

Archaeology and Daniel...Some scholars have doubted that Israel had ever been exiled! Clay ration tablets found in Babylon made out to King Jehoiachin of Judah show that he had been fed from the king's own storehouse and larder (see Jeremiah 52). Babylonian and Assyrian kings wrote annals chronicling their work of the previous year. Such a chronicle of Nebuchadnezzar dates from 597 BC and describes his capture of Jerusalem and deportation of many captives.

The mention of Belshazzar as king of Babylon was once thought to be a historical error. Ancient historians named as the last king Nabonidus, who was defeated by Cyrus the Great of Medo-Persia. It has been discovered that Nabonidus had a son, Belshazzar, to whom he entrusted the rule of Babylon and control of her army when he left for a ten year period of campaigning in Arabia. Belshazzar was, therefore, king in all but actual rank --especially so far as the Jews living in Babylon were concerned. Daniel 5:16 contains a touch of authenticity when Belshazzar offers the aging Daniel the position of third in the kingdom, he, Belshazzar, being second after his father. In terms of embarrassing critical assessments and supporting particular facts, Daniel has been exceptionally well supported archaeologically.

Some study tips: Read through Daniel at one sitting to get a feel for the flow of the book. Read it a second time labeling each chapter by its main character, event, and theme. How do Nebuchadnezzar's statements about the Lord change? What is the purpose of the prophecies of Daniel? How do you know? Which of Daniel's images are picked up in Revelation? How does John use them there? Read about the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar in a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia. Read about the inter-testamental period for background on Daniel's prophecies. Important sections of Daniel include the reason for Daniel's success (1:8-17), the source of Daniel's abilities (2:20-23), Nebuchadnezzar's confession (4:34-35), and Daniel's final instructions (12:5-13).

In the classics Daniel is used by Benjamin Britten in a church parable based on Daniel 3. Susanna by Handel (1749) is based on the apocryphal story from Daniel's youth. "Daniel in the Lion's Den" is the title of paintings by both the Flemish painter David Teniers the Elder (1582-1649) and Rembrandt (1606-1669). Rembrandt also portrayed Belshazzar's alarmed reaction to the writing on the wall in "Belshazzar's Feast" (c. 1636). Fifteen years later he painted "The Vision of Daniel" from chapter 8. "Belshazzar", Handel's oratorio, is based on Daniel 5, and William Walton's work, "Belshazzar's Feast" is drawn from Daniel 5 and Psalms 137 and 81.

For further reading..Daniel has inspired many books, commentaries, and articles. Unfortunately the majority of these are characterized by their simultaneous defense of one eschatological position and attack on all others, which seems to miss the point of the book. THE LORD IS KING (IVP) by Ronald S. Wallace, is a reissue in the "The Bible Speaks Today" series. DANIEL (IVP) by Joyce Baldwin in the number in the Tyndale commentaries. DANIEL, THE MAN AND HIS VISIONS (Christian Herald Books) by Charles Lee Feinberg is another helpful commentary. THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL (Eerdmans) by Edward J. Young, is a scholarly work based on and making constant reference to the original languages. DANIEL IN THE CRITICS DEN is the original title of a word defending the authenticity of Daniel by Sir Robert Anderson. The same title has been used for a similar work by Josh MacDowell.

b. Further study in Daniel might involve:

--his prayer in Daniel 9