The Prophecy of Daniel 8

The Atheistic Naturalist’s Self Contradiction

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Bust of Alexander the Great
In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—
to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the
vision, and it so happened while I was looking that I was in Shushan, the
capital, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great. As I was considering, suddenly a male goat came forth from the west across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to with-
stand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, the west, the ground, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and trampled them to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted itself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horns to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be desecrated" (Daniel 8:1-14).

After narrating what he saw in the vision, Daniel wondered what the dream meant. While in this state of contemplation, the angel Gabriel approached Daniel to explain the dream. Gabriel proceeded to offer an accurate inter-
pretation of the events that Daniel saw:

The ram which you saw, having the two horns—"they are the kings of
Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that was between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of the nation, but not with its power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king arises, hav-
ing fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the strong and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity.

The Kings of Media and Persia

Daniel saw a ram with two notable horns, but the other. This ram was pushing westward, northward, and southward and became great. The angel Gabriel explained that this ram with two horns signified the kings of Media and Persia. When we look into history, we see that the description of their activities matches what we know from secular historical accounts. The Median Empire had been growing in strength for many years. Historian J.M. Cook noted this rise in the seventh century B.C.—"Khang things were running for the Medes" (1983, p. 3).

Famed Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the 5th century B.C., describes the formation of the Median Empire in which the Medes had numerous small settlements that were utilized by a man named Deioces. This man built a large capital city known as Ecbatana. According to the historian, he reigned for 53 years and united at least six regional groups into the kingdom of Media. Herodotus then documents that Deioces’ son Phraortes reigned for 22 years after his father. He was succeeded by his son Cyaxares, who “united all Asia beyond the Halys under his rule” (1969, 1:95-103). Cyaxares reigned 40 years, died, and was succeeded by his son Astyages. Under the reign of Astyages, the Persians revolted against the Medes. Led by Cyrus the Great, the Persian army defeated Astyages’ army, and Cyrus ascended to the throne of both the Medes and the Persians (1:127-130). The Nabonidus Chronicle confirms Cyrus’ victory against Astyages (The Nabonidus Chronicle, n.d.).

One interesting point as it relates to the prophetic vision of Daniel is the fact that initially, the Medes were the superior, ruling class. This information comes from numerous statements found in Herodotus. For instance, Astyages married his daughter to “a Persian named Cambyses, a man he knew to be of good family and quiet habits—
though he considered him much below a Mede even of middle rank” (1:107). When Cyrus took control of the empire, however, the Persian facet of the king-
dom grew to be stronger, even though it was the second to rise. Herodotus wrote: “On the present occasion the Persians under Cyrus rose against the Medes and from then onwards were masters of Asia” (1:190). This historical fact coincides perfectly with Daniel’s vision in which the first ram had two horns “but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.”

The dual power of the Medo-Persian Empire, led first by Cyrus and then by his son Cambyses, continued to grow in strength and territory. Herodotus documents that the empire stretched across all Asia. Cyrus then began to “push westward,” conquering peoples such as the Ionians as far westward as the Aegean Sea (1:169). The historian notes that Cyrus was possessed of “rest-
less ambition” and engaged in “successive acts of aggression against one nation after another” (1:190). Cambyses, who reigned over the empire after his father, seemed to have the same ambitious spirit.
Feature Article

I n Daniel’s vision, the ram with two horns, which was the Medo-Persian Empire, was defeated by a male goat that arose out of the west and had a notable horn in its presence. In his explanation of the vision, Gabriel said that this male goat was the kingdom of Greece, and the notable horn was the “first king.” Anyone familiar with ancient history recognizes that that horn was Alexander. For Lysimachus began to wear the diadem, and Seleucus also in his interviews with the Greeks—Cassander, however, although the others gave him the royal title in their letters and addresses, wrote his letters in his own untitled name (1920, 18).

Diodorus Siculus confirmed this account in Book 19 of his work when he wrote: “When they had been brought into the council, they demanded that he have a share among them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host” (Daniel 8:11). The angel Gabriel explained that he would “magnify himself in his heart” (Daniel 8:25). When we compare this prediction with the historical record of the life and actions of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, we see a striking fulfillment explained by nationalistic fervor.

When thoroughly scrutinized, error always exposes itself through some kind of self-contradiction that arises out of the very assumption itself. Such a one is highlighted when considering a fundamental plank of the atheistic naturalist’s position.

The atheist says, “I refuse to consider believing in anything that isn’t natural—whose explanation cannot be found in nature. Everything must and can be explained through natural processes.” So, in the arbeitheist’s explanation of the Universe must be explainable by natural means—nothing unnatural (e.g., a supernatural Being) can be considered in the equation. Evolutionary geologist Robert Hazen, who received a Ph.D. in Earth Science from Harvard, is a research scientist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Geophysical Laboratory and a professor of Earth Science at George Mason University. In his lecture series, Origins of Life, Hazen said:

In this lecture series I make a basic assumption that life emerged by some kind of natural process. I propose that life arose by a sequence of events that are completely consistent with the natural laws of chemistry and physics. In this assumption I am like most other scientists. I believe in a universe that is ordered by these laws. Like other scientists, I rely on the power of mathematics and natural processes to understand the operation of natural laws. I believe that life can arise on Earth as a result of natural processes. I believe that life can arise in various environments on Earth and elsewhere in the Universe without relying on unnatural means. The creationist has no problem with unnatural explanations of the origin of life (i.e., abiogenesis, in contradiction to the 1st and 2nd Laws of Thermodynamics; see Miller, 2007). The naturalist cannot explain the Universe and life. Truth is never self-contradictory. When science always comes out on top. When a person chooses to fight it, he will inevitably get hurt in the end. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 53:1).

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bronze coin that depicts Antiochus IV with the phrase “God Manifest” on it as well. There can be no doubt that Antiochus Epiphanes IV exalted himself “as high as the Prince of the host,” a fact that added additional weight to the idea that Antiochus Epiphanes IV was the little horn of Daniel’s vision.

The Daily Sacrifices Were Taken Away
Daniel’s vision predicted that the little horn that arose from the male goat would grow “exceedingly great toward Daniel’s dream, the heavenly messenger refers to as the abomination of desolation.”

The Chief Butcher was, and continued with: Daniel’s vision was sent upon him for the miseries he had brought upon the Jewish nation, while he plundered their temple and condemned their God; and when he had said this, he gave up the ghost (Antiquities of the Jews, 12:9,13).

Porphyrius, a Greek historian from the second century B.C., stated that Antiochus “died at Tabae in Persia, smitten with a distemper or fever. Josephus stated: “He was confounded, and, by the wrath of God, was driven mad by certain apparitions, which, as it lasted a great while, and as his pains increased upon him, so he at length perceived he should die in a little time; so he called his friends to him, and told them that his distemper was severe upon him, and continued withal, that the miseries was sent upon them for the miseries he had brought upon the Jewish nation, while he plundered their temple and condemned their God; and when he had said this, he gave up the ghost (Antiquities of the Jews, 12:9,13).

The book of 1 Maccabees documents that Antiochus IV waged war against Ptolemy, routing his army and killing many (197, 1:17-19). On the return trip from Egypt, Antiochus IV plundered the temple. In this event he sent a general named Mysarch who destroyed many of the towns of Judah and killed a host of the Jews. In addition, he sent letters to Jerusalem “to put a stop to burnt offerings and meal offerings and libation in the temple, to suffer Sabbaths and festivals." And in 167 B.C. he desecrated the altar in the temple, which the 1 Maccabees writer refers to as the abomination of desolation (1:46-49).

“Broken Without Human Means”
When the angel Gabriel explained Daniel’s dream, the heavenly messenger predicted that the wicked king who was portrayed as the little horn would be “broken without human means” (Daniel 8:25).

When we compare the death of Antiochus Epiphanes IV with this statement, we can see that it accurately describes his demise. Antiochus did not die in battle, from disease, or even from enemy fire, nor was he assassinated by conspirators. In fact, Antiochus did not die at the hands of any other human. Various historical references relating to his death verify the fact that he died because of a distemper or fever. Josephus stated: “[H]e was confounded, and, by the wrath of God, was driven mad by certain apparitions, which, as it lasted a great while, and as his pains increased upon him, so he at length perceived he should die in a little time; so he called his friends to him, and told them that his distemper was severe upon him, and continued withal, that the miseries was sent upon them for the miseries he had brought upon the Jewish nation, while he plundered their temple and condemned their God; and when he had said this, he gave up the ghost (Antiquities of the Jews, 12:9,13)." Polybius, a Greek historian from the second century B.C., stated that Antiochus “died at Tabae in Persia, smitten with madness,” that was not the result of any human means.

Daniel’s vision and Gabriel’s commentary on it have proven to be so accurate that skeptics are forced to admit that this is accurate, by the very book they were written after the events transpired— not hundreds of years before. One can see why skeptics must adopt this tactic.

If the vision of Daniel 8 actually was written in approximately 550 B.C., and it accurately predicted events in detail that did not transpire until 164 B.C., then whose intervention must have been aided by divine guidance. Since the atheists, skeptics, and many liberal theologians cannot tolerate such a conclusion, they must find some way to deny the prophecy. Since secular history verifies the prophecy in great detail, to deny that the vision of Daniel 8 documents actual events is tantamount to intellectual suicide. Thus, the only alternative is to contend that the record of the events in Daniel 8 is a historic record that was penned after the events it describes. But even such a tactic is misguided and flawed, and cannot be sustained. But the fact that it is used does much to confirm the accuracy of the prophecy. After all, if the prophecy were not accurate, why would any unbeliever be forced to call it history?

Near the beginning of the fifth century A.D., Jerome became a prominent figure among Christians. He penned a commentary on the book of Daniel, in which he mentioned a skeptic by the name of Porphyrius.

Skeptics, who wrote his book against the prophecy of Daniel, denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual living in Judea at the time of Antiochus who was summarised Epiphanes. He furthermore alleged that “Daniel” did not foretell the future so much as he related the past... [Because Porphyrius] was unable to tell all those things which had been fulfilled and could not deny that they had taken place, he overcame this evidence of historical accuracy by taking refuge in this evasion. For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers to be a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past (1947, 31:18a). Observe the reasoning behind how he arrives at a date for the book. The information in Daniel is accurate up to the time of the Seleucids, thus Daniel must have been written after those events occurred. [Again, I would note that his accusation that Daniel’s information fails after that point is false.] Notice the circular reasoning involved. The assertion is that Daniel must have been written in the second century solely because of its accuracy. But the assertion fails to account for the possibility of accurate, predictive prophecy. In essence, the skeptic is forced to say that Daniel is accurate, and thus could not have been written before the second century, because no such thing as predictive prophecy exists. Yet, is it not the case that the very point of the discussion is to determine the legitimacy of predictive prophecy? The skeptic cannot say that Daniel is not predictive prophecy because there is no such thing as predictive prophecy. To date Daniel in the second century because it is accurate is faulty reasoning of the highest order.

The Internal Evidence of Authorship
The book of Daniel claims to have been written by an Israelite exile named Daniel. Various verses in Daniel (7:2,15; 8:1,27; 9:2; 12:5) insist that Daniel authored the book. In addition, the book provides specific statements such as, “in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (2:4), “in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar” (8:1), and “in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus” (9:1), that date the book to the sixth century B.C. In order for the skeptic or liberal theologian to reject these clear statements, he must provide valid reasons why they cannot be true. Such reasons have never been provided. As jurisprudence expert Simon Greenleaf stated: “Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise” (1995, p. 16).

Daniel in the Dead Sea Scrolls Collection
Another reason to date Daniel in the sixth century B.C. is because the

The Primary Reason to Date Daniel in the Second Century is Its Accuracy

Skeptics insist that the book must have been written in the second century B.C. due to anachronism, distortion or varying other discrepancies. None of their allegations has been sustained. Instead, the authors reader finds that the primary reason the skeptics reject the early date of Daniel is because of its accuracy. Due to their naturalistic assumptions—that no writer could accurately predict events that occurred 400 years after his writing—Skeptic’s assert a late date for Daniel based on the false assumption that predictive prophecy is impossible. Sandoval’s article provides an excellent example of this assumption. He stated: “Since these predictions largely came true until the middle of the war and failed thereafter, we know that the author lived in Seleucid times, not Babylonian times” (2007). Observe the reasoning behind how he arrives at a date for the book. The information in Daniel is accurate up to the time of the Seleucids, thus Daniel must have been written after those events occurred. [Again, I would note that his accusation that Daniel’s information fails after that point is false.] Notice the circular reasoning involved. The assertion is that Daniel must have been written in the second century solely because of its accuracy. But the assertion fails to account for the possibility of accurate, predictive prophecy. In essence, the skeptic is forced to say that Daniel is accurate, and thus could not have been written before the second century, because no such thing as predictive prophecy exists. Yet, is it not the case that the very point of the discussion is to determine the legitimacy of predictive prophecy? The skeptic cannot say that Daniel is not predictive prophecy because there is no such thing as predictive prophecy. To date Daniel in the second century because it is accurate is faulty reasoning of the highest order.

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Skeptics insist that the book must have been written in the second century B.C. due to anachronism, distortion or vari-
is its presence in the Dead Sea Scrolls collection. Several partial copies of Daniel were found at Qumran. First, this fact shows that by the time the books were being collected to store at Qumran, the book of Daniel was viewed with such respect that numerous copies were made to be stored there. As Bruce Waltke stated: “The discovery of manuscripts of Daniel at Qumran dating from the Maccabean period renders it highly improbable that the book was composed during the time of the Maccabees” (1976, 3:32). By the time of the Maccabees, Daniel was already such a respected and revered, sacred book that it had been copied and stored with other ancient texts at Qumran. Second, in his study of a section of Job found at Qumran, a fragment known as 1QDob, Robert Vanhoy noted that the composition of the fragment “may have originally dated to the late third century or early second century B.C.” (1976, 21:319). He compared this fragment to sections of Daniel and concluded that the data “suggest that Daniel was written before 1QDob and lead us to believe that the evidence now available from Qumran indicates a pre-second-century date for the Aramaic of Daniel” (p. 320). Not only does the presence of Daniel at Qumran provide evidence of a pre-second-century date, but the Aramaic used in the book supplies additional weight to support an early date.

Daniel’s Use of the Name Belshazzar

For many years, critics used Daniel’s reference to Belshazzar as evidence that the book contained historical errors. They asserted that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon and Belshazzar was a figment of the author’s imagination. Evidence began to accrue, however, in the form of written and inscribed cylinder-ur, that showed that “for much of the reign of Nabonidus, his eldest son, Belshazzar, acted as coregent” (Waltke, 1976, 3:326). This fact led Waltke to conclude that Daniel was a lengthy article could be written solely from a straightforward reading of the narratives of the Book of Daniel that the author possessed a more accurate knowledge of Neo-Babylonia and early Achaemenid Persian history than any other known historian since the sixth century B.C.” (p. 326). In essence, the name Belshazzar had disappeared from the last two histories of history from around 450 B.C. until the writing on the Nabonidus Chronicle was published in 1882. Thus the author of Daniel could not have been a second century observer because he would have had no way to know of the co-regency of Nabonidus and Belshazzar (Jackson, n.d.).

Josephus’ Witness to an Early Date for Daniel

Josephus, the first century A.D. historian who penned Jewish history for a Roman audience, adds additional weight to the thought that Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. and not in the second century. First, in regard to the book of Daniel, Josephus expressed the then-common Jewish belief that Daniel was prophetic book that belonged among the Scriptures or sacred writings. He concluded that a person who wanted to know certain aspects of prophecy should be “diligent in reading the book of Daniel, which he will find among the sacred writings” (Antiquities..., 10:10:4). A few paragraphs later, after relating information taken directly from the book of Daniel, Josephus said, “Let no one blame me for writing down everything of this nature, as I find it in our ancient books” (10:10:6). Notice that Josephus viewed Daniel as both part of the “sacred writings” and as part of the “ancient books,” and that as such, we can only explain the successful predictions made in the city of Babylon argues that the writer of the book of Daniel was written in the second century B.C., that Daniel cannot be a second century B.C. document, but must be included in the list of ancient books—that is written prior to 424 B.C.

An Additional Consideration

Of course, it has been impossible to consider at length all the reasons to date the book of Daniel in the sixth century and not the second, but one additional reason merits brief mention. “The precision of the details within the book of Daniel seems to suggest that the author possessed a more accurate knowledge of that ancient culture” (Jackson, n.d.). Indeed, so accurate are the historical facts and the specific knowledge of the writer of the book that a lengthy article could be written solely from a straightforward reading of the narratives of the book that claims to have been written in the sixth century and not the second century. If they are accurate predictions, then the book of Daniel stands as irrefutable evidence that Daniel cannot be a second century document, but must be included in the list of ancient books—that was written prior to 424 B.C.

CONCLUSION

Daniel provides an accurate, detailed description of the historic events that occurred between 550 B.C. and 164 B.C. A straightforward reading of the text indicates that these events were written down before they actually occurred. If they are accurate predictions, then the book of Daniel stands as irrefutable evidence that (1) God exists, and (2) the book is divinely inspired by God. Of course, the skeptic and unbeliever do not believe in divine inspiration or God’s existence. Due to their preconceived bias against the supernatural, they are forced to concoct ways to try to discredit the prophecies in Daniel. Since the secular historical record so clearly coincides with the prophecies in Daniel, the book is inaccurate fail miserably. Thus, the skeptic is forced to conjure that the book was written after the events took place, instead of before. In this vein, it has been suggested that Daniel was written in the second century B.C., instead of the sixth. The evidence against this assertion, however, is so powerful that to adopt the late date for Daniel leads the skeptic in a morass of contradiction and inconsistency. Gleason Archer, Jr. accurately summed up the force of the evidence for an early date for Daniel when he wrote: “This poses such problems for the committed antinomianist, who can only explain the successful predictions of Daniel as prophecies after the fulfillment, that he is not only to be swayed by any amount of objective evidence whatever. Nevertheless, such evidence continues to pour in…” (1970, 127:297).

In truth, Daniel stands as an insurmountable barrier to naturalism and an atheistic worldview, and provides positive evidence of God’s existence and the inspiration of the Bible.

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Among the multitude of materials that we make available to the public here at Apologetics Press, we have always sought to provide a single volume that serves as a basic Christian Evidences book. *Surveying the Evidence* is that book.

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On another note, please be reminded of the upcoming A.P. Summer Camps—the first is scheduled for June 10-15 and centered on “Defending the Reliability of the Bible.”

 Dave Miller