

**THE NEW-CENTURY
BIBLE: DANIEL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649150038

The new-century bible: Daniel by R. H. Charles

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THE NEW-CENTURY BIBLE

DANIEL

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INTRODUCTION
REVISED VERSION WITH NOTES
INDEX AND MAP

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NEW YORK: HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, AMERICAN BRANCH
EDINBURGH: T. C. & E. C. JACK

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THE BOOK OF DANIEL

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF BOOK OF DANIEL : ITS PSEUDONYMOUS CHARACTER : ORIGINALLY UNILINGUAL, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY BILINGUAL : ITS VARIOUS VERSIONS.

IN the closing years of the Syrian domination of Palestine, Antiochus Epiphanes sat on the throne of Syria. With his struggles with Egypt and other powers we are not here concerned, but only with his dealings with the Jews. His ambition was to hellenize the various provinces and peoples in his great Empire. In this aim he met with little opposition except in Judea, and even there he secured without difficulty the support of the hellenizing High Priests. Thus the High Priest Jason, a creature of Antiochus, who had superseded his brother, the faithful High Priest Onias III, set up a Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem, to join in the games of which the very priests abbreviated the sacred services of the Temple. Through his agency also contributions were sent for the celebration of the festival of Heracles at Tyre. Jason was succeeded by Menelaus, who had secured the High Priesthood by the promise of a huge sum of money to Antiochus, a sum which he was unable to raise save through plunder of the Temple treasury. For rebuking this treacherous act, Onias III, referred to above, paid for his fidelity with his life. In 170 B. C., while Antiochus was warring in Egypt, the rumour that he had fallen encouraged the exiled Jason to make an attempt to recover the High Priesthood. This attempt led to much bloodshed in Jerusalem, and Antiochus on his return treated the Jews with the utmost severity.

Multitudes of men, women, and children were put to the sword, and thousands were sold into slavery. This

visit of Antiochus closed with his seizure of the last treasures of the Temple. Thus the Jews suffered from without as well as from within, but the cup of their sorrow was not yet full. Two years later Antiochus marched with a vast force into Egypt with the intention of making the kingdom of the Ptolemies a province of his own Empire. But when his plans seemed on the eve of fulfilment he was met by envoys from Rome, who required him, on the penalty of joining issue with the Republic itself, to withdraw at once from Egypt. Enraged and embittered Antiochus turned homeward, resolved now to devote all his power to the hellenization of Judea. With this object in view he forbade the observance of the Sabbath and the practice of the rite of circumcision. The sacrifices of the Temple were done away with, and every form of Jewish worship and ceremonial. The sacred books were destroyed, and the Temple dismantled and laid waste. The walls of the city were overthrown, and a fortress erected commanding the Temple enclosure. But the culminating horror of this awful time was yet to come. On the 15th of December, 168 B.C., a heathen altar was planted on the site of the great altar of burnt offering, in honour of Olympian Zeus. On the 25th of the same month the profanation of the sacred precincts was consummated by the sacrifice of swine on the altar. Furthermore, every city and village was required to build temples and raise idolatrous altars on which swine were to be sacrificed daily.

At last the anguish of the faithful Jews became unendurable and an insurrection burst forth at Modein, under the leadership of Mattathias and his five stalwart sons. All that were zealous for the Law and the Covenant speedily joined them, and amongst these notably the Hasidim, or the league of the pious ones. This small body of Jews met with many marvellous successes. Notwithstanding, in the face of the vast forces of Syria, the Jews could repose no hope in their own powers. If they were

to succeed it could not be in reliance on the arm of flesh. Now it was just at this crisis, this hour of mingled hope and despair, that the Book of Daniel 'appeared with its sword-edge utterance, its piercing exhortation to endure in face of the despot, and its promise, full of Divine joy, of near and full salvation. No dew of heaven could fall with more refreshing coolness on the parched ground, no spark from above alight with a more kindling power on the surface so long heated with a hidden glow. With winged brevity the book gives a complete survey of the history of the kingdom of God upon earth, showing the relations which it had hitherto sustained in Israel to the successive great heathen empires of the Chaldaeans, Medo-Persians, and Greeks—in a word, towards the heathenism which ruled the world; and with the finest perception it describes the nature and individual career of Antiochus Epiphanes and his immediate predecessors so far as was possible in view of the great events which had just occurred. Rarely does it happen that a book appears as this did, in the very crisis of the times, and in a form most suited to such an age, artificially reserved, close and severe, and yet shedding so clear a light through obscurity, and so marvellously captivating. It was natural that it should soon achieve a success entirely corresponding with its inner truth and glory. And so, for the last time in the literature of the Old Testament, we have in this book an example of a work which, having sprung from the deepest necessities of the noblest impulses of the age, can render to that age the purest service; and which by the development of events immediately after, receives with such power the stamp of Divine witness that it subsequently attains imperishable sanctity¹.'

The pseudonymous character of this book has been a source of great trouble to many, but to the student who is acquainted with the facts of the time, it is obvious that,

¹ *Ewald*, v. 305 (translated by Stanley).