



The Daniel Hoax: Who Wrote Daniel? (Academic Legends in Biblical Theology) (Volume 4)

J.C.W. West

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It is fashionable among biblical scholars to assume that the book of Daniel is a pseudepigraphon written in the second century BCE, rather than the notes and memoirs of the prime minister of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, and later an official in the court of Cyrus, written in the sixth century BCE. These scholars are probably mistaken: there is voluminous evidence to the contrary, brought together in West's book. For example, the assumption that the book is a veiled political diatribe against the temporary offenses of Antiochus IV Epiphanes is probably off base: it better fits the permanent horrors of the destruction of the temple and sacking of Jerusalem under the Roman general Titus. Daniel's history was more accurate than nineteenth century scholars were aware when he said that Belshazzar conferred on Daniel the title of third highest in the empire. They thought the pseudepigrapher had invented the name 'Belshazzar', because it was unknown except in the book of Daniel. But archaeology unearthed evidence that Belshazzar was crown prince and viceroy of the emperor Nabonidus. Josephus records that when Alexander the Great visited the temple in Jerusalem (ca 330 BCE) the priests showed him the book of Daniel, and a passage that predicted his victory over the Persians. The scholarly consensus is that Josephus is an unreliable historian, and that Alexander never visited Jerusalem. Evidence here makes his visit more than plausible. The book of Ezekiel mentions Daniel in two contexts, showing that he was a prominent figure in Babylon. Scholars wiggle out of this by substituting a Daniel in the literature of Ugarit, written on clay tablets buried since the thirteenth century BCE, discovered in the 1920s. West demonstrates that this substitution is most unlikely. Scholars say that Daniel is unknown both elsewhere in the Bible, and outside the Bible. Not the case--he is the obvious source of literature and mentioned outside the Bible several times. As to its language, much of Daniel is written in Aramaic. Is it the Aramaic of second century Judea? No: rather than dating the development of Aramaic from an assumed second century Daniel, scholars should note the obvious differences in style, grammatical constructs and vocabulary between Daniel and carbon-dated second century texts found at Qumran. Finally, evidence from the history of the Second Jewish Commonwealth favors an early Daniel. This book presents voluminous evidence that Daniel is not a hoax. Most biblical scholars

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