

Daniel 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Analysis

This verse summarizes Daniel's extraordinary longevity in public service—"continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus" spans from 605 BC (Nebuchadnezzar's accession) to 539 BC (Cyrus's conquest of Babylon), over 66 years. The Hebrew *hayah* (הָיָה, "continued") implies not merely surviving but actively serving throughout multiple regime changes. Daniel outlasted the Babylonian Empire itself, serving under Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian.

This longevity demonstrates God's faithfulness to preserve His servants for their entire mission. Daniel began as a teenage captive and concluded as an honored elder who witnessed Cyrus's decree allowing Jewish exiles to return home (Ezra 1:1-4). He lived to see the initial fulfillment of Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy (Daniel 9:2), though he chose to remain in Persia rather than return to Judah. His sustained influence across generations and empires shows that faithful service for God transcends political upheavals and regime changes.

The specific mention of "Cyrus" connects Daniel's story to redemptive history. Cyrus, prophesied by name 150 years earlier (Isaiah 44:28-45:1), was God's instrument for ending exile and restoring Jerusalem. Daniel's presence in Cyrus's court may have influenced the decree permitting Jewish return. This demonstrates how God strategically positions His servants to accomplish His purposes across decades. It points to Christ, who endured to complete His redemptive mission (John 17:4, 19:30), and promises that those who endure to the end shall be saved (Matthew 24:13).

Historical Context

Daniel's 66+ years of continuous service through dramatic political upheavals is historically remarkable. He served through: Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605-562 BC), Evil-Merodach (562-560 BC), Neriglissar (560-556 BC), Labashi-Marduk (556 BC), Nabonidus/Belshazzar (556-539 BC), and into Cyrus's Persian Empire (539-530 BC). Few officials survived such transitions—regime changes typically meant execution of previous administrations.

Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 BC occurred when Daniel was approximately 80 years old. His survival and continued influence demonstrate both divine protection and such unimpeachable character that successive rulers recognized his value regardless of political allegiance. Archaeological evidence from the Cyrus Cylinder confirms his policy of religious tolerance and restoration, enabling the Jewish return prophesied in Isaiah and implemented during Daniel's lifetime.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Daniel's sustained faithfulness across six decades challenge our tendency to seek quick results or become discouraged by slow progress?
2. What does Daniel's survival through multiple regime changes teach about maintaining integrity and usefulness regardless of political circumstances?
3. How should knowing that God positioned Daniel to witness exile's end encourage trusting God's long-term purposes even when you won't see immediate fulfillment?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה	דָּנִי אֶל	עַד	שָׁנָה	אֶחָד	לְכֹ וְכֹשׁ
H1961	And Daniel	H5704	year	continued even unto the first	Cyrus
	H1840		H8141	H259	H3566

הַמֶּלֶךְ:
of king
H4428

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 6:28 (Kingdom): So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel 10:1 (Kingdom): In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.