

# Book of Daniel – Introduction

## General History Overview

- 930 BC Jewish Kingdom is divided - Israel and Judah  
Succession of evil kings in the North – Good and bad kings in the South
- 722 BC Samaria (Israel) falls to Assyria – captivity begins
- 689 BC Assyria destroys and assimilates Babylon
- 663 BC Egypt becomes vassal of Assyria
- 626 BC Upon death of Assyrian king – Nabopolassar rebels – founds the Chaldean Dynasty of Babylon
- 612 BC Babylonians capture Ninevah
- 609 BC Egypt comes to Assyria's aid and stops Babylon temporarily  
Judah becomes vassal of Egypt – begins paying tribute
- 605 BC Babylon defeats Egypt at Carchemish – Egypt relinquishes control of Assyria and Judah  
Judah becomes vassal state of Babylon – pays tribute and surrenders first captives – **Daniel**, etc.
- 597 BC Second group of captives are taken to Babylon – includes **Ezekiel**
- 586 BC Egypt encourages Judah to rebel – Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem – 10,000 captives
- 539 BC Persia conquers Babylon and absorbs it into its growing empire
- 536 BC Cyrus of Persia issues decree for captives to return  
First group returns to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel – ends 70 years of captivity – **Haggai** prophesies
- 516 BC Temple is completed – **Zechariah** prophesies
- 457 BC Ezra leads second group back to Jerusalem – events of **Ezra** and **Esther**
- 444 BC Third group led back by **Nehemiah** – walls of Jerusalem rebuilt
- 435 BC **Malachi**, the last OT prophet writes his book – 400 years of silence begin
- 334 BC Alexander the Great conquers the known world and establishes the Greek empire
- 323 BC Alexander dies in Babylon – empire divided
- 1<sup>st</sup> C BC Rome rises

## Jewish History

### **Manasseh (2 Kings 21)**

- Ruled from 687-642 BC
- Judah's worst and longest reigning king (45 years)
- Returned to evil ways of Ahab, king of Israel
- Rebuilt high places – Erected altars for Baal – Made an Asherah for Syrian goddess
- Performed human sacrifice with his own son (**2 Kings 21:6** ...*sacrificed his son in the fire...*)
- Engaged in occult practices (witchcraft, divination, mediums and spiritists)
- Tradition says that he killed Isaiah by having him sawn in two inside a hollow log
- **Manasseh led Israel toward evil – Israel willingly followed (2 Kings 21:9)**

### **God's Response**

- ...*will wipe Jerusalem clean as one wipes a bowl...* (**2 Kings 21:12-14**)
- (Judah)...*will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years...* (**Jeremiah 25:11-12**)

### **King Josiah (2 Kings 22)**

- Reigned from 640-609 BC
- Son of evil King Amon – grandson of Manasseh
- Became king at age 8
- In his 18<sup>th</sup> year (age 26) began repairing the temple – heart sought after God
- High Priest *found* the book of the law which had been hidden from Manasseh
- Josiah repented in anguish when he heard the words of the law

- Commanded the priests to inquire of the Lord for mercy
- Renewed the covenant
- Reformed the nation
- **True repentance involves grief not merely fear**

### God's Response

- *...because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord...Your eyes will not see all the disaster that I am bringing on this place. (2 Kings 22:19-20)*
- Josiah chose to intercede when Egypt moving through Judah to help Assyria – killed in battle

### Characters in Book of Daniel

#### Nabopolassar

- Tribal Chieftain
- Upon death of Assyrian king – seized power and took over Babylon
- Founded of the Chaldean dynasty of Babylon
- Made alliance with king of Medes
- Led the army in conquest of Assyria
- Ailing – returned home in 605 BC

#### Nebuchadnezzar

- Eldest son of Nabopolassar
- Chosen to lead the Babylonian army against the Egyptians in 605 BC
- Upon hearing of his father's death, rode directly across the desert in 23 days to take throne of Babylon
- Soon returned to campaign in Judea

#### Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego)

- Young men of some importance
- Born into Judean nobility sometime around Josiah's reformation (621 BC)
- Among the first captives in 605 BC – hostages to demonstrate good faith
- Committed to the Lord and his law – beneficiaries of Josiah's example and reforms

### Who Wrote the book of Daniel?

- **Critical view:** written by a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC Jewish author
    - Naturalistic perspective – denies possibility of authentic foretelling found in Daniel
    - **This view driven by rejection of supernatural prophecy**
  - **Traditional view:** written by Daniel himself shortly after end of Babylonian captivity
    - Text itself supports – Daniel claimed to have written down visions (8:2; 9:2, 20; 12:5)
    - Ezekiel referred to Daniel several times (Ez. 14:14, 20; 28:3).
    - **Manuscript evidence** supports an early date
      - Fragments from Daniel found among other Dead Sea Scrolls of same period
    - **Linguistic evidence** supports an early date
      - Use of Aramaic that fits 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BC date
      - Parallels Aramaic of Ezra as well as secular works of that period
    - **Historical evidence** supports an early date
      - Daniel accurately described Belshazzar as co-regent with another king (Nabonidus)
      - Fact not known until modern times
  - **Jesus Christ** attributed book to Daniel (Mt. 24:15)
- He should know. He was there.**