

## SESSION ONE

### DANIEL 1:1-2

#### *An Introduction to the Book*

**OBJECTIVES:** By the end of this session, the student should be able to . . .

1. Describe the basic historical setting for the book.
2. Explain the theological backdrop for God's dealings with the nation of Israel and name the key passage that announces his program of blessing and discipline.
3. Name four of the primary deities of the Babylonian worship system.

#### ORIENTATION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

##### A. The Historical Setting for the Book

1. The Person of Daniel

A young Hebrew boy (probably in his teens initially) who lives during the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

2. Nebuchadnezzar's Invasion (605 BC)



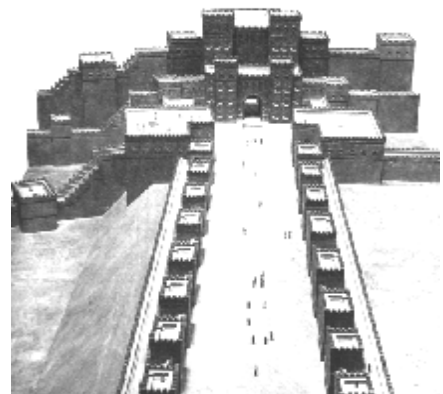
Following a major battle between the Egyptians and the Babylonians, Judah is invaded by the Babylonian army. A number of young Jews (particularly among the aristocracy) are taken captive and deported to Babylon.

3. Life in Babylon

Daniel is given an important position in the Babylonian courts, especially when he correctly interprets a dream of the king. During the time he grows up in Babylon, the Jewish Temple back in Jerusalem is destroyed in 586 BC. Daniel lives to see the Babylonian Empire overthrown by the Persian forces in 539 BC.

4. Dreams and Visions

Daniel is enabled to see the future, especially the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms; and eventually Messiah's kingdom which will replace them.



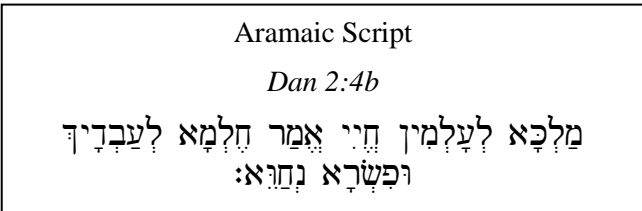
*Processional Way Into Babylon*

**B. Daniel's Name** (דָּנִיֵּאל) Dan = *to judge* El = *God* Meaning: "God is my judge"

Significance: He is put to the test several times, but the righteous judge of Heaven intercedes and delivers him.

**C. The Languages of the Book of Daniel**

1. Hebrew (1:1–2:4a; 8:1–12:13)
2. Aramaic (2:4b–7:28)



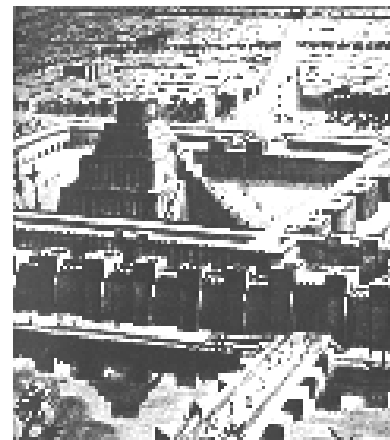
Explanation:

Daniel's native language in Judah was Hebrew, whereas the language of Babylon was Imperial Aramaic (the *lingua franca* of the day). In the parts of the book that focus on the Gentile nations and their future, the material is in Aramaic. When the focus is on God's covenant people of Israel and their future, Hebrew is used.

**THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE EXILE**

**A. Israel's Calling as God's Special Nation (Ex 19:5-6)**

Israel's role: to be a mediator between God and the other nations of the world, so that people of all nations could have the truth of the Creator God and come under His blessing.



*Ancient Babylon as it might have looked from a painting by Maurice Bardin. The Euphrates River is in the foreground, and behind the heavy defensive walls is the ziggurat area.*

**B. The Covenant Agreement**

1. Faithfulness to the covenant stipulations would result in blessing, but disobedience would result in curses (Deut 28–30; note esp. 28:1-2, 15).
2. Continued disobedience would result in exile from the land of promise (Deut 28:36-37, 41; 29:22-28).

**C. The Discipline of Exile**

1. The northern kingdom of Israel: by the Assyrians (722 BC)
2. The southern kingdom of Judah: by the Babylonians (605-586 BC)

**D. Why is the judgment so harsh?**

Israel was chosen to be a light to the nations to lead them out of darkness and idolatry, but they had perverted their responsibility.

**DANIEL 1:1-2A.**

**A. Setting: Nebuchadnezzar's Siege of Jerusalem**

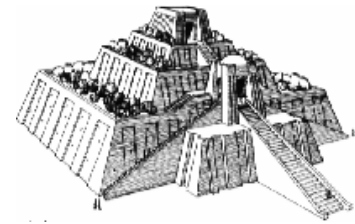
This would be in the year 605 BC, just after Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of the Egyptian army at the battle of Carchemish (present day lower Turkey). The pursuit of the Egyptians brought the Babylonians to Jerusalem. This occasion would mark the first of three deportations of Jews to Babylon.



**B. The Sacking of Jerusalem's Temple (vs 2)**

note: *Shinar* (so *NASB*) was the ancient name of Babylon.

1. "and he brought them . . . to the house of his god"



An artist's reconstruction of the ziggurat at Ur, which may have resembled the one at Babylon.

a. Principal deities of Babylonian Religion

1) Marduk - the national God of Babylon



Marduk was depicted as a hybrid dragon creature which ornamented the walls of ancient Babylon.

2) Nabû (Hebrew = Nebo)

Regarded as the son of Marduk. According to D. J. Wiseman, the name Nebuchadnezzar means "May Nebo protect my offspring."<sup>1</sup>



3) Ishtar

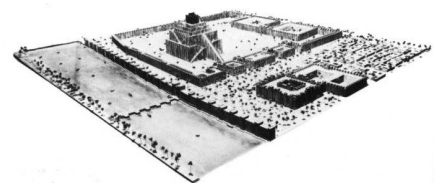


An important female deity of fertility. She is often represented riding on her sacred beast, the lion.

b. The Temple of Marduk

1) The Temple of Marduk (named *Esagila*) stood prominently in the middle of the city of Babylon.

2) Nebuchadnezzar, as king, was regarded as the head of the cult of Marduk.



The southern portion of the inner city, showing the Temple of Marduk (center right) and the ziggurat at Babylon (*Etemenanki*) in the background.

<sup>1</sup>D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, The Schweich Lectures (Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.

## 2. Theological Significance

## a. Nebuchadnezzar's Perspective

A sign of triumph for "his gods," Marduk and Nabû. By placing the vessels from Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem in Esagila, he is giving the credit to these pagan deities.

For a moment, it seems that the unbelieving world has the victory and the true God is robbed of His glory!

## b. God's Perspective

1) Notice the text: "the LORD gave Jehoiakim . . . into his hand"

cf. 2 Chronicles 36:14-17

2) God will also deal with Marduk (Bel) and Nabû (Nebo).

cf. Isa 46:1-2

A Lesson for Our Life
-----------------------

Reflection:

Think about the long dusty march that Daniel made from Jerusalem to Babylon, and the feeling of defeat and discouragement that his Jewish friends must have felt, especially as they entered Babylon and saw the vessels of Yahweh's Temple being placed in Marduk's temple. Some Babylonians may have been hurling insults like "Foolish Jews! You should have known that Yahweh could not help you. You should have called out to Marduk!"

Application:

There are times when as God's people, we may be tempted to think that our God has been defeated. When we get our focus on the Scriptures, however, we are reminded that our God is in perfect control and will ultimately triumph. In the meantime, He will work every situation for the furtherance of His glory. Remember, we may have setbacks, but we are not defeated!

*P.S. Nebuchadnezzar will change his tune!*