

The Years of Daniel's Life

From the Bible and Archaeological finds (dates approximate)

620 BC The Prophet Daniel was born

605 BC Daniel would have been about 15 years old when he was taken captive to Babylon

608 BC Daniel about 18 years old when he finished his training and was selected by King Nebuchadnezzar and named Belteshazzar (Bel protect the King)

586 BC Jerusalem with the Temple of God was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar

556 BC Nebuchadnezzar dies (Daniel is now 64 years old)

- Archaeology identifies four short lived Kings before the story of Belshazzar and the writing on the wall ending Belshazzar's reign in 549 BC
- Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as Belshazzar's father but really ancestor and the most prominent and well known as there were only seven years between his death and the writing on the wall
- Belshazzar was not King, he was a co-regent of his father King Nabonidus who spent most of his reign away from Babylon on a temple of the Sun god rebuilding project
- Nabonidus is not mentioned in the Bible but the prayer of Nabonidus fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls records that he suffered an ulcer for seven years commanded by God most high, was driven from men (similar to but not to the extent as Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps his ulcer made him withdraw from society), his sins were pardoned by a Jewish exorcist who told him to give glory to God most high as Nabonidus had been praising false gods (story has similarities to what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, God wanting to get Nabonidus' attention as well no doubt, scholars of course try to use it to debunk the Words of Daniel.

549 BC The writing on the wall and death of Belshazzar (Daniel is now ~71 years old)

549-539 BC Darius the Mede rules in Babylon (Ten years more or less until Daniel was ~81)

- Darius may have been a general, archaeology finds a Mede General Gobryas as the ruler during this time no record of Darius, we will receive the Biblical story and maybe they were one and the same.
- The Medes (Iranians of the time) had helped Babylon overthrow Assyria the former kingdom featured in the Bible which had conquered the Northern 10 tribes of Israel

but were turned back from Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah the Prophet and Hezekiah the King

- The Medes were a parallel kingdom to Babylon, nowhere near as great as Babylon and probably a subject ally during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar until ~552 BC although Darius the Mede took the throne of Babylon for ten years the kingdoms may have remained separate.
- There was already a mixing of the rule of the Medes and the Persians during Darius' reign

539 BC Cyrus the Persian conquers the Kingdoms of Babylon and Media-Persia (Daniel 8:1)

- The Book of Daniel mentions that he continued to the first year of Cyrus Daniel 1:21, this may mean Daniel passed at age 81 or it may mean he continued in the leadership until then because at the end of Daniel Chapter 6, verse 28 it tells us that Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian

516 BC The decree of Cyrus to rebuild and restore the Temple of God and city of Jerusalem, 70 years after its destruction as proclaimed by the Prophet Jeremiah

- If Daniel lived to this event he would have been 104 years old when he went to be with the Lord, quite possible God let him see this day as it ended the captivity of the Jews.

454 BC Nehemiah sent by King Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

- This is the event mentioned by the Angel in Daniel 9:25 when prophetically proclaiming the $62 + 7$ (69) weeks between the command and the coming of the Messiah, prophetic days equal years and a week is 7 days, $69 \text{ weeks} \times 7$ yields 483 years until the Messiah is cut off but not for Himself (Jesus Crucified), 454 BC plus 483 years is the year 29 AD.
- The significance of the division of the 69 weeks into 7 and 62 is unclear to me, perhaps it took Nehemiah 49 years to complete the refortification of Jerusalem then the clock starts towards Jesus' crucifixion Daniel 9:26

Historically pertinent to the Book of Daniel

Restoration of the Jews by King Cyrus

Isaiah 45:1-13

*1“Thus says the Lord to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:*

*2‘I will go before you
And make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron.*

*3I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the Lord,
Who call you by your name,
Am the God of Israel.*

*4For Jacob My servant’s sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me.*

*5I am the Lord, and there is no other;
There is no God besides Me.*

*I will gird you, though you have not known Me,
6That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That there is none besides Me.*

*I am the Lord, and there is no other;
7I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the Lord, do all these things.’*

*8“Rain down, you heavens, from above,
And let the skies pour down righteousness;
Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation,
And let righteousness spring up together.
I, the Lord, have created it.*

*9“Woe to him who strives with his Maker!
Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth!*

*Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?'
Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?
10Woe to him who says to his father, 'What are you begetting?'
Or to the woman, 'What have you brought forth?' ”
11Thus says the Lord,
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:
“Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons;
And concerning the work of My hands, you command Me.
12I have made the earth,
And created man on it.
I—My hands—stretched out the heavens,
And all their host I have commanded.
13I have raised him up in righteousness,
And I will direct all his ways;
He shall build My city
And let My exiles go free,
Not for price nor reward,”
Says the Lord of hosts.*

Thus says the LORD to His anointed means that this word was particularly directed to Cyrus. This was God’s message to him, and Cyrus apparently listened. “These things Cyrus knew from reading the book of prophecy which Isaiah had left behind two hundred and ten years earlier.” (Josephus, *Antiquities XI*, 5 [i.2], cited in Grogan)

*Ezra 1:1-4 1Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,
2Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:
All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.
4And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.*

Alexander the Great agrees to let the Jews continue to serve the Lord
Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, book XI, chapter 8:

Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his forgoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join with him in offering sacrifices to God, whom he besought to protect that nation, and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them; whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced; and declared to all the warning he had received from God. According to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of the king.

And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession, with the priests and the multitude of the citizens. The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations.... [The approaching army] thought they should have liberty to plunder the city, and torment the high priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, the very reverse of it happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high-priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head having the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high-priest.

The Jews also did all together, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about: whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind. However, Parmenio alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass, that when all others adored him, he should adore the high-priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, "I did not adore him, but that God who hath honored him with that high-priesthood, for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios, in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring

this army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind.”

And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high-priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city; and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high-priest’s direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him: whereupon the high-priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired: and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired.

Julius Ceasar grants the Jews special privilege in the Empire

Mid 1st Century BC, Roman Triumvirate Pompey, Crassus, Julius Ceasar

On January 10, 49 BCE, Julius Ceasar crossed the Rubicon, signaling the start of civil war between his forces and those of the Roman who defiled the Holy of Holies.

Pompey was a talented, ruthless general for Rome. He was the first Roman leader to understand that Rome could not successfully control the Middle East if it did not control Judea. Even if Judea was merely a neutral independent it would serve as a wedge between the Northern Empire (Syria) and the Southern Empire (Egypt). Therefore, he looked for a way to get himself in power in Judea.

Ideally, he did not want to do it through war, because the Jews – the Hasmoneans/Maccabees – had a fearsome reputation. The Romans referred to the Jews as “porcupines.” Just as a porcupine is an animal that even great predators avoid, so too the Jews. Even if you ate it you would be sorry. The Jews had the reputation as difficult to fight in a war and impossible to govern. Moreover, the Romans viewed the Jews as “atheists” or “non-believers.” Anyone who was religious, in their world view, had a god that you could see. They could not comprehend an invisible God with a Temple that had no visible idol to worship.

Therefore, Pompey was not interested in going to war with the Jews or running their country. However, he did want to control them somehow.

In the year 64 BCE, Pompey appeared in Damascus. Warring factions of Jews sent representatives to convince the Roman to side with them and not their opponent. (The Sanhedrin, ever wary of allowing Rome in the door – and history would prove their caution warranted — sent a delegation saying that Rome’s intervention wasn’t needed.) Pompey listened and then took his time responding. In 63 BCE, he arrived in Jerusalem. The Jewish forces lead by Hyrcanus promptly withdrew. The forces of his opponent, Aristobulus, fought against Pompey and Hyrcanus. After two months, the Romans broke through and massacred some 12,000 of the Jews defending the Temple.

According to Josephus, Pompey stepped into the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctum of the Temple. However, he did not take any booty or interrupt the services of the Temple. The next day he withdrew his army from the Temple Mount and returned it to the authority of the Jews.

Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, Judea was now under Roman domination.

His work done in Jerusalem, Pompey returned to Rome expecting to be made the Emperor. However, he had strong competition for the job. One of his competitors was Julius Caesar, who was a great general in his own right. He did in the West what Pompey had done in the East and subdued the peoples in what is today England, France and the Rhineland of Germany.

These two great Roman generals agreed that Rome would be run by a Triumvirate: Julius Caesar, Pompey and a third General, Crassus. However, the Triumvirate lasted only five years, leaving Pompey and Caesar jockeying for control.

On January 10, 49 BCE, Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, signaling the start of civil war between his forces and those of the Roman who defiled the Holy of Holies.

The Senate of Rome backed Pompey, but Caesar boldly marched his army across the Rubicon, the famous river that marked the boundary between Italy proper to the south and its provinces to the north. Roman law forbade a Roman army to cross the river. In doing so, Caesar was committing an act of war. (That is why the popular idiom, “Crossing the Rubicon” means to pass a point of no return.)

As Caesar's army entered Rome, Pompey and the Roman Senate fled for their lives. Caesar declared himself Emperor and pursued Pompey all the way to Egypt. Once there, he committed a rare tactical blunder and found himself besieged in Alexandria by Pompey's army and its allies. Sorely in need of friends, he looked for any help that would extricate him from his dangerous situation.

Until that time, Hyrcanus had been an official ally of Pompey. However, he shrewdly switched sides and declared his allegiance to Caesar. He then committed over 3,000 Jewish soldiers to an expeditionary force that invaded Egypt and helped raise the siege of Alexandria.

Thus, when the Roman civil war ended in Julius Caesar's complete victory Hyrcanus was in a fortuitous position. Indeed, Caesar showed the Jews his gratitude for their help. He revoked the harsh decrees and burdensome taxation imposed by Pompey. He also allowed the walls and fortifications of Jerusalem to be rebuilt and restored Jaffa as well as a number of other coastal cities to Jewish rule.

When Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE, it was a cataclysmic event in the Roman Empire... and also worried the Jews: Would his successor be as positively disposed toward them? Tragically, that eventual successor, Marc Antony, gave power to a man whose rule was as antithetical to Jewish principles and ideals as imaginable. That man was Herod, a murderous, tyrant whose ways would eventually lead to the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth and the beginning of the long exile that Jews still find themselves in.

[Excerpt from Wikipedia Decian Persecution]

Julius Caesar had formulated a policy of allowing Jews to follow their traditional religious practices, a policy which was followed, and extended, by Augustus. This gave Judaism the status of a *religio licita* (permitted religion) throughout the Empire.[4] Roman authorities respected tradition in religion and the Jews were following the beliefs and practices of their ancestors. It was well understood that Jews would not perform sacrifices to the Roman gods or burn incense before an image of the Emperor. In contrast, the Christians were a new phenomenon, and one that did not seem like a religion to Roman authorities at all; both the earliest extant Roman references to Christianity, Pliny the Younger and Tacitus in his *Annals* about 116, refer to Christianity as *superstitio*, excessive and non-traditional religiosity that was socially disruptive.[5] Christians had abandoned the religion of their forefathers, and were seeking to convert others, which seemed dangerous to the Romans; refusal to sacrifice for the Emperor's well-being appeared seditious.[3]

[Additional notes by Gordon]

Christians were originally seen as a new sect of the Jews and were at first allowed to practice their worship and activities unhindered. Incidences like the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, where Jesus had commanded that when His followers see it coming that they flee and therefore Christians did not stand with the Jews, made it clear to the Romans that Christians were not Jews and therefore could not be exempt from Roman worship of the gods, hence persecutions began in earnest.

The Apostles Peter and Paul passed during Nero's persecution in Rome mid-60s AD.

The Apostle John was banished to the Island of Patmos during Domitian's persecution in the 90s AD.

The Decian persecution of 250AD forced everyone to submit to worship of the gods in front of witnesses, [paragraph from Wikidedia-] An unknown number of Christians were executed or died in prison for refusing to perform the sacrifices, including Pope Fabian. Others went into hiding, whilst many apostatized and performed the ceremonies. The effects on Christians were long-lasting: it caused tension between those who had performed the sacrifices (or fled) and those who had not, and left bitter memories of persecution.

Ten official persecutions would take place before 312AD when Emperor Constantine declared the Roman Empire to be Christian.