

## Introduction: Part 4

### Apocalyptic

- **Daniel's Apocalyptic Passages**

Like other OT passages and the Book of Revelation in the NT, portions of the Book of Daniel are classified as *apocalyptic*. This term is derived from a transliteration of the first Greek word within the Book of Revelation: Ἀποκάλυψις [*Apokalypsis*]. The word denotes the action of *uncovering, disclosing, or revealing*. Biblically, it refers to passages within which God reveals information to man which *could not be obtained by any other means*.

- **Apocalyptic as Literary Genre**

The term *apocalyptic* is also used to identify a literary genre describing written works which share characteristics frequently found in revelatory passages where the revealing takes place by way of visions containing symbols: *Apocalyptic literature is symbolic visionary prophetic literature, composed during oppressive conditions, consisting of visions whose events are recorded exactly as they were seen by the author and explained through a divine interpreter, and whose theological content is primarily eschatological*.

- **Antidote to Apparent Hopelessness**

Apocalyptic revelation is often given in a period in which man's response to God led to judgment or postponement of promises. In the case of the Book of Revelation, the Davidic king was rejected, crucified and His rule from the throne of David postponed (Acts 1:6-7) and the age of the Church began to unfold. With Daniel, the Jews, Jerusalem, and even God's house (the Temple) were judged and the people hauled away into captivity. In both cases, there were to be long periods characterized by disobedience and judgment but the apocalyptic message given by God underscored the fact that God's intention cannot be thwarted and His will is destined to prevail upon the earth.

### Multiple Languages

- **Four Languages**

Sections of Daniel are written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Individual Greek and Persian terms also influence the text. For example, some terms in the Aramaic section are transliterations of Greek terms for musical instruments. The influence of these languages upon the text reflects the interaction of different cultures which had taken place through the sixth-century B.C. and the geographical reach of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Medo-Persian empires of that era.

- **Hebrew and Aramaic**

Daniel 1:1 - 2:4a is written in Hebrew. Daniel 2:4b - 7:28 is written in Aramaic. Daniel 8:1-12:13 reverts back to Hebrew. The use of Aramaic is not unique to Daniel, it is also found in Ezra, Jeremiah, and Genesis.

- **Why Aramaic?**

It would seem that the switch to Aramaic recognizes the Gentile setting of the historic narrative which follows since Aramaic was the predominant language spoken by the heterogeneous population at Babylon. Not only was Aramaic spoken at Babylon, it was the *lingua franca* over a wide region during the sixth-century B.C., especially in the realms of government and commerce. The use of Aramaic may be intended to indicate that the subject matter of chapters 2-7 are of special interest to non-Jews.

## Style of Aramaic

- **Eastern or Western Style of Aramaic?**

Critics have pointed to the style of the Aramaic within Daniel as evidence that the book was composed late, during the Maccabean era. They maintained that the Aramaic in Daniel was that of a Western rather than Eastern style. Presumably, Daniel would have composed in the Eastern style since he lived most of his life in Babylon. Others who have studied the question disagree, noting that Daniel's Aramaic is Western, not Eastern. Still other scholars maintain that prior to the first century B.C., when Daniel would have written, there is no evidence that Aramaic had developed different Eastern and Western styles.

- **Early Style of Aramaic**

Studies have shown that about ninety percent of the Aramaic vocabulary in Daniel occurs in fifth-century texts or earlier. The style of Aramaic in Daniel is similar to that of the Elephantine papyri (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and the Aramaic in the Book of Ezra.

- **Terms for Musical Instruments**

Several musical instruments in chapter 3 of Daniel appear to be Aramaic transliterations of their Greek names. Critics suggest that Daniel was written later because they allege Greek terms would not have been known in Babylon as early as the sixth century B.C., but only after the spread of Hellenism by the conquest of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.

- **Early Greek Influence**

Greek culture had a wide influence in the Near East in the time of Daniel. Contacts between Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt with Asiatic Greeks took place at least a century before the time of Daniel. Greek colonies are now known to have inhabited the coast of Palestine as early as the days of Hezekiah, a century before the time of Daniel. Music is often one of the earliest cultural influences to cross boundaries as musicians were employed at foreign courts, such as that of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon.

## Persian Terms

- **Aramaic contains Persian Terms**

The text of Daniel also includes words of Persian origin. This too has been seen as evidence for a late date of composition for the book. But, as in the case of the Greek Words found in Daniel, we find that the appearance of the terms is easily explained by early contact

between Persia and Aramaic-speaking peoples as well as the restricted sphere in which the terms were employed.

- **Early Greek Influence**

About half of the Persian loan words occur in Official Aramaic, and have been found in sixth- to fifth-century B.C. literary sources. All such Persian terms are Old Persian in nature, i.e., earlier than *ca.* 300 B.C., as would be expected for the era in which Daniel was written. The majority of the Persian loan words are technical terms which were used within the sphere of governmental business—just the sort of terminology which Daniel, in his administrative position under the Medes and Persians, would have quickly acquired.

- **Evidence for Early Origin**

As we mentioned concerning the contribution of The Septuagint regarding the Date of Daniel, there is evidence that by the time the Septuagint was translated the meaning of a number of the Persian terms had been forgotten. Also, some of the Persian words are from an older form of Persian which no longer existed by the Maccabean era.

## Summary

- **Inspired Apocalyptic Genre**

The fact that much of Daniel is written in an apocalyptic genre should not be used to discount the authority of its contents.

- **Aramaic By Design**

The lengthy Aramaic passage of Daniel, unique to the OT, is by design: (1) it occurs in mid-sentence; (2) it spans both major sections of the book (chapters 1-6 & 7-12); (3) it can be explained by the universal or Gentile emphasis of much of the material in chapters 2-7.

- **Early Composition**

The language of Daniel provides additional evidence of its early origin. The style of Aramaic reflects Daniel's sixth-century setting. The Greek and Persian loan words which influence the text are just what we would expect for a document written in the fifth century B.C. from the commercial center of a world-empire.