

Dr. Wendy Widder, Daniel, Session 2, Interpretive Questions and Issues Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Widder, Daniel, Session 2, Interpretive Questions and Issues, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture explores key interpretive questions surrounding the Book of Daniel. The lecture emphasizes genre, authorship, date, audience, historical setting, and purpose. It discusses the placement of Daniel within different biblical canons, Hebrew and English, and the implications for its interpretation. The lecture then examines the authorship and dating of Daniel, presenting the traditional view of 6th-century authorship versus the critical view of a 2nd-century BC anonymous author, along with the arguments for each. Finally, it considers the implications of these different views on understanding the book's audience and purpose, specifically, the role that the book plays in comfort and encouragement.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Widder, Daniel, Session 2 – 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 → Daniel).**



**Widder_Daniel_Ses
sion02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Widder, Daniel, Session 2, Interpretive Questions and Issues

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Widder_Daniel_EN_Session02.pdf":

Briefing Document: Dr. Wendy Widder on Daniel - Interpretive Questions and Issues

Introduction

This document summarizes Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on the book of Daniel, specifically focusing on key interpretive questions and issues that arise when studying this text. The lecture emphasizes the importance of addressing questions about genre, authorship, date, audience, and purpose before delving into an in-depth study.

I. Core Interpretive Questions

Dr. Widder highlights several fundamental questions that should be asked of any biblical text, including Daniel:

- **Genre:** What kind of writing is it? How does its genre affect interpretation?
- **Human Authorship:** Who wrote it?
- **Date:** When was it written?
- **Audience:** Who was the intended audience?
- **Historical Setting/Context:** What were the historical circumstances surrounding the book's events and message?
- **Purpose:** Why did the author write this book?

She stresses these questions are interconnected and answers to one can influence the answers to others.

II. The Genre of Daniel

- **Genre as a Category:** Genre is defined as "a kind of writing, a kind of literature". It is important to recognize and understand the literary genre of a biblical passage as it will influence its interpretation. Different genres within the bible include Gospels, Epistles, and Poetry.
- **Daniel's Placement in Different Canons:**

- **Hebrew Canon:** Daniel is placed in the "writings" section, not among the prophets. It is grouped with books like Ruth, Esther, Psalms, and Chronicles.
- **English Canon:** Daniel is categorized as a prophetic book, grouped with the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). The table of contents is based on the Septuagint.
- **Why the Difference?** Dr. Widder explores several reasons for the differing placement of Daniel:
- **Focus on Narrative vs. Prophecy:** The Hebrew canon emphasizes the narrative stories of the first six chapters which depict events of exilic/post-exilic life, while the English canon emphasizes the apocalyptic prophecy found in the later half of the book.
- **Role of Prophecy:** The traditional Hebrew prophets called people back to the covenant. Daniel does not do that, and is considered to focus on issues of life in exile.
- **Wisdom Qualities:** The book of Daniel, particularly the characters, have wisdom qualities which could place it among wisdom literature.
- **Similarities with Esther:** The book of Daniel and Esther both feature Israelites living in foreign courts which also gives them the "court tale" label.
- **Septuagint Influence:** The Christian bible or English canon follows the order of the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament.
- **Multiple Genres Within Daniel:** The book is not easily categorized and is a mix of narrative, prophecy and apocalyptic literature.

III. Authorship and Date of Daniel

- **Traditional View (Early Date):**
- Daniel wrote the book during the 6th century BC while in exile in Babylon.
- This view is largely based on the first-person perspective in the second half of the book, and that the stories are about Daniel.
- This is the traditional/conservative view.
- **Critical View (Late Date):**
- An anonymous Jew living in Palestine wrote it during the 2nd century BC.

- The anonymous Jew wrote it during the Antiochan persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- This view suggests the book was written to encourage those suffering during this time.
- **Reasons for the Late Date:Third Person Narrative:** The switch from third-person in the first half to first-person in the second is seen as unusual.
- **Historical Difficulties:** There is no evidence for "Darius the Mede," a key character, in historical records.
- **Unusual Prophetic Detail:** The detailed historical recount in later chapters is unlike other biblical prophecy.
- **Genre and Audience:** Apocalyptic literature flourishes during the Second Temple period.
- **Ex-Eventu Prophecy:** The book could be a form of "after the event" prophecy where history is recounted as if it is a future prophecy. The text then gets a little off when it transitions into actual future prediction.
- The theory is that the author took on the persona of Daniel to write a history that encourages the people.
- **Dr. Widder's View:** The issue of authorship and date should not be a litmus test for orthodoxy and people with high views of scripture can disagree on this point.

IV. Audience and Purpose

- **If Daniel wrote it (6th century):Audience:** Exilic or diaspora Jews scattered outside their homeland.
- **Purpose:** To encourage them that God would restore them. God had a plan, even in exile.
- **If an anonymous Jew wrote it (2nd century):Audience:** Jews living in Palestine under the Antiochian persecution.
- **Purpose:** To assure them of God's sovereignty. The righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished. To comfort the reader that God is in control of history.

V. Conclusion

Dr. Widder concludes that the book of Daniel is complex and doesn't fit into easy categories of genre, author, date, audience, and purpose. She stresses the importance of grappling with these questions as they impact the interpretation of the book. She will address different ways to approach structuring the book in the next session.

Key Quotes:

- "Genre is a kind of writing, a kind of literature."
- "The Hebrew canon made the choice, okay, we're going to categorize it according to the narrative. And specifically, it's exilic and post-exilic narratives, so that's why it goes here."
- "The Christian canon, or the English canon... the table of contents is based on the order of the books in the Septuagint."
- "The question then is, if you're living back here in exile, and Daniel the prophet is telling you this history or foretelling this history, you have to ask yourself, what was the purpose for this audience? What would it have meant to them, this history that's coming up?"
- "In apocalyptic literature... we know of a specific kind of genre called ex-eventu prophecy. After the event."
- "This question of the author date is often used as a litmus test of people's orthodoxy... And I think that's a little simplistic."

This briefing document should provide a solid overview of the key points discussed in Dr. Widder's lecture.

4. Study Guide: Widder, Daniel, Session 2, Interpretive Questions and Issues

Daniel: Interpretive Questions and Issues

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the four basic interpretive questions Dr. Widder suggests we should ask of any book of the Bible?
2. How does the organization of the biblical canon generally help determine genre?
3. What is the primary difference in the placement of Daniel in the Hebrew canon versus the English canon?
4. Name three potential reasons Daniel is included in the "writings" section of the Hebrew canon.
5. What is the Septuagint, and why is it important for understanding the English Old Testament canon?
6. What is the traditional or conservative view regarding the author and date of the book of Daniel?
7. What is the "critical" view, also known as the late date view, of the authorship and date of the book of Daniel?
8. What is the historical problem surrounding Darius the Mede in Daniel?
9. What is "ex-eventu prophecy," and how does it relate to the late date theory?
10. How can the audience and purpose of the book of Daniel change based on whether you hold the early or late date theory of authorship?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The four basic interpretive questions are: questions of genre (What kind of writing is this?), human authorship, date, and audience (Who wrote it? When? To whom?), historical setting or context (What were the circumstances?), and purpose (Why was this book written?). These questions help us understand the text by considering its context.

2. The organization of the biblical canon groups similar books together, helping to define literary genres. For example, Gospels are grouped together, as are epistles and poetry, aiding in recognizing the style and conventions within each type of writing.
3. In the Hebrew canon, Daniel is placed among the "writings," while in the English canon, it's grouped with the "major prophets." This difference is primarily due to how each canon categorizes books based on their perceived literary nature, date, and content.
4. Daniel might be placed in the "writings" because it recounts exilic and post-exilic events, because it does not fit the profile of prophets sent to call Israel back to the covenant, or because it possesses wisdom qualities or wisdom genre.
5. The Septuagint (LXX) is the first translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. It's important because the Christian, or English, Old Testament canon is based on the order of books in the Septuagint, not the original Hebrew canon.
6. The traditional view holds that Daniel wrote the book during his exile in Babylon in the 6th century BC. This view is supported by the use of first-person narrative in the second half and that the stories are about Daniel.
7. The critical view suggests that an anonymous Jew in Palestine wrote the book during the 2nd century BC. This view is based on difficulties with some historical details, the genre, and a theory that the book uses ex-eventu prophecy.
8. The historical problem with Darius the Mede is that he's not mentioned in any known historical records from Babylon or Persia. This raises questions about the accuracy of the book of Daniel as historical narrative.
9. "Ex-eventu prophecy" refers to prophecy written after the historical event it describes. The late date theory posits that the Book of Daniel is an example, recounting history as if it were prophecy up to a certain point, with a true prediction coming after that point.
10. If the author was Daniel in the 6th century, the intended audience were exiled Jews needing encouragement, while the purpose was to comfort them that God was faithful. But if an anonymous Jew in the 2nd century wrote it, the audience were Jews suffering under Antiochus, and the purpose was to offer assurance of God's sovereignty and eventual justice.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of genre in interpreting the book of Daniel. How does the shift between narrative and apocalyptic prophecy impact our understanding of the text?
2. Compare and contrast the traditional (early date) and critical (late date) views regarding the authorship and date of the book of Daniel. What are the primary arguments for each view, and how do these arguments affect interpretation?
3. Explore the potential reasons behind the differing placements of the book of Daniel in the Hebrew and English canons. How does this difference influence our understanding of the book's genre and purpose?
4. Analyze the concept of "ex-eventu prophecy" as it relates to the late date theory. How does this theory challenge traditional views of prophecy, and what are the potential implications for interpreting the book of Daniel?
5. Considering the potential audiences for the book of Daniel, how might the message of the book differ between 6th-century exiled Jews and 2nd-century Jews living under persecution?

Glossary

- **Apocalyptic:** A literary genre that reveals or unveils hidden spiritual realities, often using symbolic and visionary language to describe the end times and divine intervention.
- **Canon:** A collection or list of books that are considered sacred or authoritative scripture.
- **Critical View:** An approach to studying the Bible that analyzes texts using historical and literary methods to examine its authorship, date, and historical context, often leading to a later date for Daniel.
- **Diaspora:** The dispersion of the Jewish people beyond their homeland of Israel.
- **English Canon:** The organization and order of the books of the Bible found in most Christian Bibles, based on the Septuagint
- **Ex-eventu Prophecy:** A literary technique where a text narrates past events as if they are prophecies being foretold before their occurrence.

- **Genre:** A category of literature characterized by particular style, form, or content.
- **Hebrew Canon:** The organization and order of the books of the Bible in the Jewish tradition, with the order based on perceived age.
- **Historical-Critical Method:** A method of studying texts that uses historical, cultural, and literary analysis to understand the meaning and significance of a text.
- **Narrative:** A literary genre that tells a story, often involving characters, events, and a plot.
- **Prophecy:** A literary genre characterized by messages given by God or his messengers about events past, present or future.
- **Septuagint (LXX):** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament).
- **Superscription:** A title or heading that precedes a text, often indicating the author or context.
- **Traditional View:** An approach to studying the Bible that typically accepts authorship and date of books based on internal claims or historical tradition, often resulting in an early date for Daniel.
- **Writings (Ketuvim):** The third section of the Hebrew Bible, containing poetic, wisdom, and historical books.

5. FAQs on Widder, Daniel, Session 2, Interpretive Questions and Issues, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Daniel

1. **What is the genre of the Book of Daniel?** The Book of Daniel is complex in terms of genre, encompassing elements of narrative, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature. The first six chapters primarily consist of narrative stories about Daniel and his companions, while the latter six chapters feature prophetic visions and apocalyptic imagery. This mix of genres can make interpreting the book challenging, as narrative and prophecy require slightly different approaches.
2. **Where does the Book of Daniel fall within the Old Testament canon?** This is a complex question, as the Book of Daniel is placed differently depending on the canon. In the Hebrew canon, Daniel is part of "the Writings" (Ketuvim), not among the prophets. In the English canon, based on the Greek Septuagint, Daniel is grouped with the major prophets. This difference is significant because it affects how we understand and interpret the book, especially regarding its prophetic nature. The Hebrew canon seems to focus more on the narrative and exilic themes of the first half of the book, while the English canon focuses on the prophetic nature of the second half.
3. **Who wrote the Book of Daniel and when was it written?** The authorship and date are debated. The traditional view attributes the book to Daniel during the 6th century BC while in exile in Babylon. This is based on first-person accounts in the vision sections and the fact that the stories center on Daniel. A contrasting "critical" view proposes an anonymous Jewish author in the 2nd century BC, during the time of the Antiochan persecution in Palestine. This view is supported by the lack of a clear claim of authorship in the book, the historical difficulties presented by figures like Darius the Mede, the late emergence of apocalyptic literature, and the genre of *ex-eventu* prophecy.
4. **What is the significance of the "Darius the Mede" issue?** The absence of a historical record for a figure called "Darius the Mede," who is prominent in Daniel, poses a challenge to those who believe the book was written in the 6th century BC. This lack of corroboration from historical sources is one reason why some scholars propose a later date for the book's composition, suggesting the character is a literary device.

5. **What is *ex-eventu* prophecy, and how does it relate to Daniel?** *Ex-eventu* prophecy is a genre where historical events are recounted as if they are prophecies foretelling the future. It is a retroactive prophecy. In this genre a person will act as a prophet who foretells events up to a certain point perfectly, these are historical events, and then, when the events extend past that point the "prophecies" become less accurate, this marks the spot where the "prophet" is no longer recounting history but making a true prophecy. Some scholars believe that Daniel employs this genre, especially in its later chapters, suggesting it was written in the 2nd century BC, looking back at the history up until that point and then into the actual future.
6. **What is the significance of the apocalyptic genre in Daniel?** Apocalyptic literature is marked by visions of divine intervention, cataclysmic events, and a clear division between good and evil. This genre typically emerges during times of oppression, offering hope to those suffering. The apocalyptic content in Daniel is distinct from the way other Old Testament prophets communicated God's messages and this has implications for when the book was most likely written. It raises questions about whether apocalyptic elements would have been relevant or understandable to an audience in exile in the 6th century BC, or if the message was written to a 2nd century audience that was being oppressed.
7. **What was the intended audience of the Book of Daniel, and what was its purpose?** The intended audience and purpose vary depending on the author and date ascribed to the book. If Daniel wrote the book in the 6th century, the audience would have been exilic or diaspora Jews, and the purpose would have been to encourage and comfort them. If an anonymous Jew in the 2nd century BC wrote it, the audience would have been Jews living in Palestine under Antiochus IV's persecution, and the purpose would have been to reassure them of God's sovereignty and that justice would prevail.
8. **Is the author/date of Daniel a litmus test for orthodoxy?** No, the author/date question should not be a litmus test for someone's belief in the Bible or their orthodoxy. There are faithful interpreters who approach the text from both traditional and critical perspectives. It's crucial to be open to different viewpoints and understand the complexity of the issues rather than reducing it to a test of faith. A difference in views regarding authorship and date does not indicate a lack of belief in the divine nature of the scriptures.