

**ANALYTICAL OUTLINE**  
**Week 3 / Assignment #1**  
**Submitted By: Chryll D. Crews, M.Div., JD**

**Title of Document: Bel and The Dragon**

Resources:

- *Encyclopedia of The Bible*. “Bel and The Dragon.” *Bible Gateway*, [www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Bel-Dragon](http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Bel-Dragon).
- Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Grabbe, Lester L. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus*. New York: T & T Clark International, 2010.
- Gurtner, Daniel. “Noncanonical Jewish Writings.” *The World of The New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald, eds. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books.*, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Helyer, Larry R. *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2002.
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014.  
*New Revised Standard Bible: Containing the Old and New testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

***Hypothesized Dating of the Document, the Author, the Audience, and the Original Context:***

What do we know about the author and the time this text was written?

**A. Dating of Document:**

• **Approximate Date:**

- (1) Gurtner places the date of the three additions to canonical Daniel 1-12, “between 165 and about 100 B.C.”<sup>1</sup>
- (2) Helyer, citing Nicklesburg, has composition “around 166-165 B.C.E.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Gurtner, “Noncanonical Jewish Writings.” *The World of The New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 294.

<sup>2</sup> Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 45.

also acknowledges that some scholars debate on whether the writings should be placed in the first or second century B.C. <sup>3</sup>

**B. Author(s)/Editor(s) of Document:** The author is unknown. <sup>4</sup>

What was going on in the Jewish world and the locality when this text was created?

A. Major Events:

1. 281-100 BC Septuagint Translation of the Pentateuch and the OT and the Apocryphal book. <sup>5</sup>
2. 198-142 BC Seleucid loses control from the Ptolemies, after Antiochus II, is defeated. <sup>6</sup>
3. 159-142 BC Jonathan Maccabeus, rebellion against the Greeks. <sup>7</sup>

B. List key historic figures:

- a. Antiochus II
- b. Habakkuk
- c. Daniel
- d. Cyrus of Persia

Identify the Audience:

- a. Intended Audience: The intended audience is the Jewish people who have been exiled and are guilty of worshipping idols, particularly the god, Bel.

Are the contents of this text **prescriptive** or **descriptive**?

- A. The text is prescriptive and written to correct the behavior of idolatry. Hyler states it best: the author “aimed to reinforce steadfast refusal to participate in and embrace the idolatrous rites of the surrounding or pagan neighbors.” <sup>8</sup>
- B. What particular reasons support this view? The common warnings or themes, concerning idolatry, is also found in the prophets: Isaiah 40:19-22; Isaiah 41:6-7;

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<sup>3</sup> Helyer, 50

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Helyer, 18

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Helyer, 49.

Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 10:1-10, and, of course, Habakkuk, who is also a character in this story (Habakkuk 2:18). And, finally, Bel and The Dragon is a continuation of the Book of Daniel. The full title in the Apocrypha, includes, “Bel and the Dragon (Chapter 14 of the Greek Version of Daniel.)”<sup>9</sup>

### ***Structural Divisions***

Describe in detail what you see:

Bel and the Dragon is divided into three segments: (Apocrypha, New Revised Version, 155-56).

1. Verses 1-22- Daniel proves that it is the priests, wives, and children who are eating the food and not the god, Bel.
2. Verses 23-39- Daniel kills the dragon with the hairball (NRSV, 156)
3. Verses 40-42- King finds Daniel alive and begins to rejoice (NRSV, 156)

### ***Key Theological Themes/Topics***

A. Is there a detectable theological point of view?

Yes, that we should worship the living God, not gods made by human hands. And Ancient Israel, and people today, are still being called to return to a God, who expects to be first in our lives.

B. What do you see that you did not expect? What I saw that I didn't expect was the power of a good story and the detective element used to keep the reader engaged in reading about a serious matter, but through the lens of entertainment. And the use of sarcasm and ridicule to make the point of how foolish we are to expect our idols to supersede the power of God.

C. What powerful words and ideas are expressed? Worship is a key word. The King wants to know why Daniel is not worshipping in Bel 4. Who do we worship? And it's bad enough that we worship idols, but the word, “revered,” caught my attention. The king didn't just worship Bel, he revered Bel. This respect and awe is directed at an idol. However, glory and awe should be directed toward God alone.

D. What questions does it raise? The question raised for me is: why we make the same mistake today? There are so many biblical warnings, through the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Apocrypha. Why do we keep getting led astray by revering other Gods. After all, our very first commandment is, “you shall have no other God before me.” (Exodus 20:3, NRSV). And it is immediately followed by verse, 4: “You shall not make

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<sup>9</sup> Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, (Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 155-156.

for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them” (Exodus 20:4-5a, NRSV).

- E. Does the section provide a challenge to certain behaviors or attitudes? Yes, to return to God.
- F. What biases or stereotypes do you see? Foreigners as pagans. How we view, the “other.” And, presently, are the promises of God for everyone or just the Jews?

### ***Analytical skills***

- What do you think the author’s purpose was for writing this text? Why did this person write this document? To warn the people of God about idolatry and to show the consequences of not returning to God. And, finally, the rewards of remaining faithful.
- What conclusions can you draw about what the author means or is trying to get across to his or her audience? What is your strongest evidence for those conclusions? That the faithful are rewarded but they may also suffer persecution, for their faithfulness.
- In what way does this document confirm and/or challenge your assumptions about the past? It confirms that man hasn’t changed very much.
- How does this document relate to our understanding of Second Temple Judaism? When you are in exile, you must be intentional about writing and teaching about your religion and God, if a group expects to maintain its history and to know its God.
- How does this document relate to the New Testament writings? It shows why the story needed to be transcribed into Greek because of the Diaspora and why the synagogue is so important in the NT, where the teaching and Sabbath is observed, creating a link to their heritage.

**Summary statement:** There are so many historical documents that most laypeople don’t know exist. Yet, these historical documents are influencing what we read in the New Testament, even today. These documents were important enough that scribes labored for to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek, so it could be understood by the Jewish people of the Diaspora. What a gift to the body of faith! Also, to know there were those who were willing to die rather than disobey God is commendable.

- Identify at least three (3) clear questions that have arisen from this study that could use further investigation:
  1. Was Daniel a real person or is he just a character in a very long narrative?
  2. Is Habbakuk inserted in the story to give it more legitimacy?
  3. Is it a literary tool for the Jewish character to find favor with a foreign ruler? I’ve noticed this about Daniel, Moses, Joseph, and Hadad.