

Appendix A

GENERAL REMARKS

The Book of Daniel is a fascinating account of a young Hebrew boy who lives during the period of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. He is taken as a captive by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 605 BC along with a number of other young people of Judah. He grows up to be a statesman in the courts of Babylon, rises to a high place of prominence, and lives past the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 BC. While he is at Babylon, the city of Jerusalem (including the famous Temple of Solomon that had been built in 966 BC) is destroyed by the Babylonians. Although this event marks the lowest point of Old Testament history, Daniel is given several visions and dreams in which the future of the nation of Israel is revealed to him, thereby assuring him of God's sovereign plans to ultimately bring blessing in the future messianic kingdom. Until then, however, the nation of Israel will remain under Gentile rule.

The name Daniel (Heb. דָּנִיֵּאל) means "God is my judge." This was a fitting name for him. On several occasions, Daniel is put to the test for the stance he took of being faithful to his God, Yahweh. In these crucial moments, the LORD was faithful to deliver him as the righteous God of heaven.

Two key things stand out about the Book of Daniel: (1) Daniel's testimony of a righteous life before the pagan Babylonians and (2) the amazing prophecies about future events. This latter aspect (the prophecies) has made the Book of Daniel one of the most contended areas of Old Testament studies. Those who deny the inspiration of the Word of God and the ability to accurately predict the future refuse to believe that these prophecies could have been made by anyone living in the 6th century BC. In this commentary, however, the position will be taken that the entire book was written by an historical figure named Daniel who lived and served in the courts of Babylon during the 6th century BC. This position will be carefully defended in the section on Date and Authorship.