

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 21, Introduction to Daniel Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 21, Introduction to Daniel, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Robert Vannoy's lecture on the Book of Daniel addresses critical challenges to its traditional dating and authorship. Many scholars argue for a later date, around 165 B.C., during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, citing the assumption that predictive prophecy is impossible, alleged historical errors, and late linguistic features. Vannoy systematically examines these arguments, presenting counter-evidence related to the succession of empires, the identity of figures like Belshazzar and Darius the Mede, and the nature of Aramaic and Greek loan words used in the text. He concludes that there are no compelling reasons to dismiss the traditional dating of Daniel, and that the book's purpose was to prepare Jews for persecution and emphasize God's sovereignty. The book is divided into a historical section and a predictive section, emphasizing God's supremacy over earthly rulers in times of Jewish persecution, especially during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.

**2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 21 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Major Prophets.**



**Vannoy_MP_Session
n21.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 21, Introduction to Daniel

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Robert Vannoy's lecture on the Book of Daniel:

Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy on the Book of Daniel

Main Themes and Ideas:

1. Authorship and Dating Debate:

- **Critical View:** The dominant view among critical scholars is that the Book of Daniel is fictional, written around 165 B.C. during the Maccabean period (the time of Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution). This view is based on the assumption that predictive prophecy is impossible, alleged historical errors within the text, and perceived late linguistic features.
- *"There's a general consensus among critical scholars that the book of Daniel is fictional and that it was written shortly before 165 B.C."*
- **Traditional View:** The book itself claims authorship by Daniel, who lived during the Babylonian captivity (pre-539 B.C.). This places the writing roughly 400 years earlier than the critical dating.

1. Arguments for a Late Date and Rebuttals:

- **Rejection of Predictive Prophecy:** This is seen as the core reason for the late-date theory. Critics argue that the detailed predictions about the future (from Daniel's perspective) necessitate a post-event composition.
- *"The a priori assumption that genuine predictive prophecy does not happen... People that are not willing to accept that as a possibility are not able to accept genuine predictive prophecy."*
- **Alleged Historical Errors:**
- **Median Kingdom:** Critics claim Daniel incorrectly places a Median kingdom between the Babylonian and Persian empires. Vannoy counters that history shows a direct transition from Babylonian to Persian rule. The attempt to insert Media is driven by the need to fit four kingdoms *before* 165 BC to make the "prophecies" fit the historical events already past.

- **Belshazzar's Status:** The book refers to Belshazzar as king when Babylon fell. Critics argue Nabonidus was the actual king. Vannoy explains that Babylonian sources suggest Belshazzar was a co-regent, and Nabonidus was absent from Babylon at its fall. Vannoy quotes a critical commentary that concedes the point: *"But it has been clear since 1924, that although Nabonidas was the last king of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Belshazzar was effectively ruling Babylon. In this respect then, Daniel is correct."*
 - **Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar's Father:** Vannoy explains that "father" is used in a broader Semitic sense, meaning ancestor.
 - **Darius the Mede:** Critics argue that Darius the Mede never existed. Vannoy suggests possible explanations: Darius could be another name/title for Cyrus, or for Gubaru (governor appointed by Cyrus). He emphasizes the "fragmentary character of the archaeological evidence" and warns against drawing firm conclusions from a lack of corroboration. *"Archaeological evidence is so miniscule when you think of all the possible things that could be corroborated that aren't. To draw the conclusion that because something isn't corroborated it's suspect in some way is, methodologically, simply not a good procedure."*
 - **Alleged Late Linguistic Features:**
 - **Greek Loanwords:** The presence of Greek loanwords (especially for musical instruments) is cited as evidence of a later date. Vannoy argues that Greek influence in the Near East existed long before Alexander the Great.
 - **Late Aramaic:** Critics claim the Aramaic used in parts of Daniel is a later form. Vannoy cites K.A. Kitchen's research, arguing that the Aramaic is "Imperial Aramaic" (600-330 B.C.) and that the few Greek loanwords are insignificant given trade relations. *"In the first place, the Aramaic of Daniel is shown to be Imperial Aramaic, in itself practically undateable with any conviction within about 600-330 B.C."* Kitchen also argues that the Aramaic of Daniel belongs to the tradition of early Imperial Aramaic (7-4th century B.C.) due to the Akkadian influence of the word order.
1. **Vannoy's Conclusion on Dating:**
- Vannoy concludes that there are no compelling reasons to date Daniel late. He believes the core issue is whether one accepts the possibility of genuine predictive prophecy.

1. Structure and Purpose of Daniel (Chapters 1-6):

- **Two Sections:** Daniel is divided into two main sections: Chapters 1-6 (historical/narrative) and Chapters 7-12 (prophetic/visionary).
- **Chapters 1-6 as a Thematic Unit:** While seemingly historical narratives, Chapters 1-6 are not a connected history of Babylon, Persia, or Daniel's life. Instead, they illustrate a central theme: *God is supreme over nature, history, and human rulers.*
- **Summary of Chapters 1-6:**
- **Chapter 1:** God blesses Daniel and his friends for their faithfulness.
- **Chapter 2:** God is supreme over Nebuchadnezzar and all rulers.
- **Chapter 3:** God delivers Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, demonstrating His power and sovereignty.
- **Chapter 4:** God humbles Nebuchadnezzar, demonstrating His rule in the kingdom of men.
- **Chapter 6:** God's supremacy over earthly rulers and nature (Daniel in the lion's den).
- **Purpose of Chapters 1-6:** To encourage God's people (particularly during times of persecution) with the knowledge of God's sovereignty. Vannoy suggests a primary purpose of the book was *"to prepare the Jews for the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and to give them encouragement during this period of persecution and difficulty that was to come."*

Key Quote:

"So, by way of conclusion, it seems to me that there are no compelling reasons for dating Daniel late. There are adequate answers for each of the historical and linguistic arguments for late dating the book. I think the underlying question is whether or not one is willing to accept the possibility of genuine predictive prophecy."

Implications:

Vannoy's lecture provides a defense of the traditional view of Daniel's authorship and dating, grounded in a belief in divine revelation and a careful examination of the historical and linguistic evidence. It challenges the critical view that dismisses predictive prophecy and highlights the thematic unity of the book's early chapters.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 21, Introduction to Daniel

The Book of Daniel: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to critical scholars, when was the book of Daniel likely written, and why?
2. What is the primary assumption that leads critical scholars to reject the traditional dating of Daniel?
3. What is the problem with the claim of four successive kingdoms of Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek before 165 BC?
4. What is the Semitic usage that explains the alleged historical error of Nebuchadnezzar being called the father of Belshazzar?
5. What are the two possible identifications of "Darius the Mede" and what makes these less than certain?
6. What is the core argument against the early dating of Daniel based on linguistic features?
7. How does K.A. Kitchen's analysis challenge the late-date theory based on the Aramaic language in Daniel?
8. What are the two main sections into which the book of Daniel is generally divided?
9. What is the unifying theme found in Daniel 1-6?
10. According to Vannoy, what was the specific purpose behind the first six chapters of the book of Daniel?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Critical scholars believe Daniel was written shortly before 165 B.C. because they believe it reflects the situation of the Jews suffering under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. They consider it a fictional account written to address the challenges of that time.

2. The primary assumption is that genuine predictive prophecy does not happen. Critical scholars operate under the worldview that divine intervention and revelation are not possible, thus rejecting the idea that Daniel could have accurately predicted future events.
3. The problem is that the Median Kingdom never existed as an independent interval between the Babylonian and Persian Kingdoms. Historically, the Medo-Persian Empire defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C., moving directly from Babylonian to Persian rule.
4. In Semitic usage, the terms "father" and "son" are often used to denote ancestor and descendant, respectively. Therefore, calling Nebuchadnezzar the "father" of Belshazzar does not necessarily mean a direct paternal relationship but can imply that Nebuchadnezzar was an ancestor.
5. One possibility is that "Darius the Mede" is another name or title for Cyrus himself. The other possibility is that it refers to Gubaru, the governor appointed by Cyrus over Babylon. Definitively identifying Darius is challenging due to a lack of corroborating evidence outside of Scripture.
6. The core argument centers on the presence of several Greek loan words (particularly for musical instruments) in Daniel, along with the claim that the Aramaic used is of a later type. Critics argue that these linguistic features indicate a writing period during or after the Greek influence became prominent.
7. Kitchen argues that the Aramaic of Daniel is Imperial Aramaic, which is difficult to date precisely within 600-330 B.C. He also points out that Akkadian influence on the word order suggests an origin in early Imperial Aramaic and that the limited number of Greek loan words, especially as technical terms for musical instruments traded from the 8th century onward, does not necessarily imply a later date.
8. The book of Daniel is generally divided into two main sections: chapters 1-6, which form a historical section containing narratives about Daniel and his companions, and chapters 7-12, which constitute a prophetic section filled with visions and predictive discourse.
9. The unifying theme found in Daniel 1-6 is the supremacy of God over nature, history, and human rulers. This theme is illustrated through various narratives, emphasizing that God is sovereign and can deliver His people from any difficulties.

10. According to Vannoy, the specific purpose behind Daniel 1-6 was to prepare and encourage the Jews during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution. The stories aimed to instill confidence in God's sovereignty and ability to deliver them, even in the face of severe trials.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the implications of accepting or rejecting the possibility of predictive prophecy on the interpretation of the book of Daniel. How does one's worldview shape their understanding of the text?
2. Analyze the alleged historical errors in the book of Daniel. How do conservative and critical scholars address these issues, and what evidence do they use to support their claims?
3. Evaluate the arguments surrounding the dating of the book of Daniel. What are the strongest points for both the traditional and late-date views, and how convincing are they?
4. Examine the structure and purpose of Daniel 1-6. How do the individual narratives contribute to the overall message of God's sovereignty?
5. Explain the historical context surrounding the Maccabean period and its significance for understanding the book of Daniel. How did the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes influence the interpretation of Daniel?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Antiochus Epiphanes:** A Seleucid ruler (175-164 B.C.) known for his persecution of the Jews, which included desecrating the temple and attempting to eradicate Jewish religious practices.
- **Apocryphal:** Of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true.
- **A priori assumption:** A belief or assumption held prior to investigation or evidence.
- **Belshazzar:** According to the book of Daniel, the king of Babylon at the time of its fall to the Persians. Historical sources indicate he was co-regent with his father, Nabonidas.

- **Cyrus the Persian:** The king of Persia who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., allowing the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland.
- **Darius the Mede:** A figure mentioned in Daniel as taking over the Babylonian kingdom after Belshazzar. His historical identity is debated among scholars.
- **Imperial Aramaic:** A standardized form of Aramaic used as an official language by the Achaemenid Persian Empire, making it relevant for dating texts written during that period.
- **Judas Maccabeus:** A Jewish priest and a son of Mattathias, who led the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire (167–160 BCE).
- **Lycanthropy:** In this context, refers to a form of mental illness resembling the symptoms described in Daniel 4, where Nebuchadnezzar behaves like an animal.
- **Maccabean Period:** The time of Jewish revolt against the Seleucid Empire, led by the Maccabees (167-160 B.C.).
- **Nabonidas:** The last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, who made his son Belshazzar co-regent.
- **Nebuchadnezzar:** The king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, known for his military campaigns and building projects.
- **Predictive Prophecy:** A statement or prediction about events that will happen in the future, often attributed to divine revelation.
- **Ptolemies:** The dynasty that ruled Egypt and Palestine after the death of Alexander the Great.
- **Seleucids:** The dynasty that ruled Syria and parts of the Near East after the death of Alexander the Great. They often clashed with the Ptolemies for control of Palestine.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 21, Introduction to Daniel, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Daniel FAQ

- Why do critical scholars date the book of Daniel to around 165 B.C. instead of during the Babylonian captivity as the book claims?** Critical scholars primarily argue for a later date due to: (1) the assumption that genuine predictive prophecy is impossible, (2) alleged historical inaccuracies within the book, and (3) the presence of supposedly late linguistic features (such as Greek loanwords). They believe the book reflects the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes.
- What are the main arguments against the traditional dating of Daniel, and how are these arguments countered?** The main arguments are: (1) predictive prophecy is impossible, (2) alleged historical errors, such as the existence of a Median Kingdom between the Babylonian and Persian empires, referring to Belshazzar as king when Nabonidus was, referring to Nebuchadnezzar as the father of Belshazzar, and the existence of Darius the Mede, and (3) late linguistic features, like Greek loanwords and the type of Aramaic used. These are countered by arguing that the denial of predictive prophecy is a worldview issue, that alleged historical errors have reasonable explanations (e.g., Belshazzar was a co-regent, "father" can mean ancestor, and Darius the Mede could be another name for Cyrus or Gubaru), and that linguistic features are not conclusive for a late date given evidence of Greek influence in the Near East earlier than the Maccabean period and that the Aramaic of Daniel is Imperial Aramaic and practically undateable between 600-330 B.C.
- What is the significance of the "succession of empires" mentioned in Daniel in relation to the dating of the book?** The succession of empires (Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman) as depicted in Daniel 2 presents a problem for the late-date theory because Rome came after 165 B.C. To resolve this, some critical scholars suggest the sequence is Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek. However, this sequence is historically inaccurate as there was no independent Median kingdom between the Babylonian and Persian periods.

- **What are some of the alleged historical errors in Daniel, and how can they be explained?** Some alleged historical errors include:
 - The existence of a Median Kingdom between the Babylonian and Persian empires.
 - Referring to Belshazzar as king instead of Nabonidus when Babylon fell. This can be explained by understanding Belshazzar as a co-regent with Nabonidus.
 - Calling Nebuchadnezzar the father of Belshazzar. This is explained by understanding that "father" can mean ancestor in Semitic usage.
 - The existence of Darius the Mede. This is explained by the possibility that "Darius the Mede" may have been another name for Cyrus or Gubaru, a governor appointed by Cyrus.
- **What about the claim that the Aramaic used in Daniel points to a later date of composition?** Scholars like K.A. Kitchen argue that the Aramaic used in Daniel is "Imperial Aramaic," which is difficult to date precisely within the period of 600-330 B.C. This suggests that the Aramaic doesn't necessarily indicate a late date for the book. Furthermore, the limited number of Greek loanwords, primarily names for musical instruments, doesn't definitively point to a late date because Greeks were in Babylon long before the Greek empire.
- **How is the book of Daniel structured, and what are the main themes in each section?** Daniel is divided into two main sections: (1) chapters 1-6, a historical section with narratives about Daniel and his companions, and (2) chapters 7-12, a prophetic section containing visions. The first section (chapters 1-6) emphasizes God's supremacy over nature, history, and human rulers. Chapters 7-12 are largely predictive.
- **What is the primary theme illustrated in the historical narratives of Daniel 1-6?** The overarching theme in chapters 1-6 is God's sovereignty over all things. Through various narratives, including Daniel's dietary choices, the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar's madness, and Daniel in the lion's den, the book demonstrates that God is supreme over nature, history, human rulers, and all circumstances.

- **Why might the book of Daniel have been written, considering the historical context of Jewish persecution?** Given the historical context of increasing persecution of the Jewish people, particularly under Antiochus Epiphanes, a primary purpose for writing the book of Daniel may have been to encourage and prepare the Jews for the difficulties and persecutions they would face. The book's emphasis on God's sovereignty and ability to deliver his people would provide hope and strength during times of hardship.