bel", and

12. *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, p. 694.

13. *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, J. G. Baldwin, IVP, p. 23.

* There are a number of other ideas as to who Darius the Mede was. In "Darius the Mede", *The Testimony*, Mar.-Apr. 1992, Brother Philip Edmonds put forward the view that he was a governor of Babylon appointed by Cyrus, possibly a general called Gubaru. In "The Mystery of Darius the Mede", *The Bible Student*, July-Aug. 1979 to Jan.-Feb. 1980, Sister Ray Walker put forward the view that he was a member of the Median royal family called Cyaxeres. Another view is that he was Cyrus's son, Cambyses, but this involves amending the statement in Daniel 5:31 that Darius the Mede was sixty-two years old.—*T.B.*

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

15. Taken from *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, D. J. Wiseman, Tyndale Press, 1965, pp. 1-16.

16. *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, footnote 15, p. 27.

17. *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, p. 689.

uses the term in a way that indicates that it had been so used years before his time.¹⁸ A related claim by some critics is that the Hebrew word translated 'Chaldean' in Daniel, *kasdim*, is less accurate than the Greek *kaldayu*, from which the English word 'Chaldean' is derived. However, there is now evidence that "the Hebrew seems likely to preserve an earlier form of the word".¹⁹

6. Daniel would never have become a member of the Babylonian priesthood

This supposes that the author of the book spoke of Daniel becoming a member of the priesthood caste. However, this was not the case; Daniel only attained to a position of political prominence.

7. There is no historical evidence for Nebuchadnezzar's madness

Clearly we would not expect to find any reference to this embarrassing fact in the state records. However, there are indications that something unusual happened towards the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life. Josephus quotes Berosus as using a phrase "which may be rendered, just as well, that he fell into a state of mental depression, as into a state of bodily sickness".²⁰ Even more to the point is the following quotation that comes to us from Megasthenes, a contemporary of Berosus, via Abydenus and Eusebius: "It is moreover related by the Chaldeans, That as he (Nebuchadnezzar) went up to, or ascended the roof of his palace, he was possessed by some god".^{21, 22}

Historical corroboration

There are instances where history agrees with the book of Daniel, and this lends support to an early date. The first of these relates to the division of the Medo-Persian Empire into provinces. There were only 120 provinces in the days that Daniel was appointed a governor (6:1). Through

the later conquests of Cyrus and his successors, seven more provinces were added, so that in the days of the King Ahasuerus mentioned in the book of Esther the total was 127 provinces (Est. 1:1). This extension of the Persian Empire was the subject of Daniel's vision of the ram that pushed westward, northward and southward (ch. 8). If the book had been written in the second century B.C., as the critics say, the writer would probably have betrayed the fact by referring to 127 provinces, as in Esther, or to some other number, rather than a figure consistent with the Persian Empire in Daniel's days.

Extra-Biblical accounts of the fall of Babylon are provided by the Chaldean historian Berosus (about 270 B.C.), and the Greek historians Xenophon (born about 455 B.C.) and Herodotus (born about 485 B.C.). It so happens that the account of Belshazzar's death harmonises remarkably well with Xenophon's account, but not with that of Berosus. On the supposition of the critics that Daniel was written in the second century B.C. one would expect the writer to have followed the Aramaic account written so much nearer to his own time than the much earlier Greek account of Xenophon that was in a less familiar language. The fact that the reverse is the case provides evidence of an early date. There is, of course, no suggestion that the writer did make use of Xenophon's account.

(To be continued)

18. Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 1, Penguin Classics, 1972, p. 114.

19. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

20. *Inspiration of the Book of Daniel*, Boyle, 1863, p. 81, referring to Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book I. 20.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 82, quoting Eusebius, *Chronicles*, 49.

22. See "The nature of Nebuchadnezzar's illness", W. Form, *The Testimony*, April 1990, p. 129, for more details.

The Chosen Nation and their Law

This is a 167-page book by the late W. H. Carter, which is a reprint of a series of articles published in the *Old Paths* magazine in the period 1960-62. It deals with the origin and development of the nation of Israel, the Exodus and the events at Mount Sinai, the construction of the tabernacle and the provisions of the Law of Moses, and covers the typical and spiritual significance of these things. Cost £6 plus postage and packing. Available from Brother J. Ramus, 15A Ashdown Road, Epsom, KT17 3PL; e-mail jackramus@cwcom.net.