

The purpose of these histories, in general, not different from that of the Former Prophets save in time. That is significant since the periods are broken by the captivity and the seeming disruption of the covenant.

1. A Survey Study of Daniel (God's Deliverer)

a. An overview:

Daniel claims to be a first person account of events that took place in Babylon in the sixth century BC. This view was denied by Porphyry, a neo-platonic philosopher/theologian of the third century AD who objected to the presence of predictive prophecy in Daniel. Porphyry's opinion was that Daniel had been written during or after the events which are set forth in the book as predictive of events yet future; Daniel was therefore written during the Maccabean period (second century BC).

Modern scholarship has basically adopted Porphyry's conclusions, although it has added historical, linguistic, and general arguments to his reasons. For example, it is alleged that Nebuchadnezzar's illness (ch. 4) is not mentioned in secular sources, that Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar (5:11), and that he was not the king of Babylon (5:1). Linguistic arguments state that the presence of certain Greek words shows that the book was written after the conquest of Alexander the Great (326-323 BC), that Persian words used would not have been known until after the events narrated, and that the Aramaic of the central portions (2:4b-7:28) reflects second century BC Aramaic style as does the Hebrew of the rest of the book. Also, Daniel was written late in the development of the Bible. Lastly, Daniel's theology (e.g., his belief in the resurrection and his doctrine of angels) was too advanced for the sixth century BC and must thus belong to a later period.

Ancient near eastern kings boasted of their accomplishments and victories, even making their defeats sound like victories. Therefore it is only to be expected there would be no mention of Nebuchadnezzar's illness--such embarrassing behavior would not have been appropriate in a king. Belshazzar was not a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. His father, Nabonidus, had usurped the Babylonian throne. The word "son" could be used in a very loose way for one who followed another on the throne, or it could reflect parentage. Belshazzar may have been the son of a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, making him Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, thus as "son" as a term of general descent.

The disputed Greek words used are the names of musical instruments (3:5). A well-known fact of language growth is that cultural terms are borrowed first from a foreign language. This also applies to the Persian technical terms scattered through the book. The Aramaic of Daniel is virtually identical to the "Royal Aramaic" of the fifth century BC found in letters from a Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt and that in the book of Ezra. The Hebrew is similar to that of Ezekiel, Ezra, Haggai, and Chronicles; all of these books come from the fifth century BC or earlier. Position in the canon is not proof of date of composition, except perhaps in the case of the Pentateuch. Finally, Daniel's theology, while more developed, is fully anticipated by various portions of Ezekiel, Hosea, and Isaiah.

There are also claims that Daniel was originally two separate books --one a collection of stories about a mythical figure and his friends, the other a series of visions. Evidence against this is the interwoven themes found in both "parts". For example, Daniel 1:17 says that he was given understanding of dreams and visions; chapters 2, 4, and 7-12 detail some of those. The Aramaic section continues across the supposed division with no sign of discontinuity.