

# NOTES ON DANIEL

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL.....	1
THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT DANIEL .....	4
THE EVIDENCE FOR THE EARLY DATE VIEW .....	5
RESPONSES TO LATE DATE ARGUMENTS .....	10
CHAPTER 1.....	21
CHAPTER 2.....	31
CHAPTER 3.....	48
CHAPTER 4.....	61
CHAPTER 5.....	73
CHAPTER 6.....	84
CHAPTER 7.....	95
CHAPTER 8.....	108
CHAPTER 9.....	119
CHAPTER 10.....	138
CHAPTER 11.....	148
CHAPTER 12.....	161
WHEN WAS DANIEL WRITTEN?.....	167
DANIEL 11 WITH ANNOTATIONS.....	168

## INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

### DANIEL IS AN UNUSUAL BOOK.

- On one hand, it contains stories about lions' dens and fiery furnaces that we have known since we were children. On the other hand, it contains visions and prophecies that are some of the most difficult to unravel in all of the Bible.
- On one hand, it contains examples of faith, conviction, and the power of prayer, yet the book has been viscously

attacked by most modern scholars who doubt its authenticity.

### WHY WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

- What did the book mean to its original audience. (The key to unraveling its meaning.)
- Contrary to all of their expectations, God's chosen people had been uprooted from their promised land and transported to Babylonian captivity.
- Of course, this should not have been unexpected. They had been warned by Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and many other prophets (all the way back to Moses) that because of their flagrant apostasy and immorality, the city and the temple would be destroyed and they would be carried away in captivity. (Yet I imagine it came as a big surprise anyway.)
- 2 Chronicles 36:16 tells us why they were in captivity.

but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy.

- Jeremiah 5:15-19 tells us who led them away.

Behold, I am bringing upon you a nation from afar, O house of Israel, says the Lord. It is an enduring nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. 16 Their quiver is like an open tomb, they are all mighty men. 17 They shall eat up your harvest and your food; they shall eat up your sons and your daughters; they shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; your fortified cities in which you trust they shall destroy with the sword. 18 But even in those

days, says the Lord, I will not make a full end of you. 19 And when your people say, 'Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us?' you shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours.'

- How the world saw these events:
  - The God of the Hebrews had been completely discredited. The mighty gods of Assyria and Babylon had burned his temple to the ground and led his people away in chains, and he was apparently powerless to stop them.
  - Of course, the truth was that those foreign people and their false gods were serving God's purpose by bringing punishment upon his people. God was still totally in control and in charge even though it may have appeared otherwise.
    - In Jeremiah 25:9, God refers to King Nebuchadnezzar as "my servant."
- The events in Daniel had a dual purpose:
  - To convince the faithful Israelites that God had not forgotten them – and that they should not forget him. One day they would be vindicated.
  - To show the pagan nations that God was truly sovereign and preeminent, and that any power they had was given to them by God and could be taken away anytime he desired.
- There are at least three great theological principles that run through the book of Daniel.
  - THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. The affairs of men and kings are

subject to God's decrees, and he is able to accomplish his purposes despite the determined opposition of the mightiest men.

- This is a message we need to hear today. The clear message of scripture is that the kingdoms of earth are raised up to serve God's purpose.
- THE POWER OF PRAYER. Throughout the book we see that God acts in response to prayer. Again, this is a message we need to hear today. If we feel powerless it may be because we have become prayerless.

The worst sin is prayerlessness. We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft among the worst, but the root of all sin is self-sufficiency – independence from God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength, we are saying – with our action if not our lips – that we don't need him. We can go it alone. The opposite of such independence is when we acknowledge our need of God's instruction and supply. (Charles Hummel)

The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray. (Samuel Chadwick)

When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops reading the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy. (Corrie ten Boom)

- If we get nothing else from the book of Daniel and all of the many things that we are going to look at in this book, I hope we all gain an appreciation of the incredible power and importance of prayer.

You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed. (A. J. Gordon)

- THE LONG RANGE NATURE OF THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION. God has been working to bring about our redemption since the fall. We see in this book just what great a plan it is, and we see the extraordinary lengths that God went to in order to bring Jesus into the world at the perfect time and in the perfect setting. We also see the supreme importance of his kingdom, the church. (It was not just a haphazard decision on God's part!)

#### HOW ARE DANIEL & REVELATION RELATED?

- One commentator has said that "the book of Daniel is to the Old Testament what Revelation is to the New Testament." I agree, but probably not for the same reasons that that commentator had in mind.
- As we will soon see, Daniel has suffered about as much at the hands of careless commentators as Revelation has.
- We will need to proceed carefully and pay close attention to the historical context of the book and the time frame that is given for the prophecies.
- In at least one way, the two books are different:
  - Daniel is NOT a message for those who are suffering in the midst of deadly persecution but rather for those who are living in a settled condition yet within an alien culture.
  - In Jeremiah 29:7, God told the exiles to "seek the peace and prosperity of

the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." This is very different from what God said in Revelation.

- In other ways, however, the books are very similar:
  - Many similar symbols are used, and each book helps us understand the symbols in the other.
  - Each book has much to say about the early Roman empire and its relation to the church.
  - Keep in mind that while the two books say the same thing about this period, Daniel was written 600 years earlier.

#### WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL SETTING?

- The book of Daniel opens with Nebuchadnezzar on the throne in Babylon after the deportation of the Jewish nobles to Babylon.
- After Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562, his sons and grandsons proved worthless. A revolution in 556 placed an outsider (Nabonidus) on the throne.
- Nabonidus and his son Belshazzar were ruling jointly when Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians under Cyrus in 539. Read Jeremiah 25:11-12.

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.

- After this, the Near East was ruled by a succession of Persian rulers for about 200 years.
- Late in the fourth century, the Persian empire was overthrown by the Greeks under Alexander the Great.
- After Alexander, his kingdom in the Near East was split in two. The Ptolemies ruled Egypt and the Seleucids ruled Syria and Palestine.
- Eventually, the Romans defeated both groups and took control.
- Thus, we move in 600 years from the Babylonians to the Medes and the Persians to the Greeks and finally to the Romans. Daniel talks about all four of these kingdoms. In addition, he talks about a fifth kingdom that would follow and which would never fall. That kingdom is the church.
- We will have much more to say about the details of this history when we begin to unravel the prophecies in the book.

## *THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT DANIEL*

### TWO VIEWS REGARDING WHEN DANIEL WAS WRITTEN

- *The Early Date Position* holds that the book of Daniel was written in Babylon in the late sixth century B.C. by the prophet Daniel who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. The prophecies in the book are genuine and accurate.
- *The Late Date Position* holds that the book of Daniel was written in Palestine by an unknown Jew around 168 B.C. during the Maccabean period. The prophecies in

the book concerning events prior to 168 B.C. were written after the fact and hence are not genuine prophecies. The other prophecies in the book were merely guesses of future events, many of which later proved to be inaccurate.

- Although this view has been readily adopted by virtually all modern scholars, it is not a modern view. It was first put forth in the third century A.D. by Porphyrius of Tyre. It was quickly abandoned, however, after Jerome published a refutation. During the so-called enlightenment it was picked up again and popularized.

### WHY DO SO MANY HOLD THE LATE DATE VIEW?

- The Dual Tenets of Liberal Theology
  - Supernatural explanations of historical events are not acceptable. Any event that requires such an explanation is not historical.
  - Nothing in a general sense ever happens uniquely in history. All true occurrences must be repetitive in nature so that scientists may properly observe them.
- Consider the following comments about the modern approach to Daniel:

"Such amazingly accurate predictions defy the possibility of merely human origin. If these prophecies were composed in the lifetime of the sixth century Daniel, they would compel our acceptance of special revelation from a transcendent, personal God. No anti-supernaturalist position can reasonably be defended if Daniel is a genuine book of prophecy composed in 530 B.C. or in the preceding years."

"In textbooks which represent the critical or higher critical viewpoint it is regarded

as a matter of prime importance to explain the supernatural, which often means to explain it away, and to deal with the Bible in such a way that the supernatural will really cease to be supernatural."

- Liberal theologians approach the Bible with the *a priori* assumption that the supernatural is impossible. From this assumption it must (and does, logically) follow that Daniel is a fraud.
- It is very important to realize that the radical critics are forced to hold the late-date view. (The radical critics are also called higher critics or destructive critics. In the church they are called liberals by others, progressives by themselves – and professors by our children.)
  - These critics say that they are simply seeking the best theories and when a better theory comes along they will accept it instead. DO NOT BELIEVE THEM! They are seeking the best naturalistic theory – and the problem is that the best naturalistic theory is often not the best theory.
  - Evolutionists say the same thing. They claim to be seeking the best theory to explain their observations but they aren't. They are looking for the best naturalistic explanation – and they have found it.
    - Evolution is the best (in fact, only! - if they had another they would use it!) naturalistic explanation for how we got here - but it is not the true explanation for how we got here.
    - The true explanation is a supernatural explanation and they aren't looking for that. They are not seeking the truth.

- Carl Sagan has said that evolution is a fact because he's seen it.
- He reminds me of H. L. Mencken (famous Baltimore journalist) who was once asked if he believed in infant baptism. "Believe in it!" he said, "I've seen it done!"
- Evolutionists are like that. When asked if they believe we evolved from the slime, they say "Believe it! I've seen it!" But have they really? No. They observe small adaptive changes and jump to conclusions that are completely unsupported by the fossil record. They have been searching for conclusive evidence since Darwin and that search has produced nothing. If it had you would have heard about it!
- What's the connection with Daniel?
  - Atheists are forced to believe in evolution – they have no choice. The radical critics are forced to accept a late date for Daniel – they have no choice.

### *THE EVIDENCE FOR THE EARLY DATE VIEW*

#### THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS SUPPORTS THE EARLY DATE VIEW

- Did Daniel exist? Was he an actual historical figure? Jesus refers to him in Matthew 24:15.

So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).

- Was Daniel a prophet? Did he speak from God? Jesus calls him a prophet in Matthew 24:15.
- Did Daniel predict specific events that occurred many years from the date in which he lived? Jesus mentions an event in Matthew 24:15 that had not yet occurred but would occur soon (see verse 34).
- Isaac Newton (the greatest scientist who ever lived) said that "too reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion." I agree with this statement, because if we reject Daniel then we must admit that either Jesus was mistaken about Daniel or the gospel records are hopelessly flawed about what Jesus taught. Either way, Christianity tumbles.
- The liberal critics simply discredit Christ as an authority on such matters. One even wrote that "Christ neither would nor could be a critical authority." On the contrary, Jesus said that he had all authority in heaven and upon earth.
- Daniel 7:13 is the main source of the title 'Son of Man,' which Jesus applied to himself many times as a Messianic title.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

- Jesus said that Daniel was a prophet and Jesus said that part of what Daniel said was fulfilled after the Greek empire. Thus, the clear statements of Christ are in direct opposition to the modern scholars. Who are we to believe?

DANIEL IS ACCURATE REGARDING  
BABYLONIAN HISTORY

- The historical accuracy regarding Babylonian history makes it difficult to believe that the book was written 400 years after its historical setting.
- Daniel 4:30 gives an accurate picture of Nebuchadnezzar's building activities.

and the king said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

- "The East India House inscription, now in London, has six columns of Babylonian writing telling of the stupendous building operations which the king carried on in enlarging and beautifying Babylon."
- How would a late author have known that Babylon's greatness in the early sixth century was due to Nebuchadnezzar? Modern scholars didn't find about it until recently. (Keep in mind that whereas they discount the testimony of scripture they trust ancient inscriptions completely!)
- Belshazzar is mentioned only in Daniel and in the recently uncovered Babylonian records. How did the author of Daniel know about him if he wrote 400 years after the fact?
- Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel's friends thrown into a furnace yet Darius had Daniel thrown into a lions' den. Why? Darius the Mede was a fire worshiper. How would someone have known details like this in 168 B.C.?
- Women's participation at royal banquets (Daniel 5:3). The Persians did not permit women to feast in the presence of men but the Babylonians did.

- Daniel uses the term Shinar to indicate Babylon in Daniel 1:2. This term was no longer used when the radical critics claim the book was written.
- Daniel knew that it was impossible for anyone (even the king) to change a law of the Medes and Persians once it had been promulgated.
- Consider the following conclusions by several commentators:

"Whoever is not the slave of preconceived opinions must confess when comparing [the first six chapters of Daniel] with the cuneiform monuments that they are really ancient and written but a short distance from the [time they describe]." (Le-normant)

"No Jew whose people had been living for centuries under Persian and Grecian rule could relate with such unconscious simplicity the actual condition of affairs in Babylon 370 years before his own time." (J.D. Wilson)

"The author possessed a more accurate knowledge of Neo-Babylonian and early Persian history than any other historian since the sixth century B.C." (Harrison)

#### DANIEL IS ACCURATE REGARDING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S LOWLY ORIGIN

- The description of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 4 ends with the following statement:

"This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and *setteth up over it the basest of men.*" (4:17)

- The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an

inscription made by his father Nabopolassar was found in which he was referred to as "the son of a nobody" (of non-royal birth), "insignificant," "not visible," "the weak," and "the feeble."

- This kind of knowledge (the lowly origin of Babylon's greatest king) would have quickly been forgotten – but the author of Daniel knew about it.
- The decrees of the Babylonian kings in Daniel are remarkably similar to those found inscribed on ancient monuments. How would a Jewish writer produce such an accurate record 400 years after the fact?

#### THE FOURTH EMPIRE IN DANIEL IS THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

- The visions in chapters 2 and 7 speak of four empires.
- The late date theorists hold that the fourth empire is Greece, which means that the third is Persia, the second is Media, and the first is the Chaldean empire. This view is very widely held today, but it falls apart when you read Daniel. One commentator has said that this viewpoint is the weakest part of the late date theory.
- There is no evidence that Daniel ever considered the Medes and Persians as separate empires whereas there is evidence that Daniel considered Medo-Persia to be a single empire.
- In Daniel 8:20, we find a single ram with two horns representing the kings of Media and Persia. In 8:21, a shaggy male goat (Greece) with a prominent horn (Alexander the Great) tramples the ram.

- Also, in chapter 5 when we read about the handwriting on the wall, the last word written is Peres which is derived from the word meaning “to divide” but also is a reference to Persia. That is, Persia was depicted as conquering the Babylonians – making Persia second and not third.
- If we can show (and we can) that the fourth empire is Rome then all of the arguments by the liberals to remove prophecy from the book fall apart. Copies of Daniel have been found that predate the Roman empire and Daniel made specific prophecies about Rome.
- I submit that any of these liberals would take the fourth kingdom to be Rome if they were given no information about when the book was written. But since they do have such information they must take the fourth kingdom to be Greece.
  - They will date the book after the prophecies were fulfilled no matter what evidence there may be to the contrary. Their basic premise about naturalism must not be violated!
- Finally, Daniel predicts that the Messiah and his kingdom would appear during the fourth empire, which of course it did if we take the fourth empire to be Rome. The liberals say that again Daniel was mistaken because Jesus did not appear until after the Greek empire!
- Jesus in Matthew 24 said that some things that Daniel had written had not yet been fulfilled (but would be fulfilled within a generation). If Greece is the fourth empire, then Jesus must have been wrong. One higher critic says that the ‘emptying’ that Paul spoke of in Philippians 2 may have kept the incarnate Jesus from having complete knowledge about certain non-

essential things. (The prophecies in Daniel are non-essential??)

#### THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS SUPPORT THE EARLY DATE VIEW

- 7 copies of Daniel dating from the Maccabean period have been found in 3 of the caves at Qumran. This makes it very unlikely that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period.
- The late date group are forced to believe that the Essenes at Qumran had near original copies of Daniel to retain their late date theory. A simpler explanation is that Daniel was written much earlier.
- One non-Biblical manuscript found in cave 4 refers to ‘Daniel the prophet.’ This fragment has been dated prior to 150 B.C. Another sectarian document from the caves uses the imagery of Daniel to describe the final conflict between good and evil.
- An honest scholar would accept the clear evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the modern scholars cannot accept it. They literally are unable to believe their own eyes because to do so would be to accept the supernatural source of the Bible.
  - This is not just occurring in secular universities. Well known professors in our own Christian colleges are now writing books in which they suggest that the Bible is full of factual errors.

#### THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL SUPPORTS THE EARLY DATE VIEW

- In Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20, Daniel is listed with Noah and Job as an example of righteousness. Ezekiel 28:3 says ‘Behold, you are wiser than Daniel.’ The representation of Daniel as righteous and wise fits

perfectly with his description in the book of Daniel.

- Critics say that Ezekiel was not referring to Daniel but to Dan'el – a famous character from Ugaritic mythology. Does it seem reasonable to believe that a pious Jew would refer to a legendary pagan figure as an example of wisdom and righteousness?
- Dan'el was an idol worshipper who offered blood sacrifices to Baal for weeks at a time. He was a vengeful drunkard who convinced his daughter to commit murder.
- But Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel. This seems even more natural since then Ezekiel would use ancient and current examples to show the people that God was still at work among them.
- One commentator said that Noah, Job, and Daniel are spaced about 1500 years apart. Thus, Ezekiel may have given an example of righteousness from three different eras.

**THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES  
SUPPORTS THE EARLY DATE VIEW**

- In this book, Mattathias (the father of the Jewish patriot Maccabean brothers) encouraged his sons in their revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes by recalling how Daniel for his innocence was saved from the mouth of lions.
- Mattathias died in 166 B.C. – a year before the date that critics say Daniel was written. They say that Mattathias never said this!

**JOSEPHUS SUPPORTS THE EARLY DATE  
VIEW**

- In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus relates a story which if true would prove that the book of Daniel existed during the time of Alexander the Great (330 B.C.).
- Alexander was angry that the Jews would not give him their allegiance so he went to Jerusalem to punish them. Jewish priests met him and showed him in the book of Daniel how God had said that he would defeat the Persians. This pleased Alexander so much that he spared Jerusalem.
- Josephus wrote:

The high priest then showed Alexander the passages in the prophecy of Daniel indicating that a Greek would destroy the empire of the Persians. Alexander, of course, accepted the prophecy as a reference to himself, and declared that God had ordained him to conquer Persia, which he proceeded to do. Furthermore, Alexander not only refused to execute any sanctions against Israel but bestowed upon that nation all kinds of favors and benefits, which was contrary to his usual custom.

- History confirms that Alexander marched near Jerusalem on his way to Egypt and that he treated the Jews kindly. How else can we explain why Alexander spared Jerusalem the ravages that he inflicted upon Tyre and Sidon?
- The consequence of this story is that it means that Daniel was known long prior to the year 334 B.C. and that even Alexander himself recognized that he was the one Daniel said would destroy the Medo-Persian power.
- In addition, Josephus says that the Jewish canon was completed before 424 B.C. and that Daniel was a part of the canon. This was not just his opinion, but was the Jew-

ish national position. He also speaks of many books that were rejected.

- What do the critics say about all of this? They reject Josephus whenever he contradicts their naturalistic world view, but they enthusiastically accept him on virtually everything else. (They never give the Bible the benefit of the doubt. It is assumed to be wrong right from the start.)

THE USE OF A TWO-HORNED RAM TO SYMBOLIZE MEDO-PERSIA SUPPORTS AN EARLY DATE.

- After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever depicted on coins with his head adorned with the ram's horns of Amen-Ra. A thousand years later, Mohammed called him 'Alexander, the lord of the two horns.'
- One commentator has written:

It is impossible to believe that the writer of Daniel could, in the face of universal attribution of the two ram's horns to Alexander, represent Persia, the power he overthrew, as a two-horned ram (Daniel 8:3,20) unless he had written before the expedition into Egypt.

- If you read an article that compared the Eisenhower administration to the days of Camelot, would you conclude that it had been written before or after the Kennedy administration?

## *RESPONSES TO LATE DATE ARGUMENTS*

- Why should we respond at all to these arguments?
  - We should not ignore them (as many in the church are prone to do). If our position is correct, then we certainly

have nothing to fear by confronting these opposing positions. Indeed, a failure to confront them might indicate a fear that our own position might not withstand their arguments.

- Also, in our outreach to others, we need to be able to answer whatever questions they might have about the book of Daniel.

THE CLAIM THAT DANIEL'S POSITION IN THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES IMPLIES A LATE DATE

- The Old Testament books in the Hebrew Bible are divided into three sections.
  - The Law (Books of Moses)
  - The Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets)
  - The Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, DANIEL, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles) - called the Hagiographa (Holy Writings)
- *Claim of Radical Critics:* Since Daniel is not found in the second division (the Prophets) but in the third division (the Writings), it follows that Daniel was a very late addition to the Jewish canon.
- It is a mistake to assume that the books in the third division were written later than the books in the second division. In fact, Job, Ruth, Proverbs, and many of the Psalms were written before many of the prophetic books.
  - Josephus says that no books were added to the canon after 424 B.C. - the death of Artaxerxes.

- Jewish tradition says that Malachi was the last inspired book, which would mean that the second division was closed *after* the third.
- The division is not based on the type of book but on the type of writer.
  - The books in the first section were written by Moses.
  - Those in the second section were written by men who had the prophetic office as well as the prophetic gift.
  - Those in the third section were written by those who had the prophetic gift but not the prophetic office – inspired men but not official prophets.
  - This explains why Ezekiel and Daniel, though contemporaries, are in different divisions.
- But what do we mean when we say that Daniel was not officially a prophet?
  - Daniel does not introduce his book with his name, and he had no official position among the Jewish people.
  - He did not live among the exiles like Ezekiel did, but he lived at the court of Babylon, and he dealt with heathen kings rather than with the people of Israel.
  - Although he is called a prophet in the New Testament, that has more to do with his predictions than with any special prophetic office that he held. Note that David is called a prophet in Acts 2:30.
  - One who held the prophetic office served as a spiritual mediator between God and the Israelites. Daniel did not do this.

- We can turn this argument around on the radical critics! Why was Daniel added to the canon at all if it was not written until 160 B.C.?
- Listen to what R. D. Wilson has to say about this:

Now, the radical critics, without any direct evidence to support them, profess to believe that, into the midst of these sacred writings for which men readily died, a forged document of unknown authorship and (according to the critics) full of easily detected errors ... was quietly admitted as a genuine and authentic writing of a prophet hitherto unknown to history. ... They cannot believe in miracles and predictive prophecy ... but they can believe that a lot of obstreperous and cantankerous Jews who through all their history from Jacob and Esau down to the present time have disagreed and quarreled about almost everything, or nothing, could have accepted, unanimously and without a murmur ... a forged and fictitious document, untrue to the well remembered facts of their own experience and to the easily ascertained facts concerning their own past history and the history of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks of whom the author writes.

- Paul reminds us in Romans 3:2 that the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God – and they took that responsibility very seriously. (I wish that we took it as seriously today.)

**THE CLAIM THAT JESUS BEN SIRACH'S  
FAILURE TO MENTION DANIEL IMPLIES A  
LATE DATE**

- Jesus ben Sirach wrote Ecclesiasticus between 200 and 170 B.C. At the end of the book, he reviews Israel's history, mentioning some of the men that God used to lead Israel. Daniel is not on the list.

- Further, at one point he states that never had their been born a man like Joseph. (Daniel is similar in many respects to Joseph.)
- Daniel and Joseph both were exiles, both showed allegiance to God, both were falsely accused, both were vindicated, both interpreted dreams, both became confidants to the king, and both were given a high government position by the king.
- The radical critics claim that this omission supports the late-date view.
- Daniel was not the only Old Testament notable that was omitted from this list. Jonah, Mordecai, Ezra, and Job were also left off. (No radical critic uses the omission of Ezra to deny the authenticity of his book.)
- One commentator has noted:

It is a remarkable fact that he does not pay any regard to the great men who had exercised their functions outside the bounds of the land of Israel, such as Jonah at Ninevah, Daniel in Babylon, and Mordecai in Persia. In speaking of Abraham, he does not refer to his coming out of Ur of the Chaldees, nor his visit to Egypt. In speaking of Jacob, Joseph, and Aaron, he says nothing of the land of Egypt; nor does he intimate that Moses had ever been in Egypt.

His views might be characterized as Saducean and nationalistic. When he gives an account of the great men of his nation, he selects ... those who had most distinguished themselves according to his ideas of what constituted greatness.

THE CLAIM THAT DANIEL IS MISTAKEN  
ABOUT THE DATE OF  
NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SIEGE OF  
JERUSALEM

- Such a mistake would indicate a lack of knowledge about the history of the time, and thus would support a late date. But was Daniel mistaken?

- Daniel 1:1-3 states:

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. 3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility.

- Problems with these verses:
  - The Babylonian Chronicle makes no reference to an action by Nebuchadnezzar in Judah during the third year of Jehoiakim or to a siege of Jerusalem.
  - According to Jeremiah 46:2, the battle that opened the way for a Babylonian invasion of Judah did not occur until the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, whereas Daniel 1:1 says that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- The questions we need to consider:
  - When did Nebuchadnezzar arrive at Jerusalem and besiege it?
  - When did he defeat Jerusalem?
  - When did he carry away captives and sacred vessels?
- II Kings and II Chronicles record three separate occasions when Nebuchadnezzar carried away people and articles from the temple.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● II Kings 23:36 – 24:5 and II Chronicles 36:5–8             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jehoiakim gave allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar for three years and then rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar defeats his forces and takes Jehoiakim back in chains along with some items from the temple.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● II Kings 24:8–16 and II Chronicles 36:9–10             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jehoiachin succeeds Jehoiakim and reigns for three months while the servants of Nebuchadnezzar besiege Jerusalem. Again the siege is successful and Jehoiachin and much of the nobility is deported to Babylon.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● II Kings 24:17 – 25:21 and II Chronicles 36:11–20             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Zedekiah rules for a few years and then rebels against Nebuchadnezzar. In the ninth year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar again besieges Jerusalem, which falls in the eleventh year of his reign (586 B.C.). The city was destroyed and most of the leading men were killed. The others were deported and all articles from the temple were taken.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Daniel 1:1–4 is a brief summary of these three events and is not intended to provide all of the details.</li> <li>● There are some additional points to consider:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jerusalem was besieged – not captured.</li> <li>● One critic has written that “Daniel begins with a glaring histori-</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p>cal error, for Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● But Daniel never states that Jerusalem was captured at the time – only besieged.</li> <li>● In the middle of his Palestinian campaign, Nebuchadnezzar received news of his father’s death. He rushed back to Babylon to assume the throne and apparently abandoned the siege against Jerusalem before he captured the city.</li> <li>● Babylon used a different dating system.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Daniel 1:1 seems to be in conflict with Jeremiah 25:1 regarding the year of Jehoiakim’s reign when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine.</li> <li>● Jeremiah (writing in Jerusalem) used a different dating system than did Daniel (writing in Babylon).</li> <li>● It was different in two respects - either one of which could explain the seeming discrepancy.</li> <li>● The Babylonian calendar began each year in the spring and the Jewish calendar began each year in autumn. The Babylonian third year thus overlapped the Judean fourth year by about six months.</li> <li>● In Babylon, the year in which a king began to reign was called ‘the year of accession to the kingdom,’ which was followed by the first, second, and subsequent years of his rule. Thus, a Babylo-</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|--|--|

nian king's third year of reign would correspond to the actual fourth year of his reign. Daniel may have used the Babylonian system in verse 1.

- If this latter theory is correct it again points to an early date for the book. How could a Jew writing 400 years later know about the Babylonian system of dating?

**THE CLAIM THAT DANIEL'S USE OF THE TERM 'CHALDEANS' IMPLIES A LATE DATE**

- The author of Daniel uses the word 'Chaldeans' to denote a special class of wise men. However, the word originally had a broader meaning and referred to a particular group of tribes. The late-date proponents claim that only the original meaning was in use during the sixth century.
- Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, was a Chaldean. Although 'Chaldean' and 'Babylonian' are not synonyms, they are sometimes treated that way since many Babylonian rulers were Chaldean. Jeremiah described Nebuchadnezzar's army as the army of the Chaldeans. The term gradually came to mean a privileged class and then a special class of wise men. The question we must consider is when did this change occur?
- The claim that a single word can help date a document is not without merit. For example, if you read an English passage containing the word 'sputnik' you would be able to date it after 1957 because it was not until that time that the word passed into the English language. Of course, without this additional knowledge, the word would be of no help at all.

- Daniel uses the term "Chaldean" in BOTH ways – which destroys the liberal theory.
- In Daniel 1:4 we see the "language of the Chaldeans," which is clearly an ethnic use of the term.
- In Daniel 2, 4, and 5 we see another use where the term is used to describe master astrologers.
- Daniel was aware that "Chaldean" was an ethnic term for the race of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 5:30 refers to Belshazzar as the king of the Chaldeans. Daniel 3:8 seems to be an ethnic use of the term despite the poor NIV translation.
- Both uses of the term were known when Daniel was written.
- Herodotus who wrote *The Histories* around 450 B.C. implied that the term had been used to denote a class of wise men as far back as the time of Cyrus.
- One scholar has written: "It is hard to prove a negative. Our knowledge of the Babylonian literature of the time of Daniel is not so complete that we can safely affirm that 'Chaldean' never meant the caste of wise men in his time."

**THE CLAIM OF HISTORICAL ERRORS IN DANIEL REGARDING BELSHAZZAR**

- Daniel states that Belshazzar was king of Babylon. In addition, the book seems to indicate that Belshazzar was the Chaldean last king and that Nebuchadnezzar was his father.
- In fact, Nabonidus was the last king and Belshazzar was his son.

- QUESTION 1: Why is Nebuchadnezzar called the father of Belshazzar four times in Daniel 5 and Belshazzar is called the son of Nebuchadnezzar once in that chapter?
- The Hebrew use of “father” and “son” can simply mean “ancestor” and “descendent.” It is possible that a genetic relationship existed between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar in order to legitimize his rule then his son by her would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.
- This view is strengthened by the fact that Nabonidus named one of his sons Nebuchadnezzar.
- Also, an earlier king (Neriglissar) is known to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.
- A second explanation is that “by ancient usage the term son often referred to a successor in the same office whether or not there was a blood relationship.”
- This may have been the usage in Jeremiah 27:7.

All the nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.

- QUESTION 2: Why does Daniel say that Belshazzar was king of Babylon?
- Archaeology has shown that Nabonidus took up residence at Teman in North Arabia and left his son Belshazzar in charge of the northern frontier of the Babylonian empire.

Thus, he became the *de facto* king of Babylon.

- One commentator has written:

Belshazzar then, technically occupied a position subordinate to that of Nabonidus. Nevertheless, since he was the man in regal status with whom the Jews had to do, Daniel calls him king. This cannot justly be charged as an inaccuracy.

- Further, tablets dating from 543 B.C. have been found that implies that Belshazzar and his father were on equal footing. Daniel apparently knew what he was talking about!
- The radical critics argue that Belshazzar’s authority to appoint anyone he pleased as third ruler in the kingdom in Daniel 5 indicates that he was an absolute ruler, not a sub-king.
- Just the opposite is true, however!
- Why did Belshazzar only promise the third and not the second ruler? Because he was the second and his father was the first!
- How would a Jew writing 400 years later have known this?
- Belshazzar was long thought to have never existed, until his name was found by archaeologists. (Eventually, they will learn not to bet against the Bible!)
- Daniel mentions him, as does the apocryphal book of Baruch, which many scholars believe was written in the fourth century B.C. How did the author of Baruch know about Belshazzar if Daniel had not yet been written. This further points to an early date for the book of Daniel.

- One modern scholar has written:

We shall presumably *never know* how our author learned that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar, as the excavations have proved, and that Belshazzar was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon in 538.

#### THE CLAIM THAT DARIUS THE MEDE NEVER EXISTED

- In Daniel 5:30–31 we read

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

- One critic has written that “the references to Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem in the book.”
- The late-date proponents claim that:
  - The author of Daniel believed that a Median kingdom, under Darius, conquered Babylon and subsequently gave way to the Persian empire under Cyrus. It is known that Babylon fell directly to Cyrus and the Persians.
  - Darius the Mede never actually existed but was a confused reflection of a later Persian ruler, Darius I (Hystaspes).
  - The four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 are thus Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.
- Five reasons why this view is wrong:
  - (1) The book of Daniel never claims that Darius was the king of Media but only that he was of Median descent. To say that Napoleon was a Corsican

does not mean that Napoleon was the king of Corsica.

- (2) The author of Daniel says that Darius and Cyrus had different ancestries (Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede), NOT that they ruled separate kingdoms.
- (3) Daniel 6:12 says

So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions’ den?” The king answered, “The decree stands – in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

If Darius ruled an independent kingdom of Media then why was he subject to the law of the Persians?

- (4) Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting on the wall in chapter 5 indicates that the Persians would be the main element of the empire that succeeded the Babylonians. The author clearly says that Babylon would be conquered not by the Medes alone but by the Medes and the Persians with the Persians playing the greater role.
- (5) The vision in chapter 8 depicts a combined Medo-Persian empire as a single ram with two horns. The horn depicting Persia comes up last, but BEFORE the ram sets out to conquer.
- Just because the name ‘Darius the Mede’ has not been found in any ancient inscriptions does not mean that he did not exist.
  - Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

- The critics made similar claims about Belshazzar and Sargon and archaeology later proved them wrong.
- Who then was Darius? We will look at three proposed answers.
  - (1) The author of Daniel was mistaken about the chronology of Persian rulers, and Darius the Mede was actually Darius I, a later ruler of Persia. This view must be rejected for the following reasons:
    - Daniel calls Darius a Mede, and Darius I was a Persian.
    - Daniel says that Darius the Mede was 62 when he began to rule. Darius I was in his 20's when he began to rule.
    - Daniel 9:1 says that Darius the Mede "was MADE king" implying that he was appointed king over Babylon by some higher authority (Cyrus). Darius I, however, succeeded to the throne after the death of Cambyses.
  - (2) Darius the Mede was another name for Cyrus the Persian. (Many people hold this view. I'm not sure what its allure is.) This view must be rejected for the following reason.
    - Daniel 6:28 says that "Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian." This seems like an odd statement if the two men were the same person!
  - (3) Darius the Mede was an early governor of Babylon under Cyrus.
    - The references to Darius in Daniel do not say that he ruled the

Persian empire – only that he took control of the conquered Chaldean empire.

- It was a well known practice of Cyrus to appoint Medes to high positions in order to foster goodwill and loyalty.
- Critics claim that Darius the Mede had too much authority to have been just a governor. Read Daniel 6:25–26.

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end."

Yet the phrase "throughout the land" simply means all of the land over which he had been given authority. Remember that his land consisted of people from many different countries – such as Daniel and his friends.

- Which governor was he? One commentator has written:

Gubaru the Governor of Babylon fits the Biblical description of Darius the Mede so remarkably that the writer believes he will be recognized in due time as the monarch who played such an important role in the life of Daniel and the fall of Babylon. ... We believe that this identification is the only one which satisfactorily harmonizes the various lines of evidence which we find in the book of Daniel and in the contemporary cuneiform records.

THE CLAIM THAT EVENTS IN DANIEL  
ARE IMPROBABLE OR ABSURD

- In Daniel 4:33 we read the account of Nebuchadnezzar's illness in which he roamed the fields thinking himself to be an ox.

Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

- Critics claim that the sickness of Nebuchadnezzar is too incredible to be true.
  - Too incredible to be true? These critics need to pull their heads out of their books and watch a little daytime TV. If the talk shows on TV today do nothing else, they prove that nothing is too strange to be true. A man who thinks he is a cow? It wouldn't even make the first cut on the Sally Jesse Raphael Show.
  - Not only is it NOT that incredible, but it has a name: boanthropy.
  - R. K. Harrison speaks of an encounter he had with such a person in a British mental hospital. He ate only vegetation and drank only water. His health was excellent and the only physical abnormality noticed was the length and coarseness of his hair and the thickened condition of his nails.
  - No Babylonian record has been found that mentions any activity by Nebuchadnezzar during the period 582 to 575.

THE CLAIM THAT DANIEL VIOLATES THE SUPPOSED NATURE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

- This is a classic straw man argument. The critics set up a straw man by defining prophecy and then seek to discredit Daniel because it does not fit their own definition.
- One critic has written that "prophecy in the Bible is characterized by an absence of specific predictions. It is forthtelling and not foretelling." The prophecy in Daniel is primarily of the latter variety.
- What about Jesus? He made specific prophecies regarding his death, the manner of his death, the perpetrators of his death, his betrayal, the death of Peter, the denial by Peter, his resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem within a generation.

"And now I [Jesus] have told you before it come to pass, that, when it come to pass, you might believe." (John 14:29)

- What do liberals do with the host of predictions found in both the Old and New Testaments? They usually call in an EDITOR to deal with the problem. That is, they say that someone came along after the book was written and after certain events had occurred and changed the book to make it look like those events had been predicted long ago. (Those magical and convenient late editors solve a variety of problems for the liberals.)

THE CLAIM THAT THE TYPE OF ARAMAIC USED IN DANIEL INDICATES A LATE DATE

- Daniel 2:4b through 7:28 is in the Aramaic language. (The remainder is in Hebrew.) It has been claimed that the form of Aramaic used was the type used in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and not the type used in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

- This argument fell apart in 1929 when a farmer discovered what were later called the Ras Shamra tablets inside an underground passage.
- The Aramaic in these tablets is similar to that in Daniel and they date back to 1400 B.C.
- It is also claimed that the Aramaic in Daniel is a western dialect that was only used in Palestine.
- Even if this were true it would not prove that Daniel was written in Palestine. The book was undoubtedly copied many times and the language may have been updated to conform to the common dialect.
- However, many scholars dispute the claim that the Aramaic in Daniel is western.
  - One has asserted that it predates the eastern and western distinction.
  - Another has written that the Aramaic in Daniel is a form that originated in the courts and governments of the seventh century B.C.
- E. J. Young has written that "it is becoming more and more clear that the languages CANNOT be employed as arguments against the antiquity of the book."
- Why were two languages used?
  - It is NOT unique to Daniel. In the book of Ezra, 4 chapters are written in Aramaic.
  - Some critics have claimed that there were two authors, but even most of

the liberals reject this since the message of the book is clearly woven throughout the entire work.

- But part of Daniel is written in the third person. Doesn't this imply another author? No. It is common to switch between first and third person in the Bible. Even God does it in Exodus 20. (See verses 2 (first person) and 7 (third person).)

- One commentator has written:

"Even critical scholars admit that only one author produced Daniel. The identity of the author appears from the unity of the plan, the relation of various parts to each other, the gradation of the oracles from the uncertain to the certain, the remarkable uniformity of ideas, images, forms, symbols, and that even in two languages there is a remarkable similarity of style."

- Why then are two languages used? A much better explanation than two authors is that there were two audiences – which we know was true.
- One commentator has written:

The Aramaic chapters deal with matters pertaining to the entire citizenry of the Babylonian and the Persian empires, whereas the other six chapters relate to peculiarly Jewish concerns and God's special plans for the future of his covenant people.

**THE CLAIM THAT THE TYPE OF HEBREW USED IN DANIEL POINTS TO A LATE DATE**

- The Hebrew language underwent a big change around the time of Nehemiah. The critics claim that Daniel's Hebrew resem-

bles the later type and thus points to a late date for the book.

- The Hebrew portion of Daniel contains no Greek words.
  - Again, this seems very odd if Daniel had been written after nearly 200 years of Greek rule in Palestine.
  - The political terms in Daniel are largely Persian, which one would expect if the book had been written during the reign of Cyrus.
- The Hebrew used in the Dead Sea Scroll sectarian documents does NOT resemble the Hebrew used in Daniel, which seems odd if they were written at about the same time.
- One of the most radical critics has written that “from the Hebrew of the Book of Daniel no important inference as to its date can be safely drawn.”

**THE CLAIM THAT THE USE OF PERSIAN  
WORDS IN DANIEL INDICATES A LATE  
DATE**

- Present in the Hebrew and especially in the Aramaic parts of Daniel are several words of Persian origin.
- The radical critics assert that the Persian language did not penetrate the Aramaic of Babylon until long after Cyrus’ conquest.
- The Persian term ‘satrap’ is used throughout Daniel as if it were a Babylonian title. The critics say that such usage points to a much later date.
  - It is possible that the term had become a Babylonian title due to the Persian influence that already existed.

- Also, if Daniel wrote the book after the fall of Babylon then he might have substituted Persian terms in place of the older Babylonian terms.
- Again, this argument can be turned against the late-date crowd.
  - The first Greek translations of Daniel appeared around 100 B.C. (Septuagint and Theodotian)
  - Many of the Persian words in these translations were MISTRANSLATED, which seems odd if the book had been written only 65 years earlier.
  - Clearly, the words had been forgotten or had changed meaning since the time when Daniel was written, which points to an early date for the book.

**THE CLAIM THAT THE USE OF GREEK  
WORDS IN DANIEL INDICATES A LATE  
DATE**

- Daniel 3:5 (in the Aramaic section) contains three words of Greek origin, all are musical terms.
- It is claimed that such words could only have been used after Greek influence had spread throughout Asia after the conquest by Alexander the Great – again indicating a late date.
- How much cultural spread does it require to learn three new words? If the book had been written 400 years later, then wouldn’t we expect to find many Greek words instead of only two?
  - There are 20 Persian words and three Greek words in Daniel. Does this make sense if Daniel had been written during the Greek empire and long after the Persian empire? (By 170

B.C., a Greek speaking government had controlled Palestine for 160 years.)

- One author has said “It is the fewness of the Greek words, coupled with the fact that they are only the names of musical instruments, that must prove fatal to the critics’ theory that the book was written in 165 B.C.”
- Anyway, experts now agree that Greek culture had penetrated the Near East long before the Neo-Babylonian period. The terms may have been introduced by Greek traders before the rise of the Persian empire.
- The Elephantine papyri is a fifth century Aramaic document that contains a number of Greek words.
- It is significant that the terms are all musical terms. Such terms are frequently borrowed when the instruments they describe become known.

#### TO SUMMARIZE OUR POSITION

- The book of Daniel was written by Daniel in Babylon during the late sixth century B.C. That means that the prophecies it contains are genuine and accurate, and further they are proof of the Bible’s inspiration. The late date theory is only promoted by those who deny the inspiration of scripture, and we have shown that their arguments are specious.

## CHAPTER 1

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

- As we mentioned in our introductory comments, the first few verses of Chapter 1 do not seem to be speaking of a single incident, but instead appear to be a summary of the events that led to Daniel’s deportation.
- We meet two kings in the first verse of Daniel: King Nebuchadnezzar and King Jehoiakim. One of these is one of the most detestable figures in the Bible – and it is not Nebuchadnezzar!
- Jehoiakim was the son of King Josiah, and was appointed to be king by Necho, King of Egypt. A few years later Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians and Assyrians, and then turned his sights on Jehoiakim.
- Read Jeremiah 36

Jeremiah 36:2-3 “Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. 3 Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, each of them will turn from his wicked way; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.”

Jeremiah 36:23-24 Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe’s knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. 24 The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes.

Jeremiah 36:27-31 After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah’s dictation, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 28 “Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up. 29 Also tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, ‘This is what the Lord says: You burned that

scroll and said, "Why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and cut off both men and animals from it? 30 Therefore, this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. 31 I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened."

King Jehoiakim took a knife to the word of God, cut it in pieces, and through it in the fire. He had no regard for the word of God. Perhaps its due to my own personal experiences with some modern day Jehoiakim's but that story really burns me up (no pun intended).

- Are we sometimes guilty of the same thing? Do we pick and choose parts of the Bible the way he did? What difference is there if instead of cutting out something from our Bible, we simply choose to ignore it?
- As we mentioned in our introduction, the city was first besieged (not captured) during the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign (according to Daniel's Babylonian calendar) or in the fourth year of his reign (according to Jeremiah's Judean calendar.)
- Who was Nebuchadnezzar? His name means "Nebo, protect my boundary!" He was the son of the Chaldean Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, and would soon be king himself.
  - Note that Nebuchadnezzar is called "king" even though he was not yet king when the city was first besieged.

We use similar language today. We might say that President Bush was once the youngest pilot in the navy – but he wasn't president at the time. Thus, Daniel refers to Nebuchadnezzar as king because he had been king when Daniel was written. (We need to approach the Bible with a little common sense and not look for an error around every corner.)

- Why had this occurred? Why were the people taken captive?
  - One reason was their failure to trust in God. Judah had made alliances with Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt and in doing so had involved themselves in their power struggles – an involvement that eventually led to their destruction. These alliances were NOT according to God's will.
  - A second reason was their idolatry. God had tried everything to get them to give up their idols, but they refused. When he sent them to Babylon he sent them to the world capital of idolatry!
  - We should be careful what we attach ourselves to. God may give us our fill of it! (Remember in Revelation how the Romans wanted blood so God gave them a river of blood 200 miles long.)
  - Interestingly, idolatry was never quite the problem for Israel after their captivity in Babylon as it was before. God's plan worked.

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of

his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

- Recall our introductory comments about “Shinar.” It was the site of the Tower of Babel and was a very early term for Babylon. It points toward an early date for the book.
- In this verse we meet a third king! Nebuchadnezzar thought he was in charge, but God was in charge. He allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take Judah captive, and when the time was right he removed Nebuchadnezzar from power.
  - Just about all that is left of the mighty Nebuchadnezzar is a pile of bricks. When Nebuchadnezzar built the city, he had his name and picture imprinted on every brick that was used. One in the British museum shows the clear imprint of dog’s foot over the name of the mighty king!
  - Nebuchadnezzar thought he was building an empire for himself, but he was really building a school for the Jews. God sent them there for a 70 year lesson they would never forget. When the 70 years were over, God removed the Chaldeans through Cyrus the Persian.
- “And the Lord gave” is the first indication of a major theme of this book: the absolute sovereignty of God. God is in charge. Babylon was only victorious because God allowed it to be. Later we will see the other side of the coin. Babylon will be defeated when it has finished serving God’s purposes.
- Was Jehoiakim taken back to Babylon?

- The “them” in verse 2 may just refer to the vessels from the temple, which we know went back to Babylon.

- What about 2 Chronicles 36:6?

Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters to take him to Babylon.

- Again, this does not actually say that Jehoiakim returned to Babylon, only that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take him there.
- Why does it matter? Other passages imply that Jehoiakim died in Judah.

Jeremiah 22:18-19 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: “They shall not lament for him, saying, ‘Ah my brother!’ or ‘Ah sister!’ They shall not lament for him, saying, ‘Ah lord!’ or ‘Ah his majesty!’ 19 With the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

- CONCLUSION: It seems likely that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take him back but that after being captured, he died and his body was simply thrown down outside the city.
- Removing the vessels from the temple was a terrible insult to the Jews. They were taken back to Babylon and placed in the treasury of the Babylonian gods.
  - The mention of these vessels in verse 2 is an example of the unity of this book. They will play an important role later.
- Belshazzar is going to live to regret this theft in Chapter 5!
  - (Note that singular ‘god’ is probably more accurately translated ‘gods.’)

The Babylonians had many different deities (Marduk, Nebo, Ishtar.)

3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, 4 youths without blemish, handsome and skilful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to serve in the king's palace, and to teach them the letters and language of the Chaldeans.

- The purpose of this section is to explain why Daniel and his friends are in Babylon BEFORE the first big deportation, which occurred in 597.
- The captives are called “children of Israel” even though they were not from the Northern Kingdom (Israel, which had been taken captive long ago) but were from the Southern Kingdom (Judah).
  - Later in verse 6, they will be called children of Judah. By this time, many from the Northern kingdom had migrated south due to Assyrian invasions, so Judah included people from both kingdoms.
- The captives were of royal and noble birth. Why were they taken?
  - This weakened the subjugated nation. They were also hostages that would keep the Jews in line while Nebuchadnezzar went back to assume the throne.
  - This also strengthened the conquering nation. It was considered a good policy to make leaders from the conquered people. Alexander the Great did this, and Cyrus did this (as we will see later in this book).
- How many captives were taken? Some historians believe there were between 50 and 75. (We remember only four!) Nebuchadnezzar needed enough so that he could train them to later administer his rule among the Jews.
- How old were they? The Hebrew word for “youth” used here most probably places their ages between 14 and 17. Since we know that Daniel was still serving as a leader 70 years later, it seems clear that Daniel and his companions were very young when he was taken hostage. It is thus possible and perhaps probable that Daniel was as young as 13 or 14 when he was taken captive.
- These young men were without blemish. The ancients (much like we moderns) believed that one's outward appearance reflected an inner condition. Indeed, God did not allow men with certain physical deformities to be priests.
- They learned the ‘letters and language of the Chaldeans.’
  - We have already discussed the two meanings of the term ‘Chaldeans.’
    - The Chaldeans (led by Nabopolassar) overthrew the Assyrians and conquered Babylon in 612. The term ‘Chaldean’ can be used in an ethnic sense to describe anyone from the Chaldean tribe.
    - Like ‘Jew’ however, the term ‘Chaldean’ had both a nationalistic and a religious meaning. In the latter sense, ‘Chaldean’ can refer to a group of wise men that arose from within that tribe.
    - The use here appears to be the former ethnic sense. These cap-

tives were going to get a crash course in Babylonian and Chaldean culture.

- This included a study of the old languages of Babylonia including two dialects of Sumerian.
- It also included mathematics and science, areas in which Babylon was very advanced.
- It also included Babylonian mythology, including their creation and flood legends. (Clay tablets at the British museum show the types of math problems and legends that they studied.)
- They enrolled in the University of Babylon – and were subjected to the same brainwashing that some of our universities employ (or at least are accused of employing.) Brainwashing has little effect on a discerning mind!
- More evidence for early date: Would a late-date author writing in Palestine have enrolled his Jewish heroes in the University of Babylon for a pagan polytheistic education?
  - The Maccabees wanted to retain their Jewish heritage in the face of Greek influences. Is this the type of hero they would have created? Daniel was steeped in the foreign culture and seemed to take to it readily with God's help and approval.
- Daniel knew that if he were to have any effect at all on the Babylonians, he would need to understand their culture. Think of Paul teaching the Greeks. Would he have had the effect he had on them if he had not been so intimately knowledgeable about Greek culture. Effective missiona-

ries take the time to learn all about the people they are trying to reach, just like Paul did.

5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the rich food which the king ate, and of the wine which he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king.

- The term for 'rich food' used here is a technical Persian term that is used only twice in the Old Testament (both times in Daniel). It denotes gifts from the royal table.
- The king's food would have helped reverse the effects of the siege and the deportation. However, there seems to have been a more devious reason behind the king's generosity.
  - Remember, the king's goal was to BRAINWASH these children. He wanted them to forget their own land and culture and become Chaldeans. His theme song may have been 'How are you going to keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paris?'
  - Did it work? Of the 50 to 75 captives, only 4 that we know of remained true to God.
  - Our Message: The devil constantly works to change our appetites. He wants us to crave the things of this world. We need to resist the way that Daniel did.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.

2 Corinthians 6:17 Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.

- Our greatest danger is that we will be absorbed by the world.
- Typically these feasts would have begun with a sacrifice to the false Babylonian gods and would have consisted of many unclean foods. Thus, Daniel and his friends had a dilemma. Would they compromise or not?
- But shouldn't they have eaten the food? After all, as verse 5 says, they were going to have "to stand before the king"! Yes, but Daniel answered to another king. There was another king that Daniel would stand before some day.
  - "To stand before the king" is a Persian term for "royal service." It meant more than literally standing before the king.
- **PROBLEM:** They were educated for three years and then went before the king. Yet later in Chapter 2 we discover that Nebuchadnezzar's first dream occurred during the second year of his reign. Is this a contradiction? No.
  - It is possible that their education did not take a full three years. Mark 8:31 says that Jesus would rise "after three days" when in fact he rose on the third day. In Genesis 42:17-18, we find that Joseph put his brothers in jail for three days, but we later see

that he brought them out during the third day.

- A second explanation involves the Babylonian system for dating the years of a king's reign that we discussed earlier. The actual first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was called the year of his accession, the actual second year of his reign was called the first year of his reign, etc. The first year of their training would have corresponded to Nebuchadnezzar's year of accession.
- Another possibility is that they were still in school. This would explain why they were not present when the king first spoke to the wise men.

6 Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. 7 And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

- At last we are introduced to the hero of our story, Daniel, and his three friends. Would anyone in the world have considered Daniel to be an important figure at this time? No, but to God he was of the utmost importance. We must try to see the world as God sees it.
- Their Hebrew names were all changed to Chaldean names so that they would forget their land and culture.
- This is not the only time this occurred in the Bible.
  - Joseph became Zaphenath-paneah (Genesis 41:45)
  - Hadassah became Esther (Esther 2:7)

- Daniel (My judge is El [God]) became Belteshazzar (Nebo protect my life). This is hinted at in Daniel 4:8 where Nebuchadnezzar says that Daniel was named after his God, which was presumably Nebo.
- Another commentary said that Belteshazzar may refer to Belet, the wife of Marduk.
- There are many different theories regarding the exact meanings of these names. The ones given here seem to be the most popular.
- Hananiah (Yahweh has shown grace) became Shadrach (the command of Aku) which honors the Sumerian moon god, Aku.
- Mishaël (who is what God is?) became Meshach (who is what Aku is?)
- Azariah (Yahweh has helped) became Abednego (the servant of Nego [probably Nebo]).
- HERE'S A GOOD QUESTION: Why do we remember Daniel by his Hebrew name and the others by their Babylonian names?
  - Daniel wrote the book, and he seems to favor his original name. Also, it is easier to pronounce than Belteshazzar. (I wonder if he had used his new name if Belteshazzar would now be a popular name like Daniel is.)
  - As for Daniel's three friends, he sometimes uses their old names and sometimes uses their new names. Their new names seem to have stuck, though, because those are the ones that are used during the fiery furnace account. (Again, the pronunciation theory may apply here as well.)

- Note also that after the exile, some Jews still used Babylonian names. Zerubbabel means the seed of Babylon and Shenazzar refers to a Babylonian moon-god. (Some of our days of the week refer to false gods.)

8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's rich food, or with the wine which he drank; therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

- Nebuchadnezzar's brainwashing plan had three components:
  - Teach them Chaldean culture and language.
  - Give them Chaldean names.
  - Feed them Chaldean food.
- The first two could be done without compromising the word of God.
- Daniel could learn their culture without having to adopt it and believe in their false gods.
  - (We should never run from knowledge! Would Daniel have had such an impact on Babylon if he had buried his head in the sand and refused to learn about them. We need to teach our children to be discerning, not to run in fear from knowledge.)
- Also, the Babylonians could call them anything they wanted.
- But the heathen food was another matter. This is where our fourteen year old hero and his friends had to draw the line. (These teenage boys drew the line at food!) Why?

- Jewish food had to be prepared properly (blood drained...) . Also, many animals were considered unclean and could not be eaten. The Babylonians ate pork and horse. This violated the dietary laws in the Torah (Lev 11, Lev 17, and Deut 14).
- God did not want his people to practice idolatry or to associate with people who did. The Babylonian food would have been offered to pagan gods and would have been served at pagan feasts. To eat under those conditions would have been to wholeheartedly accept the false Babylonian gods.
- A third reason is that according to Eastern standards, to share a meal was to commit oneself to friendship. It had a covenant significance.
  - For Daniel, it would have meant an obligation of loyalty to the king, and Daniel rejected that symbol of dependence.
  - This also explains why the eunuch was so reluctant to agree with Daniel's request later in verse 10. It was treasonous! ('You would endanger my head with the king.')
- (But what if they just ate it and didn't believe. Would that have been all right? No. God does not need secret agents.)
  - Remember Aesop's fable about the bat. The beasts and the birds had a war and the bat joined both sides. With the birds he acted like a bird and with the beasts he acted like a beast. When he was discovered he had to hide and only come out at night. I fear that some of us may be spiritual bats. Daniel was not.
- Daniel made a resolution and he stuck to it. Was this difficult or easy?
  - Put yourself in his place. His home had been destroyed and he had been dragged away in chains. It seemed like God had forsaken him. He had been without much food for a long time during the siege. Maybe God wanted him to eat this food. Who would know and what would it hurt?
  - Wouldn't this little quibble hurt his chances to get a good position in the government? Money was involved! Doesn't that overrule all other considerations?
  - Daniel knew what was right and he did it no matter what or no matter who stood against him. We need more Daniels!
  - They were not the first to be tempted with forbidden fruit, but unlike Adam and Eve, they passed the test!
- But wasn't Daniel being a legalist? Wasn't carrying this all just a bit too far? Not according to God. We may think it is all right to ignore some of God's word, but it doesn't really matter what we think. It is what God thinks that matters and God agreed with Daniel!
  - This may come as a surprise to some (particularly in the denominational world), but the church is not a democracy. We do not determine the truth; we don't vote on the truth. The truth is the truth regardless of what we think about it. Daniel and his

friends did not get together to vote on what to do; they knew what to do.

- Daniel used the word “defile.” Even that was courageous! He used a strong word but an appropriate word. We really need more Daniels today!
- The Babylonians could change many things about Daniel’s life: his homeland, his culture, his name, his diet. But they could not change his heart. He remained loyal and true to God.
- Can you imagine the kind of courage this required for a teenager to stand up against all of Babylon! God, give us courageous Christians!

9 And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs; 10 and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear lest my lord the king, who appointed your food and your drink, should see that you were in poorer condition than the youths who are of your own age. So you would endanger my head with the king.”

- Why did Daniel receive such favor? Was it because of something he did? No. God gave Daniel favor in the Babylonian’s sight. God deserved the credit for Daniel’s success. Again we are reminded of God’s sovereignty.
- Daniel feared God, but who did the chief eunuch fear? Nebuchadnezzar. The chief eunuch feared for his life. Daniel feared for his soul.

11 Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; 12 “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat

the king’s rich food be observed by you, and according to what you see deal with your servants.”

- Daniel next goes to the steward that the chief eunuch had appointed and offers him a deal. Why?
  - Daniel was persistent. The first official did not give him the answer he wanted. He did not give up at the first sign of difficulty.
- The 10 days in this verse is just that – ten days. Unlike Revelation, much of this book is historical and not apocalyptic. Later, we will study sections of this book in which numbers should be interpreted figuratively.
- The King James Version uses the word ‘pulse’ in place of ‘vegetables’ in verses 12 and 16. It is a poor translation in that it refers only to beans, peas, and lentils. The actual Hebrew word includes all types of vegetables.

14 So he hearkened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s rich food. 16 So the steward took away their rich food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

- Why did the steward agree to their plan? Who do you think got all of the rich food they refused to eat? When you answer the second question you will have your answer to the first!
- As God’s people we should not run from a test. We should invite a test of our faith. We should pray for such a test. Because such a test gives us a chance to show the

world whose side we are on and to prove to the world that we are on the right side.

- Their improved appearance seems to have been miraculous, since it is difficult to see how a 10 day diet of vegetables could have made a visible difference.

17 As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all letters and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

- Again note the phrase "God gave." God is in charge here. Their learning and wisdom were gifts from God. (Not due to their diet as vegetarians like to claim!)
- God gave Daniel wisdom and the ability to understand visions and dreams.
- This gift would allow Daniel to become an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar, which is obviously what God had in mind. It would also allow Daniel to be considered a 'wise man' in the king's court, and would allow Daniel to be the channel of revelation that God wanted him to be.
- Ezekiel speaks of a man named Daniel who was wise and could interpret secrets. Who do you think he had in mind? The liberal critics think [or at least say!] that Ezekiel was speaking of a mythic pagan character who was famous for his drunkenness.

18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king spoke with them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they stood before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and un-

derstanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

- These four young men made quite an impression on the king. Although they had only been in the country for a few years, they already knew more than the wise men who advised the king.
- With God's help they passed their final exams. You can almost picture God playing the role of the proud father as these three boys showed up all of the Babylonian wise men!
- 'Ten times' better? This was a common idiom for 'much' better.

21 And Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

- This means that Daniel was around from 605 until AT LEAST 539 B.C.
- PROBLEM: How can this verse be true since in Daniel 10:1 we find that Daniel receives a vision in the third year of Cyrus?
  - Again let's read the verse and see what it actually says.
  - Does it say that Daniel died during the first year of King Cyrus? No. Not at all.
  - It simply tells us that Daniel survived into the next empire. Daniel lasted longer than the Babylonians did! He had predicted the fall and he was there to see it.
- Who was Cyrus? He was the first Persian emperor that took over after the Chaldeans were defeated. He released the

Jews from captivity and allowed them to return to their land. Read Ezra.

## CHAPTER 2

### INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

- Chapter 2 covers history from Babylon to Rome, and provides the foundation for understanding the other apocalyptic sections in the book.
- Chapter 7 expands upon chapter 2, especially with regard to the second and third kingdoms.
- Chapters 11 and 12 expand upon chapter 2, especially with regard to kingdoms two, three, and four.
- These later chapters supply many details that are not mentioned here in chapter 2.
- MESSAGE OF CHAPTER 2: God's promises to Israel have not been forgotten. (This is the same message in Romans 9–11.) The Gentiles (those outside of the covenant) are in charge now, but one day (under the Messiah) the kingdom will be restored to the faithful.

1 In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

- The world's most powerful ruler has just assumed the throne – and almost immediately he is troubled by his dreams and can't sleep. God was trying to tell him something and like most people he found that troubling.

- He calls all of his wise men to come and interpret the dream. Note that the term 'Chaldean' is used here to denote a special class of wise men. Nebuchadnezzar was himself a Chaldean in the ethnic sense.
- 'Dream manuals' have been found that list historical dreams and the events that followed them. These wise men would have been very familiar with these very long volumes. Their general course of action would have been to have heard the dream and then looked it up in their book – but Nebuchadnezzar has other ideas!
- Does God talk to us today in dreams?
  - When God talked to people with dreams in the Old Testament, they knew it. They received a definite message, and God was very persistent about it. Nebuchadnezzar knew that this was no ordinary dream.
  - If God did talk to us today with dreams then what would he say? What more do we need to hear from God? The word he has already given us is able to instruct us about salvation (2 Timothy 3:15) and equips us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16).
  - Are you looking for a message from God? You have one! The Bible is God's message to us.
  - Those who claim that God speaks to them today apart from his word generally have found something in his word that they don't like.
  - As scarce as the truth is, the demand has never exceeded the supply!

3 And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." 4 Then the Chaldeans said to the king, "O king, live for ever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." 5 The king answered the Chaldeans, "The word from me is sure: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. 6 But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation."

- Beginning in verse 4 and continuing through 7:28, the book of Daniel is written in the Aramaic language.
  - Even the Dead Seas Scrolls make this switch to Aramaic. (This strongly suggests that the original was also written in two languages.)
  - Other Aramaic sections in the Old Testament: Ezra 4:8–6:18, Ezra 7:12–26, and Jeremiah 10:11.
- Nebuchadnezzar asked his advisors to interpret the dream that he had, and the advisors at first seem eager to do so. They ask him to tell them the dream that he had, and I am sure that they would have come up with any number of interpretations. They expressed no doubt regarding their abilities in verse 4.
- Nebuchadnezzar, however, is no fool. He asks them to tell him both his dream and his interpretation. Suddenly their confidence vanishes!
  - The King James Version translates verse 5 to indicate that the king had forgotten the dream. ("The thing is gone from me.") However, he remembers enough later in the story to be able to confirm Daniel's interpre-

tation. A better interpretation is found in the Revised Standard Version, which we read above.

- ANCIENT BABYLONIAN OMEN: If a man cannot remember the dream he saw then it means that his personal god is angry with him.
- Failure meant a horrible death and success meant rich rewards.
  - The threat in verse 5 is that they would be "made into limbs." The NIV translation that they would be cut into pieces is not correct – no verb for cutting is used here and no cutting instrument is mentioned.
  - What the king had in mind was that their arms and legs would be tied to four trees that had been temporarily roped together. When the ropes were cut, the victim would be torn into four pieces. (He was going to turn each wise man into four wise pieces!)

7 They answered a second time, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." 8 The king answered, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is sure 9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation."

- They do not think that the king is serious, so they ask him for the dream one more time. (Do they seem a little nervous to you?)
  - Compare the first request in verse 4 with the second request in verse 7.

Notice any difference? In the second request, the wise men don't start off by hoping that the king will live forever!

- In verse 8-9, the king makes it very clear that he is serious, and he lets them in on his strategy. He accuses them of stalling and of planning to lie to him. (Of course, they are stalling! They are repeating themselves in verse 7.)
- He says that they were planning to wait until "the times change." That is, until the crisis has passed and the king has forgotten all about it.

10 The Chaldeans answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand; for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king asks is difficult, and none can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

- The wise men complain that no one could do what the king wanted. In fact, they say that no king has ever asked such a thing. (Indeed, not even Joseph in Egypt was required to do this.)
  - The wise men say that if they don't know the answer then no one knows the answer.

Job 12:2 "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you."

- Finally, they speak the truth. They admit to the king (whether they know they are admitting it or not) that their profession is a fraud.
  - This is definitely a lesson we need to hear today. Anytime we look for answers to our problems or answers

about our future from someone other than God, we need to seriously consider our spiritual health.

- SIMPLE PROOF THAT ESP DOES NOT EXIST: Have you ever wondered how they decide how many numbers to use in the state lottery? (6 between 1 and 50) The lottery is designed according to the laws of statistics. The lottery would not work as expected if ESP existed. The fact that it does work as expected (often there are no jackpot winners at all) proves that there is no "latent ESP" in the populace.
- The king, they say, isn't being fair. He is asking too much. Imagine, asking a fortune teller to tell someone's fortune!
- Again, they hit upon the truth. Only God can reveal someone's thoughts. What will the logical conclusion be when Daniel reveals the dream? (I imagine they later regretted their words!)

12 Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 So the decree went forth that the wise men were to be slain, and they sought Daniel and his companions, to slay them.

- The king becomes upset when he realizes that his "wise men" are suffering from an acute lack of wisdom. In fact, he becomes furious and commands that they all be killed. (You would think that some of these fortune tellers would have seen this coming and have left town!)
- Daniel and his friends, unfortunately, are numbered among this group, and their lives become in danger from the king's edict.

- It is possible that Daniel is still in school. That is, the three years of schooling may not yet be over. If this were true, then Nebuchadnezzar must have ordered that all of those who were preparing to be wise men be killed as well.
- This would explain why Daniel was not with the wise men when they first tried to interpret the dream.
- As for not standing before the king until the three years were over (1:5), recall that standing before the king was a Persian term for royal service.

14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to slay the wise men of Babylon; 15 he said to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so severe?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. 16 And Daniel went in and besought the king to appoint him a time, that he might show to the king the interpretation.

- Arioch shows up to take Daniel to death row, but Daniel talks him into taking him to the king instead.
- The word for "severe" in verse 15 really means "hasty." Daniel did not question the punishment, but the haste with which the king ordered it.
- This death sentence was Daniel's opportunity.
  - It sounded like very bad news, but Daniel saw it as a gift from God and jumped at it. Christians should be eternal optimists!
  - We usually see the light at the end of the tunnel and think it must be an on-coming train. If God is on our side, then who can be against us. Daniel is

a great example of how we should be optimistic since God is on our side.

- A "pessimistic Christian" is the ultimate oxymoron.
- Daniel seems awfully confident in his abilities. Where did this teenager get such confidence? He knew the source of all wisdom. His confidence was not in himself but in his God!
- The stage is now set to introduce King Nebuchadnezzar to the only true and living God. Also, we are about to see a theme that will last throughout the book:
  - God is still in charge, he is still as powerful as ever, and he still loves and cares for his faithful followers.
    - This was true even after their temple had been burned, their city destroyed, and they had been dragged away in slavery. [The city was destroyed in 587 B.C. This scene occurred in 602 B.C.]
    - If there is one clear message in the Bible it is that things are not always as they appear! We must see things the way that God sees them.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 and told them to seek mercy of the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

- Note that his three companions are referred to here by their less familiar Hebrew names.

- The term 'God of Heaven' is used almost exclusively in the captivity books. Why? (Daniel uses it 9 times, Ezra 6 times, and Nehemiah 4 times.)
  - When Judah turned from the Lord, Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw the glory of God depart from the holy of holies in the temple and leave the earth. (Ezekiel 10 and 11)
- What did Daniel and his friends do? They did not turn to astrology or crystal balls. Instead, they prayed.
  - Notice that Daniel doesn't do it all by himself, either. He asks them all to pray with him. Prayer is a team effort!
  - "Prayer is where the action is. Any church without a well organized and systematic prayer program is simply operating a religious treadmill."
  - "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."
- What else did Daniel do? He went to bed! He turned his problems over to God and then he went to sleep. Again, I detect an important lesson for us.
- Notice that Daniel has already promised to answer the king – before he started praying for the answer. Again, Daniel knows that God will give him the answer that he needs. What confidence! What utter dependence on God!
- The "mystery" or "secret" is revealed to Daniel during the night.

- The word "secret" occurs 9 times in this chapter.
- Ezekiel 28:3 using irony against the prince of Tyre told him "Behold thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that is hidden thee." Who was Ezekiel referring to? Remember that if Ezekiel referred to Daniel then the late date theory falls in ruin.

20 Daniel said: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever to whom belong wisdom and might. 21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; 22 he reveals deep and mysterious things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 23 To thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for thou hast given me wisdom and strength, and hast now made known to me what we asked of thee, for thou hast made known to us the king's matter."

- Here Daniel expresses his gratitude to God for answering his prayer and saving him from certain death. Notice in verse 20 that Daniel emphasizes God's wisdom and power.
- **GOD IS POWERFUL.** He controls history. He controls nature. He created the universe and keeps it operating. He is the creator, sustainer, and sovereign of the universe.
- **GOD IS WISE.** We like to think we are wise, but any wisdom we have comes from what God has told us. Although we have certainly progressed in our knowledge of the world, we still know virtually nothing about how it all works.

- The further you progress in science, the more you realize just how little we really know.
- When you think you know everything they give you a bachelor's degree, when you realize you don't know anything they give you a Master's degree, and when you realize that no one else knows anything either they give you a Doctorate.
- Remember what Paul said:

1 Corinthians 1:25,30 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ... 30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

- In verse 21, Daniel touches upon a major theme in the book. It is God who changes times and seasons, removes and sets up kings, and gives wisdom and knowledge. God is in control.
- Men look at the world, see a mess, and say that God is dead. But throughout the Bible, we see that God is always working – especially when things look the worst.
  - Was the world in bad shape before the flood? Yes. Was God in charge? You bet he was!
  - From a human perspective, could things have looked any worse than they did at the cross? Yet God was at that very moment working out the culmination of a plan that he had formed at the very beginning.
  - We must try to see things the way that God sees them! Daniel did and you can see what the result was.
- Note that Daniel was not a fatalist. He knew that men could make real decisions and effect history. He also knew, however, that God had the final word on the matter. Daniel did not see himself and the Babylonians as puppets.
- Verse 21 says that God sets up and removes kings.
  - Read Psalm 2:1–4.

1 Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, 3 "Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision.

- Does he just set up the good kings, or does he set them all up? Although we may have trouble understanding it, the Bible says that God sets them all up and we should (at least in that respect) show respect to them all like Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was polite and respectful to the one who had deported him because he knew that whatever power Nebuchadnezzar had was given to him by God.
- We are not required to agree with them (thankfully), but I think that we are required to show them respect and honor. Listen to what Paul and Peter have to say about this:

Romans 13:1-5 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to

good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

1 Peter 2:13-17 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. 17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

- Were Peter and Paul just speaking of good rulers? How could they be! There were no good rulers back then. These men were imprisoned and killed by these rulers. I think there is an important lesson for us here, even though we may not want to hear it.
- On the other side of the coin, it is certainly permissible to pray that evil rulers be removed. The Christians did this in Revelation, and God answered their prayers by judging Rome.
- Are we then supposed to honor a ruler who we think is wicked. Well, read 1 Peter 2:17 again. The answer is clearly yes.
- Daniel called God the God of his fathers. Daniel trusted God because he knew what God had done. As Isaiah 28:16 says, God is a tried stone. He has never forsaken his people, and he never will.

- Notice that Daniel is absolutely sure that he knows the king's dream even before he tells the king about it. God said it and Daniel knew it was true. Daniel was thanking God in advance because the king had not yet spared his life.
- God had made it known "to me" what "we" asked of him. Again, we are reminded of the power of combined prayer. Daniel asked his friends to pray with him, and he did not forget their contribution when he thanked God.

24 Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus to him, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation." 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who can make known to the king the interpretation."

- Incredible, isn't it? All by himself Arioch has managed to solve the king's problem. Notice how he takes all of the credit in verse 25. (This may have something to do with the reward mentioned back in verse 6.)
- Many things have changed over the centuries, but human nature has not changed one little bit since the Garden of Eden.
- Very often you hear modernists claiming that we need a new church, a new Bible, and a new theology for a new age. But of course we don't. Man has not changed. Sin has not changed. The remedy has not changed. God has not changed.

- We may see ourselves as vastly improved, but all we are doing is worshipping different idols.
- Arioch's complete confidence in Daniel is interesting. He shows no doubt that Daniel will be able to interpret the king's dream. Daniel had already made quite an impact on Arioch.

26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" 27 Daniel answered the king, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: 29 To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be hereafter, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. 30 But as for me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

- Notice that Daniel reminds the reader of his Babylonian name but then resumes using his Hebrew name.
- And what does Daniel do?
  - Does he come before the king and say, "I have solved your problem. I know all of the answers. Look what I can do." No. Unlike Arioch, Daniel does not mention himself.
  - He says look what God can do. The power was not within Daniel and Daniel knew it. God had told him what

Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed. See verse 30.

- Again, we are faced with the truth about astrology, magic, and fortune telling. Daniel says that it does not work. Read verse 27. Now, do we agree with Daniel or not? I hope we all agree with him.
- Daniel speaks to Nebuchadnezzar with great boldness. Keep in mind that Daniel was under sentence of death, yet he takes this opportunity to tell the king that all of his gods are worse than useless. He tells the king that there is a God who reveals mysteries.
- Daniel's answer to the king is that "there is a God in heaven." That is a good answer, isn't it!
- Note also the contrast that Daniel draws between the false Babylonian gods and the one true God. The king's gods were helpless, but there is a God in Heaven who is all powerful.
- We need to stop for a moment and consider the phrase "latter days" in verse 28. To what does it refer?
  - It could simply mean the future. That is, God was going to tell Nebuchadnezzar what would happen later.
  - This seems to fit well with parallel passage that appears in verse 29. (To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be hereafter.)
  - It could refer to the latter days of Jewish history, which ended as far as God was concerned in A.D. 70.
  - Premillennialists teach that it refers to a time yet future; in particular, to a

short time of tribulation preceding the second coming of Christ.

- Is this what Nebuchadnezzar would have thought? "Well, I guess Daniel is about to tell me about what will happen in about 2600 years when the Chinese suddenly decide to invade the Holy Land and toss out the Arabs and fight against the troops sent by the Antichrist who will be living in Rome at the time..." Does that make sense?

31 "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. 32 The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces; 35 then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

- Can you imagine the king's astonished reaction when Daniel started describing his dream? Can you imagine the astonishment (and relief) of his wise men? (Daniel had saved their lives. You will see later how they repay him.) Not only could Daniel reveal the meaning of the dream, he could reveal the content of the dream.
- What did the king see? A single great image consisting of four parts:
  - (1) A head of gold.

- (2) breasts and arms of silver.
- (3) belly and thighs of brass.
- (4) legs and feet of iron and clay.
- The king also saw a giant stone.
  - This stone was cut without hands – that is this stone was not of human origin.
  - This stone smites the feet of the image and turns the whole thing into dust.
  - Note: Many interpretations of this vision make a big deal out of the toes of this image. In particular, many make a big deal out of the ten toes on this image.
    - The toes are not mentioned at all when Daniel first describes what the king saw.
    - Nowhere does Daniel mention "ten toes." Certainly, we might be able to infer that there were ten toes, but if there were some symbolic significance to the number 10, you would think that Daniel would have mentioned the number ten.
- Afterward, the stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.
- The nations that fight against God are often called mountains, also.
  - Compare Jeremiah 51:25 where Babylon is called a destroying mountain.
  - The Babylonians pictured the earth as a huge mountain. In fact, they called the earth "E-kur"

which means 'Mountain House.' So it is fitting that the eternal kingdom would be pictured as huge mountain.

- Also, compare Revelation 8:8 where Rome is pictured as a mountain that is cast into the sea.
- Recall Christ's comments in Mark 11:23. (This really happened in Revelation! I think that Jesus had Rome in mind when he said this.)

Mark 11:23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

- In this passage, we have a great mountain that is from God. What could it be? Perhaps it is a kingdom from God that will replace these earthly kingdoms that are destroyed. Stay tuned...

36 "This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. 37 You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, 38 and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold.

- Luckily we are not left to figure this vision out for ourselves. Daniel tells us what the figures mean.
- Daniel makes it very clear from the start who is in charge here.
- Nebuchadnezzar had been given his rule and his kingdom by God. Any

power, might, or glory that he had was a gift from God.

- This was quite a bold thing to say to King Nebuchadnezzar!
- Why were these four distinct kingdoms represented by a single figure?
  - What relationship does Babylon have with Rome, for example?
  - Taken together, they represent a sustained revolt of organized human society and government against the will of God.
  - Babylon set the tone for the kingdoms that followed.
  - Indeed, Babylon was another name for Rome in the New Testament.

1 Peter 5:13 She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark.

Revelation 18:2 And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"

- King Nebuchadnezzar is the head of the gold – that is, the head of gold denotes his kingdom, Babylon.
- The king may have initially taken this as a complement, until he remembered what had just happened to the head of gold! It was turned to dust with the rest of the image.
- Let's quickly review the history of this first empire.
- The Neo-Babylonian Empire of the Chaldeans started in 626 BC when the Chaldean chieftain Nabopolassar captured Babylon and declared independence from Assyria.

- Nabopolassar made an alliance with the Medes, and in 612 BC their combined army attacked and destroyed the Assyrian capital Ninevah.
- The Assyrians and their Egyptian allies were completely defeated in 605 BC by Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar.
- Nebuchadnezzar ruled for about 40 years, but his empire did not last long beyond his death. His sons proved worthless, and eventually Nabonidus engineered a coup and took over.
- Finally, in 539 BC, Babylon fell to the Persians. This takes us to the second kingdom that King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream.

39 After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 40 And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these.

- The remaining three parts of the image are also kingdoms.
- The second kingdom was Medo-Persia, which as we have seen overthrew the Chaldeans about 70 years after this vision. (Daniel lived to see this. Indeed, it was during this kingdom that Daniel was tossed to the lions.)
  - Why is this second kingdom said to be “inferior” to the first? After all it defeated the first kingdom. Wouldn’t that mean that it was superior?
  - The Hebrew word for “inferior” means “beneath you.” Thus, it may

simply mean that the second kingdom was beneath the first in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw.

- A second possibility is that the second kingdom was inferior to Nebuchadnezzar in the sense that its leader did not share the same absolute and unfettered power that he did.
  - Later in 6:12 we will see that a Persian ruler lacked the power to annul a law once he had made it.
- From this “despotic standpoint” each of these empires was inferior to the ones above it.
- Let’s review the history of this second kingdom, Medo-Persia.
  - As we mentioned earlier, Daniel does not consider the Medes and Persians to be separate kingdoms, but instead explicitly considers them to be a single unified kingdom – which agrees with what historians tell us.
  - This empire began with Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539 BC and died ten years later.
  - His older son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt and died in 523 or 522. He was succeeded by an upstart who claimed to also be a son of Cyrus.
  - This upstart was quickly assassinated and Darius (not the Mede) came to power and established a new dynasty.
  - This empire ruled for about two centuries, but was never able to completely subdue the Greeks on its western border.

- Darius' son invaded the Greeks but was defeated, and his successor tried to set the Greek city-states against each other.
- Alexander the Great invaded Persia in 334 BC.
- The third kingdom that would rule over all of the earth was Greece which conquered the Persians under Alexander the Great.
- Alexander the Great invaded Persia in 334 and completely defeated it in 331.
- At one point, Alexander ruled an area from Yugoslavia to India, the largest empire of ancient times.
- After Alexander died in 323, his kingdom was split into four pieces ruled over by his former generals.
- Consider the following passages from the book of Daniel, which were written hundreds of years before Alexander the Great!

Daniel 8:8 Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly; but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 8:21-22 And the he-goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.

Daniel 11:3-4 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will. 4 And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor ac-

ording to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

- Now you see why the liberals hate this book so much! If they take the early-date view then they must admit that the Bible is from God – and this they cannot do!
- Eventually most of the Greek empire was annexed by Rome, the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's vision. By 146 BC, Greece was permanently subdued. Egypt became a Roman province in 31 BC.
- The fourth kingdom (strong as iron) was Rome, which overthrew Greece.
- The mighty Roman empire started out as a dusty village on Italy's Tiber River in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
- Rome was always fortunate in that it confronted its enemies one at a time rather than all at once. That way it was able to grow and strengthen with each victory.
- By 270 B.C. Rome had control of the Italian peninsula, and begin to look elsewhere for new worlds to conquer.
- After the Punic Wars and the defeat of Carthage, Rome turned its sights toward the East – attacking Philip V's Macedonia and Antiochus III's Seleucid empire (both successor states of Alexander the Great).
- Without giving any of the intervening details, let's jump ahead to consider a question that has intrigued historians for centuries.

- Why did Rome fall? Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar why Rome fell nearly 1000 years before it happened! Listen to what he says:

41 And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

- This fourth kingdom would also be a divided kingdom – clay mixed with iron.
- In verse 42, the “toes” of the image are finally mentioned, but the toes do not cause the weakness in the fourth kingdom. The weakness is caused by the clay that is mixed with the iron. Again, the number 10 is not mentioned at all.
- Was this true of the mighty Roman empire? Yes!
  - In Revelation 13 and 17 we see very clearly that Rome fell partly because of inner strife. This fits very well with what history tells us about Rome.
  - Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* lists four reasons why Rome fell: external invasion, inner decadence, inner strife, and the injury of time and nature.
  - The inner strife was primarily due to the client kingdoms that Rome set up to rule the borders of its empire. Here is how Michael Grant in his book the *History of Rome* describes the client kings.

The client kings were tied to the service of Rome in order to defend its frontiers and serve as listening posts to the outside world. In return, they were supported by the Romans against internal subversive movements and allowed a free hand inside their own countries.

- In his book *The Fall of the Roman Empire* he describes what eventually occurred with these client kingdoms.

In 382, Theodosius I took the revolutionary step of allowing whole German tribes to reside in Imperial territory as separate, autonomous, allied or federate units. committed to serving in the Roman army, though under the command of their own chieftains. Thereafter the practice continued and increased, until such federates became a regular and widespread feature of the life of the Empire.

- Did these groups contribute to the fall of Rome? The Visigoths were the first group to receive federate status and they sacked the city of Rome in A.D. 410 marking the first time in 800 years that the city had been taken by a foreign invader.
- Why did Rome fall? Because God wanted it to fall. Because the first century Christians prayed that it would fall. The fall of Rome was a divine judgment. The church triumphed. Its bitter enemy Rome did not.
- By the way, don't fall into the trap of thinking that Rome became a Christian nation. Rome did much more damage to the church by embracing it than it had by persecuting it. Yet still the one true church survived, and the Roman Empire did not.

44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which

shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever; 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

- The first phrase in verse 44 is vital to understanding this vision because it provides a time frame.
- Without a time frame we get the 'Nostradamus effect.' That is, any statement can be made to appear prophetic if we can choose the event from all of history.
  - For example, Nostradamus says that a political leader and his brother will be killed. So we move that statement along the time line until it matches something and we conclude that Nostradamus was speaking about the Kennedys. But are the Kennedys the only match to that vague prediction. Of course not! A prophecy without a time frame is not worth much unless it is extremely detailed.
- Matthew 24, for example, is often considered a difficult chapter, but when you consider the time frame in verse 34 the interpretation is much easier.
- The book of Revelation includes a time frame. It contains things that were to shortly come to pass after the time it was written. (This is mentioned four times!)
- Verse 44 is our time frame regarding the fifth kingdom.
- The fifth kingdom would be set up in the days of those kings. Which kings? Either all of the kings of the vision (meaning that the kingdom would be set up before all of the those kingdoms passed away) or the kings of the fourth empire.
- Any interpretation that does not have the fifth kingdom set up during this time frame is not a correct interpretation.
- Many elaborate interpretations exist that try to have the fifth kingdom set up some time in the future. Generally, they have some sort of revived Roman empire that pops up some 2000 years after the first Roman empire. This is not what Daniel said!
- What is this fifth kingdom?
  - It was not of human origin. It began during the Roman empire. It outlasted and overthrew the Roman empire. It is an eternal kingdom from God. What else could it be? The fifth kingdom is the church.
- What do we learn about the church from this vision?
  - 1. The church is not a mistake or a fall back plan. It has been a part of God's plan right from the start.
    - Premillennialists teach that Christ came to earth the first time to set up an earthly kingdom but was unable to do so because the Jews rejected him.
    - As a 'Plan B' he decided to set up the church until he could return a

second time to set up an earthly kingdom.

The premillennialists have a severe logical problem with their interpretation of Daniel. First, they say that Jesus wanted to create an earthly kingdom in the first century, but failed to do so. But they also say that Daniel talks about the delayed kingdom. Now, how could it be true that the need for a delayed kingdom was unexpected, yet Daniel predicted it?

- Thus, they teach that the church is the result of a failed plan.
- JESUS CHRIST DID NOT FAIL IN ANYTHING HE DID. EVERYTHING WENT EXACTLY ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN.
- Is the church a mistake? Listen to Paul:

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

- This fifth kingdom is the church of Jesus Christ and it will demolish and outlast any human organization just like Daniel says it will.
- This includes a large number of human organizations that call themselves churches. And this brings us to another important

point that we learn from Daniel about the church.

- 2. The church is not a divided kingdom.
- There is one and only one stone in this image. The kingdoms shatter into pieces, but the stone does not.
- There is one church and only one church.
- This is not a popular theme these days, but it is the truth. This message may not make us very popular at the local interdenominational prayer breakfast, but we must continue to proclaim it. The church is unique and distinctive.

Ephesians 4:4-5 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

John 10:16 And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

- If God had wanted two churches, he would have made one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles.
- Listen to how Ezekiel describes this fifth kingdom:

Ezekiel 37:22-27 and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.

- The church cannot be split! God has set up an eternal kingdom that cannot be divided. If someone tells you that the church has been split, don't believe them. There is one church and it cannot be divided.
- 3. The church is not of human origin.
  - In verse 34, we see that this stone was cut out by no human hand. This stone is not from man.
  - The church is not a product of the Restoration movement. Many of us are Christians because of the preachers who came out of the Restoration movement, but the church predates the Restoration movement by some 1800 years.
  - The church is not a denomination. Read what Paul had to say when denominations first started to form in 1 Corinthians 3:11. He concludes in verse 11 by saying:

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- 4. The church is powerful and eternal. It completely demolishes and replaces its opposition.
- I wish we could all learn to look at the church the way that God looks at the church.

- The church is more important and more powerful than any human organization.
- Do we view the church that way? Do we think of the church as just another in a long list of denominations? Do we want to fit in with and be accepted by all of our denominational friends? If so, we need to carefully consider what Daniel has to say about the one true church.
- In Luke 6:26 Jesus said:

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

- Our goal is not to be liked by all the world. Our goal is to preach the truth to all the world.
- We are not told to go into all the world and be liked, or to go into all the world and don't rock the boat, or to go into all the world and agree to disagree.
- We need to preach what the world needs to hear, not what the world wants to hear.
- The false prophets always told the people just what they wanted to hear, and as Jesus said, everyone liked them. (That is, everyone but God!)

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and did homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery." 48 Then the king gave Da-

niel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel remained at the king's court.

- This is a remarkable scene. One commentator has written:

"The despot who but an hour before had ordered the execution of all his wise men was prostrating himself before this foreign captive from a third-rate subject nation! Even though he opposed the wisdom of the Chaldeans, this absurd monotheist (Daniel) had somehow found the right answer."

- Did Daniel approve of the king's worship of himself? No. How do I know? The Bible doesn't say one way or the other, but I know Daniel.
  - After all he has said, do you really think that he could have approved of someone falling down to worship him. He had already said that God had interpreted the dream.
- Was the king "converted" in verse 47. No, I don't think so.
  - He was saying the right things, but only because he just seen a clear and undeniable demonstration of God's power.
  - True worship is in spirit and in truth. The king spoke the truth, but the spirit was not there. (We will get some proof of this in chapter three.)
- Did the king make Daniel great? No. God made Daniel great. Nebuchadnezzar just noticed it.

- The king fulfilled the promise he made in 2:6 and loaded Daniel down with gifts and royal honors, in addition to making him governor of the capital city, and ruler over the wise men. (Don't you imagine they loved that!)
- Did Daniel forget his friends? Not at all. How easy it would have been to forget about his prayer partners, but Daniel did not.

### OTHER THEORIES ABOUT THE FOUR KINGDOMS IN DANIEL 2

- Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece
  - We have already dealt with this theory. It is the view put forth by those who think that Daniel was written around 168 B.C. This view must be rejected for several reasons:
    - 1. Daniel did not believe or teach that an independent Median empire defeated the Chaldeans.
    - 2. This view meant that Daniel thought that the Messianic kingdom would be established before the end of the Grecian kingdom (before 31 B.C.).
    - 3. Jesus quoted Daniel in Matthew 24 and applied the prophecy to the near future.
- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece (under Alexander), the Successor States. This view must also be rejected:
  - 1. Daniel never treated the Greek kingdom as two independent kingdoms during and after Alexander.
  - 2. In fact, Daniel distinctly treated the two periods as two phases of the

same kingdom. (In Daniel 8, we have one goat with four horns.)

- Rome is the fourth kingdom, but it is split into an ancient part and a future part that has not yet arisen. This view must also be rejected:
- This view requires one to believe that the kingdom was not established in the first century.

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mark 9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

Matthew 16:28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

- Jesus said the time was fulfilled in the first century. The premillennialists say that it was not.
- This view relies heavily on the "ten toes" in the image, but the number ten is never mentioned!
- We will have much more to say about this view as we proceed through the book.

### CHAPTER 3

- In this chapter, we discover what it means to take a stand for the Lord and to refuse to compromise with the gods of this world.
- We also meet three men who are truly 'profiles in courage.'

- One of the central themes of this book is the absolute sovereignty of God and his love for his people.
- The apocalyptic sections of Daniel portray these attributes of God with signs and symbols.
- In this chapter (as well as in chapters 5 and 6) we have historical demonstrations of these attributes.
- Like Revelation, the book of Daniel is a book of assurance. God is telling his people that despite what they might think, they have not been forgotten. We must see the book in this context if we are to understand it properly.

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

#### THE KING MAKES A GIANT GOLDEN IMAGE AND SETS IT UP BEFORE THE PEOPLE.

- Notice that it did not take long for Nebuchadnezzar to forget his newly found religious insights.
- Of course, like all polytheists, he probably felt that the Jews would be capable of having multiple loyalties.
- The polytheistic perspective is very strange to us. But we need to see that the monotheistic view was just as strange to them. The idea of "one true God" was not something they understood.
- The similarity between this image and the one in Nebuchadnezzar's dream seems to be more than a coincidence.

- Recall that Daniel said that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold in his dream. (He wasn't satisfied with being just the head, he wanted to be the whole image!)
  - Out of all that Daniel told him, Nebuchadnezzar seems to have only remembered the statement "You are the head of gold." (We also have our favorite verses...)
  - Perhaps the king was saying to Daniel's God, "OK. Here is the image. Now where is your big stone?" (Daniel's prediction that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be replaced had probably not set to well with him.)
  - Nebuchadnezzar's plan was a very common one:
    - He intended to boost his own political power through the use of religion.
    - We see this happen today when politicians espouse religious views when running for office that are quickly forgotten once that office is obtained.
    - A characteristic of idolatry is that the idol serves the worshipper to achieve the worshipper's aims.
  - How large was the image?
    - It was 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits wide. At 18 inches per cubit, that means the image was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide.
    - The height is about the same as the date-palms that still grow in the plains of Iraq (90 feet), and it was almost as slender.
  - It was more of an obelisk than a statue.
  - Archaeologists have found ruins about six miles southeast of the city of Babylon that may be the foundation of this image.
  - Why 60 by 6?
    - The Babylonian number system was sexagesimal (base 6) instead of decimal (base 10) like ours (and Egypt's in that day).
    - Some see this Babylonian influence elsewhere in scripture, such as in Ezekiel:
- Ezekiel 40:5 And behold, there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area, and the length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length; so he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed.
- It is interesting that the sexagesimal system has survived in our division of time and in our division of the circle into degrees.
  - From our study of Revelation, we know that 6 has a symbolic meaning. The number 7 denotes perfection and completion and the number 6 denotes something that is hopelessly short of perfection.
    - In Revelation, the beast of Rome (a new Babylon) was given the number 666. Rome, like Babylon, thought it was great and powerful, but it was hopelessly short of perfection.
    - The numbers here are not symbolic. They are actual measure-

ments. But the symbolism applies nevertheless.

- Liberal critics see the size of the image as a problem, claiming that the disproportionate proportions would have made the image look preposterous.
- Too tall? The colossus at Rhodes was taller. (70 cubits compared to 60 cubits)
- Perhaps the image was on top of a large pedestal.
- They also complain that there would not have been enough gold in all of Babylon to make such a large image, but where does it say that the image was solid gold?
- Like smaller statues that have survived, this one was no doubt gold plated.
- Compare the following description from Isaiah:

Isaiah 40:19 The idol! a workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains.

- What was the religious significance of this image?
- The construction of this large image is yet another facet of this book that points to an early date.
- Archaeological discoveries have shown that Nebuchadnezzar's building projects extended to some of the ancient Sumerian cities such as Ur of the Chaldees.
- Most feel that Dura (meaning 'walled place') was a suburb of Babylon.

- In these areas, Nebuchadnezzar was a religious reformer. Excavations have shown that when Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt religious temples, he removed the special rooms where the priests conducted their secret ceremonies and replaced them with areas where all could come and view the procedures.
- Nebuchadnezzar's reforms thus centered around permitting the public to participate in the religious ceremonies that had formerly been secret.
- This seems to be what occurred in here in Daniel 3. Sir Leonard Wooley said the following:

What was there new in the king's act? Not the setting up of a statue, because each king in turn had done the same; the novelty was the command for general worship by the public: for a ritual performed by priests the king is substituting a form of congregational worship which all his subjects are obliged to attend.

- How did the author of Daniel know about this new phase of worship that began under Nebuchadnezzar if Daniel were written 400 years later?

2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to assemble the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, were assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

- From Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint, it was inconceivable that any reasonable person could refuse this simple demonstration of loyalty to the king.
- The titles used in this section point to a well organized bureaucracy.
  - Satrap: Persian term for "realm protector."
  - Prefect: lieutenant governors.
  - Governors: lord of an administrative district.
    - Malachi 1:8 says that the province of Judea was administered by a "governor."
  - Advisers or Counselors: Persian term for "counsel-giver."
    - This term is unique to Daniel in all known Aramaic literature.
  - Treasurers: Persian term for "treasure bearer"
  - Judges: Persian term for "law bearer"
  - Magistrate: Persian term for "over chief."
    - The terms for 'judges' and 'magistrates' occur so far only in Daniel and in Aramaic documents of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Provincial officials: general term for government officials.
- Note that five of these terms are Persian.
  - This is seen by some as a problem since this episode from early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign predates the Persian conquest by nearly 70 years.
- However, we have already been told that Daniel lived to see the Persian conquest.
- Thus, it seems most likely that Daniel wrote the book during the Persian rule and substituted the then current Persian titles for the older Aramaic terms.
- The use of these words points to an early date for the book of Daniel.
  - By the second century B.C. some of these Persian loan terms had become obsolete and could no longer be correctly translated by the Alexandrian Jews.
- The satirical effect of this section is clear. As one commentator wrote:
 

Here are all the great ones of the empire falling flat on their faces before a lifeless obelisk at the sound of a musical medley, controlled by the baton of King Nebuchadnezzar.

4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
- This command applied to all people of every nation and language. It was apparently Nebuchadnezzar's intention to unite his kingdom under one religion.

- When the music started every person was to fall down and worship the image.
  - 'Horn' is the only musical term found here that is also found elsewhere in the Old Testament.
  - 'Pipe' may come from the Hebrew word meaning to hiss or whistle.
  - 'Lyre' is a loan word from the Greek 'kithara'.
  - The term 'Trigon' comes from the Greek word used in the Septuagint meaning a triangular harp.
  - 'Harp' is the Greek 'psalterion' and also refers to a stringed instrument.
  - The term translated 'Bagpipe' by the Revised Standard Version may not be an instrument at all, but may simply mean 'in unison.' Some think it refers to a percussion instrument.
  - Can these words be used to date the book as some suggest? One commentator has said:

In view of the tentative state of present knowledge of these words it is precarious to base any theory of the date of the book on the evidence of these instruments.

- Those who did not fall down would be cast into the fiery furnace.
  - The furnaces in Babylon were used to fire the bricks that were used to build the city.
    - As we mentioned before, each brick bore the name and image of Nebuchadnezzar, and many can be seen today in the British museum. These may have been fired

in the very furnace spoken of here.

- The fuel was charcoal, and it burned at a very high temperature. Many large brick kilns have been excavated outside Babylon.
- The furnace would have been enclosed, since the technology of raising heat by forcing a draught requires it.
- Here is how one commentator has described the furnace:

It resembles a railway tunnel blocked at one end but with an entrance at the other. Uprights at frequent intervals support the dome and serve as ventilation shafts also. Charcoal provides the heat, and it is estimated that the temperature would have been 900 to 1000 °C.

- Death by burning at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar is not unique to this story. Jeremiah also speaks of it.

Jeremiah 29:22 Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: "The Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."

- This has always been the world's message to God's people: Comply or face the consequences! The world still has its fiery furnaces, and it still loves to frighten God's people with them.
- A literal translation of verse 7 is that 'as soon as they were hearing they were falling down.' Nebuchadnezzar got them to fall down on command, but he could not make them worship. Worship cannot be done on command. It must come from within a person.

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live for ever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

- The term 'Chaldeans' in verse 8 is an ethnic use of the term, despite the poor NIV translation (astrologers). They were the 'master race' and it is clear they resented the 'certain Jews' who had been given power over them.
- They quote the king's edict word for word and then inform him that these three have paid no heed to him or his decree.
- Except for the work of these informers, Nebuchadnezzar would never have known about the defiance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
  - The world is full of people who love to create trouble and then sit back and watch the fun.
  - God has a simple message for such troublemakers:

Proverbs 6:16-19 There are six things which the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.

- Does God mind if we run around and stir up trouble, when we sit around devising wicked plans, and when we run to do evil? Not only does he mind, he hates it.
- The phrase 'maliciously accused' in verse 8 is a translation of the idiom 'eat the pieces of flesh torn off from someone's body.'
- Remember what Paul said:

Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

- What was the motive of these troublemakers?
  - First, as we have suggested, they probably enjoyed watching trouble they had created. Like an arsonist they set fires and then watched them burn from a distance.
  - Second, they were jealous. These foreigners had been set up over them by King Nebuchadnezzar and they had no doubt been looking for a way to get rid of them.
    - Recall that Abraham had come from Ur of the Chaldees. This may have contributed to the racial animosity.
  - Again, we are reminded that human nature has not changed one bit since the fall.

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gol-

den image which I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well and good; but if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace; and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?"

- Nebuchadnezzar's response was exactly what these troublemakers wanted. He was in a furious rage.
- These Chaldeans had pulled his strings and he had dutifully danced to their tune. We need to be on our guard when some troublemaker tries to pull our strings.
- Justice would not, however, allow these men to be condemned on hearsay evidence alone, so the king gave them an opportunity to recant.
- Remember that all of this was occurring in front of the international array of delegates that Nebuchadnezzar had assembled to see his statue. This may explain the king's 'furious rage.'
- The king was incredulous. How could these men do this to him after all he had done for them?
  - In fact, it was probably harder for them because the king had done a lot for them.
  - Goethe: Most men can oppose their enemies but it takes a special person to oppose his friends. (Another good reason not to get too friendly with the world.)
- Notice the arrogance in verse 15.
  - 'Who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?'

- The king seems to have forgotten what he said about the God of Daniel in 2:47.

Daniel 2:47 The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

- We have a parallel with Pharaoh's statement to Moses in Exodus 5:2 (Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?)
- McGuigan: "You recall that Moses signed him up for a ten-lesson correspondence course!"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

- Well, it looks like these three had a really big decision to make.
- Not at all! The decision had been made long ago.
- They knew that God had said "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" and they had decided long ago to do what God commanded no matter what.
- The Aramaic word order in verse 16 places the emphasis on the word 'we.' That is, God himself would provide the king the answer to his question.
- Here we have an incredible statement of faith:

- Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.
- This is a difficult passage to translate.
- Two possibilities:
  - If you cast us in the furnace, then our God is able to deliver us...
  - If it fits in with the purpose of God to deliver us then he will do just that...
- Either way, these men had no doubt about God's ability to rescue them.
- And an incredible statement of courage: 'But if not...'
  - Some people are willing to serve God so long as God always does what they want him to do. (Who is serving whom???)
  - These three were going to serve God no matter what he did.
  - Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."
- These young men knew the true meaning of the Shema that they had quoted all their life:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; 5 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.."

- Paul also knew this when in Acts 20:24 he said:

Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord

Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- What did these three stand to lose by their refusal to bow down before the image?
  - They would lose their royal favor with the king.
  - They would lose their high government positions.
  - They would lose their new found fortunes.
  - They would lose their lives.
- From a worldly perspective, they were the worst sort of fools. Yet, they were not operating on a worldly level. They had their priorities right.
- How would we have responded? How do we respond in similar situations? Wouldn't it be easy to rationalize this away?
  - No one will see us in this big crowd.
  - Everyone else is bowing down.
  - There are only three of us and we are a long way from home. What does God expect us to do?
  - We know that the idol really isn't a god. We could just cross our fingers when we bow down.
  - We can do so much more for God if we remain alive and keep all of our money...
    - Beware when you hear someone say "I could do so much more for God if...." Most of us can do a lot more for God without any change

at all in our present circumstances. We just need to get busy.

- Why was everyone so upset with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
  - Because they refused to compromise and bow down, and the world hates those who refuse to join the crowd.
  - People who wallow in sin typically aren't satisfied unless they can drag others down into the mire with them.
  - The world wants us to go along with its fashions and its customs. It wants to make us just like everyone else. (And if we are just like everyone else, then I guess the world must have been successful.)
  - Romans 12:2 in the Phillips translation reads "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." (Be not conformed to this world.)
  - The world gets very angry with people who don't go along with its plans.
  - In fact, the world has its own furnaces.
    - Furnace of scorn and laughter.
    - Furnace of criticism.
    - Furnace of isolation.
    - Furnace of intimidation.
  - But if we are on God's side then doesn't that mean we won't be persecuted and have to face such trials?

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you.

- Remember what God told Jeremiah when he was being persecuted. (Cheer up! It's going to get worse!)

Jeremiah 12:5 If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you do in the jungle of the Jordan?

- And we also read:

Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.

Malachi 3:3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

James 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- How did God feel about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
  - Of the thousands who were present at the dedication of this idol, how many do we know by name? Other than the king, just these three.
  - In fact, their names are mentioned 13 times in this chapter!
  - God seems to have been proud of them.
  - Were they seeking the praise of God or the praise of men? If they sought the praise of men they would have bowed down. Instead they sought the praise of God and refused to bow down.

- Remember what Paul said:

Galatians 1:10 Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

- Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, we have a choice. Who are we going to follow? Man or God?
- Notice again the respect that these men continued to show to the king.
  - This is the same sort of respect that Peter and Paul told us we must show to earthly rulers, who have all been given their power by God.
  - They verbally acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as king, while committing their ultimate allegiance to the King of kings.

#### WHERE WAS DANIEL DURING THIS EPISODE?

- 1. He may have been absent from Babylon at the time, perhaps on government business in some other part of the kingdom.
  - This is perhaps the most popular theory, but there is no evidence to support it.
  - Daniel was governor of the capital of Babylon, so it seems unlikely that he would be away for any length of time.
- 2. He may have been too ill to attend the public ceremony. Compare Daniel 8:27.

Daniel 8:27 And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.

- 3. As chief of the 'wise men' Daniel may not have been required to bow down. His loyalty to the king may have been beyond question.

- Presumably, Nebuchadnezzar himself did not bow down. He may have extended this privilege to others as well.

- 4. Daniel's reputation may have been such that even the Chaldeans did not dare to attack him in front of the king.

- Daniel 2:48 says that Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler (civil governor) over the whole province of Babylon.

- Thus, Daniel was very powerful and the informers may have been unwilling to risk informing on him.

- (The lion den episode occurred much later in his life and with a different king and a different governing power.)

- Thus, perhaps Daniel was there and refused to bow down but the king was not told about it. Our lesson if this was the case: We shouldn't invite trouble on ourselves.

- 5. All of the action in this chapter takes place outside of the city of Babylon. Some have suggested that Daniel may have been asked to stay behind in the city to take care of business in the king's absence. This is a simple theory that seems to fit in well with the available evidence.

- Daniel's omission is additional proof of the book's authenticity.

"Had the story been the invention that many have suggested; had it originated in the days of the Maccabees to nerve the

faithful against Gentile oppression, it is unlikely that the chief hero would have been omitted. Reality transcends fiction, and the very 'incompleteness' of this account testifies to its fidelity."

"There is no psychological reason for an idealizing romancer to leave Daniel out of this exciting episode. The only way to account for this omission is that in point of fact he was not personally in attendance at this important function."

- Aside: The truthfulness of the Bible is self-evident. For example, the resurrection accounts in the gospels all have women being the first to discover the empty tomb. If the apostles had made up the story as some claim, they would never have made women their prime witnesses. Their testimony was considered worthless by the Jews. In fact, many later uninspired 2<sup>nd</sup> century accounts of the resurrection have men being the first to discover the empty tomb.
- One thing we know for sure, if Daniel had been with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they stood before the king then there would have been four people tossed into the furnace instead of only three.

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he ordered certain mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their mantles, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. 22 Because the king's order was strict and the furnace very hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

- It is worth noting that even though God delivered them, he still allowed them to endure the ordeal of being thrown into the fire.
- Why? Because it brought more glory to God to have Nebuchadnezzar and his men see those they tried to kill walking around unharmed in the flames.
- We should thank God for every opportunity he gives us for his glory to be seen at work in us. We should pray that we be given opportunities to stand up and announce that we are on his side.
- Question: Were these three men happy or unhappy that they had been brought before Nebuchadnezzar on this charge? I believe that they were thrilled to be able to say this to the king.
- The events here remind us of God's promise in Isaiah 43:2.

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

- The phrase 'heated seven times more' is a common idiom and should not be understood literally. It simply means to make it as hot as possible, which is what they did.
- The list of clothing in verse 21 has long been a source of trouble to translators.

- The Septuagint tried to make sense of the terms but reduced three words to two in the process.
- The liberals would have us believe that the writer of Daniel lived within 50 years of the Septuagint, yet in that time these words for court clothing had been completely forgotten by the translators.
- Nebuchadnezzar's absurd commands were intended to leave no room for escape.
- The already deadly furnace was made even hotter. (It killed those who threw the men in!)
- The men were fully dressed, even with their hats on, so the flames would envelop them.
- They were tied up and thrown like logs in the fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He said to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

- Nebuchadnezzar was dumfounded! Instead of seeing three burning bodies, he saw four people walking around in the flames!
- "I see four men loose." Men bind, but God loosens.
- Even today it is only through fire that we find freedom from our bonds.
- Remember John 12:24-25.

John 12:24-25 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- "How we long for holiness without pain; sanctification without a cross, and growth without tears."
- Who was the fourth person?
  - The king described him as looking like 'a son of the gods.'
  - The King James Version has "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."
  - It seems odd that the pagan Nebuchadnezzar would be able to recognize Jesus in the furnace (and perhaps even stranger that Jesus would personally be there). It seems much more likely that upon seeing an angel he would think the angel looked like 'a son of the gods.'
  - Some commentators believe that this fourth person was a Christophany (a preincarnate appearance of Christ). They could be correct, but the evidence will not let us know for sure. (We know that Jesus was with them in any event! – just perhaps not bodily.)

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire

had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their mantles were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.

- Still giving commands, the king commands that the three come out of the furnace. (Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar was not too anxious for the fourth person to come out!)
- All of the king's illustrious visitors gather with the king and look at the men. Not only are they unharmed but there is no smell of smoke or fire about them. Only their bonds were gone.
- By the way, this was a miracle.
  - Our liberal friends go to great lengths to remove the miraculous from the Bible, but of course they cannot. Their attempts are in vain.
  - Without the miraculous, Jesus would not have been raised and as Paul said, our faith would then be in vain. (This is the logical consequence of naturalism.)
  - The Bible begins with a miracle (In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.) and they recur again and again.
  - Remember 2 Peter 3:3-4.

2 Peter 3:3-4 First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation."

- The 'last days' that Peter spoke of ended long ago, but the scoffers remain.

28 Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set at nought the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

- What else could the king do but acknowledge his defeat?
  - His challenge in verse 15 (What god will be able to rescue him?) has been resoundingly answered by the one true God.
  - As in chapter 2, the king again acknowledges the power of God. But as we will see in chapter 4 this second change of heart doesn't last very long either.
- The king makes another decree.
  - His first decree had not turned out very well.
  - The king pronounces death on anyone who said anything against God, "for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."
  - Notice that the king does not renounce his polytheism, but simply says that God is the greatest god among many.
- Paul had this event in mind when he wrote Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:33-34 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

- (The author of Hebrews apparently believed in the authenticity of the book of Daniel.)
- Finally, the king promotes these three, which no doubt really thrilled their accusers.
- I am reminded of one of my favorite verses. After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid that he might at last seek his revenge. But Joseph told them:

Genesis 50:19-20 But Joseph said to them, "Fear not, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

## CHAPTER 4

- This chapter continues the story of how the mighty ruler Nebuchadnezzar came to capitulate to the God of the captives he brought back from Judea.
- This chapter is unique in all scripture.
  - It was composed under the authority of a pagan.
  - Apparently what happened is that Nebuchadnezzar authorized Daniel to write up this account, which he then did under the inspiration of God.

- But the motivation to put the account in writing seems to have come from Nebuchadnezzar and most of the account is written in the first person with Nebuchadnezzar speaking.
- In Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God was all knowing. In Chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God was all powerful and could override the will of even the mightiest rulers. In this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar will learn of his own weakness and folly before God and of his own utter dependence on God.
- Nebuchadnezzar was but an instrument in God's hand.
- Nebuchadnezzar will come face to face with the theme of this book: The absolute sovereignty of God and God's faithfulness to his covenant people.
- The first part of this theme is repeated three times in this chapter:

Daniel 4:17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.

Daniel 4:25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

Daniel 4:32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox; and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High rules the

kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."

- Nebuchadnezzar finally learned this. Have we?
- Warning: This chapter has been called 'historically absurd' by some.
- The Biblical narrative is the lone witness to most of the events in this chapter.
- The Babylonian Chronicles end with the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

1 King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! 2 It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has wrought toward me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

- King Nebuchadnezzar is much like us – his spiritual life has its ups and downs!
- After Daniel interpreted his first dream, Nebuchadnezzar praised God, but in the very next chapter he made a giant graven image.
- After God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar again praised God.
- Here in chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar again praises God but only after he has undergone a very humbling experience about which we will learn more in just a moment.
- This account of Nebuchadnezzar's experience, however, was written af-

ter the fact and thus his praise of God at the beginning of the chapter occurred after the experiences the chapter describes.

- Did he finally learn his lesson? We don't know for sure because the book will tell us nothing more about him.
- Even if Nebuchadnezzar's motives are dubious (gratitude or fear of silence?), he speaks the truth about God.
- His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His dominion is from generation to generation.
- This is what Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:44 about the church.
- But it also true in a larger sense. God's kingdom and dominion are eternal. He has always and will always rule over everyone and everything.
- Nebuchadnezzar thought his kingdom was eternal, but it was not. Human rule is transient. God's rule is permanent.
- History is full of kingdoms that thought they would be last forever. (Babylon, Greece, Rome, Nazi Germany)
- There is but one eternal kingdom.

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. 5 I had a dream which made me afraid; as I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. 6 Therefore I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpreta-

tion of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in; and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation.

- Poor Nebuchadnezzar. Every time things seem to be going well, he has a troubling dream. Here we have a repeat of what we saw in Chapter 2.
- The king was at ease and was prospering.
  - Verse 30 implies that when this occurred, Nebuchadnezzar's building activities had been completed.
  - These events probably took place after Egypt had been conquered and Jerusalem destroyed and about 8 or 9 years before the siege of Tyre in 573 mentioned in Ezekiel 26:7.
  - The seven year illness of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter may have been from 582 to 575, a period in which we know of no military operations.
  - Thus, he was at ease and prospering. This may have been a source of his problems!
    - Recall Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. There we had a man who had everything but God – and God called him a fool. (If there is any parable that captures the spirit of our own age, it is that one.)
- Again he makes a decree. (He does this a lot doesn't he!) This decree commands that all of the wise men be brought forward to interpret his dream.
  - The 'astrologers' mentioned here were not mentioned in the list found in Chapter 2. The king seems to be

grasping at straws in his increasingly desperate attempt to understand his dreams. (He may be ready to call the Psychic Hotline next!)

- As before, the Chaldean wise men are unable to interpret the dream.
  - Note that this time, Nebuchadnezzar tells them what the dream was. Their inability to interpret it means that it must not have been listed in their dream manuals.
  - Even if they knew or guessed the meaning, they probably would have lacked the courage to tell the king. Even Daniel later hesitates to tell the king what the dream means.

8 At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, 9 “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is difficult for you, here is the dream which I saw; tell me its interpretation.

- Daniel comes in last. He was not part of the 'group.' (God's people are seldom part of the 'group'.)
- Why was Daniel the last one called and not the first one called?
  - Maybe he was out of town or ill.
  - I think a better explanation is that Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to ask him unless it was absolutely necessary. I doubt that Nebuchadnezzar liked having to go to Daniel for answers.

- Also, unlike the other wise men, he no doubt did not hang around the king like a sycophant.
- It is clear that Nebuchadnezzar is still a card-carrying polytheist.
- When he calls Daniel, he reminds us that Daniel's Babylonian name is Belteshazzar "after the name of my god."
  - Recall from our earlier comments, that Nebuchadnezzar's 'god' was presumably Nebo.
  - Belteshazzar means 'Nebo, protect my life.'
- But, he assures the reader, Daniel has the "spirit of the holy gods."
  - The 'name of my god' is singular, but the 'spirit of the holy gods' is plural.
- Nebuchadnezzar is mixing Hebrew terminology with his pagan nonsense.

10 The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth; and its height was great. 11 The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. 12 Its leaves were fair and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the air dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

- The king had dreamed of a giant tree that gave shelter and food to all the beasts and birds of the earth.
- This looks like a happy dream. What was troubling the king? We are about to find out.

13 "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. 14 He cried aloud and said thus, 'Hew down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches.'

- This beautiful tree was going to be cut down and its foliage was going to be stripped away.
- The order came from "a watcher, a holy one" who "came down from heaven." Who was this?
  - Although the dream was a message from God, it is possible that God was using some imagery from Babylonian mythology to make his point.
  - The Babylonians believed in heavenly beings whose task was to keep watch over the earth.
  - However, this image is not unique to Daniel.
  - A vision in Zechariah 1:10 speaks of those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.
  - The word for 'watcher' or 'messenger' occurs nowhere else in the Bible.
  - It does occur in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (in a commentary on Genesis), where it is used to denote an angel.
  - This has caused some to believe that this is a special class of angels whose duty is to watch and patrol the earth. They would also seem to be responsible for executing the decrees of God.

- One effect of cutting down the tree was that the birds and beasts that had found shelter under it would be scattered.

15 But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven; let his lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth; 16 let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven times pass over him.

- Although the tree was to be cut down, the stump was to be left, and it was to have a band of iron and bronze placed around it.
  - The purpose of these bands seems to have been to protect and preserve the stump. They would keep the stump from being removed.
- Although Daniel had not yet interpreted the king's dream, I think we can now see why the dream was so troubling to the king. Look very carefully at what the watcher said in verse 15.

But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven; let his lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth

- The watcher begins referring to the 'stump' as a man! It was no doubt very clear to the king which man the watcher had in mind.
- What was going to happen to this stump/man?
  - The mind of this stump was to be changed from that of a man to that of a beast.

- The word for 'mind' here means 'heart.'

- It 'refers to the inner self as the seat of moral reflection, choice of the will, and pattern of behavior.'

- How long was this change going to last?
  - It was to last for 'seven times.' What does that mean?
  - The word 'times' can denote years or seasons or it can be more general as it is in 2:8 and 3:5.
  - Most commentators translate it as 'appointed times' or 'seasons,' which would mean that it refers to 7 years.
  - Another possibility is that 'seven times' denotes an indefinite period of time that is long enough for the lesson to be learned.
    - As we know, seven denotes perfection. Thus, this period of seven times might denote a period of time that would be just right for Nebuchadnezzar to learn his lesson.
    - This is supported by the wording later in verse 25.

Daniel 4:25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

- This passage seems to stress the meaning of the seven times.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses have an interesting approach to the "seven times."

- The seven times denotes seven years, each day of which also denotes a year. (Thus, we have 2520 years.)
- This period is the “times of the Gentiles” – the period of Gentile opposition, which is depicted by Nebuchadnezzar’s madness. (Doesn’t it seem odd that a time of Gentile prominence would be symbolized by the insanity of a very prominent Gentile?)
- This period supposedly began in 607 BC when they say the temple was destroyed. (This actually happened in 587 BC. They give incorrect dates for virtually all of the events that we have been studying.)
- Counting 2520 years from 607 BC brings us to 1914, which is when they say the kingdom was established.
  - Many textbooks have the answers to certain exercises and problems listed in the back of the book. The purpose of these answers is to allow the students to check their work. However, many students look at the answers first and then work backwards through the problem trying to set things up so that they obtain the answer they started with. This seems to be what the Jehovah’s Witnesses have done. They started with the answer ‘1914’ and then worked backward through history doing whatever they needed to make sure they got the answer they were seeking.

17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may

know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.’

- Notice the plural ‘watchers’ and ‘holy ones’ here.
  - Although one is mentioned in verse 13, there are apparently more than one involved in this decree.
- The watcher continues the decree, and gives the reason behind it.
  - The decree was so that “the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.”
  - That is, the purpose of this decree was to make clear one of the principle themes of this book – the absolute sovereignty of God.
- The term ‘lowliest of men’ in verse 17 is interesting from several perspectives.
  - God chooses who will wear the crown and often he has chosen those who are humble and of low social standing.

Job 5:11 he sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

1 Samuel 2:7-8 The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. 8 He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and on them he has set the world.

Luke 1:51-53 He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, 52 he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; 53 he has

filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.

- But this term also has a particular application to the history of Nebuchadnezzar (as we mentioned in the introduction).

- The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an inscription made by his father Nabopolassar was found in which he was referred to as "the son of a nobody" (of non-royal birth), "insignificant," "not visible," "the weak," and "the feeble."

- This kind of knowledge (the lowly origin of Babylon's greatest king) would have quickly been forgotten – but the author of Daniel knew about it.

- The decrees of the Babylonian kings in Daniel are remarkably similar to those found inscribed on ancient monuments. How would a Jewish writer produce such an accurate record 400 years after the fact?

18 This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

- The king turns at last to Daniel for the interpretation of the dream because the other wise men could not interpret it.
- But why couldn't they interpret it? The meaning seems very clear.

- The portrayal of a man in his pride as a lofty tree is common in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 2:12-13 For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high; 13 against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;

Isaiah 10:34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon with its majestic trees will fall.

- Ezekiel used a very similar picture to describe Assyria just a few years before Nebuchadnezzar had this dream. (See Ezekiel 31:3-17.)
- Why couldn't the other wise men interpret the image?
  - They may not have been familiar with the imagery that must have been very clear to any Hebrew. This is possible but unlikely. The image seems very clear. (Indeed, it was so clear to Nebuchadnezzar that he was terrified by it.)
  - God may have kept them from understanding it so that Daniel would be chosen to explain it to the king.
  - The most likely possibility is that they understood exactly what the dream meant but they were too cowardly to explain it to the king.

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a moment, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!"

- Even Daniel was reluctant to tell the king what his dream meant.
  - The Aramaic here literally reads “He was stupefied for one hour” but the word for “hour” can simply mean a period of time.
- This verse gives us an interesting picture of the relationship between these two men.
  - Daniel was not happy in the least about the bad news he had for the king. Daniel’s loyalty was genuine.
  - But maybe he just delayed because he was scared? It seems more reasonable to believe that Daniel’s reluctance arose from his feelings for the king rather than from his fear of the king.
  - Notice the concern of the king for Daniel as well. “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.”
  - Their relationship seems to have involved mutual respect and perhaps mutual affection. Their concern seems genuine.
- When Daniel at last begins to speak, he voices the fruitless wish that the dream might apply instead to Nebuchadnezzar’s worst enemies.

20 The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth; 21 whose leaves were fair and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all; under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the air dwelt — 22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown

and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth.

- Daniel has good news and bad news – and he starts with the good news.
- The mighty tree represented Nebuchadnezzar in all his military success and genius.
  - His kingdom stretched from the border of Egypt to the kingdom of the Elamites, near the Persian Gulf.
  - Did Nebuchadnezzar’s dominion extend to the ends of the earth as verse 22 suggests?
    - The scope of the term ‘earth’ always depends on its context. (Here it refers simply to the Mesopotamian orbit in which the king reigned supreme.)
    - It was common to describe a king’s dominion in this way even though no earthly king has ever literally ruled the entire earth. (It was simply a hyperbole.)
    - Even in the New Testament, we read in Luke 2:1 that “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled” and in Romans 1:8 Paul said “your faith is proclaimed in all the world.”

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Hew down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field; and let him be wet with the dew of heaven; and let his lot be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’; 24 this is the interpretation, O king: It is a

decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, 25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will. 26 And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be sure for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. 27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your tranquillity."

- Here Daniel gives the interpretation of the more ominous part of the dream.
- The decree of the watcher, Daniel says in verse 24, is a decree of the Most High. This judgment, whatever it will be, is from God.
- The bad news is that the king was going to lose his kingdom and his sanity until he understood the lesson that God wanted to teach him – that God rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.
- The guarded tree stump represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom during his illness.
- The stump was left so that the king would know that his kingdom would not be taken away permanently. Why was this important?
  - If Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom while he was out of the picture then that would prove his point. That is, it would show that Nebuchadnezzar was the real power and that it was his genius that kept the kingdom together.
- God, however, wanted to show him that the opposite was true. Nebuchadnezzar ruled and had his kingdom because it pleased God for him to.
- If God could keep his kingdom together while he was out in the field living the life of an ox then God did not need a brilliant leader to hold a kingdom together.
- In the ordinary course of events, any ruler suffering from such an illness would have been deposed and replaced.
- History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar's sons were worthless, and indeed were unable to retain power very long after his death.
- In any event, however, it was God's will that the kingdom would be returned to Nebuchadnezzar after he recovered – so that is what happened.
- There was still a possibility that Nebuchadnezzar could avoid this misfortune if we would amend his ways and acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God.
- What did the king need to do? He needed to adopt two new policies:
  - He needed to renounce his sins and do what was right.
  - He needed to protect the poor in his kingdom and not allow them to be exploited and oppressed.
- Did he do this? Perhaps he tried. The judgment was delayed for one year.

28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

- Verse 28 gives us the sad news. Everything in the vision came true because Nebuchadnezzar refused to change his ways.
- Notice that the account changes from the first person to the third person. This makes sense since the king could not have been a sane witness of his own insanity!
- What was the straw that broke the camel's back? The king looked out over his kingdom and said "Look what I have done!"
  - Herod suffered a similar fate in Acts 12:21-23.

Acts 12:21-23 On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and made an oration to them. 22 And the people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of man!" 23 Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died.

- Nebuchadnezzar, like Herod, was filled with pride at his own achievements. He had not given glory to God.
  - This is a lesson for us in the church. Often we are tempted to boast about all that we have done and all that we have built in God's kingdom.
  - This church is not "our church" – it is the Lord's church (it is the church of Christ!), and any building that goes on is done by him. ("Look at the great church we

have built!") He adds people to his church – we don't add people to our church. He deserves all of the glory.

- The Bible has much to say about the sin of pride, and we will not repeat it all here. However, it is useful to note that when God listed seven things that he hates, pride was at the top of the list. (Proverbs 6:17) Also, recall what Jesus said:

Luke 16:14-15 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. 15 But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

- The first step toward overcoming pride is to learn to see things the way that God sees them. What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.
- An inscription has been found in which Nebuchadnezzar boasted "The fortifications of [the temple of Marduk] and Babylon I strengthened, and established the name of my reign forever."
- How do you suppose the author of Daniel knew about Nebuchadnezzar's extreme pride if he wrote the book 400 years after the fact?

31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, 32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox; and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High rules the kingdom of men

and gives it to whom he will." 33 Immediately the word was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men, and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

- God interrupts the mighty king while the words were still in his mouth.
  - As McGuigan points out, he was "bragging one moment and munching the next!"
  - The humor of this incident is hard to miss. Imagine for a moment how the court must have handled the visit of foreign dignitaries. ("The king can't talk to you at the moment... He's grazing.")
  - Poor Nebuchadnezzar. After all that he did, this is what he is most remembered for. Even Shakespeare mentions him with respect to this episode. In "All's Well That Ends Well", the clown, after being rebuked for his ignorance of herbs, responds by saying "I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir; I have not much skill in grass."
- In verse 31, God says that the kingdom "has" departed from him. So sure was the coming judgment that God used the past tense. (We saw this in Revelation 14:8 as well - "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!")
  - When God starts using the past tense, it's time to watch out! The sky is about to fall on someone.
- Verse 33 tells us the condition of Nebuchadnezzar during his insanity.
  - He grazed in the field like a beast.
- His skin was toughened by the exposure to the extreme heat in the summer (110 to 120°F) with high humidity to well below freezing in the winter.
- His hair, matted and coarse, looked like eagle feathers. His fingernails and toenails became like claws.
- This description still points to a long period of time even if "seven times" does not mean "seven years."
- As we mentioned in our introductory comments, some have said that this description of Nebuchadnezzar is too absurd to be true. But is it really that absurd? Not at all. In fact, it is very similar to a known medical condition - boanthropy.
  - R. K. Harrison speaks of an encounter he had with such a person in a British mental hospital. He ate only vegetation and drank only water. His health was excellent and the only physical abnormality noticed was the length and coarseness of his hair and the thickened condition of his nails.
- No Babylonian record has been found that mentions any activity by Nebuchadnezzar during the period 582 to 575. What do you think he was up to? (Perhaps he was "out standing in his field"!)

34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;

35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What doest thou?"

- For the third time in as many chapters, King Nebuchadnezzar seems to get the message. His reason returns to him and he realizes just how inappropriate his pride was.
- Nebuchadnezzar says:
  - God deserves all of the glory and praise because he has an everlasting dominion and an eternal kingdom – unlike the king whose kingdom could be taken from him.
  - No one can stay God's hand – as the king had tried to do.
  - No one can question God's actions – the way that God had repeatedly questioned Nebuchadnezzar's actions.
- Nebuchadnezzar said "I blessed and praised the Most High." Does it seem unreasonable that the pagan Nebuchadnezzar would use this Hebrew terminology?
  - Not at all. He knew Daniel, so he must have been familiar with the terminology that Daniel used to praise God.

36 At the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to abase.

- As promised, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was returned to him and he was returned to power.
- In fact, he says that even more greatness was added to him.
  - Do you think that this is how he would have expressed his increased greatness before he learned a lesson about pride? That his greatness was added to him? Added by whom?
- Again, the significant part of this account is that Nebuchadnezzar regained his kingdom. That proved to him and to all that his kingdom was not his because of his own power or genius. His kingdom was a gift from God – and at last he understood that. He finally knew the power of the God of the Hebrews.
- This is the end of the story as far as Nebuchadnezzar is concerned. Before proceeding to Chapter 5, it will be helpful to briefly consider the history that occurred between the events in these two chapters.
- Without any warning or explanation, the narrative leaps from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the very end (very last day!) of the Babylonian empire.
  - Note: It is clear that a large break occurs between these two chapters. Later we will see other similar large breaks that occur without warning – but they should not come as a surprise since we now know that such breaks occur in the book.
  - Nebuchadnezzar died in 563.
  - He was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk or man of Marduk), who released Jehoiachin from prison and gave him an honora-

ble place in the court. (2 Kings 25:27–30)

- (Perhaps when you name your son 'Evil' you have only yourself to blame when he turns out bad!)
- Two years later, Amel-Marduk was assassinated by his brother-in-law, who died 4 years later. He was succeeded by his son, who was murdered 9 months later.
- When the dust cleared, Nabonidus was on the throne. He apparently married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimize his claim to the throne.
- Belshazzar, who we meet in Chapter 5, was the son of Nabonidus.
- The final year of the Chaldean empire was 539 BC. The ruler who takes charge of the empire is Cyrus. The ruler who takes charge of the city of Babylon is Darius.
- Note: Neither Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, nor Darius attempted to destroy or severely persecute the Jewish people. Unlike Revelation, courage in the face of persecution is not the point of Daniel. Instead, Daniel is more concerned with how the people of God should live in an ungodly culture and in that sense it has a more important and relevant message for us than Revelation does!

## CHAPTER 5

- In this chapter, Daniel says that Belshazzar was king of Babylon, that Belshazzar was the last Chaldean king, and that Nebuchadnezzar was his father. In fact, Nabonidus was the last king and Belshazzar was his son. Let's recall what we had to

say in our introduction about these questions:

- Belshazzar was once thought to be merely a figment of Daniel's very active imagination.
- Then an inscription was found in which Belshazzar was mentioned by name and was said to have been left in charge when the Persians invaded just like Daniel 5 says happened.
- By the time of the Greek historian Herodotus (called the father of history), writing about 100 years later, the name of Belshazzar had been completely forgotten except for the mention in the book of Daniel.
- The story of Herodotus provides a good example of the bias of historians against the scripture. You have probably heard that the three big pyramids at Giza were built as tombs for Pharaoh's from the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty. How do we know this? After all, no pharaoh has ever been found in one of these pyramids, and no evidence of any royal burial has ever been found. The answer is that some tour guide told Herodotus that this was the case and historians have been repeating it ever since with no other evidence. What if the Bible had said this instead? Would historians have accepted it so readily as the true explanation? I doubt it.
- If Daniel had been written in the second century as the liberals suggest then how did the author know about Belshazzar?

- To a truly unbiased historian, this mention would be enough evidence to prove the early date for the book of Daniel. But the historians in our universities are hardly unbiased. They will obtain a naturalistic answer no matter what amount of evidence they have to disregard. (I don't mind their bias as much as I mind their claim that the bias does not exist. I have a bias toward believing God and his word, but I also readily admit that bias.)
- QUESTION 1: Why is Nebuchadnezzar called the father of Belshazzar four times in Daniel 5 and Belshazzar is called the son of Nebuchadnezzar once in that chapter when Belshazzar was actually the son of Nabonidus?
- The Hebrew use of "father" and "son" can simply mean "ancestor" and "descendent." It is possible that a genetic relationship existed between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar in order to legitimize his rule then his son by her would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.
  - This view is strengthened by the fact that Nabonidus named one of his sons Nebuchadnezzar.
  - Also, an earlier king (Neriglissar) is known to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.
- A second explanation is that "by ancient usage the term son often referred to a successor in the same office whether or not there was a blood relationship."
- This may have been the usage in Jeremiah 27:7.

All the nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.

- QUESTION 2: Why does Daniel say that Belshazzar was king of Babylon when his father was the actual king?
- Archaeology has shown that Nabonidus took up residence at Teman in North Arabia and left his son Belshazzar in charge of the northern frontier of the Babylonian empire. Thus, he became the *de facto* king of Babylon.
- One commentator has written:

Belshazzar then, technically occupied a position subordinate to that of Nabonidus. Nevertheless, since he was the man in regal status with whom the Jews had to do, Daniel calls him king. This cannot justly be charged as an inaccuracy.

- Further, tablets dating from 543 B.C. have been found which imply that Belshazzar and his father were on equal footing. Daniel apparently knew what he was talking about!
- The radical critics argue that Belshazzar's authority to appoint anyone he pleased as third ruler in the kingdom in Daniel 5 indicates that he was an absolute ruler, not a sub-king.
  - Just the opposite is true, however!
  - Why did Belshazzar only promise the third and not the second ruler? Because he was the second and his father was the first!
  - How would a Jew writing 400 years later have known this?

- One modern scholar has written:

We shall presumably never know how our author learned that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar, as the excavations have proved, and that Belshazzar was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon in 538.

- Perhaps we already know!
- QUESTION 3: Why not just call him the “son of Nabonidus” since that is what he actually was?
  - Nabonidus was a very unpopular king. This may explain why he was absent from the city of Babylon for 14 years.
  - Also, inscriptions have been found that show Nabonidus claimed to have authority from Nebuchadnezzar to administer his kingdom. Thus, it is quite likely that his sons were re-quired to be addressed as sons of Nebuchadnezzar to stress this connection. (Belshazzar and his mother both refer to Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter.)
  - This is not unlike presidents who like to stress their connections with Lincoln, FDR, JFK, or Ronald Reagan.

1 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in front of the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden and silver vessels which had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They

drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

- It was bad enough when Nebuchadnezzar looted the temple and stole the gold and silver vessels, but now Belshazzar and his friends were using them in a drunken feast while they praised their false gods and idols.
- What else was going on while the king was giving this feast? History tells us that this ‘great feast’ was occurring while the Persians and Medes were camped outside of the city!
  - Belshazzar was no doubt trying to drown his fears with this drunken feast, but as dark as things seemed they were about to get much worse.
  - The ‘Nabonidus Chronicle,’ which has recently been unearthed, says that Belshazzar’s father Nabonidus had abandoned the city and fled leaving his son (and, as we will see, perhaps his own wife) to face the enemy forces alone.
  - Looked at in this light, Belshazzar becomes a very pitiable and perhaps even sympathetic character.
  - The ‘Nabonidus Chronicle’ also says that the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without any battle, which as we will see is precisely the picture we get from Daniel 5.
- Verse 1 says that Belshazzar “tasted the wine.”
  - Some feel that this phrase refers to a ritual that preceded the feast in which the king tasted the wine.

- Others think that this is a euphemism for saying that the king was drunk – which seems to fit the context very well.
  - If alcohol did indeed play a part in the king's fall, then Belshazzar would join the ranks of many kings and kingdoms that have fallen due to drunkenness – including Alexander the Great, Napoleon at Waterloo, and the French in World War II.
  - Notice how the vessels mentioned in the first chapter (written in Hebrew) play a prominent role in this story from the fifth chapter (written in Aramaic). It is this type of evidence that causes even liberal scholars to agree that Daniel was written by a single author even though two languages were used.
  - We might pause at this point and wonder why these temple vessels were so important. After all they themselves like the false gods of the Babylonians were just made of gold and silver.
  - They were important because they were God's. They were important because God made them important – and neither Belshazzar nor we have any right to question their importance.
  - Here is an important lesson for us: No person is in a position to tell God what is important and what is not important.
  - Most religious division is caused by people who decide all by themselves that God couldn't possibly think that BLANK is important, where they fill in the BLANK with some clear command of God they don't want to do.
  - 'This is what Jesus said that is important and this is what Jesus said that is not important...'
  - 'This is the part of God's pattern for proper worship that is important and this is the part that is not important...'
  - 'This is the part of God's plan for salvation that is important and this is the part that is not...'
  - 'This is the part of what Paul said about Christian conduct that is important and this the part that is not...'
  - Good starting point: Everything that God has to say about anything is of the utmost importance and we should treat it that way.
- 5 Immediately the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand; and the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.
- No trumpet blast, no earthquake, no fanfare. Just the fingers of a hand that appeared, wrote four words (2 of which were identical), and then vanished – leaving only the words on the wall.
  - Everything stopped as the king gazed at the words. His color changed, his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.
  - The 'color' or 'countenance' in verse 6 literally means 'brightness.' That is, his bright looks, his cheerfulness, and his hilarity changed.

- One commentator has written:

Belshazzar had as much of power and of drink withal to lead him to bid defiance to God as any ruffian under heaven; and yet when God, as it were, lifted up his finger against him, how poorly did he crouch and shiver. How did his joints loose, and his knees knock together!

7 The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed; and his lords were perplexed.

- Belshazzar promises to make the interpreter the third ruler in the kingdom. Why the third?
  - Belshazzar could make someone only the third ruler, because he himself was the second ruler, and his father Nabonidus was the first ruler.
  - It would be helpful if the liberals who see mistakes around every corner in the Bible would bother to read the Bible that they love to attack. If they did they would discover that Daniel knew Belshazzar was not the supreme ruler in Babylon.
- The wise men "could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation."

WHY COULDN'T THE KING'S ADVISORS READ AND INTERPRET THIS MESSAGE?

- Many theories have been advanced to explain why the king's wise men could not read this message or interpret it. (Why they could not interpret it is easier to explain than why they could not read it.)
- QUESTION 1: What language were the words written in?
  - Many think that the words were written in Aramaic since that is the language used in Chapter 5. However, if this were the case then the wise men would have been able to read the words.
  - Others think that the words were written in Hebrew. This would better explain the facts that we have in this chapter. The wise men might not have been able to read Hebrew, whereas Daniel certainly could have read the message.
  - Other suggestions include the Phoenician language and an unknown language known only to Daniel. There is very little evidence for such suggestions.
- QUESTION 2: If the language was Aramaic, then how can we explain why the wise men were unable to read it?
  - The words may have been written using just consonants and no vowels. Thus, in interpreting the message, Daniel completed the words by filling in the appropriate vowels.
  - Some suggest that the wise men were stricken with blindness, but the king was apparently unable to read the message as well.

- The Jews believe that the words were written vertically forming an anagram. If this were true then the message would be unintelligible if read horizontally.
- Others think only the first letters of the words may have been given, or the words may have been jumbled.
- The simplest explanation seems to be that the words were written in Hebrew, and Daniel was the only person around who could read Hebrew.

10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall; and the queen said, "O king, live for ever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. 11 There is in your kingdom a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

- The queen in verse 10 was probably the wife of Nabonidus, Belshazzar's mother, since verse 2 tells us that Belshazzar's 'wives' were present at the feast and this queen was not at the feast, but came in when she heard the trouble.
- Herodotus tells us that Nabonidus' wife was named Nitocris.
- Whoever this queen was, she was not at the drunken feast. This suggests that she may have been the real power here since someone was presuma-

bly worrying about the Persians who were camped outside.

- We have said earlier that it is quite likely that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to secure his claim to the throne.
- These verses support that claim. This queen seems to have known a lot about Daniel and his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. This would be easy to explain if Nebuchadnezzar were her father.
- Notice that even the queen herself refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the father of Belshazzar.
- How did Belshazzar know about the temple vessels in the first place? Perhaps his mother told him about the items that her father had brought back from Jerusalem.
- Further, note in verse 10 that the queen entered the king's presence unbidden.
- According to Esther 4:11 she could have been put to death for this under the Persian system. Perhaps a similar system was used by the Chaldeans.
- The translators of the Septuagint thought so because they felt this behavior was so odd that they added the phrase 'The king called the queen on account of the mystery' to explain it.
- But is this really that odd if this queen is Belshazzar's mother and the wife of the king?
- Again we are faced with question of why Daniel was called last and not first.

- Since this happens each time he is called, I am inclined to believe that God was behind it and arranged things so that it would happen this way each time. He seems to have wanted all of the other wise men to be proved incapable before Daniel was called – and this is just what happened each time.

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. 14 I have heard of you that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation; but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

- Belshazzar, apparently meeting Daniel for the first time, relays the story of what has happened and offers Daniel the same rewards as he offered the others if he can interpret the writing. ("You are that Daniel" in verse 13 can be translated "Are you that Daniel?" which would further suggest that the king did not know who Daniel was.)
- Daniel had apparently lost his power and was living in obscurity. When did he lose his power and position? No doubt he lost it when Nebuchadnezzar died.
- In verse 13 Belshazzar refers to 'the king my father.'

- He is not speaking of Nabonidus but of Nebuchadnezzar. Even Belshazzar himself referred to Nebuchadnezzar as his father. It was apparently very important to Nabonidus and Belshazzar that they legitimize their rule at every opportunity.
- Also, by mentioning Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar gave Daniel an opportunity to give him a little history lesson, which Daniel proceeds to do.

17 Then Daniel answered before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty; 19 and because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him; whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him; 21 he was driven from among men, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of men, and sets over it whom he will. 22 And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, 23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored. 24

"Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed.

- Why did Daniel refuse the king's gifts?
  - It would not have been wrong to accept them, since he had earlier accepted the gifts and favors of Nebuchadnezzar, as had his three friends on two occasions.
  - Perhaps Daniel felt that he was too old to get back into government service, which would have been required had he assumed the position that Belshazzar offered. (However, he did serve a role in the Persian government, which took over the very next day!)
  - The best explanation, however, may be that Daniel knew that Belshazzar's rule (and indeed the Chaldean kingdom) was not going to last much longer. Indeed, Belshazzar was killed that very night.
- As mentioned above, before Daniel interprets the message, he gives the king a history lesson.
  - In verse 19 Daniel reminds Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute sovereign. He could dispense life and death at his whim – unlike Belshazzar who seems to be much less powerful and mighty.
    - Would Nebuchadnezzar have spent the night in a drunken feast with the enemy camped just outside the city?
    - Daniel is telling the king: "I knew Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was a friend of mine. You, sir, are no Nebuchadnezzar!"

- The "but" in verse 20 is the turning point in the story. Nebuchadnezzar was great, but...
  - He was filled with pride and refused to give the glory to God.
  - As bad as Nebuchadnezzar's punishment was, Belshazzar's punishment was going to be worse.
- Finally, like any good history teacher, Daniel reminds the king in verse 22 that he already knew all of this but he had not learned from the past.

25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 PARSIN, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

- Daniel next translates (perhaps) and interprets the four words (three different words) on the wall.
  - Even if the king could have read the words they would have been hard to understand. Literally they mean "Number, Number, Weight, Division." The meaning is hardly clear. Daniel will need to tell the king what they mean.
- The first word 'MENE' (mene) was repeated twice.
  - This word means numbered, counted out, or measured.
  - It meant that the years of Belshazzar's reign had been counted out to their very last one.

- Both his days and the days of his kingdom were numbered – that is, they were both coming to a swift end.
- The second distinct word was ‘TEKEL’ (tekel).
  - This word meant ‘weighed’ and Daniel explained that Belshazzar had been weighed and found wanting.
  - He did not measure up.
- The third distinct word was ‘PARSIN.’
  - (The ‘U’ in ‘UPHARSIN’ in the King James Version means ‘and.’ Thus, the final word on the wall was ‘PARSIN.’)
  - The word means ‘to divide’ and Daniel says that Belshazzar’s kingdom had been divided or separated from him and given instead to the Medes and the Persians who were at that time besieging the city.
  - The ‘divided’ or ‘shared’ or ‘fragmented’ may also refer to the sharing of power by the Medes and Persians. This would further discredit the liberal contention that Daniel thought a separate Median kingdom ruled before the Persians.
  - There is a double word play at work with this word.
    - This word also points to the word ‘Persian,’ which means that Daniel knew that the kingdom that defeated the Chaldeans was the Persians operating with the Medes – and not the Medes all by themselves as the liberals suggest.

- These three words can also be translated to mean three different measures of weights.
  - This may also explain why the king’s advisors were unable to tell the king what the words referred to.
  - Liberals have latched onto this and have suggested that instead of being written by God, the words were really written by a waiter at the feast who was trying to remember how much food to serve. (This would be funny if it were not so sad...)

29 Then Belshazzar commanded, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put about his neck, and proclamation was made concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

- Belshazzar was true to his word even though Daniel had given him very bad news. He made Daniel ‘king for day’ – literally.
  - One might have thought that Belshazzar would have had Daniel killed on the spot for his effrontery. Why didn’t he?
    - He may not have wanted to appear untrue to his word in front of his guests. If he had lived, Daniel might not have fared well after the guests were gone.
    - He may also have thought that God would spare him if he bestowed his gifts on Daniel and made him his prime minister.

30 That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 And Darius the

Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

- While the king and his friends had been having their drunken feast, the Medes and the Persians were camped outside.
- History tells us that the Medes and the Persians diverted the river Euphrates to expose a dry river bed leading into the city under the wall.
- The historian Xenophon in telling the story confirms several of the details that we see here in Chapter 5.
  - He wrote that “the whole city that night seemed to be given up to revelry.”
  - He also said that the king was killed the night the city was taken.
- The historian Herodotus, writing about 80 years after these events, explained what happened on that night:

Hereupon the Persians who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street-gates which gave upon the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy as it were in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and took the city. Owing to vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare), long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing about what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and revelling

until they learnt the capture but too certainly.

- Verse 30 tells us that Belshazzar was killed that very night and verse 31 tells us that Darius the Mede took over after Belshazzar. Who was Darius the Mede? Recall our earlier comments on this subject:
- One critic (Professor H. H. Rowley of England) has written:

The references to Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem of the book. ... The claim of the Book of Daniel to be a work of history, written by a well-informed contemporary, is shattered beyond repair by this fiction of Darius the Mede. ... So far as Darius the Mede is concerned, we have seen that there is no way of reconciling the Book of Daniel with assured history, and all the efforts of the apologists, of whom the present century has seen a new and plentiful crop, definitely fail.

- The truth of the matter is that this learned professor is dead wrong. (In fact, later work has shown that much of his supposed evidence was flawed.) Listen to what he had to say about this supposed historical inaccuracy in Daniel.

Its very historical mistakes add to the fullness of its religious message to our hearts, for the God Who maketh the wrath of men to praise Him can also convert the mistakes of His servants, whose hearts are consecrated to His service, to rich use.

- If the book of Daniel has no historical reliability then it has no religious message at all.
- What does Jesus think about the historical reliability of Daniel?

O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24:25)

- In any event, Darius the Mede presents no difficulty at all.
  - Daniel never claims that the Medes conquered the Chaldeans all by themselves – in fact he said just the opposite in Daniel 6:12.
  - Darius was a governor who was subject to Cyrus, the king. In fact, in Daniel 9:1, we read explicitly that Darius ruled the kingdom of the Chaldeans – that is, Cyrus gave him that specific newly conquered territory to govern. (Notice Daniel does not say that Darius ruled the kingdom of the Medes!)
- It is interesting to note that Daniel gives far more information about the personal background of Darius than he does for Belshazzar or even Nebuchadnezzar.
  - Daniel 5:30 says that Darius was 62 when he began to reign. (This use of a very particular detail does not sound like a vague recollection about a forgotten or imagined king.)
  - Daniel 5:30 also tells us his nationality – Darius was a Mede.
  - Daniel 9:1 says that Darius was the son of Ahasuerus.
  - Thus, unlike even Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel tells us the age, the nationality, and the parentage of Darius.
- The late-date proponents claim that:
  - The author of Daniel believed that a Median kingdom, under Darius, conquered Babylon and subsequently gave way to the Persian empire under Cyrus.
  - Darius the Mede never actually existed but was a confused reflection of a later Persian ruler, Darius I (Hystaspes).
  - The four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 are thus Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.
  - Five reasons why this view is wrong:
    - (1) The book of Daniel never claims that Darius was the king of Media but only that he was of Median descent.
    - (2) The author of Daniel says that Darius and Cyrus had different ancestries (Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede), NOT that they ruled separate kingdoms.
    - (3) Daniel 6:12 says that Darius was subject to the law of the Medes and Persians. If Darius ruled an independent kingdom of Media then why was he subject to the law of the Persians?
    - (4) Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting on the wall in this chapter indicates that the Persians would be the main element of the empire that succeeded the Babylonians.
    - (5) The vision in chapter 8 depicts a combined Medo-Persian empire as a single ram with two horns. The horn depicting Persia comes up last, but BEFORE the ram sets out to conquer.
  - But couldn't the author of Daniel have been referring to Darius I, a later Persian king? No, for the following five reasons:

- 1. Darius I was Persian (a cousin of Cyrus) and not a Mede.
- 2. Darius I was in his 20's when he began to reign, not 62.
- 3. Darius I began to reign 7 years after the death of Cyrus, whereas Darius the Mede and Cyrus were both in power when the Chaldeans were conquered.
- 4. In Daniel 5:31 we read that Darius received the kingdom and in Daniel 9:1 we read that he was made king. These passages imply that Darius' power to rule came from a higher earthly authority (Cyrus). This was not true of Darius I who took control after the death of Cambyses.
- 5. The liberals would have us believe that Daniel was written in the second century BC and that Daniel mistakenly thought Darius I preceded Cyrus.
  - Any such author would have been laughed to scorn. Every schoolboy of the time would have read the Greek historians and would have known that such was not the case.
  - The Jews would never have let enter the canon a book containing such a grievous error.
- Just because the name 'Darius the Mede' has not been found in any ancient inscriptions does not mean that he did not exist.
  - Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.
  - The critics made similar claims about Belshazzar and archaeology later proved them wrong. (We wait in vain for their apology...)

- Who then was Darius? We suggested in our introductory comments that Darius the Mede was an early governor of Babylon under Cyrus.
  - The references to Darius in Daniel do not say that he ruled the Persian empire – only that he took control of the conquered Chaldean empire.
  - It was a well known practice of Cyrus to appoint Medes to high positions in order to foster goodwill and loyalty.
  - Which governor was he? John Whitcomb in his book Darius the Mede wrote the following:

Gubaru the Governor of Babylon fits the Biblical description of Darius the Mede so remarkably that the writer believes he will be recognized in due time as the monarch who played such an important role in the life of Daniel and the fall of Babylon.

## CHAPTER 6

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 2 and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

- Cyrus was king of the Persians, and Darius was his governor. The "kingdom" over which Darius ruled was thus the old Chaldean kingdom that Cyrus had just conquered. This was the kingdom that Daniel has been concerned with so far,

and he continues to refer to it as “the kingdom.”

- Darius’ first responsibility was to appoint administrators over his newly won territory. He appoints 120 satraps and 3 commissioners of which Daniel becomes the chairman.
  - Edwin M. Yamauchi, in his book Persia and the Bible, wrote that “the satrap was in charge of all aspects of provincial rule. He levied the funds necessary for his administration and provided troops for the king.”
- Daniel’s character and integrity are such that Darius plans to make him his prime minister.
  - If Darius answered only to Cyrus, then Daniel would have become third in power, which is what the late Belshazzar had promised him!
- Why did Darius think so highly of Daniel?
  - 1. Daniel had a good reputation.
  - 2. He had recently made a very successful prediction concerning Belshazzar.
  - 3. Daniel was not a Chaldean, but he was very familiar with their system.
  - 4. Daniel was experienced. (He was at least 83 years old at this time! Most drawings showing Daniel in the lion’s den picture a much younger man, but he was actually in his 80’s.)

4 Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom; but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was

faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.

- As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, jealousy again rears its ugly head. Those who are jealous and envious of Daniel seek to bring him down.
  - Nothing they could possibly do could bring Daniel down one inch. They could lie about him and effect the opinion of other men, but they could do nothing to change God’s opinion of Daniel – and that is the only opinion that really matters.
  - We need to remember this, particularly when faced with false accusations. God knows the truth and he will never be fooled by a false accusation.
- These envious men could find no fault with Daniel. They could find nothing bad to say about him. What would they do next?
  - They decide to lie to the king and get him to pass a law that would trap Daniel.
  - This is not the only place in scripture where this occurs.
    - Jesus, also, was delivered up because of envy and he also faced false accusers.
  - In Proverbs 6:17–19 God lists seven things that he hates.

19 There are six things which the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false wit-

ness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.

- How many of these actions were these envious men guilty of? All seven!
- Not only do we see jealousy and envy at work here, but we see racism as well.
  - Just like the Chaldeans had earlier, the Medes and the Persians looked down on the Jews as being inferior because of their captivity.
  - Again, we need to see things the way that God sees them. Not only were the Jews not inferior, but they were the stars of this show!
  - Note also that although racism played a part in this story, the Jews were much better off under Cyrus. As he did with many other captive people, he let the Jews return to their homeland.

Ezra 1:1-4 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: 2 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel – he is the God who is in Jerusalem; 4 and let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem."

- This proclamation may have already been issued at this time. Remember what Isaiah had to say about Cyrus by name – before he was born and 150 years before he began to rule!

Isaiah 45:1-4 Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: 2 "I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut asunder the bars of iron, 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me.

5 Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

- What a compliment! Do people see us this way? If people wanted something bad to say about us, would they find it? We need to make sure that our accusers are not true accusers!
- These accusers knew that to succeed they would have to put Daniel in a position where he would have to choose between obedience to God and obedience to the government.
  - While this may be true of us, does the world know that it is true? Daniel's life was such that these men knew he would choose God when forced to make a choice. Are our lives such that the world knows that we too will choose God when forced to make a choice? Do we choose God when we

are forced to make a choice between God and the world?

- Problem: Persia had no law against monotheism.
- Solution: They would come up with a law that would look merely political to Darius, but would pose a religious issue for Daniel.

6 Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live for ever! 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

- These envious accusers show up in a group to work their plan.
  - Notice how this type of person also seems to travel in a pack!
- Darius should have noticed that Daniel was not present, but as we will soon see, Darius was completely unsuspecting. He did not know that these men were out to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.
- The Proposed Law: For one month, all petitions and all prayers in the realm may be directed toward Darius only. Those who disobeyed would be cast into a den of lions.
- Why did Darius agree with this suggestion?

- 1. It was a very flattering suggestion.
- 2. It reinforced the idea that the empire was now under new management. It would help unify the kingdom under Darius and Cyrus.
- 3. It was a reasonable time limit. What harm could it cause to impose this seemingly modest requirement for only 30 days?
- 4. Darius was under the impression that Daniel had agreed to this plan. (Verse 7 says all the presidents of the kingdom had agreed to the plan when in fact they had not.)
- 5. Whereas the sanction was severe, Darius no doubt thought that it would not be needed. Who could possibly fail to follow this simple 30 day requirement?
- Why were offenders to be cast into a den of lions instead of into a fiery furnace?
  - The Persians used fire in their religious ceremonies and thus would not have cast anyone into fire as a form of punishment.
  - Edwin M. Yamauchi has written the following in this regard: (Persia and the Bible, pp. 401 and 447.)

But it is especially to fire and water that they offer sacrifice. To fire they offer sacrifice by adding dry wood without the bark and by placing fat on top of it; and then they pour oil upon it and light it below, not blowing with their breath, but fanning it; and those who blow the fire with their breath or put anything dead or filthy upon it are put to death. [quote from Strabo]

Fire stands at the center of the Zoroastrian cult; no ceremony can take place

without fire being present. [quoting Eckehard Kulke]

- If Daniel were written by a second century Jew living in Palestine as some suggest, then how did such an author know about such a subtle difference between the Chaldean and Persian methods of execution? (This is the same author who they say was so badly mistaken about the well known history of the time.)

10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

- Note that verse 10 tells us plainly that Daniel at some point learned that the document had been signed. Thus, whatever he does next is not done in ignorance of the decree. He knows the new law and he knows the penalty for breaking it.
- Daniel's prayers had been his lifeline all these years under the corrupting Babylonian influences. What would he do now?
  - 1. He could compromise and simply not pray for one month. (For many of us this would hardly be noticed!) From the world's standpoint this would be reasonable and prudent.
    - This plan would have several advantages.
    - First, it would be the most peaceful plan. Nobody would get upset. But Daniel knew that peace at any price was too costly if the price turned out to be disobedience to God.

Luke 12:51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.

- The truth always creates a division. Some accept it and some do not. Jesus was often accused of creating division – and he never denied the charge.
- Second, this plan would allow Daniel to follow the path of least resistance. It would be the easy way out. But Daniel knew that the path of least resistance never intersected the path of righteousness. In fact, for Daniel, the path of righteousness was the path of most resistance!
- Daniel could not simply do nothing and hope for the best. He knew like James that:

James 4:17 Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- Daniel had to act. To do nothing would have been a sin.
- 2. He could have gone underground and prayed silently or at night when no one could see him.
  - Sadly, many seem to have adopted this plan ourselves. God, however, has never put out a call for secret agents.
  - We must speak out and let the world know where we stand. If we are on God's side then we must let the world know.
  - This plan might appear to be the best of both worlds. Daniel could please both God and man by just praying silently. Wrong! It is not

possible to please God if at the same time you are trying equally hard to please men.

Galatians 1:10 Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

- Sometimes it is easy to just ignore what we might consider the "little" compromises. But the little things are training for the big things!

Jeremiah 12:5 If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you do in the jungle of the Jordan?

- The time to take a stand against the world is early before it gets a foothold because once it gets a foothold it may be too late.
- 3. He could have rationalized. Just think how much good he could do if he stayed in power. He had just gotten his power back after being without it for so long. God wouldn't want him to lose it again so quickly, would he?
- We too are faced with choices every day.
- Remember what Joshua told the people in Joshua 24.

Joshua 24:14-15 "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell;

but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

- I think that we often follow the advice of that great philosopher Yogi Berra who once said "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" But we cannot do that. We must make a choice.

Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.

- God has given us a choice, and God is begging us to choose life.
- We must choose whose side we are on, and once we do that all of our other decisions will be easy.
- Should we compromise with the world or should we do what we know is right and stand with God? Listen to Paul's answer:

Ephesians 5:11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

- Isn't this exactly what Daniel did? Not only did he did not take part in the wicked plan, but he exposed the wicked plan.
- 4. He could concern himself with pleasing God instead of pleasing men and not worry about the consequences – and that is exactly what he did.
- The decision was easy. In fact, there was no decision to make. Daniel had made the decision to follow God long ago, and whether he was 13 or 83, he would not compromise with the world.

- What a wonderful example of faithfulness and loyalty to God!
- Why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem?
  - 1 Kings 8:10-11 tells us that God's presence resided in the temple.

1 Kings 8:10-11 And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

- While Ezekiel 11:23 tells us that this presence left prior to the destruction of the city in 587, Ezekiel 43:2 tells us that God promised to return – and in fact Cyrus' order to rebuild the city had probably already been given.

Ezekiel 11:23 And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

Ezekiel 43:2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with his glory.

- What was Daniel praying for?
  - In Daniel 9:1-2 we will discover that since Darius had begun to reign Daniel had been reading Jeremiah with regard to the 70 year period of exile.

Daniel 9:1-2 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans – 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years which, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

- Thus Daniel knew it was time for his people to return from their exile and indeed many may have already returned.
- Thus, the returning captives may have been the primary item on Daniel's prayer list, and he could hardly stop praying for them now that they needed his prayers the most.

11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. 12 Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that any man who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."

- This group waited around for Daniel to pray, and then went and reported to Darius as soon as he did.
- Notice in verse 12 the word "you." Suddenly this law has become the king's idea!
- Darius is reminded of his decree. Darius remembers and also points out that the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked.
  - This passage provides absolute proof that Daniel did not believe that a separate Median kingdom conquered the Chaldeans prior to the Persian kingdom under Cyrus.
  - The late-date hypothesis that the second kingdom is Media and the third kingdom is Persia is shown to be ill-founded.

- Daniel treats Media and Persia as a unified kingdom – which historians tell us is what they were.
- Why couldn't the law be changed or revoked?
  - Having a law that stood even above the despot was a very politically sophisticated system of government. Although we take it for granted, it was quite rare at the time.
  - Although we can only speculate about the reason for this system, this same requirement provided the drama in the book of Esther after the decree went out to kill the Jews. (See Esther 1:19 and 8:8.)
  - History tells us that it also played a role during the reign of Darius III who ruled from 336 to 331. It is said that he put a man to death who he knew was innocent because "it was not possible to undo what had been done by royal authority."
  - We are about to watch God as he changes and revokes a law that cannot be changed or revoked!

13 Then they answered before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no heed to you, O king, or the interdict you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed, and set his mind to deliver Daniel; and he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

- The charge made against Daniel is similar to the charge made against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3:12.

Daniel 3:12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

- This was a false charge. Daniel did pay heed to the king. He just did not give his ultimate loyalty to the king – that belonged to God.
- Darius' response is not what the conspirators had hoped for!
  - When the real reason for the decree finally dawned on him, he became greatly distressed.
  - He had been duped by Daniel's enemies, and I am sure he now regretted not having discussed the matter with Daniel personally.
  - He no doubt respected Daniel for his loyalty to his God, and he tried to save his life. But there was nothing he could do.
    - Providing Daniel with armor, or feeding the lions ahead of time would have undermined the law of the Medes and the Persians.
    - A miracle was Daniel's only hope.
- How did Darius know so much about God?
  - He may have learned from Cyrus. Read Ezra 1:2 again.

Ezra 1:2 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Cyrus seems to have known a lot about God! Perhaps he told Darius about God as well. Darius, at least, would have been familiar with the decree found in the book of Ezra.

- He may have heard about God from Daniel. We already know that Daniel had become a very trusted advisor. It would seem unlikely that Daniel had never talked to Darius about God.

15 Then these men came by agreement to the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance which the king establishes can be changed." 16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" 17 And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

- Darius is again reminded of his decree, and finally he resigns himself to carrying it out.
- Still concerned, however, he goes with Daniel to the pit, and Daniel is thrown into the pit. (Recall that Daniel was at least 83 years old at this time.)
- Darius calls out to Daniel hoping that God would deliver him. (We often talk about the faith of Daniel, but the faith of Darius is impressive as well!)
- The pit is closed and sealed by Darius and the others who are present.
  - Seals of this sort have been found. They consist of a cylinder that is rolled across a clay tablet.

- Why was the pit sealed? Darius may have been concerned that Daniel's enemies might decide to give the lions a little help.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. 19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 When he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

- The king returned to the palace very troubled.
- Darius and Pilate share some similarities. Both were forced by circumstances against their will to put someone to death who did not deserve it. However, Darius seems to have been much more concerned about his decision than Pilate was. Darius certainly never washed his hands of Daniel's blood.
- The king ate no food, enjoyed no entertainment, and could not sleep.
- As soon as it was light, he ran to the pit to check on Daniel.
  - Do you think the conspirators may have been worried by the king's behavior? They should have been! I think they were starting to sweat.
- Darius refers to Daniel as the servant of the living God.
  - To Darius, this test would determine whether or not Daniel's God was living.

21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live for ever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong."

- Can you imagine the king's relief when Daniel answered!
- Daniel calls out and tells the king that God had sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. He also reminds the king that this was proof of his innocence.
  - But was he innocent? He had violated the law of the land. God, however, declared him innocent. God does not recognize as valid any law that contradicts his own. Every nation and king answers to God. He is the only supreme ruler.
- These verses may give us a clue as to who the fourth person was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.
  - Recall Daniel 3:25.

Daniel 3:25 He answered, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

- Here Daniel was delivered by an angel. This seems the most likely explanation for the deliverer in Chapter 3 as well.
- Again, we should note that this was a miracle.
  - As I mentioned before, there are many who deny the miracles in the Bible and try to explain them away.
  - Their strained attempts to believe the Bible yet remove the miracles it con-

tains would be laughable if they were not so sad.

- Listen carefully to what John Crossan had to say about the resurrection of Lazarus in his book Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography.

...while I do not think this event ever did or could happen, I think it is absolutely true. Let me explain.

- This quote is then followed by pages of mumbo-jumbo and double speak.
- How would he respond to the following questions?
- Do you believe that the resurrection of Lazarus is absolutely true? (He would say yes.)
- Do you believe that the resurrection of Lazarus ever did or ever could happen? (He would say no.)
- Keep this example in mind when you try to pin a liberal down about what he believes!! They are very skilled at using language intended to deceive.

23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.

- Darius brings Daniel out and looks him over. Not a scratch is found on him.
- "And no hurt was found upon him..."
  - because Daniel was so powerful? No.

- because Daniel was so charismatic? No.
- because Daniel was so popular? No.
- because Daniel was so wealthy? No.
- because Daniel was so smart? No.
- because Daniel trusted in God? Yes!
- Daniel was delivered because Daniel was faithful to God. Indeed, he takes his place in the roll call of faith we find in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets – 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

- Daniel is a wonderful example of someone who absolutely refused to compromise with the world and instead remained loyal and true to God despite the earthly consequences.

24 And the king commanded, and those men who had accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

- Without any trial or hearing, Darius has Daniel's accusers and their families paraded past Daniel and thrown into the pit. They were killed before they reached the bottom of the pit. (These lions seem to have been in a foul mood for some reason.

Perhaps because they had been forced to just stare at their dinner all night...)

- And Daniel's reaction? He did not object. God has said that he will judge – and we should not get in the way when he does!
- What was their crime?
  - They had lied to the king.
  - They had tried to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.
- While Darius' actions may seem arbitrary and unjust to us, we must keep in mind that ancient despots did not generally follow the law of Moses!

Deuteronomy 24:16 "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

- Indeed, even the Jews did not always follow the law of Moses.
  - 2 Kings 10:11 tells us that Jehu killed everyone in the house of Ahab in Jezreel.
- Why were their families killed as well? Probably to minimize the chance of revenge. Darius wanted a secure prime minister.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. 26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring for ever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. 27 He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

- Darius makes a public proclamation as Nebuchadnezzar had done in Daniel 3:29 and 4:34.
- It was clear to all that God was alive and that he worked in history to bring about justice and the welfare of his people.
- Indeed, while this was going on, his people were as promised returning to the Holy Land under Zerubbabel.

28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- Daniel's usefulness to the king continued and he prospered as he had during the days of Nebuchadnezzar.
  - This verse does not imply that Cyrus followed Darius as some suggest that it does. Instead it states (correctly) that Darius and Cyrus ruled simultaneously.
- He also continued to pray and study his Bible. The visions in Chapters 10–12 were given to him during the third year of Cyrus.
- The book was probably written shortly after these visions were revealed, which perhaps puts its date around 532 (about 7 years after the Persians took over in 539).

## CHAPTER 7

- As we leave the first six chapters and enter chapter 7, we are leaving historical narrative behind and entering an apocalyptic section.
- What is apocalyptic language?

- Apocalyptic language is composed of symbols that are often lurid in color, violent in tone, and easily remembered. They strike the imagination and grab hold of the mind.
- Such language is found in Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Isaiah, and even in the gospels and epistles.
- What is the purpose of apocalyptic language?
  - It denotes conflict and victory.
  - It is used when God judges and smites an oppressor and vindicates his people.
  - It is used to describe times of crisis and judgment.
- Why does God use apocalyptic language?
  - Some think that the language is used to hide the true meaning from hostile authorities and thus shield God's people from retaliation.
    - This makes more sense with the book of Revelation than it does with the book of Daniel. Who are the hostile authorities in Daniel? The Jews were not being persecuted. Further, writing the message in Hebrew would no doubt have been sufficient to hide its meaning from the Chaldeans and the Persians.
  - I think the reason God uses such language is because of its emotional impact.
    - Apocalyptic books are oil paintings from God.

- The vivid and violent language conveys emotional images while also conveying historical facts – just as a painting can convey emotions and facts.
- Numbers 12:8 reminds us that God does not always speak clearly, but sometimes uses dark language. (Such language may be reserved for times of conflict and judgment.)
- How do we interpret apocalyptic language?
  - We need to pay particular attention to numbers and periods of time. They have symbolic meanings that must be deduced from the evidence.
    - 3 is the number of God.
    - 12 is the number of God's people.
    - 10 is the number of completeness.
    - 7 is the number of perfection.
    - 6 is the number of imperfection.
    - 8 is the number of renewal.
  - Apocalyptic language always has historical significance, so we must study history in order to interpret it properly.
  - The usual approach to scripture is to understand a passage literally unless we are forced to do otherwise.
    - For example, Jesus told us to cut off our right hand if it offends us. Was this a literal command or should we interpret it figuratively?
- This is reversed for apocalyptic language – it should be understood figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise.
- Whatever we do, we should strive to be consistent. (Hal Lindsey says the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7:4 are literal yet the locusts in Revelation 9:3 are cobra helicopters. John Walvoord says the 10 days in Revelation 2:10 are figurative yet the 1000 years in Revelation 20 are literal.)
- The following principles are helpful in interpreting apocalyptic language.
  - (1) We should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise. We should be consistent in our interpretations.
  - (2) Similarity of language does not prove identity of subjects. (There are many judgments in the Bible, but the same language is used to describe each – Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Edom, Jerusalem, Rome, the world.)
  - (3) Dissimilarity of language does not prove distinctness of subjects.
  - (4) Easy to understand scriptures should be used to understand harder passages. This basic principle of hermeneutics should be used whenever we study the Bible. We should be very wary of any interpretation of apocalyptic language that conflicts with easier passages found elsewhere. (Premillennialism is based entirely on Revelation 20 and as we

- know is in conflict with a host of other passages.)
- (5) Mark Twain: "When you find yourselves on the side of the majority, it is probably time to change sides." Keep in mind that more nonsense has been written about these books than any other Biblical subject. We must be discerning.
  - But shouldn't we just take all scripture literally?
    - NO ONE takes all scripture literally.
      - Of course, when we say that we do not take all scripture literally we do not mean that we do not believe that all scripture is true. We know that God's word is absolutely true and contains no falsehoods or inaccuracies – historical, scientific, or otherwise.
      - The question is not whether a particular passage is true, but is instead whether God is using literal language or figurative language to convey the truth to us.
    - To take Matthew 5:30 literally would require Christians to practice self-mutilation.
    - Is Genesis 3:15 a prophecy about snakes and humans or about God and Satan?
    - Was Hosea mistaken when he told Israel they were going into Egyptian captivity when they really went into Assyrian captivity – or did he simply know that to a Jew 'Egypt' denotes slavery and captivity?
  - To literally interpret Ezekiel 16:53–55 would require the resurrection of the Sodomites to their former prosperity despite what we read in Jude 7.
  - To literalize Ezekiel 37:22–25 would require David and not Jesus be Israel's eternal king.
  - To literalize Isaiah 34:5–17 would require that Edom exist eternally here on earth and burn eternally while weeds and animals live in it.
  - NO ONE takes all scripture literally – indeed, it is not logically possible to do so. Instead we need to approach the scripture with the common sense that God has given to us and that he knew we had when he gave us his word. God wants a thinking people!
  - One last example: Matthew 24:21 and Ezekiel 5:9, in reference to different events, both claim that the event in question will be a greater calamity than anything that has occurred or will ever occur. Logically, this could not be literally true of both events! The solution is to recognize the language as hyperbole and reject the literal interpretation.
  - Sometimes one hears or reads Deuteronomy 29:29 applied to apocalyptic language.
 

The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.
  - The idea is that we shouldn't worry about what books like Revelation and Daniel mean because they contain secret things that belong only to God. But does this make any sense?

- The word apokalupsis in Greek means unveiled, uncovered, or revealed! Apocalyptic books do not contain secret things, they contain revealed things.
- The Bible is meant to be understood – and if we don't understand it, we shouldn't blame our inability on God. He wants us to understand his word.
- Apocalyptic language is meant to convey comfort to those suffering captivity or persecution. What would it say about God if he offered us comfort but worded it in such a way that we could never receive that comfort? He wants us to understand his word.
- Final comments before we begin:
  - Many different interpretations about the following passages have been given. Without discussing all of the other opinions, I will largely confine my efforts to presenting and providing evidence for my own opinions.
  - While it is hard in some places to be dogmatic, it is not impossible. Also, our inability at some points to state with certainty what a passage means does not imply that it could mean anything. We can, even in those cases, still often state with certainty what the passage does not mean.
  - We all have preconceptions about what this book says or does not say. Countless sermons, for example, have used Daniel 12 to preach about the end of the world. We must, however, keep an open mind regarding the evidence in this book. Remember, however, Chesterton's comment that an open mind is only useful when it clamps down on something solid.

- Of course, it goes without saying that whatever is said about these passages should be checked carefully with the word.

- In Mark 4 and Luke 8 we find two commands of Christ that have largely been ignored.

Mark 4:24 Take heed what you hear.

Luke 8:18 Take heed how you hear.

- Hearing is not a neutral activity. Jesus told us to be active hearers and to watch both how and what we hear. (This is not directed just to our leaders, but it is directed to every Christian. This is a very important responsibility that we shouldn't turn over to anyone else.)
- This is particularly crucial today when so many are twisting the scriptures to their own and their listeners' destruction.

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter.

- Notice that chronologically this vision occurred before the events that we studied in chapter 6. In fact, this vision occurred prior to the defeat of the Chaldeans by Cyrus.
- The first year of Belshazzar probably refers to the year 553 in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC when Nabonidus left the city of Babylon for 14 years to live in North and Central Arabia. Thus, the first year of his reign would refer to the first year of his coregency.

- This book states very clearly that this vision was given to Daniel in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The late-date crowd states very clearly that this vision was made up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Who are we to believe? To believe the late-date crowd requires us to believe that the author of Daniel was guilty of a deliberate lie. (If he lied he certainly had Jesus fooled! See Matthew 24:15.)

2 Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

- The wind often denotes the action of God. Like God, the wind is invisible yet can have very dramatic effects.

Psalm 18:10 He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind.

Hosea 13:15 Though he may flourish as the reed plant, the east wind, the wind of the Lord, shall come, rising from the wilderness; and his fountain shall dry up, his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing.

- The sea often denotes the restless nations of the world as they toss and churn.

Isaiah 17:12-13 Ah, the thunder of many peoples, they thunder like the thundering of the sea! Ah, the roar of nations, they roar like the roaring of mighty waters! 13 The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm.

- Thus, the wind on the sea would denote the action of God on the restless nations of the world.

- In verse 3 these four beasts come up from the sea. Later in verse 17 we will see that they also come up from the earth.

- Coming from the sea means that these beasts will arise from the restless nations of the world.
- Coming from the earth means that these beasts are of human origin.

4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it.

- This first beast is Babylon – the same kingdom that was represented by the golden head of the statue we saw in chapter 2. (Chapter 7 parallels chapter 2 in many ways.)
- A winged lion was a very common symbol for Babylon, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. ALL commentators agree on this point.
- Like Babylon, this beast was hindered and humiliated by God.
- In historical fact, the king of Babylon was a man who was given the heart of a beast. In the vision, Babylon is pictured as a beast who is given the heart of a man.

5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'

- This second beast is the combined Medo-Persia empire that both Daniel and secular history say followed the Babylonians. Recall that in chapter 2, Medo-Persia was

represented by the breast and arms of silver on the giant statue.

- Note that one side of the bear is higher than the other side. This stresses the point that in the Medo-Persian empire, the Persians were dominant.
- This beast is like a bear and is told to continue eating even before it has finished its last meal. It is voracious and greedy.
- The three ribs may simply add to the picture of the greedy starving bear, or they may depict the three major Medo-Persian conquests that occurred under Cyrus and his son Cambyses.
  - Lydian kingdom in 546 BC
  - Chaldean kingdom in 539 BC
  - Egypt in 525 BC

6 After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it.

- This third beast represents Greece, which in chapter 2 was denoted by the belly and thighs of brass on the giant statue.
- This beast is a leopard, which like Greece, moved very fast.
- This beast has four wings and four heads. Recall that after the death of Alexander, Greece was split into four pieces ruled by his four generals.
  - Note 1: This is an example where it seems most logical to interpret a number literally rather than figuratively even though the number appears in an apocalyptic section.

- Note 2: Here in Daniel 7:6 Greece is depicted as a beast with four heads. Later in Daniel 8:8 Greece will be depicted as a goat with four horns. In Daniel 8:21–22 we will find out that those horns denote kings or kingdoms. Thus, heads and horns are sometimes used to denote the same thing – kings or their kingdoms. (This point will be useful to remember as we continue.)

- The liberals would have us believe that this divided third kingdom is Persia, but Persia remained unified until its end when Alexander the Great conquered it. Who is mistaken? Daniel or his critics? I wonder...
- The arrogance of these liberal critics is unbounded. Instead of admitting that they are mistaken, they insist that Daniel must have mistakenly thought that Persia would be split into four pieces!

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

- This fourth beast is Rome, which in chapter 2 was represented by the legs and feet of iron and clay on the giant statue.
- Like Rome this beast is terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong. And like Rome, it is different from the beasts that came before it.
- This beast has ten horns, which we will discover in verse 24 denote 10 kings. (We will see which kings they are when we get to verse 24.)

8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

- From among the ten horns arises an eleventh horn. This little horn (which we will later discover denotes an eleventh king) comes up only after three of the ten horns are plucked up.
- Who is this little horn? We will discover that when we get to verses 24 and 25.

9 As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

- Here we have a judgment scene in which the ancient of days sits at the head of an enormous court in which the books are opened and judgment is rendered.
- Which judgment does this refer to? There are many different judgments in the Bible.
  - The two leading candidates are the judgment of Rome and the judgment of the world at the end of time. Which choice fits better with the context? Clearly the judgment of Rome does.
  - This is the judgment of the fourth beast, and the fourth beast is Rome.

- Verse 11 tells us that after this judgment the fourth beast is slain and burned with fire.
- Verses 21–22 tell us that this judgment was against the little horn who was waging war against the saints.
- Verse 26 tells us that this court would take the dominion away from the little horn.
- Revelation 20 contains another great judgment scene similar to what we see here. (It also contains thrones, books, and fire.)
  - John said that the judgment in Revelation 20 would come to pass soon after the book was written. (Revelation 1:1;1:3;10:6;22:6;22:10)
  - Revelation was written during the Roman persecution.
  - Thus, the context suggests that the judgment scene in Revelation 20 also applies to the judgment of the fourth beast from Daniel 7 – the Roman empire.
- Thus, I believe that the judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the judgment scene in Revelation 20 both apply to the same judgment – the judgment of Rome.
- Did Rome fall in the first century? Absolutely no. Was Rome judged and sentenced by God during the first century? Absolutely yes!

11 I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given

over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

- The judgment of the court is that the fourth beast be destroyed, which is thus pictured in verse 11. The beast is burned with fire and utterly destroyed.
- The other three beasts have lost their power (their dominion was taken away), but they are pictured as still being around waiting to hear their fate as well.
  - These three beasts lived on in the fourth beast. They had the same ungodly ways and aims.
  - We saw this in chapter 2, where all four kingdoms were denoted by a single giant statue.
  - What did they have in common? They were all earthly kingdoms that were trying to take the place of or destroy the one true heavenly kingdom of God.
  - We also see this in John's description of Rome found in Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:1-2 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

- In Revelation 13, the beast (Rome) is like a leopard, a bear, and a lion.
- Where have we seen these three animals before?

- In Daniel 7, we just saw a lion, a bear, and a leopard (in that order).
- In Revelation, John mentions a leopard, a bear, and a lion (in the reverse order).
- Daniel and John are both looking at the same three kingdoms, but Daniel is looking FORWARD through time whereas John is looking BACKWARD through time!

13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

- At the end of this remarkable judgment scene, Daniel sees "one like a son of man" come to the Ancient of Days to be presented before him.
- This son of man is Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and in fact this is where the Messianic title "the Son of Man" came from. Why the Son of Man? Jesus was saying that he was the son of man who was mentioned in Daniel 7! He was taking a Messianic title familiar to every Jew and applying it to himself.
- Jesus as the representative of his people comes to receive the kingdom. What does this mean?
  - In verse 22 and 27, it is the saints who receive the kingdom.

- Like we mentioned in our study of Revelation, Jesus did not receive something here that he did not already have.
- This part of the judgment scene depicts a public reaffirmation of something that had been true all along. God has removed and judged a great enemy of his people and he wants everyone to be aware of the outcome.
- In Revelation 1:9, John made it very clear that the kingdom had been established. Yet in Revelation 12:10 we read that “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” What is meant by this? It is simply a public reaffirmation and display of what was already true!
- Is it still appropriate to pray “Thy kingdom come” as the apostles’ were instructed to do in the Lord’s prayer? Yes. Although the kingdom was established on the Day of Pentecost after the Lord’s ascension, God’s kingdom continues to come anytime and anywhere the Lord and his church are victorious over their enemies.

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made known to me the interpretation of the things.

- Luckily, Daniel was just as curious as we are, so he asks someone standing in the court what the vision meant, and he receives the interpretation.

- Be very wary of any commentary whose interpretation of this passage disagrees with what we are about to read!
- At this point we might pause to consider why Daniel was given this vision.
  - A cursory reading of Isaiah might have led some to conclude that the Messiah would appear immediately following the Babylonian captivity.
  - In fact, liberals today believe that Zerubbabel was a disappointing Messiah figure.
  - Daniel’s vision says NO. The Messiah will not come until two other kingdoms have come and gone. The Messiah, Daniel will say, will come during the fourth kingdom (Rome).
  - Paul dealt with a similar problem in 2 Thessalonians. There some had quit working to await what they felt would be the immediate return of Christ. Paul told them that Christ would not return until the man of perdition was destroyed. I think the man of perdition is the little horn from Daniel 7, and Paul was simply saying that Jesus could not return until all that God had prophesied in Daniel had come to pass.
  - Some say that the New Testament authors were under the mistaken impression that Jesus’ return was imminent. That is just not so. Paul said just the opposite in 2 Thessalonians. While we say (correctly) that Jesus can return at any moment, that was not true in the first century before all of the events in Daniel had come to pass.

17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever and ever.'

- The four beasts are four kings (or kingdoms) as we have suggested.
  - The term "king" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably in this chapter. The fourth beast is called a king here in verse 17 and is called a kingdom in verse 23.
  - When the term "king" is used it most likely speaks of the king or kings who rule the kingdom in question.
- Should God's people have been frightened of these four fierce powers that had arisen or would arise from the earth? No.
  - Notice the word "but" in verse 18. Things look bad, BUT we are going to win. Our kingdom (unlike these earthly kingdoms) will never pass away. It will outlast them all.

19 "Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up and before which three of them fell, the horn which had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and which seemed greater than its fellows. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom.

- Daniel skips quickly to the fourth beast, which in this vision was different from all the others.
  - What about the other three? Daniel does not ask about those or perhaps he does but does not give us the details regarding the answer he received.
  - We will learn a great deal about these other kingdoms in the visions that occur later in the book.
- Daniel repeats the details regarding the fourth kingdom and we learn more about the little horn.
  - Notice that this little horn wages war against the saints.
    - This sheds doubt on the theory of some that this vision is speaking about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. There, Rome was not waging war on the saints but on the Jews who had persecuted the saints.
    - Daniel will have some things to say about the fall of Jerusalem, but I don't think it is being discussed here.
- In verse 22 we see God coming in judgment.
  - There are many comings of God in the Bible.
  - We often speak of the "second coming of Christ" as if there were only two.
  - However, the phrase "second coming of Christ" does not appear anywhere in the Bible. The closest we get is Hebrews 9:28 which says that he will appear a

second time – which will occur at the end of the world.

- While Christ did not literally appear in AD 70, he did come in judgment at that time. Matthew 24:30 describes a coming of Christ and Matthew 24:34 tells us that it happened during the first century.
- Conclusion? We need to consider the context very carefully when we read of a coming of God or of Christ in the Bible. While Jesus will come again literally at the end of the world, he has come before figuratively in judgment against oppressors of God's people.
- Matthew 24 speaks of his coming in judgment against Jerusalem, and Revelation speaks of his coming in judgment against Rome.

23 "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

- This is an accurate picture of the Roman empire which grew from a dusty village on the Tiber River in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC to control virtually the entire known world.
- This fourth beast is Rome, which was different than all the other kingdoms in its organization and unity.
- This kingdom breaks things into pieces, unlike Greece which was itself broken into pieces. The fourth kingdom is not Greece; it is Rome.

24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time.

- Here we again meet the ten horns and the little horn.
- Do they rule simultaneously? Some have suggested that the language requires that they do so.
  - However, this is not true at all. In Chapter 2, the statue was destroyed at one time yet the kingdoms it depicted did not rule simultaneously.
- What do we know about the little horn? Let's consider the clues:
  - 1. He is of the fourth beast. (verses 7–8 and 24)
    - This would mean that he would be a king of the Roman empire, which is represented by the fourth beast.
  - 2. He is the 11<sup>th</sup> king. (verses 7–8 and 24)
    - The 11<sup>th</sup> Roman emperor was Domitian.
  - 3. He is a braggart. (verses 8 and 20)
    - Listen to what Suetonius had to say about Domitian in his Lives of the Twelve Caesars:

From his youth he was far from being of an affable disposition, but was on the con-

trary presumptuous and unbridled both in act and word.

- 4. He claims to be deity. (verse 25)
  - Verse 25 says that he would think to change the times. In Daniel 2:21 we read that God changes the times. Thus, this little horn claims to be in the place of God.
  - Suetonius wrote:

With no less arrogance he began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, 'Our Master and our God bids that this be done.' And so the custom arose henceforth of addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation.

- William Barclay wrote:

But with the coming of Domitian there came a complete change. Domitian was a devil. He was the worst of all things – a cold blooded persecutor. With the exception of the mad Caligula, he was the first Emperor to take his divinity seriously, and to demand Caesar worship.

- 5. He is a persecutor of God's people. (verses 21–22 and 25)
  - Domitian began an empire policy of persecution that did not end until 311 AD under the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and Constantine.
  - Tertullian called him a "limb of the bloody Nero" and that name was associated with him even into the third century.
  - Eusebius called him "the successor of Nero."

- 6. He is depicted as the 8<sup>th</sup> king when 3 others are removed. (verses 8 and 20–24)

#### WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT TO DEPICT DOMITIAN AS NUMBER 8 RATHER THAN NUMBER 11?

- Listen to what Milligan had to say about the number eight:

The number six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who felt the significance of numbers. It fell below seven just as eight went beyond it. [The number eight] denoted more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of circumcision on the eighth day, of the "great day" of the feast on the eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning in active power.

- The Year of Jubilee when everyone got the chance to begin all over again, followed seven sevens of years.
- The leper who had been excluded from the congregation was given a new beginning on the eighth day. (Lev. 14:10)
- In early Christian literature, Christ was referred to as 888.

#### HOW DOES THE NUMBER 8 FIT WITH DOMITIAN?

- Nero was the first to actively persecute Christians.
- Tertullian wrote:

Consult your annals, and there you will find Nero, the first emperor who dyed his sword in Christian blood.

- He later referred to Domitian as a "limb of the bloody Nero."
- A rumor arose during the reign of Domitian that he was literally Nero, raised from the dead. How else would he be described except by the number 8?

#### WHO ARE THESE THREE KINGS THAT ARE UPROOTED?

- Galba, Otho, and Vitellius all reigned within less than a two year period of time.
- These are the three that are pushed out of the way so that the actual 11<sup>th</sup> emperor can be seen as the symbolic 8<sup>th</sup> emperor.
- They are ignored in Revelation and are mentioned but uprooted in Daniel.
- How was Domitian "different from the former ones" as verse 24 says?
  - As we mentioned, he was the first to make it a policy of the empire that all who refused to worship him be persecuted.
- What does it mean in verse 25 when it says that the saints would be given into his hand for "a time, two times, and half a time"?
  - This phrase denotes 3.5 years, a period of time that is also found in Revelation 11:2, 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, and 13:5.
  - In each case it denotes a state of affairs in which God's people would be persecuted yet be sustained. It de-

notes a temporary state of affairs – something that would not last.

- Why is 3.5 used to denote this?
  - It is a broken seven, and seven denotes perfection – something that will last. Thus, a broken 7 denotes something that is temporary.
  - Another possible source is the drought that Elijah prayed for. It lasted 3.5 years. (See James 5:17.) Thus, this may have been the source for a period of time denoting a temporary affliction.

26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

- Here we again have a public demonstration of something that was already true.
- Similar language was used in Revelation to also describe the judgment of Rome:

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

- Did the kingdom of the world become the kingdom of the Lord when Rome was judged? No. That had always been true. Jesus has always and will always rule the universe. Jesus did not begin to reign in Revelation 11. He had been reigning all the time.

- What did happen when Rome was judged? The rule of Christ was vindicated. The triumph of the church was a public demonstration of the power of Christ, which was thus made known to all of the world. That is how the language is used here in Daniel.
- Again, note that while Rome did not fall in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Rome was judged and sentenced in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, we have just seen a picture of the judgment scene in which that happened.

28 "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed; but I kept the matter in my mind."

- Daniel was greatly alarmed by what he had seen. Why?
  - He had been given a glimpse of the great persecution that awaited the people of God – and that disturbed him.
  - Paul said that we should rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)
  - Sometimes I fear that we weep with those who rejoice and rejoice with those who weep!
  - Further, he bore the burden of this knowledge alone because he was not able to make the vision known when he first received it. (Verse 28 says that he kept the matter in his mind.)
- If you agree with the conclusions in this chapter, then you have absolutely undeniable proof of Biblical prophecy. Why? Because we have copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls that predate the Ro-

man empire. Even the late date critics are unable to push the book of Daniel past 160 BC. That is why they deny the obvious internal evidence that the fourth empire is Rome.

## CHAPTER 8

- With chapter 8, the book again switches to the Hebrew language. Recall that since chapter 2, Daniel's record had been given in Aramaic.
  - As we mentioned earlier, the use of different languages probably has much to do with the different audiences. Perhaps the Aramaic sections had messages primarily for the Babylonians and the Hebrew sections had messages primarily for the Jews.
  - The two languages used in Daniel casts serious doubt on the idea that the apocalyptic language in the book was used to hide its message from the hostile powers that be. On the contrary, Daniel seems to have had the opposite objective in mind. He wanted the authorities to read his book. Indeed, he went out of his way to explain visions to two of the "hostile" kings.
- Although certain symbols in Chapter 8 may remind us of symbols that were used in Chapter 7, we must keep in mind one of our principles of interpretation: Similarity of language does not prove identity of subjects.
  - While the primary subject of Chapter 7 was the fourth kingdom, the primary subject of Chapter 8 is the third kingdom.

1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. 2 And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the capital, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was at the river Ulai.

- This vision appeared to Daniel in the third year of Belshazzar's reign. If this denotes the third year of his coregency with Nabonidus, his father, then this vision would have appeared to Daniel in 550 BC.
- Again, we are faced with a choice. Either this book was written and these visions were received in the sixth century BC or its author was a liar.
  - Jesus called Daniel a prophet and said that we should believe all that the prophets had written.

Matthew 24:15 So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).

Luke 24:25 And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

- The Bible is not a grocery store where we can take what we want and reject the rest. If the book of Daniel is not trustworthy, then none of the Bible is trustworthy.
- The city of Susa (or Shushan) has been identified and the palace of Xerxes was discovered there in the late 1800's.
  - It is not clear whether Daniel was in Susa when he received the vision or if the setting of the vision was Susa. (Verse 16 seems to support the for-

mer view since it occurs 'after' the vision.)

IF DANIEL WAS IN SUSA THEN WHAT WAS HE DOING THERE?

- Susa was the capital of Elam, which at one time was independent of both the Babylonians and the Medes.
- By around 550 BC, however, Elam seems to have become a province of Persia.
- While Persia and the Medes were rivals, the Babylonians and the Persians were friendly. However, that changed when the Persians and the Medes merged.
- It was then that Nabonidus began to negotiate with Lydia and Egypt, hoping to form a triple alliance.
- Perhaps, Daniel was acting as an ambassador in these difficult negotiations.
- Problem: Daniel was apparently unknown to Belshazzar in Chapter 6, which of course occurred after the vision recorded here in Chapter 8.
  - Belshazzar hardly seems to have had his pulse on the nation. Recall that he was engaged in a drunken feast when the city fell to the Persians. I doubt that he knew every government official in his employ.
- Note that Daniel was not in the city itself but was outside of the city by the river Ulai. This 'river' was a wide artificial canal that connected the Choaspes River and the Coprates River.

3 I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the river. It had two horns; and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.

- What does the ram denote?
  - There is no doubt but that it denotes Medo-Persia. This is stated explicitly in verse 20. (See our comments about verse 20 below.)
  - Again, one must wonder where the liberals get their idea that Daniel thought the Medes and the Persians acted as separate kingdoms in their dealings with the Babylonians. How could it be any more clear? We have one ram denoting both kingdoms. Why don't the liberals see this? They do see it, but they have a hidden agenda – naturalism at any cost, even when that cost is their own intellectual integrity.
- This ram has two horns which denote the Medes and the Persians.
  - One horn is higher than the other. This higher horn denotes the supremacy of the Persians in their merger with the Medes.
  - This higher horn comes up last. This is in perfect accord with history. The Medes were the dominant power until Cyrus the Great came along and brought prominence to the Persians.

4 I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward; no beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power; he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

- This verse gives us a completely accurate picture of the Medo-Persians.
  - The three general areas of Medo-Persian expansion were:

- Westward toward Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, and Macedon.
- Northward toward the Caspians and the Scythians.
- Southward to Babylon and Egypt.
- In these campaigns, the Medo-Persians were nearly invincible and, as pictured here, their targets were helpless against them.
- Medo-Persia and its king, Cyrus, became arrogant and Cyrus "magnified himself." The careful student of the Bible will infer from this language that Cyrus was ripe for a fall.

5 As I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. 6 He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the river, and he ran at him in his mighty wrath. 7 I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns; and the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled upon him; and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.

- Who is this goat from the East? Again we are left with no doubt. Verse 21 tells us explicitly that it denotes Greece.
- This goat with one conspicuous horn comes from the West and charges the ram with the two horns. Again, this is in perfect accord with history.
  - Alexander the Great and the Greeks came against Persia in 334 BC from Macedonia and Greece, which were in the West.

- Like this goat, Alexander moved fast. The hooves of this goat did not even touch the ground. (Alexander died when he was 33, but by that time he had virtually conquered the world!)
- Who was this conspicuous horn?
  - As we have suggested, it must be Alexander the Great.
  - Verse 21 tells us that this horn was the "first king." Alexander was the first king of the consolidated Greek empire. (Indeed, he was the one who consolidated it.)
- This attack by the goat against the ram appears to be unprovoked.
  - History tells us that Alexander launched just such an attack in 334, and emerged victorious just 3 years later.
  - One commentator wrote:

Alexander's conquest of the entire Near and Middle East within three years stands unique in military history and is appropriately portrayed by the lightning speed of this one-horned goat. Despite the immense numerical superiority of the Persian imperial forces and their possession of military equipment like war elephants, the tactical genius of young Alexander ... proved decisive.

- Daniel is suggesting that Alexander had a little help! He was acting out his part of a plan that God had put in place hundreds of years earlier.
- Recall that Josephus says that the Jews showed Alexander this very passage when he marched against their city. Alexander then spared the city out of gratitude. (We had more to

say about this in our introductory comments.)

8 Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly; but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

- This goat "magnified himself." What does that mean?
  - It could denote Alexander's advances into Afghanistan and India which occurred in 327 BC. That is, he magnified his empire.
  - More likely, it refers to Alexander's pretensions of divinity, which distressed his troops to the point that they mutinied and refused to advance further into India.
  - Egyptian priests had told Alexander that he had descended from Zeus, and he took it very seriously. He required his comrades to prostrate themselves before him.
  - Isn't it interesting that when God uses a man to do great things, that man often ends up thinking that he is a god himself? The progression seems to be:
    - God did...
    - God and I did...
    - I did...

Numbers 20:10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?"

- We should remember to give God all of the glory and credit when we are allowed to do something great on his behalf. After all, how much credit do we give to Michelangelo's chisel? None. Which is exactly how much credit we deserve.
- This horn is broken at the height of its power, and in its place arise four other horns.
  - Alexander died in 323 at the age of 33 due to a sudden fever brought on by dissipation.
  - (The rumor was that he had in fact been poisoned by Cassander, the son of Antipater, viceroy of Macedonia.)
  - After his death, attempts were made to hold his empire together, but they proved futile.
  - By 311, four of his generals had claimed independence and by 301 they had it. (At one point 13 men were trying to carve out a piece of the Greek empire, but when the smoke cleared only 4 were still standing.)
    - Ptolemy in Egypt (including Palestine)
    - Seleucus in Babylonia
    - Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor
    - Cassander in Macedonia and Greece
  - History tells us that the initial division of Alexander's kingdom was four-fold and that is what Daniel tells us as well. The difference is that Da-

niel told us many years before Alexander was even born!

9 Out of one of them came forth a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. 10 It grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. 11 It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. 12 And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression; and truth was cast down to the ground, and the horn acted and prospered.

- Here we have another little horn.
  - Recall that we saw a little horn in Chapter 7 as well. That little horn was Domitian, the 11<sup>th</sup> emperor of Rome.
  - Is this little horn also Domitian? No. The little horn in Chapter 7 came up from the fourth kingdom (Rome). The little horn here in Chapter 8 comes up from the third kingdom (Greece).
  - Remember, similarity of language does not prove identity of subject – and this 'little horn' is a perfect example.
- Who then is this little horn that arises out of the Greek empire?
  - We are given a few clues here and more clues later in the chapter. Let's summarize the clues:
    - He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land. (verse 9)

- He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven. (verse 10)
- He greatly magnified himself. (verse 11)
- He took away the burnt offerings. (verse 11)
- He overthrew the sanctuary. (verse 11)
- He was a king of bold countenance. (verse 23)
- He understood riddles (verse 23)
- He had great power (verse 24)
- He caused great destruction (verse 24)
- There is only one ruler who fits all of these clues. The little horn of Chapter 8 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire.

#### HISTORICAL REVIEW OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES

- As we have seen, after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy and his successors established themselves in Egypt and at first controlled Palestine as well.
- The Seleucids on the other hand controlled Mesopotamia and Syria.
- There was constant friction between these two groups, and as was often the case, Palestine became a battlefield.
- In 200 BC, the Seleucids gained Palestine from the Ptolemies at the Battle of Panias.
- Initially the Seleucid rule was popular with the Jews. According to Josephus, An-

tiochus III eased the tax burden considerably.

- However, he soon came in conflict with Rome and after several defeats was forced to pay a large annual indemnity. This meant he had to tax the Jews more heavily, and understandably his popularity began to wane. (The conflict between taxes and popularity is hardly new!)
- Antiochus III was killed in 187 BC while raiding a temple treasury in Elam in order to pay off the Romans.
- His successor, Seleucus IV, continued this policy by plotting unsuccessfully to rob the temple treasury in Jerusalem. He was assassinated in 175 BC.
- As one might expect, this period gave rise to Jewish opposition and the gradual emergence of a nationalistic movement.
- Antiochus IV Epiphanes came to power after the death of his brother, Seleucus IV.
- He needed to unify his empire against the threats of Rome to the west, Parthia to the east, and Egypt to the south.
- He sought to accomplish this unity by fostering Hellenism; that is, by encouraging the adoption of Greek culture and ideals. He particularly identified with Zeus and took the name Epiphanes ('the god appearing') because he considered himself to be a divine personification of Zeus.
- Due to the Roman taxes, he was virtually penniless when he assumed the throne, so he increased taxes and continued to rob temples.
- Although they all disliked the taxes, the Jews were divided about Hellenism. Younger Jews were eager to adopt Greek

culture and integrate it into Jewish society, but most older Jews were uncompromising traditionalists.

- Matters came to a head in Jerusalem when two men tried to outbribe each other in an effort to have Antiochus make them high priest.
- The new High Priest supported the establishment of a Greek gymnasium within sight of the temple. There, young men (including priests) studied Greek culture and took part in sports.
- The intertestamental book of First Maccabees contains the following description:

Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the custom of the heathen. And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen.

- Greek sports were conducted without clothing.
- When the author writes that they made themselves uncircumcised, he is not just speaking figuratively. Some of the Jews actually tried to reverse their circumcision with surgery.
- Later, the High Priest (who had obtained that position by paying Antiochus a bribe) assisted the king in plundering the temple and said nothing while Antiochus murdered citizens and nearly destroyed the city.
- Later, an altar to Zeus was built in the temple and sacrifices were offered on it. And this was not all, as the following excerpt from one commentary makes clear:

Antiochus issued decrees forbidding the practice of Jewish religion on pain of torture and death; the Sabbath and the fes-

tivals were not to be observed and circumcision was forbidden; copies of the Torah were to be destroyed and Jews were to be forced to offer sacrifices to Zeus and eat the meat of the sacrifice. Pigs were deliberately chosen as the sacrificial animals because they were considered unclean by the Jews.

- One elderly priest, Mattathias, refused to sacrifice to Zeus and, with his five sons, rose up and killed the king's officers who were trying to force him to comply.
- This led to the Maccabean Revolt, which eventually gave rise to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian captivity. This nation only lasted 79 years. In 63 BC, the Romans under Pompey conquered Jerusalem and once again the Jews were under foreign domination.

#### NOW, LET'S LOOK AT THOSE CLUES AGAIN. WHO IS THE LITTLE HORN OF CHAPTER 8?

- He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land. (verse 9)
  - This accurately describes the directions of the Seleucids. The 'glorious land' denotes Palestine.
- He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven. (verse 10)
  - This 'stars of heaven' and the 'host of heaven' refer to the people of God, who at this time were the Jews. This symbol may point back to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5.
  - Antiochus caused many 'stars of heaven' to fall as he caused them to renounce their covenant with God.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He greatly magnified himself. (verse 11)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antiochus declared himself to be the divine personification of the Greek god Zeus.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• He took away the burnt offerings. (verse 11)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verse 11 says that "It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown."</li> <li>• This Prince of the host is undoubtedly Jesus Christ himself, who we also saw in Chapter 7.</li> <li>• It was from him (the Prince) that the burnt offering was taken. (The Hebrew here simply says that the daily was taken away. That is, the daily activities of the priests were stopped.)</li> <li>• As we have seen, Antiochus did just this.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• He overthrew the sanctuary. (verse 11)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antiochus looted the temple and set up an altar to Zeus in the sanctuary.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• He was a king of bold countenance. (verse 23)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even the Roman Pompey refused to disrupt the Jewish worship, but no so with Antiochus. He definitely had a bold countenance!</li> </ul> </li> <li>• He understood riddles (verse 23)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A better translation is that he was skilled at double dealings. Again, this was true of Antiochus. History tells us that he was extremely crafty and devious.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He had great power and he caused great destruction (verse 24)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This, of course, as we have seen was also true of Antiochus.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In summary, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the little horn that arose out of the Greek empire and persecuted the people of God ruthlessly. He overthrew the sanctuary and caused the daily sacrifices to end. He caused many of God's people to fall by causing them to renounce their covenant with God in favor of Greek culture and gods.</li> <li>• Verse 12 gives us the reason behind his success. It was through transgression. God didn't lack power; it was just that the people were evil. They followed him and allowed him to do what he did.</li> <li>• Also, in verse 12 we see that he would cast the truth down to the ground. In fact, he forbid scriptural faith and service to God on pain of death.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>13 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to the one that spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot?" 14 And he said to him, "For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daniel hears a 'holy one' (probably an angel) ask how long the sanctuary and the people would be trampled under foot. A second 'holy one' provides the answer: The sanctuary will be restored after 2300 evenings and mornings.</li> <li>• History tells us that the sanctuary was restored in December 164.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

- In fact, the Jewish Hanukkah holiday celebrates this very event. This is the feast that is called the feast of the dedication in John 10:22–23. This celebration of the rebirth of the temple was later adopted by Christians to celebrate the birth of Christ.
- What about the time period of 2300 mornings and evenings? Is it literal or figurative?
  - View 1: The time period is a literal 2300 days, which would be a little over 6 years and 100 days.
    - A problem with this view is that nothing really notable occurred 6 years and 100 days before the temple was cleansed. That is, there appears to be no *terminus a quo*.
  - View 2: The time period is a literal 1150 days, which would be a little over 3 years and 50 days. (1150 days contain 1150 mornings and 1150 evenings for a grand total of 2300 mornings and evenings.)
    - This view is appealing in that the altar to Zeus was set up in the temple about 3 years before it was cleansed.
  - View 3: The time period refers to a figurative time period of 6 years that falls just short of a figuratively complete 7 year period.
    - If this view is correct then a period of six years would indicate that the persecution would be temporary.
    - Why ‘evenings and mornings’ instead of ‘days’? The removal of

the ‘daily’ sacrifices was the center of attention in this story.

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." 17 So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened and fell upon my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."

- After the vision, Daniel sees the angel Gabriel and hears a voice asking Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel.
  - Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament that gives us the name of an angel.
- The angel tells Daniel that the vision is for the time of the end. What does he mean by this?
  - The phrase ‘time of the end’ is one of those phrases that requires us to examine the context very closely.
  - Although we might be tempted to think ‘the end’ must always refer to the end of the world, that could not be the case here. The vision very clearly ends with the cleansing of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus. Thus, the time of the end refers here to a time even before the birth of Christ.
  - Consider the following passage where similar language is used:

Habakkuk 2:2-3 And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it. 3 For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie. If it seem slow,

wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay."

- The 'end' is the end of the vision. That is, it is the appointed time when the vision will be fulfilled. The key idea is that God is in charge of the timing and he will determine when the 'end' occurs. The fulfillment is sure and will not occur by accident.

18 As he was speaking to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and set me on my feet. 19 He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.

- Daniel is so overcome that he faints, but the angel sets him on his feet again.
- Here we see it even more clearly. The 'time of the end' in verse 17 is called the 'appointed time of the end' in verse 19. It is the time that God has appointed for the events in the vision to be completed.
- The 'indignation' in verse 19 refers to the outpouring of God's wrath against the enemies of his people and against sin.

20 As for the ram which you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the he-goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.

- Here we have the explanation of the vision, which we have already discussed.
- Recall that the ram was Medo-Persia and the goat was Greece. As history tells us,

Greece defeated Medo-Persia and then split into four pieces after the death of Alexander the Great.

- These four kingdoms did not arise 'with his power.' That is, they were ruled by his generals and not by his sons.
- Verse 20 speaks of the 'kings of Media and Persia.' Did Daniel believe that the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms when these events occurred?
  - No. Daniel clearly sees that Media and Persia are represented by a single ram. That is, they act and do everything together. They are, as history tells us, a single entity.
  - Why, then, does he refer to the 'kings' of Media and Persia when in fact Cyrus was in charge of both?
  - The answer is suggested by verse 21.

And the he-goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king.

- Verse 21 shows us that the term 'king' can also refer to 'kingdom'.
- The goat is called the king of Greece, yet the first king is a horn on the goat.
- Thus, the 'two kings' of Media and Persia in a single ram denote the two kingdoms of Media and Persia which merged into a single Medo-Persian empire.

23 And at the latter end of their rule, when the transgressors have reached their full measure, a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise. 24 His power shall be great, and he

shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints. 25 By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken.

- Here we have a description of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who we have also already discussed.
- Recall that each of these items fits Antiochus precisely. In Jewish writings, he is referred to as Antiochus the Wicked.
- Verse 23 tells us that he would arise in the latter end of their rule.
  - Although, chronologically he ruled about midway in the timespan of the Seleucid kingdom, God's interest in the Seleucids ends with Antiochus IV (as we will see in Chapter 11). The kingdom began to decline with the death of his father Antiochus III.
  - This is not unusual in the Bible. There were many Roman emperors, but as far as God was concerned there were only 11. He talks about the first 11 in Daniel and in Revelation, but says nothing about all the others that followed. God's interest in Rome (and in the Seleucids) seems to have ended after they were judged and sentenced.
- Verse 25 tells us that Antiochus IV would be broken by no human hand.
  - History tells us that after making an unsuccessful attempt to pillage a wealthy temple in Elymais, he died of a sudden mysterious illness.

- Daniel tells us that the illness was anything but mysterious! God removed Antiochus from the scene just like he removed Herod from the scene in Acts 12.

26 The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told is true; but seal up the vision, for it pertains to many days hence."

- Daniel is told to seal up this vision because it pertains to many days hence. How many days hence?
  - The vision was received in 550 BC and it was fulfilled in 164 BC. Thus 'many days' refers here to a time period of 386 years.
  - Daniel was told to seal the vision up because it dealt with events that would pertain to people who would live much later. This vision was not directly applicable to the people of his own day.
- In Revelation 22:10 John was given the opposite command!

Revelation 22:10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."

- Why was John told to not seal up the words? Because the time for their fulfillment was near! This is also mentioned elsewhere in the book.

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place.

Revelation 1:3 the time is near.

Revelation 22:6 And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his

angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

- Thus, Daniel was told to seal up a vision that referred to a time less than 400 years after he received it, yet John was told not to seal up his vision. Does it make sense to teach that nothing in Revelation has yet been fulfilled as so many teach today?
- Daniel 8:26 and Revelation 22:10 provide a very good starting point for discussing the prophecies in these two books and especially the prophecy in Revelation.

27 And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.

- Daniel was appalled by the vision and was overcome for some days. Why? Because he saw what would one day happen to God's people. Even though it would not happen to him or to anyone he knew, still he was disturbed.
- This is certainly a lesson for us. We should be concerned for God's people everywhere and for all time.
- How can we show our concern for future Christians? By carefully guarding the truth that has been entrusted to us, we show our care and concern for God's people in the future.

1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you.

Jude 3 Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

- This is not just the elders' or the ministers' responsibility. It is everyone's responsibility. We neglect it at our own and our children's peril.
- Notice that even after the explanation, Daniel confesses in verse 27 that he did not fully understand the vision. (This should provide some comfort to us in our efforts to understand these visions!)

## CHAPTER 9

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans — 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years which, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

- This vision was received by Daniel during the first year of Darius' reign.
- As we have suggested, Darius was most likely a governor that Cyrus placed over the newly conquered Chaldean territory.
- Notice that although Darius is said to be a Mede, he is not called the king of the Medes. Cyrus was king of the Medes. Darius was king over the Chaldeans, which meant he answered to Cyrus.
- Some commentators believe that the first year of Darius' reign coincided with the third year of Cyrus' reign.
  - Daniel 9:1 (first year of Darius)
  - Daniel 10:1 (third year of Cyrus)

- Daniel 11:1 (ALSO in the first year of Darius)
- What was Daniel doing? He was studying his Bible and praying to God.
- Daniel was studying the book of Jeremiah.
- Notice that Daniel clearly says that what he was reading was the word of the Lord that had been given to Jeremiah. Jeremiah did not just make up his prophecies anymore than Daniel just made up his, as so many teach today.
- What part of Jeremiah was he reading?

Jeremiah 25:11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Jeremiah 29:10 For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

THESE PASSAGES FROM JEREMIAH SPEAK OF 70 YEARS OF BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY. IS THIS A LITERAL 70 YEARS?

- Some believe that the 70 year figure is symbolic with 7 denoting the perfection of God's work and 10 denoting the completeness of the punishment.
- Other commentators, however, believe that the 70 years is a literal, yet rounded, number denoting perhaps the length of a normal life span.

Psalm 90:10 The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but

toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Isaiah 23:15 In that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:

- A problem with these ideas is that Daniel knew how long he had been in captivity, and he seemed to be under the impression that exactly (or perhaps approximately) 70 years had passed.
- If the 70 year figure is to be taken literally and exactly then what period does it refer to?
  - Theory 1: 605 to 535 BC
    - The time from the first deportation to the time when some suggest the first captives returned to the land.
  - Theory 2: 586 to 516 BC
    - The time when the temple was destroyed to the time when it was rebuilt.
  - If instead we take the time period to be from the deportation in 605 to the decree by Cyrus in 539 we obtain a period of 66 years – which when rounded also gives us 70 years.

3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

- Daniel took his praying very seriously and we should too.

To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world. (Karl Barth)

The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray. (Samuel Chadwick)

Much of our praying is just asking God to bless some folks that are ill and to keep us plugging along. But prayer is not merely prattle: it is warfare. (Alan Redpath)

- Verses 4–19 will teach us much about prayer and will show us how a true servant of God should approach the Sovereign of the Universe on behalf of his people.
- Notice the spiritual preparation that Daniel went through before he even began to pray. He had fasted, mourned, and clothed himself with sackcloth.
- Daniel saw prayer as serious business indeed. Do we see prayer that way?

4 I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and terrible God, who keepest covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 5 we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from thy commandments and ordinances; 6 we have not listened to thy servants the prophets, who spoke in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

- In this prayer, Daniel makes a confession of his personal guilt and the guilt of the Jewish nation. He made no excuses – the Jews had deserved their punishment.
- Daniel loved his people, but he knew that they had turned away from God despite his repeated warnings and graciousness.

- They had forsaken the law; they had embraced idols; they had killed the prophets that God had sent to warn them. They had virtually forced God to destroy their cities and send them into exile.

2 Chronicles 36:16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

7 To thee, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us confusion of face, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those that are near and those that are far away, in all the lands to which thou hast driven them, because of the treachery which they have committed against thee. 8 To us, O Lord, belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness; because we have rebelled against him, 10 and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

- This section stresses the humiliation of the Hebrew people in the eyes of the surrounding heathen nations.
- The Jews had a special place in God's plan:

Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth.

- God had promised them military success as long as they remained faithful:

Deuteronomy 28:7 The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out

against you one way, and flee before you seven ways.

- God had promised that they would be respected by the surrounding nations:

Deuteronomy 28:10 And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of you.

- But now this had all changed. Since the death of King Josiah in 609 BC, the Jews had become objects of scorn, deprived of their freedom, and ridiculed for their belief in the one true God.

11 All Israel has transgressed thy law and turned aside, refusing to obey thy voice. And the curse and oath which are written in the law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. 12 He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what has been done against Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us, yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and giving heed to thy truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.

- In this section Daniel exalts the justice of God in dealing with his people according to all of the warnings and promises that had been given to Moses.
- As one commentator noted:

To Daniel it was more important for the God of Israel to retain his integrity and uphold his moral law than for his guilty people to escape the consequences of

their infidelity. Had God not fulfilled his word of judgment, little credence could be placed in his word of grace. If a nation like Judah, instructed so perfectly in the truth of God, could fall into idolatry and immorality and defy the Lord to punish them as he had promised to do, why should anyone obey the Almighty or believe in him?

- The punishment of the Jews vindicated the holiness and righteousness of God and demonstrated to the world the sanctity of God's law and word.
- Verse 12 says that the coming calamity would be unlike anything that had ever happened in the world. Is this a literal description?
- No. The latter half of verse 12 is a proverbial expression that should not be understood literally. It simply stresses the extent of the trouble that befell the city.
- Matthew 24:21 makes a similar statement about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

- The statement here in verse 12 is describing the destruction of the city in 586 BC. A similar description is found in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 5:9 And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.

- They cannot both be literally correct since each claims to be worse than every other calamity that ever did or ever would occur. Instead, each is

simply employing hyperbole to make a point.

- I think we will all agree that Daniel's prayers were among the most powerful and effective in all the Bible.
- What was the greatest historical force of the time? The great Persian army? The mighty Babylonian army? Or was it perhaps the 80 year old Daniel praying alone in his room? I think we all know the answer!
- Charles Finney said that:

John Knox was a man famous for his power in prayer. Queen Mary of England used to say that she feared his prayer more than all the armies of Europe.

- How powerful is prayer? Prayer can do anything that God can do.
- Since Daniel's prayers were so powerful and effective, it stands to reason that we can learn much about how we should pray by carefully looking at Daniel's prayers.
- Notice that Daniel twice reminded God of what God had said in the law of Moses. (Verses 11 and 13.)
- Is it all right to quote the Bible to God or to remind God about what he has said in the Bible when we pray?
  - Some would say no since God wrote the Bible and he already knows what is in it.
  - But, if I can only tell God things that he does not already know then I will not have much to pray about!
  - If we take Daniel as an example, then not only is it all right but I

think we should quote scripture in our prayers.

- Consider the following quotes:

The most promising method of prayer is to allow oneself to be guided by the word of the Scriptures, to pray on the basis of a word of Scripture. In this way we shall not become the victims of our own emptiness. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved. (E. M. Bounds)

By bringing God's word directly into our praying, we are bringing God's power directly into our praying. (Dick Eastman)

God's word is known at the throne. Use it every time you pray. It is your prayer language. (Armin Gesswein)

- The Bible is our prayer language? Perhaps Jesus had this very idea in mind when he said:

John 15:7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

15 And now, O Lord our God, who didst bring thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast made thee a name, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 O Lord, according to all thy righteous acts, let thy anger and thy wrath turn away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy hill; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people have become a byword among all who are round about us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, hearken to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplications, and for thy own sake, O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 O my God, incline thy ear and hear; open thy eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not

present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

- In this section, Daniel appeals to God's pity on the exiled nation and the ruined city of Jerusalem. He bases his appeal on God's honor and glory. He asks God in verse 17 to restore the sanctuary for His own sake.
- Daniel's primary concern is not the discomfort of the Jews but instead is the tarnishing that they have inflicted upon God's image and reputation in the eyes of the world. In verse 19 he says "Delay not, for thy own sake ...because thy city and thy people are called by thy name."
- To Daniel, the worst part of the captivity was that someone might look at it and conclude that God was not able to deliver them. Daniel did not pray "Get me out of this!" Instead his first concern was for God and His reputation. (Is this how we look at things? Do we think of God first like Daniel did?)
- Daniel confesses that he is not asking God to answer his prayers because he (Daniel) and the people are so good but because God is so merciful.
- In verse 19 he asks God to do three things: hear, forgive, and act – and it doesn't take long for Daniel to get his answer.

20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God; 21 while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen

in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.

- While Daniel was praying, Gabriel came to him in swift flight.
- One commentator noted that if Gabriel were going to catch many of us in prayer, he would have to be swift indeed!
- Do angels have wings? Although they are often depicted as having wings, they usually appear as men in the Bible. In this case, however, Daniel sees Gabriel in "swift flight." Perhaps, he had wings in this appearance.
- Notice that the use of the term 'man' in verse 21 does not imply that Gabriel was not an angel. The Hebrew word used here simply means that Gabriel appeared in humanlike form.
- The "time of evening sacrifice" means late afternoon. Of course, no actual sacrifice could have been offered in Babylon (or even in Palestine) without the restored altar, but the Jews still observed sunrise and sunset as appropriate times for offering praise and worship to God.

22 He came and he said to me, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. 23 At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

- Daniel receives wisdom and understanding in response to his prayer.
- But prayer doesn't work like that today. Right? When we pray we never see angels flying swiftly to answer our prayers. But

because we do not see them as Daniel did, does that mean they are not there?

- Notice how eager God was to answer Daniel's prayer. "As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given."
  - God is more eager to answer than we are to ask.
  - "This is the nature of prayer. Not that I am stumbling toward God but that God is running towards me."
- Daniel was greatly beloved by God. Why?
  - He had refused to compromise with the world.
  - He was faithful and true to God.
  - He was a man of prayer.
  - He studied his Bible and knew it was true.
  - He was a man of great faith.
- If we compromise with the world, disbelieve the Scriptures, and fail to pray can we honestly believe that we too are "greatly beloved" by God as Daniel was?

2 Timothy 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his." and, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

24 "Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. 25 Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then

for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

- This section of Daniel is one of the most commented upon sections in the entire Bible. We are going to need to proceed very carefully.
- First, the Revised Standard Version translation is very poor in verse 24. The Hebrew is literally "seventy sevens" which denotes 70 weeks. The Revised Standard Version's "70 weeks of years" is not in the original text.
- The Revised Standard Version translation of this section is so poor that I think it will be helpful to consider as well the American Standard Version translation given below:

Daniel 9:24-27 Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. 25 Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. 26 And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have

nothing; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. 27 And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.

- What is the setting? Daniel has been reading about a 70 year decree upon the Jews found in Jeremiah. God uses that decree as an opportunity to tell Daniel about another decree regarding the Jews – a decree of seventy sevens.
- How are we to interpret this ‘seventy sevens’ decree? There are two approaches: Chronological and Non-chronological.

#### THE CHRONOLOGICAL APPROACH

- The chronological approach assumes that the ‘seventy sevens’ refer to a period of time in which the events mentioned in the decree will come to pass.
- There are two different chronological viewpoints.
- Note: Neither viewpoint believes that the ‘70 weeks’ are literal since no one has ever claimed that all of the events in the decree occurred within 490 days of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. NO ONE (NOT EVEN THE MOST RABID PREMILLENNIAL LITERALIST) TAKES EVERYTHING IN THIS VISION LITERALLY!
- Before looking at the two different chronological approaches, it will be helpful to review the history of the exiles’ return to Palestine.

#### THE THREE RETURNS

- Return Number 1: 539 BC
  - In 539 BC Cyrus gave a decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (Some scholars think the decree was given in 538 BC. We will use the 539 date.)
  - This decree can be found in Ezra 1:2-4 and 2 Chronicles 36:23.
  - The leaders of this return were Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Jeshua.
  - After their return, work on the temple was begun, sacrifices were made, and the Feast of the Tabernacles was celebrated.
  - The Samaritans had prospered during the Jewish deportation, and they were not happy when the exiles returned. Their guerrilla tactics stopped work on the temple for 19 years until 520 BC.
  - The temple was completed in 516 BC.
- Return Number 2: 458 BC
  - Ezra, a descendent of a High Priest killed by Nebuchadnezzar, was concerned about the spiritual condition of the Palestinian Jews.
    - There was great disparity between the rich and the poor.
    - Most of the exiles had been men, so mixed marriages with non-Jews had become very common. Many of the children from these marriages did not even speak Hebrew.
    - The Jewish law had been neglected. Prophets from this period

<p>speaking of murder, adultery, perjury, and injustice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ezra led 1500 men with their families to Jerusalem.</li> <li>• He read the law to the people, who were very moved when they realized how far they had strayed from the law of God.</li> <li>• He commanded that the mixed marriages be dissolved, that the non-Jewish wives be sent back to their own lands, and that the walls be rebuilt.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some have suggested that the commands to send the women out of the city and to rebuild the city walls may have had some relation!</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Samaritans again caused trouble. They reported the treasonous rebuilding of the wall to Persia and they then proceeded to tear down the wall.</li> <li>• Return Number 3: 445 BC             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nehemiah, a cup bearer in the court of Artaxerxes, asked the king to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.</li> <li>• The king agreed, perhaps because he wanted a fort close to the Egyptian border.</li> <li>• The Samaritans ridiculed their efforts and spread rumors that Nehemiah planned an insurrection and wanted to be king himself.</li> <li>• The wall was rebuilt in 52 days.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>THE MILLENNIAL CHRONOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The starting point for this view is the decree given 445 BC by Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. (That is, the starting point is the third return.) This is the decree found in Nehemiah 2.</li> <li>• Verse 25 tells us that, from this point, it will be 69 weeks (7 + 62) until the Messiah comes.</li> <li>• Using the so-called 'universal prophetic Day equals a Year' principle (more on this later...) they add 69 weeks (69×7 or 483 years) to this starting point.</li> <li>• Here is where things really get complicated. If we add 483 years to 445 BC we arrive at the year AD 39, which misses Jesus' ministry and death by a wide margin. (Keep in mind when you add years to a BC date to obtain an AD date that there is no year 0. For example, 6 BC + 12 years is 7 AD.)</li> <li>• The solution? Instead of counting 483 solar years (containing 365 days each), they count ahead 483 lunar years (containing 360 days each) to reach the year AD 32, which they claim is the year that Jesus was crucified. (Most researchers think that the crucifixion occurred a few years earlier.)</li> <li>• After the 69 weeks (483 lunar years), the prophetic clock stopped and has not ticked once in the intervening 2000 years. Instead, we have been living in a prophetic gap period that they call the church age.</li> <li>• The last of Daniel's 70 weeks will occur when the Rapture begins. The final 3.5 years of these 7 years will be the Great Tribulation when the Antichrist will reign on earth. Following these 7 years, Jesus will return to reign for 1000 years on Earth.</li> </ul>
---	---

- There are a host of problems with the millennial viewpoint in general that do not have a direct bearing on the passage we are considering. Without going into all of these, we will pause for a few moments and consider the general premillennial approach to interpreting scripture.

#### PROBLEMS WITH PREMILLENNIALISM

- Does it make any difference what we believe about premillennialism? Is it all just a matter of opinion? Should we make an issue out of it?
  - Here is one opinion. Listen to what Professor Carroll Osburn of Abilene Christian University has to say on pages 90 and 91 of his book The Peaceable Kingdom:

There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether more than one cup in communion is acceptable, whether the communion bread is to be pinched or snapped, whether one can eat in the church building, whether funds can be used from the church treasury to support orphan homes; whether the Lord's Supper must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on eschatological theories [i.e. matters dealing with last things] such as premillennialism, ecclesiastical matters such as congregational organization, or soteriological matters [i.e. matters dealing with salvation] such as whether baptism is "for" or "because of" the remission of sins.

- Thus, according to Professor Osburn, premillennialism (and baptism and instrumental music, for that matter) is on par with the raging controversy over whether communion bread should be pinched or snapped. That

is, premillennialism is just a side issue that is really of little importance.

- That is, premillennialism, baptism, and instrumental music are just side issues that don't really matter so long as we all just believe that Christ is the Son of God.
  - But can I honestly say that I believe that Jesus is the Son of God if I ignore what he has to say about baptism? If I ignore what he has to say about the end of the world? If I ignore what he has to say about the authority of the scriptures?
  - In Dallas, there is a large group of practicing homosexuals who meet in what they call a church and who no doubt would agree with us that Jesus is the Son of God. Should we then add homosexuality to Professor Osburn's list of non-issues?
- But let's get back to the one so-called side issue that is of particular interest to us. Is premillennialism a side issue that doesn't really make that much difference?
  - To answer that question, let's turn to John Walvoord, who is perhaps the leading proponent of premillennialism. Here is what he has to say about its importance:

If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God, and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that

premillennialism is more than a dispute about Revelation 20. It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.

- Thus, according to Walvoord, premillennialism is a “determining factor in Biblical interpretation.” And if you read their commentaries, you soon find out that this in no exaggeration. They manage to work it in practically everywhere, even though the ‘1000 year’ figure they rely on occurs only in Revelation 20.
- Let’s look at this from a logical standpoint for a moment: If premillennialism is false and if it is a determining factor in Walvoord’s interpretation of the Bible then what can we conclude about Walvoord’s interpretation of the Bible? It must be badly flawed since it is based on a false premise.
- The conclusion? With all due respect to Professor Osburn, it does make a difference what we believe about premillennialism. It is not a side issue, it is a main issue. Why?
  - The premillennialist doctrine has consequences that run counter to the very heart of the gospel.
  - Premillennialists teach that one day the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system will be restored. In this way, they belittle the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice and his eternal priesthood.
  - They teach that Jesus is not presently ruling over Israel. Thus, they belittle his claim to have all authority in Heaven and Earth.

- They teach that Jesus’ mission on earth was failure, and that the church (his body) was a result of that failure. Thus, they belittle the plan of God and they belittle the importance of his church. They teach that our Lord and Savior was a failure who caused God to come up with a Plan B at the last minute.
- Can I say that Jesus is the Son of God and yet claim that he was a failure? That his church was a mistake? That he does not have all authority? That his sacrifice was not sufficient? Professor Osburn apparently thinks that I can. (Read it for yourself on pages 90 and 91 of his book.)
  - I cannot claim on one hand that Jesus is Lord and claim on the other hand that premillennialism is true. The two claims are logically inconsistent.

James 3:11-12 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine yield fresh.

- It makes a great deal of difference what we believe about this important issue. It strikes to the very core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Premillennialism is false and we must continue to proclaim that.
- By the way, we owe a great debt to Foy E. Wallace for keeping it out of the Lord's church. Foy Wallace (then the editor of the Gospel Advocate) debated Charles Neal (minister of the Main Street Church of Christ in Winchester, Kentucky) in 1933 about the 1000 year reign. He was largely responsible for keeping that false doctrine from infiltrating the church.

(What would the situation be like today if he had just ignored the problem? I hate to think. That sort of problem rarely goes away by itself. Someone must have the courage to stand up and refute it. If you want to know whose primary responsibility this is, then take a look at Titus 1:9.)

#### ADDITIONAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MILLENNIAL CHRONOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

- (1) There is no proof that the so-called 'Day Equals a Year' principle is in operation here.
  - Although this principle is sometimes claimed to be some sort of 'Universal Prophetic Principle,' it is in fact only used (with certainty) twice in the Bible.

Numbers 14:34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.'

Ezekiel 4:6 And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, a day for each year.

- How do we know the principle is in operation in these two passages? God tells us each time.
- Does that mean God couldn't use it elsewhere without telling us? No, but it does cast doubt on the idea that he would.
- But could it be a universal principle? No. There are many cases where it is clearly not in use. The creation account leaps to mind. Was the creation week a 7 year period? I know of no

one who believes that it was. (Notice that the first of the above two passages occurs in the Books of Moses.)

- Conclusion: There is no universal principle of Biblical interpretation that requires us to view days as years. To take that view here is just an assumption since God does not tell us here (as He does elsewhere) that the principle is in effect. (Our conclusion at this point is not that this principle is not used in Daniel. Our claim at this point is simply that the principle is hardly universal.)
- (2) Beginning with the 445 BC decree from Nehemiah is just an assumption.
  - The prophecy clearly has a starting point, but what is it?
  - Verse 25 tells us that the starting point was the time when the word went out to restore and build Jerusalem. When was that?
  - If it were not for the efforts to make a chronology fit this prophecy, there would never have been any question as to the starting point: it is the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC.
  - Let's consider the facts:
    - God had prophesied that Cyrus would rebuild the city. Some deny that he did, but listen to Isaiah:

Isaiah 44:28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfil all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

Isaiah 45:13 I have aroused him in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways; he shall build my city and set my

exiles free, not for price or reward," says the Lord of hosts.

- Cyrus gave a decree relating to Jerusalem in 539 BC.
- Daniel received this vision around 539 BC.
- Put yourself in Daniel's place. Which decree would you have thought God was speaking about? The only decree you knew of! The decree that Cyrus had just given must have been the one that God was referring to.
- Objection: Premillennialists say that the only decree ever given to rebuild the city was issued in 445. (This is the one found in Nehemiah.) But is that what God said? No! Look at Isaiah 44 and Isaiah 45 again. God said that Cyrus would issue the decree to rebuild the city.
- Conclusion: The context virtually demands that we take the starting point of this prophecy to be the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC. Take this as the starting point, and you will never reach the cross in 69 weeks (483 years).
- (3) The use of lunar years to reach their target date is baseless.
  - Going back to the lunar calendar to make the numbers work out is (pardon the pun) sheer lunacy.
  - No country (ancient or otherwise) has ever used lunar years to count out long periods of time without including some method of intercalation [the insertion of days into the calendar] to reconcile the lunar and solar years.

- At the time of Daniel, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Sumerians, Persians, and Egyptians all had methods in place for reconciling lunar and solar calendars.
- (4) They miss the date of the cross – perhaps by as much as several years.
- This inaccuracy is particularly troubling based upon their own comments regarding the accuracy of what they call the Divine Chronology.
- Here is what one leading proponent had to say:

And accuracy as absolute as the nature of the case permits is no more than men are here entitled to demand. There can be no loose reckoning in a Divine chronology; and if God had designed to mark on human calendars the fulfillment of His purposes as foretold in prophecy, the strictest scrutiny shall fail to detect miscalculation or mistake.

- I agree that the strictness scrutiny will not detect an error on God's part. However, even a casual scrutiny is enough to leave the premillennialists' theory looking like a piece of Swiss cheese.

#### THE NON-MILLENNIAL CHRONOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

- This view, which is very popular in the church, begins with the decree of 458 BC when Artaxerxes gave Ezra approval to rebuild the city. (This decree is found in Ezra 7.)
- Again, verse 25 tells us that 69 weeks will elapse before the Messiah comes. Applying the 'Day Equals a Week' principle to the 69 weeks gives us 483 years, as before.

- Taking the starting point of 458 BC and adding 483 (solar) years, we arrive at the year AD 26, which is about the year that Jesus was baptized (the coming of an Anointed One).
- Verse 27 tells us that in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, the sacrifices will cease. This, they claim, occurred when Jesus died on the cross and ushered in the new Christian age.
- Again, this seems to fit chronologically since Jesus' earthly ministry lasted about 3.5 years.
- Most in the church rightly reject the millennial approach, but this non-millennial approach is very popular. Let's consider a few arguments against the non-millennial chronological viewpoint.

#### ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE NON-MILLENNIAL CHRONOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

- (1) Again, there is no proof that the 'Day Equal a Year' principle is in operation here. There are only two places in scripture where we know it is used, and the reason we know is because each time God explicitly told us it was being used. (See our earlier comments.)
- (2) Verse 25 requires that 7 weeks (49 years) elapse from the decree in 458 BC until the city is rebuilt. That is, verse 25 under this interpretation would have the city rebuilt in 409 BC. But, Nehemiah suggests that the city was rebuilt in 444 BC during the reign on Artaxerxes.
- (3) There is no particular reason to begin with the decree in 458 that is found in Ezra 7, except that it seems to work. As we mentioned earlier, there is much more reason to believe that the prophecy be-

gins with the original decree of Cyrus in 539 BC.

- (4) Verse 26 clearly suggests that the 70 weeks includes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in AD 70. There is no way to make this fit with a 490 year chronology beginning in 458 BC.

#### THE NON-CHRONOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

- The non-chronological approach assumes that the 'seventy sevens' refer to a state of affairs (rather than a period of time) that symbolically describe the events in the prophecy.
- Before we consider what state of affairs is being described here, let's consider what the symbol of 'seventy sevens' might depict.
  - The number 7 as we have suggested depicts perfection. The creation completed in 7 days was perfect and complete. Thus, 7 could depict the completion of divine activity.
  - The number 7 is used all throughout the book of Revelation to denote the total and complete judgment of Rome and victory of the church.
  - The figure of 'seventy sevens' is also found elsewhere in the Bible.

Genesis 4:24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

- In each case, the '70 by 7' figure denotes something that is total and complete. (Total and com-

plete vengeance and total and complete forgiveness.)

- What was total and complete about the decree that Daniel received in Chapter 9? The decree in Daniel 9 was God's final decree with respect to the Jews under the Law of Moses.
  - This decree represented the completion of his work with regard to the Jews.
  - This decree embodied all of the elements that were needed to completely fulfill all of God's promises to the Jews.
  - As far as God was concerned, this decree was his final word with regard to the Jewish Age.
  - The '70 by 7' symbol was the perfect way to denote this statement of God's completed activity. God is telling Daniel that this is a final decree. One day the Messiah will come and the city will be destroyed.
- Objection: The 70 years in Jeremiah were literal. Why should we take the 'seventy sevens' figuratively?
  - First, as we have mentioned, NO ONE takes it literally since 70 weeks does not give us enough time to get to the Messiah from the time of Daniel.
  - But what about the 70? Shouldn't that be taken literally?
  - Our rule is that we will take numbers figuratively unless forced to do otherwise. Certainly we are not forced to do otherwise here.
  - But even if we tried to take the 490 year figure literally, I claim that there

is no way to make a chronological system of 490 years fit the events in this vision, which includes (verse 26) the destruction of the city in AD 70 and begins at the latest in 445 BC (and most likely begins in 539 BC!). Thus, we are in effect FORCED to take the value of 70 to be symbolic unless we had rather use a forced and faulty chronology.

**NOW WE ARE READY TO CONSIDER THE  
DETAILS OF VERSES 24-27**

- Verse 24 lists six things that are dealt with by this decree. That is, the decree will accomplish or bring about these six things:
  - (1) To finish transgression.
    - This could mean that under this decree transgression would reach its peak or limit. That is, the transgression of the faithless Jews would reach its peak and then be punished.

Matthew 23:31-32 Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.

1 Thessalonians 2:14b-16 for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved – so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

- Or, to finish transgression could mean that transgression would be dealt with effectively, which of course is what occurred at the death of Christ.

- (2) To make an end of sins.
  - This was also accomplished by the death of Christ.

Hebrews 9:26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Hebrews 10:12-14 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

- (3) To make reconciliation for iniquity.
  - Again, this was accomplished by Christ's perfect sacrifice.

Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

2 Corinthians 5:19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

- (4) To bring in everlasting righteousness.
  - Yet again, we see something that was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is

the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- (5) To seal up vision and prophecy.
  - This could mean that this decree would bring about the fullness of God's revelation, and that after it there would be no more.

Hebrews 1:1-2 In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

1 Corinthians 13:9-10 For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; 10 but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

- It could also point to the hardening of the Jews that occurred at this time. That is, the prophecy would be sealed to them because they would not understand it due to their hardness of heart.

Isaiah 29:10-11 For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, the prophets, and covered your heads, the seers. 11 And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."

Romans 11:7-8 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, 8 as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day."

Matthew 23:37-38 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! 38 Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate.

- (6) To anoint the most holy.
  - If the most holy refers to a person then it must refer to Christ who was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power at his baptism.

Luke 3:21-22 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Luke 4:16-19 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; 17 and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

- If the most holy refers to a place then it must refer to the church – the new dwelling place of God which God has anointed with the Holy Spirit. This fits well with the context since the decree ends with the destruction of the old dwelling place of God – the Jewish sanctuary.

Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- The last week of this decree begins with the coming of the anointed one and ends with the destruction of the city and the sanctuary.
  - I believe that the 'last week' of Daniel's prophecy coincides with the 'last days' that are spoken of in the New Testament.
  - That is, the 'last week' or the 'last days' both point to the period of time between the incarnation (or perhaps the baptism) of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
    - We know that the 'last days' occurred during the first century. In Acts 2:16–17 Peter said:

but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

- Thus, Peter very clearly said that he and his audience were living in the 'last days' that had been spoken of by the prophet Joel.
- Whereas God's new covenant and his kingdom were ushered in 40 years before the fall of Jerusalem, God's patience and longsuffering toward the Jews continued until AD 70. It was at that time that God's patience came to an end with respect to the faithless Jews who rejected and continued to reject his son.
- Jesus had predicted this in Matthew 21:33-43 with the parable of the wicked tenants who cast the owner's son out of the vineyard and killed him. Beginning in verse 41, we read:

41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."

- Finally, just because God delayed the punishment of the faithless Jews until AD 70 does not mean that the Mosaic covenant remained in effect until that time.
- The Mosaic covenant was removed at the cross and was replaced with the new covenant.
- Hebrews 7 makes it very clear that Christ could not become a high priest until the Mosaic cove-

nant was removed. (See also Hebrews 9:11-12.)

- What occurred in this decree and during this last week?
- The entire decree began with a command to restore and rebuild the city and the sanctuary.
  - As we have suggested the most likely candidate for this decree is the decree by Cyrus which was given at the same time that this vision was received.
  - The only reason why other decrees are put forward is because they fit in better with attempts to fit this vision with a chronology. These problems disappear if we take a non-chronological approach to the vision.
- After 7 weeks the city is rebuilt and the sanctuary is restored.
  - This part of the decree speaks of the efforts under Nehemiah and Ezra that we talked about. Read those books to find out more about the 'troublous times' mentioned in verse 25.
  - Why seven weeks to rebuild the city? It depicts God's activity in perfectly fulfilling the promises he had made regarding the city in Isaiah and Jeremiah.
  - The chronological view really breaks down here. It did not take 49 years to rebuild the city. (One particularly desperate commentator has suggested that they may have finished much earlier but it took them a long time to clear away all the extra construc-

tion material and garbage! That's a lot of garbage – in more ways than one.)

- After 62 weeks (69 weeks from the beginning of the decree), we have the coming of the anointed one.
- This, as we have suggested, must be Christ. He is the Messiah. He is the anointed one.
- Verse 27 tells us that he makes a strong covenant with many for one week.
  - I think the 'he' in verse 27 must refer to the anointed one and not to the prince of the people to come. The prince of the people to come was the Roman leader Titus, and he did not make a strong covenant regarding the Jews.
  - Christ on the other hand did make a such strong covenant, but was it for just one week? No. The word 'for' is not in the Hebrew. The strong covenant was made during this week, but was not restricted to this week. (Remember also that the point of the 70 'weeks' is not 'duration'.)
  - Which covenant is in mind here? If it is the old covenant, then it means that he would make that covenant firm – he would fulfill all of the Jewish promises, which he did. If it means the new covenant, then it means that he would bring it about by his death, which he did.
- This anointed one is cut off half way through the last week. (As verse 26 says, he is cut off after the 69<sup>th</sup> week –

that is, during the 70<sup>th</sup> week. Verse 27 suggests that he was cut off half way through the 70<sup>th</sup> week.) Isaiah spoke about this:

Isaiah 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

- This 'cutting off' ushered in the blessings listed in verse 24. It also resulted in the destruction of the city in AD 70 since the Jews were punished for rejecting and cutting off God's son.
- Verse 26 says that the anointed would 'have nothing' after he was cut off. What does that mean? I think it points toward the faithless Jews who rejected him. They were not his people. He had nothing in their city and in their sanctuary, and thus they could be destroyed.
- Why was he cut off half way through the 70<sup>th</sup> week? Because half of a week is 3.5 days, which as we recall from our study of Revelation depicts a temporary persecution. Jesus was cut off, but not for long!
- The sacrifices ceased during this week.
  - This could refer to the final sacrifice of Christ which meant that the Jewish sacrifices no longer had any significance.
  - It could also refer to the literal end of the Jewish sacrifices, which occurred in AD 70. Not only was the temple destroyed, but

the priestly records were also destroyed, which effectively brought the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system to an end.

- Finally, at the end of the decree (i.e. at the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week), the prince of a people that is to come destroys the city and the sanctuary again.
- This prince was Titus and the people to come were the Romans. They destroyed the city and the temple in AD 70.
- Premillennialists say that the people to come were the first century Romans but the prince is the antichrist, who hasn't shown up yet!
- The city and the sanctuary are destroyed by divine decree – not by accident. The destruction of the city was a punishment by God against the faithless Jews. The use of a 'flood' to depict the judgment makes this even more clear.

Amos 3:6 Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does evil befall a city, unless the Lord has done it?

## CHAPTER 10

- Chapter 10 is a prelude to the final vision in the book of Daniel. This vision, found in Chapters 11 and 12, will cover the history of the Jews from Daniel's day down until the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was

named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.

- The third year of Cyrus would be the third year of his reign over the Chaldeans (about 536 BC), not the third year of his reign over Persia – which would have been 20 years earlier.
- As we have suggested, the third year of Cyrus may have coincided with the first year of Darius the Mede, but we do not know for sure.
- We know for sure, however, that this vision occurred after Cyrus's decree that the Jews could return to Palestine. Ezra 1:1 tells us that decree went out in the first year of Cyrus.
- The timing here is important because Daniel, who was obviously concerned about the exiles, may have just heard that work on the temple had been halted. This may explain why he is mourning later in the chapter.

WHAT DOES DANIEL TELL US ABOUT THE WORD THAT WAS REVEALED TO HIM?

- (1) The word was true.
- Daniel received this vision and this word from God, and thus the word and the vision are true. The vision contained prophecies that would certainly be accomplished. There was no doubt on Daniel's part.
- The liberals do not approach this book from that perspective. Instead, they determine what the vision must mean, and then check to see if the events in their interpretation ever occurred (and, no surprise, they

hardly ever have!). Thus, they conclude, the author of Daniel was mistaken since the events he predicted never came true.

- For an example of this approach to Biblical interpretation, consider the following excerpt from The New Oxford Annotated Bible commenting on Daniel 11:40–45.

Predictions that Ptolemy will provoke another war with disastrous results, so that Antiochus will conquer Libya to the west of Egypt and Ethiopia to the south, but on his way back will perish somewhere along the coastal route. None of these predictions was fulfilled.

- You can sense the glee as the author makes that final comment. “Here is what Daniel said would happen, but it never happened. So much for those who think the Bible is always right...” But notice that the commentator himself is never in doubt with regard to his own conclusions. He couldn’t be wrong, could he? What do you think?
- If instead we believe that the word of God is true, then the situation is different. If we make some conclusion about the scriptures that later turns out to be in conflict with historical or scientific truth, then we must be in error – not God. It is our fault for misunderstanding his word. God’s word is truth no matter what we have to say about it.
- The two approaches are not all that different. We begin by assuming that God is infallible. The liberals begin by assuming that they themselves are infallible. Beginning with our premise, the liberals are wrong. Beginning

with the liberal premise, God is wrong.

- And what does God have to say to these critics?

Isaiah 44:7 Who is like me? Let him proclaim it, let him declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be.

- (2) The word involved great conflict.
  - The King James Version translates this phrase by saying “the time appointed was long” or great. The Hebrew word translated “time appointed” in the King James Version is more properly translated “army” or “host” going forth to war. The Revised Standard Version translation “it was a great conflict” is preferred.
  - The “conflict” here is the warfare that we will see in Chapter 11. That is, the vision will involve conflicts between many different peoples and nations.
- (3) Daniel understood the word and the vision.
  - Recall that in Daniel 8:27, Daniel confessed that he did not fully understand the vision that he received in that chapter even after an angel appeared to help him understand it. How is this vision different?
    - The primary difference is that the vision in Chapters 11 and 12 is longer and contains more details. This extra detail seems to have helped Daniel understand what was in store for his people.
    - Also, the vision in Chapters 11 and 12 is largely historical narra-

tive, and in that sense is more straightforward than his earlier visions.

- This first verse in Chapter 10 is an overview of the last three chapters of Daniel. The “understanding” of the vision in 10:1 was not present until the end of Chapter 12.
- If we skip down to verses 12–14 we discover that Daniel prayed for understanding and an angel was sent to explain to him what would occur to his people in the last days.
- With the next verse, Daniel begins to give the account of the events that led him to this understanding. As we will see, it began with spiritual preparation and prayer. (Perhaps we should follow his example when we too seek to understand the will of God.)

2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. 3 I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

- Again, we see the extent of Daniel’s spiritual preparation.
- Daniel prepared himself to seek God and study his word. Daniel made time for God. Indeed, Daniel seems to have made time for little else.
- Should we follow Daniel’s example? Daniel got results when he prayed. God heard his prayers and acted to answer his prayers. If we want similar results then perhaps we should prepare ourselves as Daniel did.

- For easterners, anointing oneself with oil was a daily ritual except for those who were sick, who were mourning, or who were facing a crisis.
- In James 5:14, the elders anointed the sick person with oil to express their faith that the person was going to recover. (They did not think the oil healed the person.)
- Here, Daniel abstains from the oil because he is mourning.
- Note also that Daniel abstained during this time from meat and wine. The inference of course is that normally he did not abstain from these foods. Thus, the dietary changes he made when he first arrived in Babylon seem to have been just temporary. (Some have said that Daniel was a vegetarian all of his life, but this verse casts serious doubt on that idea.)
- Why was Daniel mourning?
- As we have suggested, Daniel may have heard bad news from the exiles who had left several years earlier for Palestine. As we know from Ezra, the news was not all good.
- Also, the vision in Chapter 8 had discussed the horrors that lay in store for God’s people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The vision in Chapter 9 had told Daniel that one day the Messiah would come, only to be cut off, and that one day the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed. Further, this would be God’s last word with regard to the Jews. The vision in Chapter 11 that Daniel was about to receive will have even more to say about the horrors that would soon

face God's people. What else could Daniel do but mourn? Daniel knew that there was a time to mourn, and he knew that the time was now!

- And how long did Daniel fast? Well, if we believe those who think there is a Universal Day Equals a Year Principle in the Bible, then Daniel must have fasted for 21 years! But of course there is no such principle as we have already discussed. Daniel fasted for 3 weeks – a literal 21 days.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with gold of Uphaz. 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of a multitude.

- Daniel received this vision on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the first month.
  - The first month of the Jewish calendar is Nisan. The Passover celebration took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of this month, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> day. Thus, Daniel received his vision 10 days after Passover. While traditionally this was a time of feasting, Daniel had spent the time fasting and mourning.
  - Why did Daniel give us the day and the month and the year of this vision? (The year is given indirectly in verse 1.) One reason is that the extra level of detail adds to the testimony of his book. Daniel is not just making this up – these visions really occurred. A

second reason is that Daniel knew that the starting point of a vision was often crucial in understanding a vision.

- Daniel was standing on the bank of the Tigris River.
  - Earlier Daniel had a vision next to the River Ulai (which flows into the Tigris River). As you recall, it was unclear if Daniel was actually at the River Ulai or rather was just seeing the river in his vision. The wording here, however, seems to suggest that Daniel was actually present at the Tigris river when these events occurred.
  - Daniel was not the only prophet to receive a message from God next to a river. Ezekiel received several visions by the River Chebar.
- Verse 5–6 contain perhaps the most detailed description of an angel's appearance found anywhere in the Bible.
  - The description of this angel is very similar to the description of Christ found in Revelation 1. This has caused some to conclude that perhaps Daniel was seeing the preincarnate Christ rather than an angel.
  - One big point against this theory is that this angel, as we will soon see, fought with the Prince of Persia for three weeks until he was helped by Michael. Christ, on the other hand, had little trouble with the demons he encountered in the New Testament.
  - Despite the similarity of their appearance in Revelation 1 and Daniel 10, the similarity between angels and Christ goes no further.

- Christ is the eternal creator (Colossians 1:16). Angels are creatures (Psalm 148).
- Christ is omnipotent (Jeremiah 32:27). Angels are not (Daniel 10).
- Christ is omnipresent (Psalm 139). Angels are not (Daniel 10).
- Christ is omniscient (1 John 3:20). Angels are not (1 Peter 1:12).
- Christ is worthy of our worship (Revelation 22:3). Angels are not (Revelation 22:8-9).

7 And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. 8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me; my radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. 9 Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in a deep sleep with my face to the ground.

- The vision in verse 7 is the vision of the angel himself appearing, not the vision in Chapters 11 and 12. The word that the angel brings is also called a vision in verse 14, but this vision in verse 7 occurs before the angel says anything.
- Daniel's companions are not able to see the vision, but they sense enough to be afraid and to flee, leaving Daniel alone.
  - Daniel's experience is similar to that of Paul on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:7 and 22:9 tell us that Paul's companions could not see Christ or understand his voice, but did sense

enough to be frightened. (They saw the bright light and stood speechless.)

- Also, we are reminded of the incident in 2 Kings 6:15-17 in which Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant would be opened so that he could see the great angelic army that surrounded them.
- Why could Daniel, Elisha, and Saul see what their companions could not? The most likely reason is simply that God did not want their companions to see the visions. Perhaps, though, they were more spiritually alert than their companions.
- Daniel's appearance changed when he saw the angel.
  - Verse 8 in the New English Bible reads "My strength left me; I became a sorry figure of a man."

10 And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, give heed to the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. 12 Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

- Again, Daniel is said to be greatly beloved by God.
  - A literal translation of greatly beloved would be "man of preciousness." Daniel was precious in God's sight. What a tremendous complement!

- Why was Daniel precious in God's sight? Because Daniel was a man of faith and a man of good works. Because Daniel devoted himself entirely to doing God's will and pleasing God.
- We have heard so often that our works do not earn our salvation that I fear we have begun to believe that our works don't count for anything in God's sight. Our works are important to God. Indeed, Ephesians 2:10 says that we were created for good works.
- Why were Daniel's prayers so effective?
  - Verse 12 says that Daniel set his mind to understand and he humbled himself before God. Thus, the angel says, God heard his words.
  - It is a sad fact that although God is always able to hear us, sometimes he chooses not to hear us. Why? Because of our sinfulness.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; 2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.

13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia 14 and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."

- The answer to Daniel's prayer was delayed for 21 days. Why?
  - Some suggest that the answer was not delayed, but that the angel was acting to answer his prayer. Daniel's

concern was with the Jewish exiles, and this angel no doubt had the same concern as he wrestled with the forces behind Persia. Often answers cannot be given at once, but instead must be delayed by the arrangements necessary to bring them about.

- Daniel's prayer was heard the first day he started praying, yet the answer didn't show up for 21 days. Why didn't Daniel just give up?
  - Luke 18:1 tells us that we should continue to pray and not lose heart, and this is just what Daniel did.
  - James 5:16 tells us that our prayers can be very effective. Daniel 10 gives us some idea of the mighty forces that we can unleash with our prayers.

This is the place of prayer – on the battlefield of the world. It is a wartime walkie-talkie for spiritual warfare, not a domestic intercom to increase the comfort of the saints. (John Piper)

- The prince of Persia is apparently the satanic agent assigned to work with Persia in fighting the will of God.
  - We would be foolish to think that Satan is not organized in his fight against him. He has a plan and he works to carry out that plan.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour.

- Although God could wipe out all the forces of Hell with a single thought, he does not. Instead, he accords demons (like men) certain limited powers and gives them free will.
- Michael comes to the aid of this angel and remains to fight the prince of Persia.

- The angel Michael is also mentioned in verse 21 and later in 12:1. Here he is called a chief prince. In Jude 9 he is called an archangel. He also makes an appearance in Revelation 12:7.
- One conclusion we can draw is that apparently there is a hierarchy of angels in which Michael occupies a high position.
- By the way, the liberal critics look at all that Daniel has to say about angels, and they conclude that the theology in his book was too advanced to have been written in the sixth century BC. Of course, this theory presupposes that the Jews were just making everything up as they went along, which is exactly what the liberals believe.
- Why was this angelic warfare occurring? Why was Satan interested in Persia and Greece?
  - The short answer is that Satan was interested because God was interested. Satan constantly seeks to thwart God's plans.
  - Even today, Satan is seeking to destroy the church and his attacks come from within and without.
    - He attacks the church from without through the sinful culture of the world and the false doctrines of the world's religions.
    - He attacks the church from within by raising up false teachers from within our own ranks who twist the word of God to their own destruction, who deny the miracles and prophecies of the Bible, and who seek to change the eternal pattern that is found in God's word.
- This battle is not new. As we see, it was going full tilt back in the days of Daniel, 500 years before Christ. Now, 2500 years later, it continues. Our job is to take our position in God's army and remain faithful and true to his word. When we compromise with this world, we betray him. To God, compromise is treason!
- An interesting question to consider is to look at how much Satan knows about the plan of God and to ask when he found out about it.
  - Satan obviously knew that the Jews were part of God's plan and so he sought to frustrate their efforts at every turn.
  - Satan, of course, knew that Jesus as the Son of God was the focus of God's plan so he put temptations before him at every opportunity.
  - But what about the death of Christ? Did Satan see that as a victory? If he did, then as we know he was badly mistaken, because as John 12:31 and Hebrews 2:14 tell us, Satan was defeated at the cross.
  - I think that Satan first saw the cross as a victory, but later realized his mistake at the last moment. Matthew 27:19 tells us that Pilates' wife sought to have Jesus released because of a dream she had. Who was behind that dream? I think Satan was.
- One thing that these verses make very clear is that there is an unseen spiritual war going on that is related to events occurring in this world.

- This warfare is going on behind a curtain and is obscured from our sight. The Bible occasionally pulls back that curtain a bit and gives us a glimpse of what is going on. Daniel 10 pulls back the curtain perhaps more than any other section of the Bible. Even so, we are not told very much and we can only speculate about the details of this spiritual battle.
- Other verses that pull back the curtain are:

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- Of course, we can only speculate about the details of this spiritual warfare since the only thing we know for sure about it is what God has revealed to us – and he hasn't revealed very much on this topic. There is nothing wrong with conjecture just so long as we remember where the word ends and the conjecture begins.
- We must be careful not to go too far and become preoccupied with demons as some have done. C.S. Lewis said the following in this regard:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

- When are the 'latter days' mentioned in verse 14?
  - The phrase could simply mean "later" or it could point to the latter days of the Jewish age. This latter interpretation seems to fit the context better.
  - Many assume that the "latter days" refers to the end of the world. But as we saw in Acts 2, the 'last days' occurred in the first century.
- If we do take the 'latter days' to refer to the end of the world, then we need to be aware of some consequences of that belief. Verse 14 states very clearly that this vision concerns the role of the Jews in the latter days.
  - As I have already suggested, I think the 'latter days' refers to the time when God's special plan for the Jews would come to an end. This happened in the first century and fits nicely with how Peter described the last days in Acts 2.
  - But could this vision also relate to events that will occur at the end of the world? We need to be very careful how we answer that question. To answer the question 'yes,' is to logically imply that the Jews still have a special role to play in the plan of God, which many today believe is the case. If we take Daniel to refer to the end of the world in this vision, then the idea of a future Jewish role in God's plan follows as a logical consequence of verse 14 – we cannot avoid it. Thus, we need to be careful about the time frame we choose for this prophecy.

- What does the Bible have to say about the future role of the Jews in God's plan?

Romans 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him.

Acts 13:32-33 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee.'

Jeremiah 33:14-16 Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

- Does God have a plan for the Jews today? Yes. Does God have a plan for Jews today that is different from his plan for Gentiles? Absolutely not!

15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was dumb. 16 And behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. 17 How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me." 18 Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. 19 And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." And when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

- Daniel is unable to speak until the angel (or perhaps another angel) touches his lips.

- Daniel's response to the angel is similar to that of Isaiah in Isaiah 6:5 where after seeing the vision of God on his throne he was moved to say, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips."

- Daniel turns his face toward the ground and is unable to speak.

- Daniel's responses to the visions he receives are worth studying. Often he is overcome and unable to speak for a time. Indeed, he sometimes loses consciousness for a moment and must be revived.

- I think that we have sometimes been guilty of emphasizing that Jesus is our friend (which is certainly true) at the expense of also emphasizing that Jesus is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe who upholds the universe by the power of his word and possesses all authority in Heaven and on Earth.

- Listen further to what Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6:

Isaiah 6:1-4 In the year that King Uzzi'ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

- Our attitude toward sin is directly related to our attitude toward God. If we have become lax about sin, then

perhaps it is because we have tried to lower God down to our level instead of seeing him sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.

- John Calvin said:

Hence that dread and amazement with which, as Scripture uniformly relates, holy men were struck and overwhelmed whenever they beheld the presence of God. ... Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.

- And we might add that men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their sinfulness until they have contrasted themselves with the holiness of God.
- The first step in saving someone is too convince him that he is lost. We cannot proclaim the good news until we have first proclaimed the bad news.
- Holy, Holy, Holy. That is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times for emphasis. You never read that God is love, love, love or merciful, merciful, merciful. But you do read that he is holy, holy, holy – and when we really understand that, we will see ourselves and our sin in a whole new light, just like Isaiah did. We are guilty, guilty, guilty.
- Voltaire said that “God made man in His image, and man returned the favor.” Instead of coming up with new gods, I fear we have often been guilty of trying to refashion the one we have. And the result? One author has said that we are like Lancelot in search of the Holy Grail who finds

himself at the end of his quest at a Tupperware party. We have tried to trivialize God.

- Our so-called Christian society has tried to reduce God to some catchy phrase or fish symbol we stick on our bumpers. Some even parade around in so-called “Christian T-shirts” with slogans such as “This Blood’s For You,” which brings Christ’s atoning sacrifice down to the level of a beer commercial.
- When Isaiah saw God on his throne and when Daniel met a messenger of God they were not driven to put a new slogan on their clothing or a catchy phrase on their chariot. They were driven to their knees when they realized their own sinfulness in the presence of the holiness of God.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

- Daniel is strengthened by the angel, and for good reason. There is bad news ahead! His people are going to undergo serious trials.

20 Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I am through with him, lo, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

- The angel had already answered the question in verse 20. In verse 14, the angel told Daniel that he had come to help Daniel understand what would happen to the Jews at the end of days. The question here in verse 20 is merely rhetorical.
- Although we have a picture of spiritual warfare involving the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece, it is important to note that the outcome of the battle was never in doubt. God had already told us how the battle was going to end!
  - Persia was a part of God's plan, yet Persia was supported by demonic powers. The faithless Jews that rejected Christ were also critical to God's plan yet were also acting on the side of Satan. Is this a contradiction?
  - No. Paul dealt with this problem in Romans 9–11. The Jews' rejection of Christ allowed God to bless the whole world. Thus, how could God hold them responsible for rejecting Christ? Paul answer was that just because God is able to use evil people to further his own aims does not mean that those evil people are no longer responsible for their actions. What evil man could possibly say to God, "You are not allowed to use my evil to accomplish something good unless you give me credit!" The idea, as Paul points out, is ludicrous.
- Daniel was very important to God. Indeed, God's dealings with the powers of the world were put on hold for a moment so that this angel could answer Daniel's prayer.
- The vision in Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 is found in the book of truth.

- This book conveys the idea of God's control and knowledge of past, present, and future. The future that God is about to tell Daniel is so certain that it is already written down. It is as if it has already happened.

Psalm 139:16 Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Isaiah 44:7 Who is like me? Let him proclaim it, let him declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be.

- This angel and Michael appear to be outnumbered. They are contending by themselves against the demonic powers of Persia. But, of course, no one is outnumbered when God is on his side.

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?

## CHAPTER 11

- God does not view history as we do. What we see as important, God sometimes just skips over. He includes what he views as important and omits the rest. We should strive to see history as God sees it and not strive to force our view of what is important on God.
- The focus of this vision is the history of the Jews in the latter days, where the latter days refers to the end of the Jewish age which occurred in the first century.
- The focus is not the end of the world and the focus is not the many other nations that are mentioned. These other nations are only important with regard to how they are involved with the Jews.

- Finally, as we will see, the prophecies in this chapter are some of the most detailed found anywhere in the Bible. Further, they were given to Daniel hundreds of years before they came to pass. (The extreme level of detail is what has caused the liberals to conclude that it must have been written after the fact.)
- Such extreme precision raises many philosophical questions about the foreknowledge of God and the free will of man. We will not consider these questions now, but anyone who does should definitely take a long look at Daniel 11. Very few sections of scripture give us a better demonstration of God's knowledge and control of the future.

1 And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

- This verse really belongs at the end of Chapter 10. The angel, still speaking, tells Daniel that he stood up and helped Michael in his struggle with Persia.
  - As we have already mentioned, Satan was actively seeking to destroy the Jews so that God's plan could not proceed.
  - About 50 years after this vision, during the reign of Xerxes, Haman received consent to kill all of the Jews. As we recall, his plans were thwarted by Queen Esther.
  - Much later, Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to exterminate the Jewish culture and religion. We recall the outcome of that attempt.
- In each case, we can only speculate about the spiritual battles that were occurring.

2 "And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia; and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them; and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.

- The three kings that followed Cyrus were Cambyses (Cyrus' elder son), Gaumata (the impostor who passed himself off as Cyrus' younger son Smerdis), and Darius the Persian (son of Hystaspes and cousin of Cyrus who killed the impostor and took the throne).
- The fourth king after Cyrus was Xerxes (Darius' son) who reigned from 485 to 464. This king is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. Esther 1:4 talks about the "riches of his glorious kingdom."
- Xerxes invaded Greece with a huge army and was very successful until his navy was defeated by a united Greek fleet at the Battle of Salamis in 480. He retreated to Asia and his forces that remained in Greece were completely defeated the next year at the Battle of Plataea.

3 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will.

- In moving from verse 2 to verse 3, we skip over 6 Persian kings and 134 years. Note that this skip occurred without any warning. We will need to be very alert so that we will notice such jumps should they occur again. Notice also that the country of interest has changed from Persia to Greece.

- The mighty king is Alexander the Great who defeated the Persians in 331. He died in 323 at the age of 33. The Hebrew for "shall arise" is literally "shall stand up," which emphasizes how brief his reign was.

4 And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

- Alexander's kingdom did not go to his posterity, which included his Persian princess wife Roxana and their son, Alexander IV (who was murdered in 310). Alexander IV's illegitimate brother had already been killed in 317. Thus, there were no blood descendants of Alexander, as the book of Daniel predicted.
- Instead, it was divided into four pieces among Lysimachus, Antipater (and his son Cassander), Seleucus I Nicator, and Ptolemy I Soter.

5 "Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and his dominion shall be a great dominion.

- The king of the South is Ptolemy I Soter whose ambitions extended far beyond Egypt to include Palestine and the rest of Asia. For most of their history, however, the domain of the Ptolemies was restricted to Egypt and Cyprus.
- The prince who would be stronger than the king was Seleucus Nicator of the Seleucid Empire, who defected to Ptolemy after the Battle of Antigonus. He later returned to Babylon and became king under

Ptolemy's sponsorship. His empire and authority stretched from India to Phoenicia, and thus was much greater than that of Ptolemy.

6 After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make peace; but she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his offspring shall not endure; but she shall be given up, and her attendants, her child, and he who got possession of her.

- After the death of Ptolemy I in 285, his son Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) continued the contest with the Seleucids until 252 when a peace treaty was made with Antiochus II Theos. Under this treaty, Antiochus II was to marry Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II.
- One slight problem with the plan was that Antiochus II was already married to a very influential woman named Laodice. She was divorced and banished. She arranged the assassination of the king, Berenice, and their infant son. Afterward, she took control as queen regent for her young son, Seleucus II (Callinicus).

7 "In those times a branch from her roots shall arise in his place; he shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. 8 He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their molten images and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north.

- Ptolemy II died soon after his daughter Berenice was murdered. His son, Ptolemy III (Euergetes) came to power and marched off to avenge his sister's death.

He is the “branch from her [Berenice’s] roots” in verse 7.

- The king of the north is Seleucus II Callinicus, the son of Laodice. Ptolemy captured the capital city of Antioch and returned to Egypt laden with spoil. This spoil included long-lost idols that had been taken by Cambyses in 524 BC. Their return made Ptolemy III very popular with the native Egyptian populace, who named him Euergetes which means benefactor.
- Ptolemy III made a peace treaty with Seleucus II in 240 BC.

9 Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return into his own land.

- The “latter” is Seleucus II and the “king of the south” is Ptolemy III. While there is no record that Seleucus II ever invaded Egypt, he did invade the territory of the Ptolemies in the 230s when he regained control of northern Syria and Phoenicia.

10 “His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. 11 Then the king of the south, moved with anger, shall come out and fight with the king of the north; and he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. 12 And when the multitude is taken, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail.

- Seleucus II Callinicus died in 226 and was succeeded by his son Seleucus III Soter, who reigned for only three years and was succeeded by his brother Antiochus III (the Great).

- The king of the south in verse 11 is Ptolemy IV Philopater and the king of the north is Antiochus III. Ptolemy IV defeated the much larger army of Antiochus III at the Battle of Raphia in 217.
- Ptolemy IV got back all of the territory of Phoenicia and Palestine, but his success did not last very long. After he died, his four year old son Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) came to power and Antiochus saw his chance to invade Egypt.
  - The Rosetta Stone, which finally allowed modern scholars to understand Egyptian hieroglyphics, was found in 1799 built into an old wall that was being demolished by the French near a village they called Rosetta. Located now in the British Museum, it contains a decree given by Ptolemy V written in three languages: Greek, Egyptian Demotic, and Egyptian hieroglyphics.

13 For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the former; and after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies.

- In 202, Antiochus III (the king of the north) invaded Phoenicia and Palestine and marched all the way to Gaza, which fell in 201.

14 “In those times many shall rise against the king of the south; and the men of violence among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfil the vision; but they shall fail.

- The king of the south here is Ptolemy V. The “men of violence among your own people” are the pro-Seleucid Jews who

rebelled against the Ptolemies. The vision they were fulfilling by doing this was the very vision that Daniel was now receiving!

- But they failed. The Egyptians, led by General Scopas, punished the Jewish rebels severely until his defeat at the Battle of Panium in 200 BC. He then retreated to Sidon off the Phoenician coast.

15 Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks, and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his picked troops, for there shall be no strength to stand. 16 But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land, and all of it shall be in his power.

- The king of the north (Antiochus III) moved against Sidon, and Scopas finally surrendered. At this time, Palestine (the glorious land) became a permanent part of the Antioch government.
- Antiochus did not destroy Jerusalem, but only extracted reprisals from the pro-Egyptian leaders that he captured. When he entered Jerusalem in 198 he was welcomed as a deliverer and benefactor.

17 He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom; but it shall not stand or be to his advantage.

- Antiochus' plan at this point in the story was to place the 10 year old king Ptolemy V under the influence of his daughter Cleopatra I. [The Cleopatra from the movie was Cleopatra VII. We will meet her in verse 40.] He knew that their son would

be legal heir to both thrones, and would give him a good excuse to interfere in Egypt. The phrase "destroy the kingdom" in verse 17 is better translated "corrupt the kingdom."

- When the marriage finally did take place a few years later, Cleopatra became completely sympathetic to Ptolemy V and his kingdom, which greatly disappointed her father. Thus, their son, Ptolemy VI, gave no advantage to Antiochus III.
- When Ptolemy V died, Cleopatra I became queen of Egypt. Her death years later put an end to any possibility of Seleucid influence in Egyptian affairs.

18 Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many of them; but a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed he shall turn his insolence back upon him.

- Soon after his victory over Scopas at Sidon, Antiochus III moved against a new front, Pergamum and the Aegean coastline island of Rhodes. The Rhodians appealed to Rome for help.
- Meanwhile, Hannibal (who had been exiled by the Romans) joined forces with Antiochus III as a military advisor. The Romans were not happy that he had given asylum to their enemy.
- The Roman commander Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus III in 190 at Magnesium. (This same general had defeated Hannibal in 202.)
- Antiochus was humiliated by the Romans. He lost most of his land and his army. His son Antiochus IV Epiphanes was taken back to Rome as a hostage.

19 Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

- Antiochus III died the next year while pillaging a temple of Bel in Elymais in an attempt to raise money to pay the Romans. The local inhabitants stormed his forces and managed to kill him and defend their temple.

20 "Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute through the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle.

- Antiochus III was succeeded by his oldest son, Seleucus IV (Philopator). The exactor of tribute that he sent out was Heliodorus.
- Heliodorus was sent to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which a Jewish spy had said contained enough treasure to meet all of the Roman demands. Heliodorus decided not to rob the temple, but instead went back and eventually poisoned the king, who thus did not die due to battle or mob action as his father had.

21 In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given; he shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

- Verses 21–35 are devoted to the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who we first met in Chapter 8. As we recall, he did his best to completely wipe out the Jewish religion and culture by persecuting the Jews and introducing Greek culture.

- He is the "contemptible person" in verse 21 to whom "royal majesty has not been given." In fact, Demetrius I Soter, the son of Seleucus IV, was next in line for the crown. He, however, was being held hostage in Rome, so the crown went to his uncle, Antiochus IV Epiphanes instead. (Antiochus was later able to set aside Demetrius' claims to the throne, but Demetrius later led a Roman army against Antiochus' son, Antiochus V Eupator.)
- "Epiphanes" mean illustrious, very evident, or manifest. On coins, he linked the name with "theos," thus taking the title "God Manifest." Many of his enemies referred to him instead as "Epinanes" which means "madman."

22 Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, and the prince of the covenant also. 23 And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully; and he shall become strong with a small people. 24 Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province; and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time.

- Verses 22–24 bring us back to the continuing struggle between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. It was Epiphanes' policy to first offer friendship and then wait for an opportunity to launch a surprise attack.
- Ptolemy VI launched an invasion against Antiochus, which at first was successful but eventually led to his capture. The Egyptians gave up on him and placed his brother Ptolemy Physcon on the throne. Antiochus placed Ptolemy back on the throne by force, this time as his ally backed up by a treaty of friendship and alliance.

- Ptolemy Physcon is also known as Ptolemy VIII or Euergetes II. His nickname Physcon means 'fat paunch.' I am not sure which is worse: being deposed from the throne of Egypt by your brother or going through history with the nickname 'fat paunch.' Both of these things happened to Ptolemy VIII.
- Eventually, Ptolemy VI made an alliance with his banished brother Physcon to get rid of Antiochus. Antiochus then marched against Egypt, but this time Rome intervened and told him to leave Egypt or face war with Rome. Popilius drew a circle around him in the sand and told him to make up his mind before he left it. He left in humiliation.
- The "prince of the covenant" in verse 22 is probably Onias III, the high priest. Antiochus had him replaced by his brother, Joshua (who went by his Greek name Jason), in exchange for a large bribe. Jason was later replaced by Menelaus who offered a larger bribe. Menelaus had Onias III, the legitimate high priest, killed.
- The "small people" in verse 23 refer to the small invasion force Antiochus used in his initial invasion of Egypt. The "richest parts of the province" refers not only to Egypt but also to the eastern provinces he invaded.

25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. 26 Even those who eat his rich food shall be his undoing; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.

- Verse 25 describes the attack by Antiochus against Ptolemy Physcon (the king of the south in verse 25) in the attempt to put Ptolemy VI back on the throne. Those Egyptians still loyal to Ptolemy VI plotted against Physcon.

27 And as for the two kings, their minds shall be bent on mischief; they shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail; for the end is yet to be at the time appointed.

- The two kings, after the defeat of Ptolemy Physcon, were Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI. As this verse suggests, they sat down and made a treaty after the defeat of Physcon, but already they were plotting against each other.

28 And he shall return to his land with great substance, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will, and return to his own land.

- Antiochus returned to his capital city of Antioch with a great deal of plundered wealth from Egypt. It is at this point that he set his mind against the "holy covenant"; that is, he began to persecute the Jews.
- The deposed illegitimate high priest Jason had heard a rumor that Antiochus had died in Egypt. He thus took the city of Jerusalem and locked up the other illegitimate high priest Menelaus. Antiochus decided to get rid of the Jewish religion altogether. He took the city back, released Menelaus, killed 80,000 people, and robbed and desecrated the temple. (This occurred in 168 BC.)

29 "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south; but it shall not be this time as it was before. 30 For ships

of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and give heed to those who forsake the holy covenant.

- These verses predict Antiochus' humiliation by Rome and his subsequent return to desecrate the temple in Jerusalem. Those "who forsake the holy covenant" in verse 30 are the allies of Menelaus who did not protest as Antiochus pillaged the temple.
- The ships of Kittim are Roman ships. Kittim refers to Cyprus, which was under Roman dominion.

31 Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

- This verse gives more details about the desecration of the temple that occurred in December 168 BC.
- The "abomination that makes desolate" may refer to a statue of Jupiter that was set up in the inner sanctuary. In fact, the temple was renamed the temple of Zeus Olympius. It may also refer to the desecration of the altar that occurred when a pig was sacrificed and the temple was sprinkled with pig broth.
- In Matthew 24:15, Jesus speaks of the abomination of desolation that Daniel the prophet spoke of. However, Jesus made it very clear that the event he was referring to had not yet occurred, but would occur soon. (See Matthew 24:34.) Thus, Matthew 24:15 cannot be referring to Daniel 11:31 since the event predicted by Daniel 11:31 came to pass before the birth of

Christ. What was Jesus referring to then? Stay tuned...

32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant; but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

- Antiochus was a master at winning over people with flattery and empty promises. He convinced many of the influential Jews to adopt his pro-Hellenic policies. These are the ones who "violate the covenant"; that is, they violated their covenant with God by compromising with the world.
- One commentator notes:

In some ways this defection of the would-be "progressives" among the Jews themselves was an even more serious threat to the survival of Israel as a nation than the tyrannical measures of Antiochus. For it was the same kind of large-scale betrayal of their covenant obligations toward the Lord that had made inevitable the former destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity in the days of Jeremiah.

- Those who "stand firm and take action" are the Maccabees who stood up to Antiochus and started the revolt that eventually led to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian captivity.
- Again, one commentator notes:

Their uncompromising commitment to faithful adherence to the Mosaic covenant and law resulted in the spiritual survival of the nation till the first coming of the Lord Jesus.

33 And those among the people who are wise shall make many understand, though they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days.

- The Maccabean leaders went throughout the countryside and preached a message of repentance and a return to the law of Moses. These are the “wise” that “make many understand.”
- The patriots, however, suffered great hardship. Many lost their lives as Antiochus pursued them and burned their fields and cities.

34 When they fall, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery;

- Many of the initial leaders, including Mattathias himself, died early during the struggle. Those who were left received a “little help” from early supporters of their cause.
- When it began to look like they were going to win, many more joined their cause. Many of these latter converts were insincere and only switched over to save their own necks.

35 and some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and to cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed.

- Many of the Jewish patriots faced death early in the struggle rather than retreat to save their lives. This verse stresses the spiritual meaning of the struggle. Those who fell lost their lives but saved their souls. Then as today, those who seek to save their life will lose it.
- The context suggests that the time of the end in this verse is the end of the Jewish struggle with the Seleucids, which came in 142 when Judea became politically independent 25 years after the start of the

rebellion. The Seleucids lasted a little longer but their power had been permanently broken. Again, we discover here that their end was a part of God’s plan for the Jews.

36 “And the king shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is determined shall be done.

- Who is the king mentioned in verse 36? Verses 28–35 have been discussing the “king of the north” so it would seem that verse 36 is also discussing the “king of the north.” But who is this king of the north? (We have seen four different kings of the north so far.)
- (1) Some say that the king of the north is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who we have been reading about since verse 21. Although a cursory reading seems to make this choice the most likely, a more in-depth study leaves no doubt that verse 36 is no longer talking about Antiochus IV.
  - Antiochus IV never fought a war against Egypt after 168 BC. Thus, verses 40–43 cannot apply to him.
  - Antiochus IV never conquered Libya and Ethiopia as verse 43 suggests the king in verse 36 did.
  - Antiochus IV never had all the riches mentioned in verse 43. In fact, he robbed temples in his spare time to pay the Roman taxes.
- (2) The premillennialists says that the king in verse 36 is the antichrist, who will show up just before Christ shows up to reign on earth for 1000 years.

- As we have said, this view cannot possibly be correct since the vision is explicitly said to deal with the history of the Jews in the latter days, where we know from Acts 2 that the latter days occurred in the first century.
  - As we will see, this vision ends in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans. Contextually there is no valid reason to insert a gap of at least several thousand years into this vision as the premillennialists try to do.
  - In short, this view has all of the problems associated with premillennialism, which as we have seen are legion.
  - (3) Who then is this king? Well, let's look at the problem in reverse. We have said that this vision deals with Jewish history up to AD 70. Further, we have seen the Persians and the Greeks so far. Who haven't we seen? Rome!
  - How could we possibly have a history of the Jews in the latter days that did not mention Rome? Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. Rome fits in perfectly with the declared scope of this vision.
  - Also, as we will see, the description in verses 36–45 fits very well with what we know about Rome and the Roman rulers. (This will be made clear as we continue through the text.)
  - Which Roman king does verse 36 refer to? My own view is that the description in verses 36–40 does not refer to any single Roman ruler, but instead is a composite description of many Roman rulers, and in fact is a description of Rome itself.
- I think verse 36 summarizes the Roman mindset from its emergence as a world power until its fall. This king does whatever he wants, he magnifies himself above every god, and sets himself against the true God. As we know, this fits very well with what we might call the "typical" Roman emperor.
  - Consider the following passage from 2 Thessalonians in which I think Paul is discussing the Roman emperor Domitian:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.
  - And what is the indignation? I think it is the final outpouring of God's wrath on Rome. Although this occurred long after AD 70, it is mentioned in this vision as a side comment. In fact, each time Rome is referred to, we are given a side comment to the effect that "they are getting it too one of these days!"
  - I think we see the same thing in Luke 21:24. There, Jesus is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Rome, and he makes the following comment:

Luke 21:24 they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
  - In Luke, Jesus says "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Here in Daniel 11:36, the angel says "he shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished." I think that both of these verses are saying that "Yes, Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans, but the Romans are going to be destroyed as well."

- This is just a side comment, however. The fall of Rome is not part of the vision. Indeed, the vision ends at a time when Rome is still very much in power.
- One objection to the identification of this king in verse 36 with Rome is that it causes a very abrupt change from verse 35. But we saw another abrupt change back in verse 3 when we switched from Persia to Greece. Back in Chapter 5, the narrative jumped from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the very end of the Babylonian empire. Abrupt changes are not uncommon at all in Daniel. Indeed, they seem to be the rule rather than the exception.

37 He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

- Here we see even further the arrogance of Rome and of the Roman rulers. As the Roman emperors began to deify themselves, all other 'gods' were pushed aside. The Roman rulers magnified themselves above all else.
- The phrase "one beloved by women" is difficult to interpret. It may simply be the counterpart to the gods of their fathers; that is, they would pay no heed to the gods of their fathers or of their mothers. Or, perhaps there is a particular god the angel has in mind; one that was worshipped primarily by women.

- A literal translation of the passage points to another possibility. Literally, the phrase is "the love of women"; that is, these rulers would pay no heed to the love of women. As we know, homosexuality was rampant in Rome, and it is possible that this verse is referring to the moral collapse of Rome, which we know from secular historians contributed to Rome's fall.

38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.

- Rome only had one real god throughout its history. Rome worshipped power. Rome worshipped war. Rome's god was the "god of fortresses."
- Rome did not care what type of religion you practiced just so long as you recognized their ultimate authority and you paid your taxes. Rome was not religiously zealous in the sense that they sought to convert those they conquered for religious reasons. Everything Rome did was for pragmatic reasons. They worshipped at the altar of perpetual power, and all of their resources were devoted to that god.

39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god; those who acknowledge him he shall magnify with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

- Rome used other nations and their "foreign gods" to accomplish its goals. In fact, Rome used anything and everything necessary to accomplish its goals.

- This verse suggests that Rome would magnify with honor those who helped it and would divide the land for a price. Did Rome do this? Yes. Rome set up a system of client kingdoms around its border. Consider the following description found in the History of Rome by Michael Grant:

The client kings were tied to the service of Rome in order to defend its frontiers and serve as listening posts to the outside world. In return, they were supported by the Romans against internal subversive movements and allowed a free hand inside their own countries. Thus Rome was spared the trouble and expense of administering these territories; and the formula worked well.

- In Chapter 2, Rome was pictured as being composed of iron mixed with clay. That is Rome was both strong and weak. The weakness came from these client kingdoms, which history tells us contributed to their downfall. This is also referred to in Revelation 17:12-17.

40 "At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him; but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.

- The time of the end, as it did earlier, points to the time appointed by God for the events in the vision to have all come to pass. All it means here is that we are nearing the end of the vision.
- The "king of the south" here is the Ptolemies of Egypt under Cleopatra VII aided by Marc Antony. Their push against Rome (the king of the north) led to Octavian's declaration of war against Egypt.

- Rome is pictured as rushing in like a whirlwind with ships and chariots. This began at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, which ended the Ptolemy kingdom, which itself was the last vestige of the Grecian kingdom. Egypt itself fell to Octavian in 30 BC. Cleopatra and Marc Antony committed suicide at Alexandria when the country fell to the Romans.
- Verse 40 very clearly indicates that the kingdom of the north under consideration here is Rome. Who else was attacked by Egypt during this time period? Who else so thoroughly conquered Egypt during this time period?

41 He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.

- The glorious land is Palestine, and of course as we know, Rome took control of the holy land in 63 BC when Pompey marched into Jerusalem.
- Herod's patron was Marc Antony. When Antony was defeated, Herod as you might suspect switched sides. Octavian realized the importance of Herod as a client king and thus confirmed his royal status.
- The 'tens of thousands' who fell are those who were on the losing end of Rome's continued expansion. As this verse points out, however, Rome had its share of failures.
- Aelius Gallus' expedition into Arabia for Augustus, for example, was not successful. Instead, he was betrayed by Obodas, chief minister of the king of the Nabatean Arabs, who forced Gallus to travel along a dangerous sea route by falsely

telling him that there was no safe land route. This failed Arabian campaign may be what the angel has in mind here in verse 41.

42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train.

- After the defeat of Cleopatra, Octavian confiscated the royal treasures of Egypt, just as verse 43 suggests. Michael Grant says that Octavian's "seizure of the Cleopatra's treasure made him wealthier than the Roman state itself."
- As for the Libyans and the Ethiopians, they were also part of the triumphal procession into the city of the Rome. (Antony and Cleopatra killed themselves to avoid appearing in just such a procession.)
  - Libya and Ethiopia, like Egypt, were conquered by Rome. Ethiopia fell in 22 BC. Libya had long been under Roman domination, but was claimed by Cleopatra when she marched against Rome. Rome, of course, retained control.

44 But tidings from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go forth with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many.

- Again, we are reminded that all was not well with Rome. Rome's biggest threats came from the east and the north, just as this verse suggests.

- The Germanic hordes and the Gauls were north of Rome and the Parthians were east of Rome.
- Parthia was an Iranian feudal empire beyond the Euphrates that had broken away from the Seleucids in the third century BC. In the first century BC, they were only the substantial foreign power confronting Rome anywhere in the world.
- Later in Rome's history, the threat shifted to the north. In fact, the city of Rome itself was sacked in AD 410 by Alaric, a (Germanic) Visigoth from the north. That event marked the first time in 800 years that the city had been taken by a foreign invader.

45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

- This verse shows that Rome would be firmly in control of Palestine, as in fact it was. The "sea" in Hebrew is plural and refers most probably to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean.
- Again, we are given a side comment to the effect that Rome is not going to be around forever. The fall of Rome is not a part of this vision because it takes place far outside the clearly stated time frame and it has nothing at all to do with the Jews. Even so, the angel makes it clear to Daniel that Rome would not be around forever. They also would come to an end as a part of God's plan.
- Notice the time frame of this verse. Rome is in control of Palestine and Egypt has been defeated. What happens next? Jesus is born! The very next verse begins with

the phrase “at that time.” Which time? During the time of Roman rule. This time frame will be crucial to understanding Chapter 12. (It will also help us avoid a very common pitfall in Chapter 12.)

## CHAPTER 12

1 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. 4 But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

- The most important words in understanding this section of the vision are the first three in verse 1: “At that time.” They provide the time frame for this part of the vision, which of course is crucial to understanding the vision.
- What is the time frame? The items mentioned here in Chapter 12 will occur at the time when Chapter 11 came to an end. What was happening when Chapter 11 came to an end? Rome had just established its authority in Palestine. The angel is telling Daniel (very plainly) that this part of the vision applies to the time when Rome would be in charge of the Holy Land.
- But, we do not have to rely on this clue alone to determine the time when this

prophecy would occur. We can also look at what the angel said would happen, and then look elsewhere in the Scripture to see when it happened. Let’s consider these other clues:

- (1) At this time, the angel Michael would arise. Here he is called the “great prince who has charge of your people.” In Daniel 10:21, he is called “your prince.” Just like Persia had a prince in Chapter 10, the Jews also had a prince; Michael. The fact that Michael is involved here indicates that this vision involves the Jews.
- This also fits in well with what we were told at the beginning of this vision. Daniel 10:14 told us that this vision would tell us about the Jews in the latter days. (Recall that Acts 2 tells us that the latter days spoken of by the prophets occurred in the first century.)
- (2) At this time there would be “a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.” As we have already discussed, this was a common way of describing a very terrible calamity. Did such a calamity befall the Jews at this time? Yes. Read the description of Jerusalem’s destruction found in Matthew 24:21.

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

- You might also compare Josephus’ description of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

It is impossible to give every instance of the iniquity of these men [the Romans]. I

shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly: that never did any other city suffer such miseries.

- (3) Verse 1 tells us that at that time all of the faithful Jews (i.e. those of Daniel's people whose names are in the book) will be delivered. Did that happen in the first century? Absolutely.

Jeremiah 33:14-16 Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

Luke 1:68-70 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

- Verses 2-3 talk about a resurrection. Is this the final resurrection at the end of the world? Well, despite countless sermons to the contrary, I do not think that this is the final resurrection.
- If this is the final resurrection, then we must conclude that the vision includes the end of the world, and hence we must conclude that the Jews have a special role to play in the end of the world. This is clearly in conflict with other scriptures that tell us there is no distinction between Jew and Greek in the church.
- Which resurrection does it apply to then? It is the resurrection of the Jewish nation. It is the time when a Jew-

ish Messiah would come to bring blessings to the entire world. The Jewish nation would be resurrected under Christ.

- What happened to the Jews at this time?
  - Those Jews who followed Christ were saved. Here they are pictured as awakening to everlasting life. This is the resurrection of the faithful Jewish remnant who were taken from foreign domination and ushered into the kingdom of God under the rule of their Messiah.
  - Those Jews who rejected Christ were lost. Here they are pictured as awakening to shame and everlasting contempt.
  - Is this resurrection spoken of elsewhere in the Bible? You bet!

Ezekiel 37:12-13 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.

John 5:25 Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Ephesians 5:14 Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

Luke 2:34 and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel..."

- A very puzzling event to many has been the actual resurrection of some that occurred at the death of Christ. Recall:

Matthew 27:52-53 the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

- I think that this actual resurrection of faithful Jews in Jerusalem was a sign that all of the faithful Jews still living would be resurrected as well at this time. That is, this physical resurrection reminded the people of the spiritual resurrection that occurred at this time.
- Many use this passage to apply to the end of the world. I think they are taking it out of context. (How many times have you heard both Daniel 12:2 and Daniel 11 discussed in the same sermon?) If you want to apply Daniel 12:2 to the end of the world then you should be aware of the logical consequence that the Jews must then have a future role to play in God's plan.
- Finally, Daniel is again told to seal up the vision, which means that it pertains to a future time and a future people. (Recall that John was told just the opposite in the book of Revelation!)

5 Then I Daniel looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. 6 And I said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end

of these wonders?" 7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven; and I heard him swear by him who lives for ever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished.

- Daniel asked how long it would be until the end of the events in the vision. He is told that it would be "a time, two times, and half a time" and that everything in the vision would be accomplished when "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end."
- First, nowhere is there a clearer statement than here that the vision ends in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. That was the shattering of the power of the holy people. This vision ends with the Romans and the Romans are the ones who shattered the power of the holy people. (If we take Daniel 12:2 to apply to a still future event then we must conclude that this shattering is still future as well.)
- The "time, two times, and half a time" is a broken 7, and we have seen this symbol before. The angel is telling Daniel that while the Jews will be oppressed, it will not be a permanent oppression. The power of Rome would end one day, and the faithful remnant of true Jews would be victorious in Christ.
- God's promises to the Jews have always been conditioned on their faithfulness to him. The true Jew was always the faithful Jew. The prophets said this. Jesus said this. Paul said this.

- The faithful Jews were saved at the time of Christ. (Jeremiah 33:14–16 and Romans 11:26.) The faithless Jews were completely cut off during the time of Christ. (Matthew 21:43 and Acts 3:22–23.)

8 I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the issue of these things?" 9 He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand. 11 And from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he who waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. 13 But go your way till the end; and you shall rest, and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days."

- As you might suspect, Daniel is confused. This story does not seem to have a happy ending. How can God's plan for the Jews end with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple? Daniel asks the angel for an explanation of this seeming discrepancy.
- Now, here is an important point. At this point, Daniel does not understand the point of the vision. Yet, in Daniel 10:1, Daniel said that he did understand the vision. Thus, the explanation from the angel that we are about to read gave Daniel the extra information he needed to understand the point of the vision.
- First, the angel reminds Daniel that the end of the vision would not occur for some time. He would not be personally af-

ected by these events. Many good things and many bad things would happen before it came to pass.

- Those who were wicked would not understand; that is, they would not know that they were playing a part in the plan of God. Those who were wise, however, would know that they were playing a part in the plan of God. Indeed, they would know that the events that were occurring had been spoken of here in Daniel 11 and 12.
- In verse 10, the angel is assuring Daniel that God will bless those who are good and the wicked will perish. This is just what Daniel needed to hear since this vision ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. That is, it appeared that at the end of this vision the wicked were blessed and the good perished. The angel assures Daniel that just the opposite is true.
- The angel then says that from the time that the burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1290 days. Further, those who wait for 1335 days will be blessed.
- Note that the 1290 days occur after both the removal of the burnt offering and the abomination that makes desolate. In particular, the 1290 days do not separate these two events.
- Are this removal of the daily sacrifice and this abomination of desolation the same ones that we read about in Daniel 11:31? They cannot be. Jesus pointed to a prophecy of Daniel in Matthew 24:15 regarding the abomination of desolation and said that it

had not happened yet, but that it would happen in the first century (Matthew 24:34). The abomination of desolation in Daniel 11:31 happened nearly 200 years before the birth of Christ. Since Daniel only mentions the abomination twice, Jesus must be referring to the one mentioned here.

- We have another clue that this is the fact. Look at Matthew 24:15.

Matthew 24:15 So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).

- Do you see the phrase “let the reader understand”? Why did Jesus say that? He wanted us to know that he was pointing back to Daniel 12:11 because almost the same phrase is found in Daniel 12:10 where we read “those who are wise shall understand.” (A similar phrase is found in Daniel 11:33 but there it refers to the Maccabeans.)
- Which abomination is this then? It is the desecration of the temple by the Romans in AD 70. The vision ends with the Romans. Jesus was talking about the Romans in Matthew 24. In Matthew 24:15,34 Jesus said that the abomination he spoke of would occur in the first century. The desecration by Antiochus IV occurred long before the birth of Christ.
- What about the 1290 days and the 1335 days? What do they denote?
  - What would we expect then to denote? Daniel doesn’t understand how God’s plan for the Jews could end with the destruction of the Jews. After he hears this, though, he understands

God’s plan. What must God have told him?

- God must have told him that God’s plan for the Jews did not end with the destruction of the their city and their temple. He may also have told him that those who destroyed the city and the temple would themselves be destroyed, and thus would not ultimately be victorious.
- How do these symbols denote that?
  - Revelation 13:5 uses 1260 days to describe the temporary power of Rome. Since 1260 days is 42 months (30 days each), we have 3.5 years. Thus, 1260 days points to a broken 7.
  - But here we have 1290 days. Why the extra month? I think that God is telling Daniel that while the Roman persecution will be temporary, it will be longer and worse than other persecutions. It will be a broken 7 plus a little bit more.
  - What about the extra 45 days between the 1290 days and the 1335 days? What would we expect it to denote? The context suggests that it denotes the time after Rome during which God’s followers must continue to persevere.
  - Why would 45 denote that? No one knows for sure, but we can speculate. The number 5 is said by some to symbolize the grace of God. (The number 5 and multiples of 5 occur all throughout the tabernacle.) The number 9 is said by some to denote finality

and judgment. (The 9 judgments of Haggai 1:11, for example.) [See the book You Can Count On It by Eli Borden.]

- Thus, 45 being  $5 \times 9$  may denote the grace of God leading to the final judgment of the world. This is just speculation, however. It is possible that the number 45 had some significance that has been lost to us but was quickly understood by Daniel. (While we cannot be certain of the meaning of this number, we can be certain of the meaning of the message that Daniel received.)
- One other possibility is that the 45 days (month and a half) is simply God's way of telling Daniel that after Rome, God's people will need to persevere a little longer. This would fit in well with our explanation of the extra 30 days in the 1290 days.
- Finally, Daniel is assured that while he will not live to see these events ("and you shall rest"), he will be present at "the end of the days."
- And the "end of the days"? What does that refer to? I think that we have at last come to the end of the world! The vision is over. The Romans are gone. God's grace has been extended to the final judgment. Daniel is again present and standing in his allotted place. This is the final judgment of the world. (Recall that the vision dealing with the end of the Jewish age ended in verse 4 of this chapter. Thus, it does not violate the time frame of that vision to say that Daniel is now hearing about the end of the world.)

- Thus, while Daniel 12:2 does not refer to the final resurrection, I think that Daniel 12:13 does. Daniel goes to his rest in verse 13, but then we see him standing again.
- Another possibility is that the end of the days is the fall of Jerusalem and that Daniel stands up and figuratively takes his place when the events in his book come to pass. This view is not as appealing since verse 12 seems to take us past the end of Rome.
- The book ends with a complete confirmation of one of the book's principle themes: the absolute and total sovereignty of God. God is in control of this world and this universe and he has a plan to bless the entire world through his son Jesus Christ. This book has given us a glimpse of just what was involved in bringing that plan about.

1 Peter 1:18-21 You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. 21 Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

- We are looking back over 2500 years of history, and during that time we have seen virtually everything in this book come to pass. But there is one thing that we have not yet seen. We like Daniel are waiting for that day when we will stand up and take our allotted place among the people of God.

## *When Was Daniel Written?*

	Early-Date View	Late-Date View
The Four Kingdoms in Daniel 2 & 7	Babylon Medo-Persia Greece Rome	Babylon Media Persia Greece
Proponents' Claims and Arguments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jesus holds this view.</li> <li>2. Daniel is accurate in his description of sixth century Babylon.</li> <li>3. Daniel is accurate regarding Nebuchadnezzar's lowly origin.</li> <li>4. Daniel clearly did <i>not</i> consider the Medes and the Persians to be separate empires.</li> <li>5. Daniel predicted that the Messiah and his kingdom would arrive during the fourth kingdom.</li> <li>6. In Matthew 24, Jesus said that portions of Daniel had not yet been fulfilled but would be fulfilled during the lifetime of his listeners.</li> <li>7. The Dead Sea Scrolls support this view.</li> <li>8. The book of Ezekiel supports this view.</li> <li>9. The first book of Maccabees supports this view.</li> <li>10. Josephus supports this view.</li> <li>11. The use by Daniel of a two-horned ram to symbolize Medo-Persia supports this view.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is claimed that Daniel's position in the Jewish scriptures supports this view.</li> <li>2. It is claimed that the failure of Jesus ben Sirach to mention Daniel supports this view.</li> <li>3. It is claimed that Daniel is mistaken regarding the date of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem.</li> <li>4. It is claimed that Daniel's usage of the term 'Chaldeans' supports this view.</li> <li>5. It is claimed that Daniel mistakenly says that Belshazzar was king and was the son of Nebuchadnezzar.</li> <li>6. It is claimed that Darius the Mede never existed.</li> <li>7. It is claimed that certain events in the book are improbable and absurd.</li> <li>8. It is claimed that Daniel violates the supposed nature of Biblical prophecy.</li> <li>9. It is claimed that the type of Aramaic used in Daniel supports this view.</li> <li>10. It is claimed that the type of Hebrew used in Daniel supports this view.</li> <li>11. It is claimed that the use of Persian words in Daniel supports this view.</li> <li>12. It is claimed that the use of Greek words in Daniel supports this view.</li> </ol>

# Daniel 11 with Annotations

And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. 2 "And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia; and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them; and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will. 4 And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these. 5 "Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and his dominion shall be a great dominion. 6 After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make peace; but she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his offspring shall not endure; but she shall be given up, and her attendants, her child, and he who got possession of her. 7 "In those times a branch from her roots shall arise in his place; he shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. 8 He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their molten images and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. 9 Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return into his own land. 10 "His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. 11 Then the king of the south moved with anger, shall come out and fight with the king of the north and he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. 12 And when the multitude is taken, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. 13 For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the former; and after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies. 14 "In those times many shall rise against the king of the south; and the men of violence among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfil the vision; but they shall fail. 15 Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks, and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his picked troops, for there shall be no strength to stand. 16 But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land and all of it shall be in his power. 17 He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom; but it shall not stand or be to his advantage. 18 Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall take many of them; but a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed he shall turn his insolence back upon him. 19 Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found. 20 "Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute through the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle. 21 In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given; he shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22 Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, and the prince of the covenant also. 23 And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully; and he shall become strong

Cambyses  
Gaumata  
Darius I Hystaspis  
Xerxes  
Alexander the Great  
Roxana and Alexander IV  
Ptolemy VI Philometor  
Antiochus IV  
Lysimachus  
Antipater & Cassander  
Seleucus I Nicator  
Ptolemy I Soter  
Ptolemy I Soter  
Seleucus I Nicator  
Berenice  
Ptolemy II  
Antiochus II Theos (divorced Laodice)  
Ptolemy III Euergetes  
Seleucus II Callinicus  
Ptolemy III Euergetes  
Seleucus III Soter  
Antiochus III (the Great)  
Ptolemy IV Philopater  
Antiochus III  
Ptolemy V  
Jewish allies of Antiochus III  
Antiochus III  
Sidon  
literally "the love of women"  
Rome worshipped power  
Egypt under General Scopas  
Palestine  
client kings of Rome  
Antiochus III  
Ptolemy V  
Cleopatra I  
Rhodes, etc.  
Scipio  
Seleucus IV Philopater  
Heliodorus  
Antiochus IV Epiphanes  
the expected heir was Demetrius I Soter  
Onias III  
literally seas; i.e. Dead Sea and Mediterranean

with a small people. 24 Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province; and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. 25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. 26 Even those who eat his rich food shall be his undoing; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. 27 And as for the two kings, their minds shall be bent on mischief; they shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail; for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. 28 And he shall return to his land with great substance, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will, and return to his own land. 29 "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south but it shall not be this time as it was before. 30 For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and give heed to those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. 32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant; but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. 33 And those among the people who are wise shall make many understand, though they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days. 34 When they fall, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery; 35 and some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and to cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed. 36 And the king shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is determined shall be done. 37 He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god; those who acknowledge him he shall magnify with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price. 40 "At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him; but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. 41 He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train. 44 But tidings from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go forth with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many. 45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

triumphal procession into Rome

Parthians

Germanic hordes

literally seas; i.e. Dead Sea and Mediterranean

Jerusalem