

NOTES ON DANIEL

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INTRODUCTION

Daniel is an Unusual Book

On one hand, it contains accounts of 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.

The book also contains some of the most remarkable examples of predictive prophecy found anywhere in the Bible, which explains why it has been viscously attacked by liberal critics, perhaps more so than any other book in the Bible. One book that I have on that subject is aptly entitled *Daniel in the Critics' Den!*

Many commentators today tell us that the prophecies in Daniel are all about the end of the world — and perhaps we will find that some of them are. But many of those commentators go a step further and tell us that all the signs indicate that the end of the world is very near.

Walvoord writes:

The rapidly increasing tempo of change in modern life has given the entire world a sense of impending crisis. ... How long can world tensions be kept in check? ... As alarming as these events are, they really are not surprising in light of the Bible's end-time prophecies.

Let me read next from the introduction of another end-is-near book:

It is impossible for the most thoughtless to overlook the impressive and almost unprecedented character of the age in which we live. Events, as rapid in their succession as they are startling in their magnitude, ... chase each other like waves on the sea... .

And where did that second quote come from? From another modern end-is-near bestseller? No. It came from *The Great Tribulation, or Things Coming on the Earth* by

John Cumming, which was published in 1863 in New York at the height of the U.S. Civil War!

Ronald Reagan said, “I sometimes believe we’re heading very fast for Armageddon,” and he told People magazine in 1983 that:

Theologians have been studying the ancient prophecies—what would portend the coming of Armageddon—and have said that never, in the time between the prophecies up until now, has there ever been a time in which so many of the prophecies are coming together. There have been times in the past when people thought the end of the world was coming, but never anything like this.

President Reagan was right about most things, but he was not right about this. The end of the world will not be preceded by signs.

How do we know that? Many reasons, but, for starters, we are told repeatedly that the end will come like a thief in the night, and thieves don’t leave signs ahead of time.

We will need to proceed carefully as we study the prophecies in this book. And for those of you who were here for our study of Zechariah, you know what we will need to do first! Determine the context and the time frame!

Prophecies in the Bible almost always come with a time frame. Why is that important? Because absent a time frame it is not that difficult to predict things. You simply make a vague statement that could apply in many circumstances, and then you slide it up and down the timeline of history until you find a match. And if you can’t find a match, you just say it hasn’t happened yet! There is a very well-known example of such a prophet — Nostradamus, the 16th century French astrologer.

The Bible is not like that. When it tells us what will happen, it almost always tells us when it will happen. One exception, of course, is the end of the world — we know it will happen, but we don’t know when. But in almost all other cases, the Bible tells us both what and when. And if we don’t first ask when, we will have very little hope in successfully understanding what!

In addition to remarkable prophecies, we will meet and discuss some very interesting historical figures during our study.

We will meet Cleopatra in Chapter 11, along with many other famous people.

Daniel 4 is unique in all scripture. The entire chapter is written from the perspective of a pagan king.

In the very first verse of Daniel, we will meet two historical kings: Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and the Chaldeans. One of those two men is one of the most despicable men in the Bible, and hint — it is not Nebuchadnezzar (although he would come close)!

Why Study Daniel?

The first reason should perhaps be the only reason — it is part of the word of God. But there are some other reasons to study Daniel.

Daniel has a vital message for the modern Christian. Why? Because Daniel gives us a wonderful example of faithfulness to God while living in a culture that is totally hostile to God, which describes the culture we are living in today.

With Daniel, we have a teenager living far from home and facing many temptations but who nevertheless determined to remain faithful to God no matter what, and who did so for his entire life. That tells us a great deal about Daniel, and I think it also tells us a great deal about Daniel's parents.

That is a big reason to study the book of Daniel, but there are others.

If you love history, you will love Daniel. Daniel lived through some of the most exciting and turbulent times in human history, and he prophesied about later exciting and turbulent times that occurred after his death.

If you love languages, you will love Daniel. Daniel is one of the few books in the Bible originally written in more than one language, Hebrew and Aramaic.

If you love math and puzzles, you will love Daniel — how do we unravel the 70 weeks in Daniel 9? Many have tried. Will we be successful?

Another reason to study Daniel is that studying Daniel can be a great tool for personal evangelism. The same is true of Zechariah and Revelation. Why?

People have questions about those books of the Bible, and they hear many strange things about those books. If you can answer their questions, they will perhaps trust you on other issues about the Bible. One of the best ways to open doors is to leave a commentary about Daniel or Revelation in your office as a magnet — people will notice it and ask you about it.

If you ever study with an atheist, one of the first things you will need to do is convince them that the Bible is not from man. To do that, I would turn first to Daniel. If we can show them that Daniel contains specific prophecies of certain Roman emperors (and we can), then Daniel is not from man because we have copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea scrolls that predate those Roman emperors.

Finally, studying Daniel will teach us about the church. In Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, we will learn that the church is not just a Jewish kingdom, that the church is not man made, that the church is victorious, that the church is eternal, that the church is immovable, that the church is powerful, that the church is important, that the church was planned, and that the church was established during the first century Roman empire. All of that from a book written half a century before the church was established in Acts 2.

Why Was Daniel Written?

What did the book mean to its original audience? This question is always key to unraveling the meaning of a book. Yes, God's word was written for us, but it was not written *first* for us. To properly understand the Bible, we need to always ask what it meant to those who heard it first, and that is particularly true when it comes to prophecy.

What can we say about those who first heard the prophecies in this book?

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 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.

Jeremiah 5:15 tells us about the Babylonians who carried them away.

Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

How did the world see these events?

To the pagan world, it seemed as if 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 the Hebrew God 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 fact, in Jeremiah 25:9, God refers to King Nebuchadnezzar as "my servant."

But that is not how it seemed at the time to the world around them.

The book of Daniel has two responses to that false view.

First, Daniel's goal is to convince the faithful Israelites that God had not forgotten them — and that they should not forget God. One day they would be vindicated, and God would restore them to their former position.

Second, Daniel's goal is 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 by God anytime he desired.

In Daniel 9, we will study one of the most beautiful and powerful prayers recorded in the Bible. And the most remarkable thing about that prayer is what it reveals about Daniel.

To Daniel, the worst part of the captivity was that someone might look at it and conclude that God was not able to deliver his people. Daniel did not pray, “Get me out of this!” Instead Daniel’s primary concern in that wonderful prayer was for God and for God’s reputation.

A central theme that we will see in the book is the power of prayer. Daniel was a man of prayer, and Daniel lived almost his entire life of over 80 years in a hostile culture, and yet remained faithful to God. If we are having trouble remaining faithful in our own sin-sick and perverted culture, perhaps we need to closely study Daniel’s prayer life.

When Daniel Was Written?

We usually ask that question when we study a book of the Bible, and we usually spend about 30 seconds or less in discussing the answer. Not so with Daniel.

Without any doubt, the most controversial topic about the book of Daniel is when the book was written. And there are two views — the early date view and the late date view.

The early date view holds that the book of Daniel was written in Babylon in the late sixth century BC by the prophet Daniel who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. According to this view, the prophecies in the book are genuine and accurate, where by “genuine” I mean that the prophecies predate the events that are prophesied.

Not wanting to keep anyone in suspense, and before we discuss the second view, I will tell you now that we will take this first approach here. And I suspect that does not come as a surprise to anyone here! The book of Daniel is genuine, the prophecies of Daniel are genuine, and the book of Daniel was written by Daniel.

Now, before I describe the late date view, let's see if we can figure out what that position must be. I say "must" because once you adopt the assumptions of the modern liberal critic mindset, you are pretty much in a straightjacket when it comes to the book of Daniel. Why?

Daniel contains detailed prophecies about certain kingdoms that were to follow after the Babylonians or Chaldeans. That Daniel could know that any kingdom would follow the mighty Chaldeans was shocking enough, but that Daniel provides intricate detailed prophecies about three subsequent kingdoms that look forward about six centuries is impossible for the liberal critic to accept.

So how can modern liberal critics explain the book of Daniel? They would never admit that Daniel was inspired by God. They would never admit that Daniel was a prophet. But if Daniel was written before the Greek and Roman empires and if Daniel contains detailed prophecies about the Greek and Roman empires written six centuries earlier, then the book of Daniel must be from God.

What must the liberal critic do to get around this dilemma? They have two choices. They can move the date of Daniel until after the events that are prophesied, or they can change the prophecies so that they are referring to some earlier event (even if that change causes them to predict events that never actually happened).

And, in fact, modern liberal critics do both of those things.

First, they tell us that the book of Daniel was written around 168 BC rather than in the sixth century BC.

And second, they tell us that the four kingdoms of Daniel 2 are Chaldea, Media, Persia, and Greece rather than Chaldea (aka Babylon), Medo-Persia (aka Persia), Greece, and Rome. That is, they split Medo-Persia into two separate kingdoms to avoid having the fourth kingdom be Rome.

Why do they split up the Medes and the Persians? Why don't they instead try to have Daniel post-date Rome just like they argue Daniel post-dates Greece?

Because we have copies of Daniel that predate the first century Roman empire, which means the liberal critics can't push the date of Daniel far enough ahead in time to have it written during or after that time.

But do I really mean that they take prophecies that read perfectly on events in the Roman empire, and move them to instead refer to events that never occurred in the Greek empire? That is exactly what I mean, and let me give you an example 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.

When we get to those verses in Daniel 11, we will find that they are discussing Rome, not Greece — and that they fit perfectly with the history of Rome.

Why doesn't the Oxford commentator apply those verses to Rome? Because to do so would cause him to admit that Daniel was a genuine prophet, so instead he applies the prophecies to Greece.

But to make this work, the liberal scholar has to first convince us that the second kingdom is Media and the third kingdom is Persia. One commentator has rightly 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.

We will have much more to say on these four kingdoms as we move through the text.

So here is the second of the two views on when Daniel was written, what we will call the late date view.

The late date view holds that the book of Daniel was written in Palestine by an unknown Jew around 168 BC during the Maccabean period. The prophecies in the book concerning events prior to 168 BC were written after the fact and so 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 adopted by virtually all modern scholars, it is not a modern view. The late date view was first put forth in the third century AD by Porphyrius of Tyre. But it was quickly abandoned after Jerome published a refutation.

Before we move on, perhaps I should explain what I mean by the phrase “modern liberal scholar.” A modern liberal scholar is someone who operates according to the dual tenets of liberal theology.

The first tenet is that supernatural explanations of historical events are not acceptable. Any event that requires a supernatural explanation is not historical.

The second tenet is that nothing in a general sense ever happens uniquely in history. All true historical occurrences must be repetitive in nature so that scientists may properly observe them.

But wait, you say, the Bible is full of unique events, including, as examples, the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ! Do you mean to say that there are so-called Bible scholars who reject those events as historical? Yes, that is what I am saying. And they also reject the book of Daniel for the same reasons.

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. Let me allow you to hear it in their own words by quoting from a commentary by W. Sibley Towner published in 1984:

We need to assume that the vision as a whole is a prophecy after the fact. Why? Because human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance and to say that Daniel could do so, even on the basis of a symbolic revelation vouchsafed to him by God and interpreted by an angel, is to fly in the face of the certainties of human nature. So what we have here is in fact not a road map of the future laid down in the sixth century BC but an interpretation of the events of the author's own time, 167–164 BC.

Towner is correct when he says that “*human beings* are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance.” But God can do that, and God does do that.

It is very important to realize that the liberal critics are forced to hold the late-date view. 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 they will ignore all evidence to the contrary that points away from a naturalistic explanation. The true explanation is a supernatural explanation, but they aren't looking for that. They are not seeking the truth, which likely explains why they haven't found it.

As we work through this book, we will pause several times to discuss the internal evidence regarding the date of the book, and we will see how the internal evidence is all pointing to an early date.

But in our introduction, let's look now at some evidence outside of the book of Daniel that also points to an early date.

The Testimony of Jesus supports the Early Date View

Did Daniel exist? Was Daniel an actual historical figure? Is the book of Daniel authentic? Was Daniel a prophet? Did Daniel speak from God? Does Daniel have anything to say about Rome?

The liberal critic answers no to each of those questions. But how does Jesus answer those questions?

Jesus refers to Daniel by name in Matthew 24:15 and in Mark 13:14, and Jesus calls Daniel a prophet.

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

Did Daniel predict specific events that occurred many years after the time in which Daniel lived?

Jesus mentions just such an event in Matthew 24:15 that had not yet occurred but that would occur in the first century (see Matthew 24:34). And we will see Daniel's prophecy of that event later in our study of the book.

The modern critic tells us that Daniel is silent when it comes to Rome. The modern critic tells us that the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 is Greece. Jesus tells us just the opposite.

Isaac Newton (the greatest scientist who ever lived) said that "to reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion." And I agree with that statement, because if we reject Daniel then we must conclude that either Jesus was mistaken about Daniel or that the gospel accounts are hopelessly flawed about what Jesus taught. Either way, Christianity tumbles from a rejection of Daniel as a prophet.

And how do the liberal critics respond?

The liberal critics simply discredit Christ as an authority on such matters. One critic wrote that "Christ neither would nor could be a critical authority." Another liberal 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. Truly incredible!

Jesus said that Daniel was a prophet, and Jesus said that part of what Daniel prophesied was fulfilled after the Greek empire and during the Roman empire. Those clear statements of Christ are in direct opposition to the modern liberals scholars.

Who are we to believe? Who is the real authority here? I believe the one who has all authority in heaven and in earth!

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 14:14 — Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

And we also see Daniel in Ezekiel 28.

Ezekiel 28:3 — Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee.

This representation in Ezekiel of Daniel as righteous and wise fits perfectly with Daniel's description in the book of Daniel.

Most of those same modern scholars accept an early date for Ezekiel. So how then do they explain Ezekiel's reference to Daniel if, as they argue, Daniel was written centuries later?

The liberal critics say that Ezekiel was not referring to Daniel but instead to Dan'el — a famous character from Ugaritic mythology.

But is it even remotely believable that a pious Jew such as Ezekiel 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. Dan'el was a vengeful drunkard who convinced his daughter to commit murder.

Others say that the person who wrote Daniel in the 2nd century BC simply created an author named Daniel based on the name supplied by Ezekiel. But, of course, that makes no sense at all. Are they really telling us that there was someone else named Daniel, who is completely unknown and yet was listed by Ezekiel next to Noah and Job? Someone so wise that Ezekiel used him as the ultimate example of wisdom in Ezekiel 28, and yet completely unknown outside of those few verses in Ezekiel? Ridiculous!

Others argue that since Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, Ezekiel would not have pointed to someone then living to serve as such an example.

But why not? Why not point to Daniel as an example of righteousness? Why couldn't Ezekiel use both ancient and current examples to show the people that God was still at work among them?

One commentator has said that Noah, Job, and Daniel are spaced about 1500 years apart. That means Ezekiel gave an example of righteousness from three different eras, including from his own era.

Archeology Supports the Early Date View

It has been said that history doesn't repeat itself, rather historians repeat each other. Nowhere is that more true than when it comes to ancient history. Many historians adhere blindly to the historical dogma — without regard to what the evidence shows.

For example, modern critics will tell you that there is no historical evidence that the Exodus ever happened or that Joseph ever lived. But their problem is that they are looking in the wrong place (or rather the wrong time!) for the evidence.

There is a conflict between the accepted Egyptian chronology and Biblical chronology. Any guesses on which chronology the liberal critics accept without question and which chronology they reject out of hand?

If we assume the accepted Egyptian chronology is right and the Bible is wrong, then nothing fits and no evidence can be found. But if instead we assume the accepted Egyptian chronology is wrong and the Bible is right, then everything suddenly fits, and we can find archeological evidence for the exodus and for Joseph.

You might think that would cause an *honest* Egyptian scholar to rethink his chronology, and maybe it would. But that is hard to test unless you can find an honest Egyptian scholar around somewhere!

Moving back to Daniel, many liberal scholars once said that Belshazzar of Daniel 5 never existed. Here is the opening paragraph of an article published in 1930 by *The Journal of Theological Studies*:

The Book of Daniel depicts Belshazzar as ‘the Chaldean king.’ It represents him as reigning in Babylon at the time of the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and as being the monarch of that empire. This must still be pronounced a grave historical error.

But guess who really made the grave error! Guess what happened after that article was written! Ancient Babylonian inscriptions were found that mention Belshazzar by name and that confirm the Biblical account. Never bet against the Bible! Archaeology has confirmed the Biblical accounts over and over again.

And that leads us to what has been called the greatest archeological discovery of all time.

In the spring of 1947, in the Judean wilderness near the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea, ancient manuscripts were found that have given us our oldest manuscripts of most of the Old Testament.

Some of the scrolls were a thousand years older than any other copies that we had. Before this find, our earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Old Testament was the Leningrad Codex of AD 916. Thirteen copies of Deuteronomy, twelve of Isaiah, and ten of the Psalms were found. (In Luke 4:17, Jesus was handed a copy of Isaiah, which he then read aloud. The copies found in Cave 4 date back to around the same time.) To date, eleven caves have produced at least four hundred manuscripts.

The Scrolls have had a tremendous impact on the textual study of the Bible — and they have overwhelmingly confirmed the accuracy of the text that we have, and have shown God’s providential care in preserving the text.

As one example of how the Scrolls have confirmed the Bible’s integrity, a popular theory among liberal critics is that Isaiah is really three books with the first ending at Chapter 39. This theory, which was first put forth in 1892, initially even claimed that the later chapters of Isaiah (including Chapter 53) were added during the first century. The Isaiah scroll from Qumran has no break between Chapters 39 and 40.

As another example, seven copies of Daniel dating from the Maccabean period have been found in three of the caves at Qumran.

That fact alone makes it very unlikely that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period. Why? Because those in the late date group are forced to believe that the Essenes at Qumran somehow had near original copies of Daniel. 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 BC. 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 they literally are unable to believe their own eyes because to do so would be to accept the supernatural source of the Bible.

The linguistic evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls overwhelmingly supports an early date for the book of Daniel.

With the Dead Sea Scrolls we have some scrolls that were unquestionably written during the Maccabean period, and we can compare those scrolls with the book of Daniel by looking at syntax, word order, morphology (structure of words), vocabulary, spelling, and word usage. What does that comparison show?

It shows that Daniel is linguistically older by at least several centuries. It also shows that Daniel was written in the eastern sector of the Aramaic speaking world (which includes Babylon) rather than in Palestine.

If anyone ever tells you that Christian faith is a blind faith that simply ignores all evidence to the contrary — ask them about Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls. If you want to see an example of blind faith ignoring evidence, then simply look at how modern liberal critics deal with Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls!

Josephus Supports the Early Date View

In his book *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus relates a story that, if true, would prove that the book of Daniel existed during the time of Alexander the Great (330 BC). (We discussed this account when we studied Zechariah.)

Josephus tells us that 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 destruction that he inflicted on Tyre and Sidon?

The consequence of this story is that it means that Daniel was known long prior to the year 334 BC and that even Alexander himself recognized that he was the one Daniel said would destroy the *combined* Medo-Persian power.

In addition, Josephus says that the Jewish canon was completed before 424 BC and that Daniel was a part of the canon. This was not just his opinion, but was the Jewish national position. He also speaks of many other books that were rejected — but not Daniel; Josephus tells us that the book of Daniel was in the Jewish canon long before the modern liberal critic says it was written.

Responses to Late Date Arguments

Another thing we will do as we move through the text is that we will honestly and objectively examine the arguments raised by those who oppose the early date view.

After all, if our early date position is correct, then we certainly have nothing to fear by confronting the opposing position.

We will deal with most of the late date arguments as we work through the text, but let's deal with a few of them now.

Some 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.

(1) The Law (Books of Moses)

(2) The Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets)

(3) The Holy Writings or Hagiographa (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, **DANIEL**, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles)

The liberal critics argue that because Daniel is not found in the second division (the Prophets) but instead is found in the third division (the Writings) it follows that Daniel was a very late addition to the Jewish canon.

But 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 (all in the third group) were written before many of the prophetic books in the second group.

Josephus says that no books were added to the canon after 424 BC — the death of Artaxerxes. Jewish tradition says that Malachi was the last written book in the Bible, which would mean that the second division was closed after the third was closed.

Also, the division is not based on the type of *book* but instead is based 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. That is, the authors in the third group were not “official”

prophets. That explains why Ezekiel and Daniel, even though they were contemporaries, are in different divisions.

But what do we mean when we say that Daniel was not an “official” prophet? What we mean becomes clear when we compare Daniel with the prophets from the second division of books.

Daniel does not introduce his book with his name. Daniel has no official position among the Jewish people. Daniel did not live among the exiles as Ezekiel did, but instead Daniel lived at the court of Babylon, and Daniel dealt with heathen kings more than he did with the people of Israel.

Although Daniel is called a prophet by Jesus in Matthew 24, that has more to do with Daniel’s inspired prophecies rather than with any special prophetic office that Daniel held. Note that King David is also called a prophet in Acts 2:30, but no one would argue that King David held the office of prophet. One who held the prophetic office served as a spiritual mediator between God and the Israelites. Neither David nor Daniel did that.

And we can turn this argument around on the radical critics! Why was the book of Daniel added to the canon at all if it was not written until 160 BC? 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.

That Daniel is in the Jewish canon attests to its authenticity.

Some 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 liberal critics claim that Daniel's Hebrew resembles the later type and thus points to a late date for the book.

But even if that were true, it would not prove a late date. The book was undoubtedly copied many times and the language may have been updated to conform to the common dialect just as the KJV has been updated in the NKJV.

And, once again, this argument can be turned around on the critics. It is very telling that the Hebrew portion of Daniel contains no Greek words. That 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.

Also, 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" (which means, if he were honest, he would agree that it supported an early date!).

Any time a liberal critic concludes that no inference can be drawn based on certain evidence it nearly always means that the evidence overwhelmingly supports the early date view!

Some Claim That the Use of Persian Words in Daniel Indicates a Late Date

Several words of Persian origin are present in the Hebrew and especially in the Aramaic parts of Daniel. The radical critics argue 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.

But it is very possible that the term had already become a Babylonian title due to the Persian influence that already existed. Also, as Daniel wrote the book after the fall of Babylon, 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 BC. Many of the Persian words in these translations were MISTRANSLATED, which seems very 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.

We will have much more to say on the dating controversy as we work through the text, but now let's start with verse 1.

CHAPTER 1

DANIEL 1:1

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

Where are we, and how did we get here? And who are these two kings?

To answer those questions, we need to start with two other rulers: King Josiah of Judah and Pharaoh Neco of Egypt.

Josiah is first mentioned by name in 1 Kings 13:2 (in a remarkable prophecy against Jeroboam given three centuries before Josiah's birth!) and then in 2 Kings 21:24, when Josiah becomes king after his father, King Amon. 2 Kings 22 tells us how Josiah repaired the temple and found the book of the Law.

Soon after coming to power in Egypt, Pharaoh Neco (who is first mentioned in 2 Kings 23:29) began trying to gain control of Syria-Palestine. In 609, he captured Gaza and Ashkelon. He then led his army northward to help the Assyrians in their battles with the Chaldeans, who had already captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612.

Neco sent envoys to King Josiah, assuring him that his purpose was not to fight with Judah but rather to fight with the Chaldeans of Babylon. In fact, Neco accused Josiah of opposing God.

2 Chronicles 35:21 — But he sent envoys to him, saying, What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.

Josiah, thinking that the independence of Judah was at stake, tried to stop the Egyptians at the pass of Megiddo (the world's most famous battlefield!), but Josiah was defeated and mortally wounded. (2 Kings 23:29)

Neco proceeded to gain control of Syria as far as the Euphrates.

When Neco heard that the people of Judah had crowned Jehoahaz, an anti-Egyptian son of Josiah, as king, Neco summoned Jehoahaz to Syria, deposed him, and took him to Egypt as a prisoner for the rest of his life.

In his place, Neco put Jehoahaz's brother and Josiah's other son, Eliakim, and Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim to show that he was an Egyptian vassal. Neco placed Judah under heavy tribute — 100 talents of silver and one talent of gold. (2 Kings 23:33-34)

In the introduction, I mentioned that of the two kings in verse 1, one of them is one of the most detestable figures in the Bible — and it is not Nebuchadnezzar! Why did I say that? Because in Jeremiah 36, we read how King Jehoiakim literally took a knife to the word of God, cut it in pieces, and threw it in the fire!

In 605, King Nabopolassar of Babylon sent his son Nebuchadnezzar against Neco's army at Carchemish on the Euphrates. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and drove them out of Syria. Jeremiah describes this defeat of Egypt in Jeremiah 46:1-2.

After the Egyptians were defeated in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and the puppet king Jehoiakim went from being a vassal of Egypt to becoming a vassal of Babylon. 2 Kings 24:1 says that Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar's servant for three years.

Jehoiakim paid tribute from the treasury in Jerusalem, turned over some temple artifacts, and handed over some of the royal family and nobility as hostages. These hostages included Daniel and his three friends. This is the point where we catch up with the opening verses of Daniel. What happened next?

Shortly after this, Nebuchadnezzar's father, King Nabopolassar, died. Nebuchadnezzar quickly rushed back to Babylon and was proclaimed king.

In 601, Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Egypt itself, but Neco withstood him in a bloody battle at Egypt's border. This battle may have encouraged Jehoiakim to revolt against Babylon in 601 despite Jeremiah's warnings. We read about the rebellion in 2 Kings 24:1, and we can read Jeremiah's warnings in Jeremiah 27:8-10.

Jehoiakim rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar decided to move against rebellious Judah. Although this siege began with Jehoiakim on the throne, Jehoiakim was soon taken captive and died. We read about that in 2 Chronicles 36:6-7 and 2 Kings 24:6.

One commentator described the death of Jehoiakim this way: "It seems that Jehoiakim's final 'service' to his country was to expire just in time to let his successors and those he has oppressed face Babylon's wrath."

After the death of Jehoiakim, his 18 year old son Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah) came to the throne during the siege and ended up reigning for only three months. Nebuchadnezzar took the city of Jerusalem in 597 BC. We read about that in 2 Kings 24:11-12.

Jehoiachin and his family were carried off to Babylon, but 2 Kings 25:27-30 tells us that Jehoiachin was later released from prison by the next king, Amel-Marduk.

The king that replaced Jehoiachin was his uncle, Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed Zedekiah. Like his nephew and like his brother, Zedekiah also ignored Jeremiah and also rebelled against Babylon, hoping for help from Egypt.

That rebellion was the final straw for Nebuchadnezzar. In 587 BC, Jerusalem fell, the walls were torn down, and the temple was demolished. Some of the Jewish leaders were executed and others were deported. Zedekiah tried to escape, but he was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon. Only the poor were left to till the soil. We read about that in 2 Kings 25:7-12.

By the time that the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, Daniel had already been a captive in Babylon for nearly 20 years. Daniel was carried away as a teenager when the troubles with Babylon started, and Daniel was in his thirties when Nebuchadnezzar finally had enough and destroyed the city.

And what happened to Nebuchadnezzar after he destroyed Jerusalem? Well, not long after that happened, the mighty Nebuchadnezzar found himself munching grass like an ox for seven years, but now we are getting ahead of ourselves! More on that later.

The liberal critics don't waste any time griping about Daniel. They start complaining with the very first verse!

One critic has written that "Daniel begins with a glaring historical error, for Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim." But is that what verse 1 says — that the city was taken?

Daniel never states that Jerusalem was taken or captured in verse 1 — only that Jerusalem was besieged, and that is exactly what happened at that time. In the middle of his Palestinian campaign after Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar received the 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.

Yes, Nebuchadnezzar got Jehoiakim to hand over some of the temple treasury and some hostages, but that happened to prevent the city from being taken. That is why Jehoiakim switched his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon — to prevent the city from being destroyed. The city was besieged, just as verse 1 says it was.

But what about Jeremiah 46:2? There we are told that the battle that opened the way for a Babylonian invasion of Judah did not occur until the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim's reign. Why then does Daniel 1:1 say that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the *third* year of Jehoiakim's reign?

The answer to that question is simple, but it raises a point that we will see again later in our studies. Babylon used a different dating system than did Jerusalem, and it was different in two ways.

First, 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.

Second, 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 Babylonian 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 so, that points to an early date for the book. How could a Jew writing 400 years later have known about the Babylonian system of dating? Wouldn't he have instead just copied the date from Jeremiah?

DANIEL 1:2

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

Verse 2 begins by describing what happened when Nebuchadnezzar initially besieged Jerusalem. He was given Jehoiakim, which means that Jehoiakim became his vassal, and Nebuchadnezzar was given temple treasures and, as we will see in a moment, hostages, including Daniel.

Verse 2 says that these were taken to the land of Shinar? What is that?

Genesis 11:2 tells us that the tower of Babel was built in the land of Shinar. In Genesis 11:9, we read: “Therefore is the name of it [the city] called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.” Genesis 10:10 likewise tells us that Babel was a city in the land of Shinar. That city later became Babylon.

As we study Daniel, we will often pause to consider the history of a city, a nation, or a king. Let’s briefly do that with Babylon, which will be central to our study of Daniel.

Babylon flourished for thousands of years, starting at least as early as 3200 BC and continuing through 323 BC when Alexander the Great died there, having captured the city in 331 BC.

We need to keep in mind that Babylon is a city rather than a nation, although Babylon is sometimes used as a synonym for Chaldea, the nation that is ruling over and from the city of Babylon when the book of Daniel opens.

But many others have ruled over Babylon during its long history.

- The Sumerians in 3200 BC.
- The Akkadians in 2300 BC.
- The Amorites in 1890 BC (The code of Hammurabi).
- The Assyrians in 900 BC (Isaiah; Nahum).
- The Chaldeans in 625 BC (Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Habakkuk).
- Medo-Persia in 539 BC (Zechariah; Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther).
- The Greeks in 333 BC (Alexander the Great).
- The Parthians in 141 BC (Enemies of Rome).
- The Muslims in AD 650 (Iraq).

We will have much to say about the Medes and the Persians, but we should stress now that they were a combined nation at the time they defeated the Chaldeans. They had combined in 553 BC when Cyrus rebelled against his grandfather, the Mede king. But the Medes retained a prominent place in the combined empire.

We will also have much to say about the interaction of these kingdoms with the Jews. As we have already seen, the Chaldeans captured Jerusalem in 597 BC, and Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC.

That was how Babylon began — how did Babylon end? Zosimus tells us that by AD 363 the city had become a wild animal park for the Persian king Shapur I. Who would have thought that when Babylon was at the height of its power? Jeremiah knew all about it 1000 years earlier.

Jeremiah 51:37 — And Babylon shall become heaps, A dwelling place for dragons, An astonishment, and an hissing, Without an inhabitant.

Now let's go back to verse 2.

The Babylonians had many different false gods (Marduk, Nebo, Ishtar). The singular word “god” in verse 2 likely refers to Marduk.

In this verse we meet a third king — the Lord in verse 2 is the true king! Nebuchadnezzar thought he was in charge, but God was in charge. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take Judah captive, and when the time was right God removed Nebuchadnezzar from power.

Just about all that is left today 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” in verse 2 is the first indication of a major theme of this book: the absolute sovereignty of God. God is in charge.

Babylon was victorious only 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. Jeremiah 50-51 record the prophetic judgments against Babylon.

Was Jehoiakim (not Jehoiachin) taken back to Babylon? We can't tell just from verse 2. The phrase "which he carried" in verse 2 most likely just refers to the vessels from the temple, which we know went back to Babylon.

But what about 2 Chronicles 36:6-7?

Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

Again, this verse does not actually say that Jehoiakim returned to Babylon, only that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take him there.

Why does it matter? It matters because Jeremiah seems to suggest that Jehoiakim would die in Judah.

Jeremiah 22:18-19 — Therefore thus saith 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 glory! 19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Most likely Nebuchadnezzar planned to take Jehoiakim back, but after being captured after his rebellion, Jehoiakim died and his body was simply thrown down outside the city, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy. And again, his death happened about three years after the events in these opening verses.

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. In Chapter 5, Belshazzar is going to live just long enough to regret this theft!

There is a very interesting back story about the temple vessels. Hezekiah had displayed the temple articles one century earlier to Babylonian emissaries.

2 Kings 20:12-13 — At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and

shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

Before we read further, does this seem like a smart thing for Hezekiah to have done? No, and Isaiah is quick to tell him so.

2 Kings 20:14-19 — Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. 15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. 16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?

That last verse is a classic! Who cares if I have brought calamity to the land if that calamity occurs long after I'm gone! Many things have changed in this world since the days of Hezekiah, but politicians are not one of them! Hezekiah should run for Congress!

DANIEL 1:3-4

3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

The captives are called "children of Israel" here in verse 3, and later in verse 6 they are called "children of Judah." Why both phrases?

The northern kingdom (Israel) had been taken captive long ago by the Assyrians. These captives were from the southern kingdom (Judah). But, by this time, many from the northern kingdom had migrated south due to the Assyrian invasions, so Judah included people from both kingdoms.

But verse 3 tells us that the captives were of the king's seed, which would mean they were from the tribe of Judah. Most likely, the phrase "children of Israel" denotes their nationality (both the northern and southern tribes were Israelites in that sense), and the phrase "children of Judah" denotes their royal tribe, which of course was vital for the fulfillment of God's promise to King David in Psalm 89:36 that "his offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me."

The captives were of royal and noble birth. Why were they taken? Because their exile weakened the subjugated nation. Also, they served as hostages who would help keep the Jews in line while Nebuchadnezzar went back to assume the throne. We will learn in verse 6 that Daniel is one of these exiled children.

Daniel was taken early during Nebuchadnezzar's extended campaign against Jerusalem. Although that campaign eventually ended with the destruction of the city, that was not Nebuchadnezzar's original plan. Had the people heeded the message of Jeremiah, the city could have been spared. That it later had to be rebuilt was a result of both the original rebellion (that led to the exile in Babylon) and to the continued rebellion (that eventually led to the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar).

Taking high born hostages strengthened the conquering nation. In fact, it was considered a good policy to raise up leaders from the conquered people. Alexander the Great did this, and Cyrus also did this (as we will see later in this book).

That desire explains why Babylonians wanted to assimilate Daniel and his friends. Nebuchadnezzar planned to train them so that they could later administer his rule among the Jews.

Daniel and his friends were almost certainly of noble birth, but were they of royal birth as well? We don't know for sure, but Josephus says that Daniel and his three friends were members of King Zedekiah's family.

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, Daniel and his companions must have been very young when they were taken hostage and were almost certainly teenagers.

Plato tells us that the education of Persian boys began in their 14th year. The same may have been true of the Chaldeans.

These young men were without blemish. The ancients (much like many moderns) believed that one’s outward appearance reflected an inner condition. We know that God did not allow men with certain physical deformities to be priests (Leviticus 21:17-21). The same Hebrew word translated “blemish” here is used in 2 Samuel 14:25 to describe David’s son, Absalom.

That Daniel and the other exiled youth were placed in the charge of the master of the eunuchs has led some to conclude that Daniel and his three friends were made eunuchs by the Babylonians. Here is what Jerome said on that point:

From this passage the Hebrews think that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were eunuchs, thus fulfilling that prophecy which is spoken by the prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah: “And they shall take of thy seed and make them eunuchs in the house of the king of Babylon” ... But perhaps the following words are opposed to this interpretation: “... lads, or youths, who were free from all blemish.”

We looked at that prophecy by Isaiah to King Hezekiah earlier when we read 2 Kings 20:18, and we also find the same prophecy in Isaiah 39:7.

So we know from Isaiah that some of the royal children were made eunuchs by the Babylonians. Was Daniel among that group?

It is true that, unlike with Joseph, there is no mention of Daniel’s wife or Daniel’s children, but while their presence would be definitive evidence on this issue, their absence is not. And there is some extra-Biblical evidence to the contrary — Rabbinic tradition says that Daniel’s three friends “married and begat sons and daughters.”

We cannot know for certain, but I think that these four were most likely not eunuchs. Why?

First, the text seems to suggest they were taken in the earliest deportation, which would mean that Nebuchadnezzar still had hopes that he could set up a government there that would be loyal to him and be administered by those he had deported and trained.

Second, the king may have planned to use them as hostages, and their value as hostages would have been diminished had he made them eunuchs.

Third, had Isaiah's prophecy been fulfilled by Daniel and his friends, I think that fulfillment would likely have been mentioned.

Fourth, I agree with Jerome that the phrase "free from all blemish" suggests they were not eunuchs, although that phrase could have applied only when they were taken. But if the king purposely wanted boys without any physical defect, it seems odd that he would then mutilate them.

Fifth, the Hebrew word translated "eunuch" in verse 3 (saris) may not refer to a physical eunuch at all (although sometimes it does, as in Isaiah 39:7). The same word is used elsewhere to refer simply to a court official. For example, the same word is used to describe Potiphar in Genesis 37:36, and Potiphar was married.

We are told in verse 4 that they were taught "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans."

The word "Chaldean" had two meanings — one broad and one narrow. The term "Chaldean" can be used broadly in an ethnic sense to describe anyone from the Chaldean tribe. The Chaldeans (led by Nabopolassar) overthrew the Assyrians and conquered the city of Babylon in 612.

But as with the word "Jew," the word "Chaldean" had both a nationalistic and a religious meaning. In the latter narrower sense, the word "Chaldean" could refer just to a group of wise men that arose from within that larger tribe.

The use of the word here in verse 4 appears to have the broader ethnic meaning. These young captives were going to get a crash course in Chaldean culture!

What would they have learned?

Their study would likely have included a study of the old languages of Babylonia including two dialects of Sumerian.

Their study would also have included mathematics and science, areas in which Babylon was very advanced.

The Babylonians used a Base-60 number system, the remnants of which we can still see today — 60 minutes in an hour, 360 degrees in a circle. How did they arrive at such a base? Most numerical bases can be traced back to the human hand — our own Base-10 being the best example. But a single hand gives us Base-5, and the three joints on the four fingers of that hand give us Base-12. Most likely Base-60 came from an early merger of two groups of people — one that used Base-5 and one that used Base-12.

Their study would also have included Babylonian mythology, including Babylon's creation and flood legends.

Clay tablets at the British museum show the types of math problems and legends that they would have studied. Who knows? Maybe we have a copy of Daniel's homework!

The captives enrolled in the University of Babylon — and they were subjected to the same indoctrination and attempted brainwashing that some of our universities employ today. But, both then and now, attempted brainwashing has little effect on a discerning mind, as Babylon is about to discover.

It seems as if Daniel was able to take in the good part of his education while rejecting the rest, and if we are looking for good examples to follow from the life of Daniel, this should be the first one.

We don't fit the world's mold, and the world does not like that at all. The world is trying very hard to change us. We need to constantly fight against that, lest we ever become salt that has lost its savor.

DANIEL 1:5

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

The term for “the king’s meat” 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 was possibly intended simply to help reverse the effects of the siege and the deportation.

But there may have been a devious reason behind the king’s generosity. Remember, the king’s goal was to BRAINWASH these children. Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to forget their own land and culture and instead become Chaldeans. “How are you going to keep them down on the farm after they’ve seen Paris?”

Did it work? Out of all the captives, only four that we know of remained true to God. Only three were cast in that fiery furnace. (We will discuss later why Daniel was not among that group.)

Again, there is a lesson here for us. The devil constantly works to change our appetites. He wants us to crave the things of this world, and we need to resist the way that Daniel did.

Romans 12:2 — And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1 John 2:15-16 — Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

2 Corinthians 6:17 — Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Our greatest danger is that we will be absorbed by the world. That we will become an unrecognizable part of an alien, hostile, pagan culture. Nothing would please Satan more than that.

Typically these feasts would have begun with a sacrifice to the false Babylonian gods and would have consisted of many unclean foods. What that means is that Daniel and his friends had a dilemma. Would they compromise or would they not?

But shouldn't they have just eaten the rich food? After all, as verse 5 says, they were going to have "to stand before the king"! Wouldn't it be important for them to look their best in front of the king? And the phrase "stand before the king" included more than just standing, but also included royal service for the king. Shouldn't Daniel have eaten the food so he look his best for the king and be ready to serve the king?

No. Why not? Because Daniel answered to another king. There was another king that Daniel would stand before someday. In fact, I think we will see that Daniel is doing just that in the very last verse of this book. And the reason we see Daniel doing that in the final verse of the book is because Daniel was making the right decisions in the opening verses of the book.

DANIEL 1:6-7

**6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:
7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.**

At last we are introduced to the hero of these events, Daniel, and his three friends.

Their Hebrew names were all changed to Chaldean names so that they would forget their land and culture. At this time, your name was an integral part of your identity — much more so than today. Very often, and as we see here, someone's name contained the name of that person's (or rather the parents') god.

Here, Daniel (God is my judge) becomes Belteshazzar (Nebo protect my life or protect the king). The meaning of Daniel's name is hinted at in Daniel 4:8 when 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 the false god Marduk.

There are several theories regarding the meanings of the other names. Here are the most popular.

- Hananiah (Yahweh has shown grace) became Shadrach (the command of Aku), which honors the Sumerian moon god, Aku.
- Mishael (who is what God is?) became Meshach (who is what Aku is?)
- Azariah (Yahweh has helped) became Abednego (the servant of Nego, probably in reference to Nebo).

Now here is a good question — why do we remember Daniel by his *Hebrew* name and the others by their *Babylonian* names?

Most likely it is because Daniel wrote the book, and Daniel likely favored his original name. Also, Daniel is easier to pronounce than Belteshazzar. (I wonder if he had used his new name instead whether Belteshazzar would now be a popular name like Daniel is.)

Also, when the book was written during the Persian rule, the earlier king Belshazzar was a disgraced figure — which is very close to Daniel's new name, Belteshazzar. So perhaps Daniel changed his name back to Daniel at that time.

As for Daniel's three friends, he sometimes uses their old names, and he 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.

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. (We use days of the week today that refer to false gods.)

Whatever the reason, the Babylonians changed the name of the Jewish kings, and the Babylonians changed the names of Daniel's friends — but the Babylonians did not change Daniel's name! And they didn't change Daniel either.

DANIEL 1:8

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

So far we have seen that Nebuchadnezzar's brainwashing plan for Daniel and his friends had three components: Teach them Chaldean culture and language, give them Chaldean names and feed them Chaldean food.

The first two items on that list did not require Daniel to compromise the word of God. Daniel could learn about the Babylonian culture and religion without having to adopt that culture or that religion. And the Babylonians could call him anything they wanted. Daniel knew his actual name, and in fact he apparently continued to use it.

But eating the Babylonian food was another matter. This is where our teenage hero and his friends had to draw the line. (And just think about that for a moment — these teenage boys drew the line at food!) Why did they have to draw that line?

Jewish food had to be prepared properly. Also, many animals were considered unclean and could not be eaten no matter how they were prepared. The Babylonians ate pork and horse, both of which violated the dietary laws in Leviticus 11, Leviticus 17, and Deuteronomy 14.

And another problem is that the Babylonian food would have been offered to pagan gods and would have been served at pagan feasts.

In his book *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, A. Leo Oppenheim tells us about the care and feeding of the gods of Babylon. Sumptuous food would have been offered to the gods, and whatever was left would have been brought to the king's table as the royal food.

To eat the food under those conditions would have made it appear that Daniel had wholeheartedly accepted the false Babylonian gods to whom that food had been offered.

We see a similar issue in First Corinthians. And we see it again in the last book of the Bible.

Revelation 2:14 — But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

But what if they just ate the food and didn't believe in the false god? Would that have been all right? No, and it wouldn't be right 600 years later when the same problem rose in the Corinthian congregation. After first telling them to flee from idolatry, Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 10:20 — The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

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 have become spiritual bats. Daniel was not.

Daniel made a resolution and he stuck to it. Was this difficult or easy?

Put yourself in Daniel's place. He had been dragged away from his home, and eventually his home had been destroyed. It seemed as if God had forsaken him. Daniel 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?

The Babylonians were telling him to eat the food. Maybe even some of his friends were eating the food and urging him to do so as well.

Wouldn't this little quibble about food hurt his chances to get a good position in the government? Wouldn't it hurt his career? And on and on he could have gone with the rationalizations.

But Daniel knew what was right, and Daniel did what was right no matter what or who stood against him. In fact, verse 8 tells us that Daniel had purposed this in his heart. What that means is that Daniel had made the decision long before the food arrived!

We need more Daniels! These four teenage boys were not the first to be tempted with forbidden fruit, but unlike Adam and Eve, they passed the test!

Daniel and his friends did not get together to vote on what to do; they knew what to do. And there is a word for that — integrity! We don't see Daniel agonizing over what to do. There was no need to agonize over this decision — Daniel knew what he had to do — and he knew that before he was ever faced with the decision. If we like Daniel purpose in our heart to follow God's word, then we won't find ourselves with very many difficult decisions. Most of the decisions will have already been made!

Daniel used the word “defile” in verse 8. Even that strong word choice was courageous! He used a very direct word but an appropriate word.

The Babylonians could change many things about Daniel's life: his homeland, his culture, his name. But they could not change his heart. Daniel remained loyal and true to God, and he wanted to make sure the entire world knew that he was loyal and true to God. It reminds me of one of my favorite songs: “To Christ be loyal and be true; he needs brave volunteers to stand against the powers of sin, moved not by frowns or fears!”

Can you imagine the kind of courage required for this exiled teenager to stand up against all of the might and power of Babylon! Can you imagine the courage it took for him to stand up against the peer pressure from his own fellow exiles?

By choosing this course of action, Daniel and his three friends were separating and setting themselves apart from all of the others. The others likely thought no one would ever know what they were doing in Babylon — but Daniel knew that God would know. The others may have even blamed God for their predicament — but Daniel knew that their nation's own disobedience was to blame.

Daniel faced the same sort of pressures that we face today — he was pressured to change his whole way of thinking. The Babylonians wanted the exiles to adopt their worldview, their view of man, their view of God, and their view of morality.

Young people today don't face such pressures from ancient Babylon, but don't they face the same pressures from modern Babylons? Don't they face these same pressures at school? Don't we all face these same pressures daily from our society's constant attempts to change our thinking?

How were these teenagers able to be so strong in their stand against Babylon? Why were they able to be so strong after being dragged 900 miles away from their home in Jerusalem?

How were they so strong? There was the influence of God's word. We recently talked about Josiah, and we briefly mentioned something that happened very early in his life — he restored the temple and discovered the word of God. If Daniel was 16 now, then he was born at about the same time that God's word was found by King Josiah. Daniel must have heard the rediscovered law read many times while he was growing up.

How were they so strong? There was the influence of their parents. We don't know much about Daniel's parents, but we do know one thing — they named him "God is my judge"! They were in effect saying to him, "You will not always have us around to demand an account from you. But you will always be accountable to God, and he will always be there to demand it from you. God is your judge — so watch how you live and what you believe." We also know that Daniel's parents taught him the law of God. How else would he have known about the dietary laws? He had been taught what was right, and he had the courage to stand up and do what was right no matter what the consequences. But absent that initial teaching, all of the courage in the world will not do you any good!

How were they so strong? There was the influence of God. God had not forsaken the exiles. He was at work among them, and we see that from the opening verses of Daniel. The Lord gave in verse 2. God had brought in verse 9. God gave in verse 17.

Finally, notice how Daniel handled this issue — he requested (not demanded) that he be allowed to eat other food.

When (as we will see) the chief of the eunuchs does not grant his request, Daniel will ask someone else. We don't know what Daniel's next step would have been had all of his requests been denied, but I think we know he would not have eaten that food. But Daniel began with a request, and he showed respect to those who had authority over him.

Daniel did not create a public spectacle. He did not stage a food strike. His diet was private, not public. The king likely never knew anything about it. But Daniel knew. And God knew. We can learn much from how Daniel handled this situation. We can learn a lot from the maturity of this teenager!

DANIEL 1:9-10

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

Why did Daniel receive such favor and tender love as described in verse 9? Was it because of something he did? No — at least not entirely.

God gave Daniel favor in the Babylonian's sight, but Daniel also had a role to play in receiving that favor. Daniel's role was to be obedient to God in how Daniel dealt with the Babylonians. But it was God who deserved all of the credit for Daniel's success as verse 9 tells us. Again we are reminded of a major theme in this book — the absolute sovereignty of God. But Daniel is not just a passive observer!

Daniel's faithfulness allowed God to use Daniel to fulfill his plans on this earth. And God still works that way through us today. We, like Daniel, are not passive observers. We have a vital role to play in God's plan.

Daniel feared God, but whom did the chief eunuch fear? Nebuchadnezzar. The chief eunuch feared for his life. Daniel feared for his soul.

If these young boys were not well taken care of, the chief eunuch would lose his head! He had a great deal riding on the outcome of this experiment! And his fears were well founded. We will soon see an example of Nebuchadnezzar's rashness and harshness.

The reference to the other children in verse 10 confirms that Daniel and his three friends were not alone. The others almost certainly included other children from Judah as well as children from the other lands that had been conquered by Babylon. And, of course, that word "children" also confirms that Daniel was just a teenager.

DANIEL 1:11-13

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

Daniel next goes to the steward whom the chief eunuch had appointed and offers him a deal — let them eat their alternative diet for ten days, and then he can judge for himself which group looks better.

The King James Version treats "Melzar" in verse 11 as a proper name, but the presence of an article in the original Hebrew makes that unlikely. A better translation is "overseer" or "guardian," although "guard" is also a possibility (but his role seems to have been more to watch over them and care for them than to guard them).

The ten days in verse 11 is just that — ten days. Unlike Revelation, much of the book of Daniel is historical and not apocalyptic. Later, we will study sections of this book in which numbers should generally be interpreted figuratively, but not here.

(Although we will see another ten in verse 20 (“ten times better”) that is likely just an idiom for “much.”)

The proposed diet is found in verse 12 — pulse to eat and water to drink. The word “pulse” in the King James Version (here and in verse 16) is better translated “vegetables.” “Pulse” is a poor translation because it refers only to beans, peas, and lentils. The actual Hebrew word just means “that which grows from sown seed.”

A search on Amazon.com returns over 2000 results for the Daniel Diet! Yes, it may be healthy, but that is not the point here. Daniel was not opposed to eating meat because he thought meat was unhealthy; Daniel was opposed because some of the meat was unclean (which, in at least some cases, also meant it was unhealthy) and because of the meat’s association with idols. (A meat diet is commanded at some points in the law; the Passover lamb and other sacrifices, for example.) In 10:2-3 we will see Daniel briefly abstaining from meat for three weeks, which suggests he was not always a vegetarian. In fact, you will also find books on the “Daniel Fast.” They are based on that three week fast in 10:2-3.

Let me say this about the Daniel Diet and the Daniel Fast — if all we get out of this wonderful book is a new diet plan, then we have seriously missed out! Such people are best described by a phrase I found written on the inside cover of my grandfather’s Bible — they are like “a duck paddling across the surface of a large lake, taking in only an inch of water, completely unaware of the fathomless depths that lie beneath.”

DANIEL 1:14-16

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

Why did the overseer agree to Daniel's plan in verse 14? We aren't told, but it may have been due to God working on him just as God was working on the prince of eunuchs in verse 9.

But we might also ask this question: Who do we think got to eat all of the rich food that Daniel and his friends refused to eat? When you answer that question you may have your answer to the other question!

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his friends were found to be fairer and fatter than all of the other children who ate the kings' food. Their improved appearance was likely miraculous as it is difficult to see how a ten day diet of vegetables could have made such a visible difference. So the guard makes the change permanent — he takes away the meat and the wine, and gives them vegetables and water instead.

Was Daniel testing God here? Not at all.

First, verse 12 did not say that God was being tested, but rather that Daniel and his friends were being proved or tested.

Second, what we are seeing here is Daniel's faith in God — and that faith would have remained unshaken had the four boys lost weight and strength on their new diet.

Third, this diet was part of God's plan for Daniel, as we will soon see.

DANIEL 1:17

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

The key phrase in verse 17 is "God gave." This is the third time in this first chapter that we have been told that God gave something to someone.

In 1:2, God gave Jehoiakim and Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. In 1:9, God gave the chief official sympathy toward Daniel and his friends. Now in verse 17 we read that God gave the four Judeans "knowledge and understanding."

What we are seeing here is a subtle reminder of perhaps the central theme of the book of Daniel — God is in charge. Not Nebuchadnezzar. Not Jehoiakim. Not Daniel. Not anyone else. But God alone is in charge. If anyone has anything, it is because God gave it to him.

Here we see that their learning and their wisdom were gifts from God. (And not due to their diet as vegetarians claim!)

But does that mean Daniel didn't need to study? Does it mean that Daniel just suddenly woke up one day filled with learning? No. We don't see that here. Verse 4 already told us that they were being taught these things. God gave them their minds, and God gave them their teachers, but once again we see another theme in this book — Daniel had a role to play in God's plan.

Yes, God is in charge, but God uses his faithful people to carry out his plans. We will see that theme over and over in this book. In fact, sometimes we will see God using unfaithful people to carry out his plans, and we have already seen with Nebuchadnezzar.

We also see other important foreshadowing in verse 17 — God gave Daniel wisdom and the ability to understand visions and dreams. Notice that while all four children received the first gift, only Daniel received this second gift. We will very soon see why this second gift was so important!

DANIEL 1:18-20

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

These four young men made quite an impression on the king. Although they had been in the country only a short time, they already knew much more than the wise men who advised the king.

We have already asked the question of why Daniel and his friends wouldn't eat the king's food, and we have mentioned two reasons: the food was unclean (not kosher), and the food had been offered to idols.

But there is also a third likely reason why Daniel refused the king's food, and it fits the context very well. If their strength and their wisdom had come from their Babylonian food and their Babylonian education, then who would have gotten the glory when they stood before the king ten times better than all of the others?

In a book in which earthly kings believe they are in total control and deserve all of the glory, it is important to show right from the first chapter that God is in total control and God deserves all the glory.

Most likely all three of these reasons were at play here — the food was unclean, the food had been offered to idols, and it was important to show that Daniel's strength and wisdom came from God and not from his captors.

DANIEL 1:21

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

Verse 21 tells us that Daniel was around from 605 until at least 539 BC. If Daniel was 15 when he arrived in 605, then Daniel was 81 when Babylon fell to king Cyrus in 539 BC.

Verse 21 does not say that Daniel died during the first year of King Cyrus. We know that was not the case because in Daniel 10:1 he receives a vision in the third year of Cyrus. The word “until” or the phrase “even unto” in verse 21 simply means that Daniel survived into the next empire. Daniel lasted longer than the Babylonians did! Daniel had predicted their fall, and he was there to see it.

Who was King 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 homeland. Cyrus is mentioned by name in Isaiah 44 and 45 long before he was born. (We also saw this with King Josiah. God had been planning for these events for many years!)

We will have much more to say about Cyrus and how he came to power later in our study of this book.

So what modern day lessons have we learned from Chapter 1?

In Romans 15:4, Paul tells us that what was written before was written for our learning. He tells us in Galatians 3:24 that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. And so throughout our study of Daniel our question should be what is the great schoolmaster teaching us?

For starters, Daniel shows us that our first battle is not how to make our hostile culture into a Christian culture. Instead, our first battle is how to continue living as a Christian in that hostile culture.

Yes, we must proclaim the gospel to all the world, but first we must be sure that we remain in God's grace ourselves. If we become absorbed in this pagan culture, then not only will we fail in the great commission, but we will fail to obtain our own reward. Daniel knew that first he must remain undefiled himself before he could ever hope to teach others about God.

Second, Daniel shows us how to interact with a culture that is hostile to everything that we believe — and that is a lesson we need to hear because that is precisely the kind of culture in which we now live.

Our values and our beliefs are openly mocked and ridiculed. Almost any time a preacher is shown on television or in movies, he is soon revealed to be a sexually immoral hypocrite. We live in a nation that seeks to redefine things that God defined long ago — marriage and gender — and labels as hate mongers and seeks to cancel any who stand opposed. It reminds me of a riddle: how many legs does a dog have if we call a tail a leg? And the answer? Four. A dog has only four legs without regard to what we call his tail.

Isaiah 5:20 — Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Romans 3:4 — Let God be true, but every man a liar.

What should we do? We can learn much from Daniel. He shows us how to live as Jesus told us how to live:

Matthew 10:16 — Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Matthew 10:22 — And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Revelation 2:10 — Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Daniel is an example of someone who was wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. Daniel is an example of one who endured to the end. Daniel is an example of someone who was faithful unto death.

Daniel found himself at a crossroads in Chapter 1. The government, the authorities, the public, and perhaps even some of his friends wanted him to compromise and defile himself. What should he do?

There is one thing we do not see Daniel doing here. We do not see Daniel agonizing over what he should do. Why not? Because Daniel had already decided what he would do long before the temptation arose. Daniel had already purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

We know the path that Daniel took. Which path do we take when we have those “Daniel moments”? And we have them every day — most are not public, but we are tempted to compromise every day. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

CHAPTER 2

The second chapter of Daniel is one of the most remarkable and important chapters in the entire Bible.

Before this chapter ends, the most powerful pagan king in the world will lie prostrate before an exiled Jew. And before that happens, that powerful pagan king will hear one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible — a prophecy that begins with his own kingdom (which he will learn is temporary) and that will end with God’s eternal and indestructible kingdom.

When it comes to understanding God’s plan for the church, Daniel 2 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. Few chapters in the Bible (old or new testament) tell us more about the church than does Daniel 2. Daniel 2 is one of the famous “Church Chapter Two’s” — Psalm 2, Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, Joel 2, Acts 2, and Ephesians 2, among others.

Daniel 2 covers world history from Babylon to Rome, and Daniel 2 provides the foundation for understanding the other apocalyptic sections of Daniel that will follow.

Daniel 7 will expand upon Daniel 2, especially with regard to the second and third kingdoms. Daniel 11 and 12 will expand upon Daniel 2, especially with regard to the second, third, and fourth kingdoms. These later chapters of Daniel will supply many details that are not mentioned here in Daniel 2.

What is the message of Daniel 2? One of the primary messages of Daniel (and especially of Daniel 2) is that God’s promises to Israel had not been forgotten. The Gentiles (those outside of the covenant) seemed to be in charge now, but one day (under the Messiah) the kingdom would be restored to the faithful remnant. God had not forgotten them or his promises.

That was a message that Daniel and his fellow exiles needed to hear. They needed to hear a message of comfort and assurance from God. And if our understanding of

this book would have had no meaning to its original readers, then our understanding is wrong!

Many commentators read these verses and conclude that they are focused on our own time and our own generation. They tell us the end is near and that we are living in the final days. They look at these prophecies and they find our modern times, our modern conflicts, and our modern politicians.

And people have been doing that same thing for millennia! If we think we have found some modern day event prophesied in these pages, then warning bells should go off immediately. Why are we special? Why is our generation special? Why are we right where all of the others who have made the same claims in past generations proved to be wrong? Why is the modern Pat Robertson right, when all of the past Pat Robertson's have proved to be false prophets? And the answer, of course, is that the modern Pat Robertson is just as much of a false prophet as all the Pat Robinsons that came before him.

Time frame and context! They are what will carry us through these remarkable prophecies. We will see the time frame soon. What is the context?

The context is that God's people have just been carried off into exile, and it looks to them and the entire world that God has washed his hands of the Jews and his promises to the Jews. Either that, or perhaps God is just not as powerful as the gods of Babylon. The context of this book is to provide a resounding refutation of those false views about God.

God had not forgotten his people. God had not forgotten his promises. God was not powerless against Babylon. God had a plan to bless the entire world through the coming Messiah, and God was at this very time moving all of the pieces into place so that Jesus would find the perfect cradle when he came into this world to establish his eternal kingdom. And those events happened in the first century, just as Daniel will tell us in this second chapter.

That is the context of Daniel. And if we read it as find nuclear weapons being used against the antichrist and his horde of soldiers invading the Holy Land, then we have strayed very far from what this book is about.

If our view of God's word changes with the headlines, then we need to very seriously reconsider how we are approaching, studying, and dividing God's word. This book means the same thing today that it meant when it was first written, and our task is to discover that meaning.

DANIEL 2:1-2

1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

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

Nebuchadnezzar calls all of his wise men to come and interpret his dream. Notice that the term "Chaldean" is used in verse 2 in a narrow sense to denote a special class of wise men. Nebuchadnezzar was himself a Chaldean in the broader ethnic sense, but Nebuchadnezzar was not a Chaldean in this more restrictive sense.

The Babylonians believed that indications of future events could be found in the skies, in bizarre births, in the shape of animal livers, and in dreams.

The Jews agreed with only the last of those. God had spoken through dreams in the past. He did so with Jacob, Abimelech, Laban, Joseph, Pharaoh, the baker and the butler, and Solomon. Numbers 12:6 and Jeremiah 23:28 suggest that God spoke to all the prophets in dreams (but not to Moses that way).

Was Daniel already a wise man in the king's court at this time or was Daniel still in training?

I think that Daniel was likely still in school when these events occurred. Why? Because that would explain why he was not present when the king first spoke to the

wise men. And that makes the events here even more remarkable — that a student was able to do what none of the king's wise men could accomplish!

Also, this was the second year of the king's reign and the training lasted three years (1:5), which suggests that Daniel was likely still in training.

Why just likely? Because the first year of the king's reign was called the Year of Accession, with what was called the first year of his reign actually being the second year. Also, according to Hebrew usage, a part of a year was reckoned as a whole. This would mean that the "three year" program could have lasted less than two full years if it consisted of a full year and parts of two others. Also, perhaps Daniel just graduated early.

Later in verse 13 we will see that an edict against the wise men applied to Daniel and his friends, so whether or not they were still in training, they were considered members of the group of wise men.

However long the training lasted and whether or not Daniel was yet officially a Babylonian wise man, Daniel was still very young when all of this occurred. He would have been only seventeen or eighteen, and possibly younger. He was not the old prophet with the long white beard that many people imagine when reading this chapter. That is probably what he looked like when he was tossed into the lions' den, but that is not what he looked like here.

The sorcery and witchcraft that we see in verse 2 were widespread in the ancient world, and such practices are condemned in the Old Testament.

Exodus 22:18 — Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

But people were still listening to them.

Jeremiah 27:9-10 — Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: For they prophesy a lie unto you.

Sorcery and witchcraft are also condemned in the New Testament.

Galatians 5:20 — Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies.

Revelation 21:8 — But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Witchcraft remains a problem to this day, not only with astrology and horoscopes, but with some environmental groups that have veered into the worship of nature. When I was teaching engineering at SMU, the theology school invited a witch to be a guest speaker at one of their seminars!

Ancient Babylonian “dream manuals” have been found that list historical dreams and the events that followed them. These wise men would have been very familiar with those very long volumes. But without the content of the dream, the experts had no way to interpret the dream. Their plan would have been to listen to the dream and then look its meaning up in their book — but Nebuchadnezzar has other ideas!

One of the dreams listed in the Babylonian “dream book” is the appearance of a god’s statue. So the king’s wise men would have had an answer had the king told them his dream, but would it have been the right answer? As the magic eight ball says, doubtful!

DANIEL 2:3-6

3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

Some translations leave the impression that the astrologers spoke to the king in the Aramaic language, and maybe they did, but the Aramaic section of Daniel is not limited to just what the Chaldeans said. Instead, beginning in verse 4 and continuing through 7:28, the entire text of Daniel is written in the Aramaic language rather than the Hebrew language.

Aramaic was the language of the Arameans. Early Aramaic inscriptions date from 10th century BC, placing it among the earliest languages to be written down. The Aramaic language rose to particular prominence under the Assyrians, at which time Aramaic was adopted as the lingua franca of the empire. For over three thousand years, Aramaic served as the language of public life and administration for ancient kingdoms and empires.

The earliest Aramaic alphabet was based on the Phoenician alphabet. The Jews used this same alphabet for writing Hebrew, which is why it is today called the Hebrew alphabet. The use of the same alphabet also explains why the break between Hebrew and Aramaic is difficult to see if you don't know what the words mean! Hebrew and Aramaic both look much the same when written down.

If verse 4 is just telling us that the text is switching to Aramaic, then the Chaldeans could have been speaking some other language, such as Akkadian. But verse 4 is likely telling us both that the Chaldeans were speaking Aramaic and that the text is switching to that same language.

And that would also provide one possible reason for the change in language that begins here. Perhaps Daniel wanted to write down verbatim what everyone was saying rather than a translation into Hebrew of what everyone was saying. Of course, either way it would have been inspired. Jesus, for example, most likely spoke Aramaic, but the inspired account of what he said was written in Greek. And the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint, is often quoted in the New Testament.

We will look in a moment at another possible reason for the switch to Aramaic that occurs here, but first let's consider a related question — was this switch in the original version of Daniel, or are we instead seeing two versions pasted together? Was

perhaps the entirety of the original in Hebrew, with a later Aramaic translation having been spliced in at some point?

The answer is almost certainly that the original version of Daniel was written down by the prophet Daniel using two languages. How do we know that? Once again we turn to the Dead Sea scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scroll copies of Daniel make this same switch to Aramaic in verse 4 and the same switch back to Hebrew that will occur in Chapter 7. That evidence very strongly suggests that the original was also written in two languages. And Daniel is not unique in that regard. Other Aramaic sections or verses in the Old Testament are found in Ezra and briefly in Jeremiah.

It was once claimed by the late-date crowd that the form of Aramaic used in Daniel was the type used in the third century BC and not the type used in the sixth century BC. But that argument fell apart in 1929 when a farmer discovered what were later called the Ras Shamra tablets. The Aramaic in those tablets is similar to that in Daniel, and those tablets date all the way back to 1400 BC.

So let's get back to our earlier question — why were two different languages used in writing Daniel?

Some critics have claimed that there were two authors, but even most of the liberals reject that theory because the message of the book is clearly woven throughout the entire work.

So why then are two languages used? A much better explanation than that there were two authors is that there were two audiences — something that 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.

Switching to Aramaic for these middle chapters would be like switching to English today — it would ensure that the most people in the most areas would be able to understand it, which was certainly not true with Hebrew.

Whatever the reason, the book of Daniel is written in two different languages, with the break between them starting here in verse 4 and ending in Chapter 7.

So now back to what the language is actually saying.

Nebuchadnezzar asks his advisors to interpret the dream that he had, and the advisors at first seem eager to do so. They ask the king to tell them the dream that he had, and I am sure that they would have come up with an interpretation by consulting their book of dreams. In fact, these wise men express no doubt at all regarding their abilities or their wisdom in verse 4. Reminds me of a famous quote: “Confidence is the food of the wise man but the liquor of the fool.” We will see both kinds of confidence on display here.

But Nebuchadnezzar has other plans. He asks his wise men to tell him both his dream and its interpretation. And suddenly their confidence vanishes!

And here is a question for us — did Nebuchadnezzar really forget his dream, or was Nebuchadnezzar just doing this to test the accuracy of the interpretation?

The King James Version translates verse 5 to indicate that the king had forgotten the dream. (“The thing is gone from me.”) Most modern translations translate the phrase differently. (“The word from me is sure.”) The underlying word could have either meaning, but many suggest that the modern view is more likely. So even though the KJV tells us that Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream, the underlying text is not as certain.

So had the king forgotten the dream? He remembers enough of it later to confirm Daniel’s interpretation. But, of course, Daniel’s interpretation could have served as reminder that caused Nebuchadnezzar to remember the entire dream. And the wise men did not seem to think that the king had forgotten the dream because they continued to plead with him to reveal it. Also, Daniel 2:1 states that the king “was troubled” by the dream, and that suggests perhaps that he remembered the contents of what he had seen.

Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the dream, one thing is certain. God was behind both the dream and Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to the dream. How do we know that? Because if Nebuchadnezzar had followed the usual course of action,

then the events in this chapter would not have occurred, and Daniel would have remained in obscurity. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar would have relayed the dream to his wise men, they would have looked it up in their dream manuals and told the king what their book said it meant, and that would have been that. But instead, either God caused the king to forget the dream, or perhaps God planted the idea that the king's wise men were not as wise as they claimed to be. Either way, God created an opportunity for Daniel. And once again, we see that Daniel had an active role to play once that opportunity had been created for him by God. God opens the door, and we go through it!

Verses 5 and 6 describe what the consequences of the wise men's failure would be as well as what the consequences of their success would be in relating and interpreting the king's dream. I suspect these wise men were very much more focused on the consequence of failure!

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 his wise men into wise pieces!)

And this was no idle threat by Nebuchadnezzar. His harsh treatment of King Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:7), of two Jewish rebels in Jeremiah 29:22 who were roasted in the fire, and of Daniel's three friends later in Chapter 3 prove that Nebuchadnezzar would have had no qualms about carrying out this cruel threat against his counselors.

This situation has suddenly become very dangerous for the wise men, which we will soon learn extends to Daniel and his friends. Daniel is about to be thrown into his first lions' den! And maybe that is one reason why Daniel could be so faithful when he met the actual lions at age 80 — he had been thrown into many lions' dens before that one! And what about us? Are we ever tossed into lions' dens by the world? "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 2:12)

DANIEL 2:7-9

7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.

The wise men 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?)

At first it looks like they are just repeating themselves, but let's compare very carefully their first request to the king in verse 4 with their second request to the king in verse 7.

Verse 4 — Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.

Verse 7 — They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.

Notice any difference? In the second request, the wise men don't start off by hoping that the king will live forever! If the king was ever planning to drop dead, now would be a good time!

The KJV in verse 8 again suggests that the king had forgotten the dream, but once again a better translation of that verse makes no such suggestion: "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm" in the ESV. Also, verse 9 may suggest that the king had not forgotten the dream, but was instead testing his wise men by withholding the dream from them: "therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof."

In verse 8-9, Nebuchadnezzar makes it very clear that he is serious, and the king lets them in on his strategy. He accuses them of stalling and planning to lie to him. He says in verse 9 that they are planning to wait until “the times change.” That is, until the crisis has passed and the king has forgotten all about it. O great Nebuchadnezzar, we will tell you your dream, but we will need about 10 years to come up with it!

Why would Nebuchadnezzar be so willing to dispose of his wise men like this? Didn't he need them?

First, if they couldn't do what the king wanted, then that would seem to prove that he didn't need them. Their inability to tell the king his dream would prove that either their power was limited or perhaps they were not as in touch with the gods as they claimed to be.

Second, ancient kings did not always trust their so-called experts. Another king, Sennacherib, separated his diviners into groups to reduce collusion and ensure a reliable interpretation of an omen.

Third, the king probably felt that the dream foretold some terrible disaster that was going to befall him. After all, as we will soon see, Nebuchadnezzar had seen a man-like statue destroyed, which he likely associated with himself or his empire. He may well have felt insecure about his newly acquired kingdom, and he may have considered the destruction of the statue a divine omen to him that he and his empire were doomed.

Perhaps this led him to believe that someone was planning to assassinate him and take away his kingdom. And history tells us that such was a real possibility — two out of the next three Babylonian kings were assassinated!

Traitors may have been in his midst planning to overthrow his government at that very moment. Since a coup usually was perpetrated by the military or the court, the king may have wondered if some of these very wise men were plotting against him.

In short, Nebuchadnezzar might not have been reluctant at all to rid himself of these worthless advisors and just start over with a new and better group.

DANIEL 2:10-11

10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

The wise men complain that no one on earth who could do what the king wanted. In fact, they tell Nebuchadnezzar that no king has ever asked such a thing. (And they have a point because not even Joseph in Genesis 41 was required to do this when he stood before Pharaoh.)

In verse 10, these wise men admit to the king (whether they know they are admitting it or not) that their entire profession of magic and astrology is a fraud. They are unable to read the king's mind and determine what the king had dreamed, and in fact they say that no one on earth can do that — and they are correct, as Paul confirms:

1 Corinthians 2:11 — For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?

The king, they say, isn't being fair. He is asking too much. Imagine, asking a fortune teller to tell someone's fortune!

Nebuchadnezzar probably thought, and rightly so, that since these astrologers claimed to be able to communicate with the spirit world, they should be able to discover the dream and its interpretation from their gods. And if they couldn't do that, then what good were they?

These magicians make a very profound statement in verse 11: "there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

What they were saying was that only the gods could reveal someone's thoughts — and their gods could not do that. Why? Because their gods weren't here! They did

not dwell with men. So what then will be the logical conclusion when Daniel reveals the dream? (I imagine these wise men later questioned the wisdom of their words to the king!)

The Babylonians were famous for their astrology, but astrology could not help these wise men in their time of need. Over a hundred years earlier, God had challenged the wise men of Babylon to deliver their nation from his power by their sorceries, spells, and counsel from the stars.

Isaiah 47:12-13 — Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

Not only could these astrologers not save Babylon from the wrath of God, they will not even be able to save themselves from the wrath of the king. Their astrology would be proved useless.

DANIEL 2:12-13

12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

Nebuchadnezzar becomes “angry and very furious” when he realizes that his “wise men” are suffering from an acute lack of wisdom. In fact, he commands that they all be killed. (You would think that some of these fortune tellers would have seen this coming and would have left town the day before!)

Daniel and his friends, unfortunately, are numbered among this group, and their lives are now in danger from the king’s edict. As we discussed earlier, Daniel was most likely still in training, but apparently was advanced enough in his studies to be considered a wise man for the purposes of this edict. From the perspective of the king, anyone studying under useless teachers must themselves be useless to the king. He would soon discover the error of that view.

As verse 13 ends, it seems that the wise men were being assembled for what would likely have been a formal public execution, and Daniel and his friends were being sought so that they could be added to that group of condemned wise men. Keep in mind that Daniel is most likely in his late teens when all of this is happening.

What had happened to Daniel up to this point? He had lived under a siege by Nebuchadnezzar. He had been carried off to Babylon as an exile away from his family and never to return to his homeland. He had been pressured to forget his homeland and adopt the Babylonian culture. And now he had been sentenced to death because of an event at which he was not even present.

After all of that, some people might have started to question or doubt God. But do we see that with Daniel? Do we ever see that with Daniel? No. What we see is Daniel remaining faithful to God no matter what happened in his life. He did not blame God or doubt God or question God or accuse God.

Daniel was not one of those who praised God in the good times but blamed God in the bad times. And that perhaps more than anything else here shows us Daniel's spiritual maturity and the depth of his faith.

DANIEL 2:14-16

14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

How did Daniel see this death sentence? He saw it as an opportunity! Daniel saw it as an open door! Arioch arrives to take Daniel to death row, but Daniel talks him into taking him to the king instead.

We sometimes see the light at the end of the tunnel and think it must be an oncoming train. But if God is on our side, who can be against us? Daniel is a great example

of optimism. And what is optimism if not faith? And, if so, what then is pessimism but a lack of faith?

Daniel seems awfully confident in his abilities. Where did this teenager get such confidence? Daniel was confident because Daniel knew the source of all wisdom. Unlike the earlier confidence of those wise men, Daniel's confidence was not in himself but in God!

The stage is now set in these events to introduce King Nebuchadnezzar to the only true and living God. And in these remarkable events we will see the themes of this entire book — God is in charge, God is all-powerful, and God loves and cares for his people.

But, one might ask, how could that be true? Many of God's people had been dragged off into exile. In less than twenty years, Nebuchadnezzar would destroy their temple and burn down their city, dragging even more of God's people off to exile and captivity. How could God be in control during all of that? How could anyone conclude that God loved and cared for his people during all of that?

The answer is that those events must be viewed through eyes of faith, as Daniel was now and would later view them. Those events must be viewed through the eyes of Scripture as Daniel was now and would later view them. In fact, when we get to Daniel 9 what we will find in verse 2 is Daniel reading the book of Jeremiah!

And what is something that is known to everyone with eyes of faith? What is one thing they all know? They know that things are not always what they seem! They know that to truly understand what is going on this world, we must see things as God sees them. In fact, that is what it means to have eyes of faith. That is what it means to walk by faith and not by sight. And how do we see things as God sees them? We see things through the word of God. We let God tell us why things are happening the way they are, and then we trust and believe what God is telling us. That is what it means to walk by faith. And we would be hard pressed to find a better example than Daniel of someone who walked by faith.

The title "Arioch" denotes an important Babylonian official and was used in verse 14 of Arioch is used in 2 Kings and Jeremiah to describe Nebuzaradan, who carried

out the destruction of Jerusalem. The literal meaning of Arioch is something like “chief butcher.” So perhaps Arioch was the chief executioner.

In verse 15, Daniel says, “Why is the decree so hasty from the king?” But the root word used denotes harshness or stiffness, so “harsh” is likely a better translation than “hasty.” In any event, I think we would agree that the king’s edict (at least as to Daniel and his friends) was both harsh and hasty.

Why did Daniel and his friends not already know about the general order to execute all the wise men of Babylon? The text does not say. Perhaps it was because the wise men who might have told them now had other things on their minds! Or perhaps it is a further indication that Daniel was still in school.

Daniel had been sentenced to death, but how does he respond in verse 16? He responds calmly and with total confidence!

This whole scene reminds me of a favorite song: “When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul.” That was how Daniel lived!

How was Daniel able to gain access to the king after being sentenced to death? I think we see both the hand of God and the character of Daniel. God had certainly arranged this dream and these events so that Daniel could carry out God’s plan before the king, but Daniel also had a role to play here. Arioch knew enough about Daniel to know that he should not be ignored!

DANIEL 2:17-19

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Note that Daniel's three companions are referred to here by their less familiar Hebrew names.

The phrase "God of heaven" in verse 18 is used almost exclusively in the captivity books. Daniel uses that phrase nine times, Ezra six times, and Nehemiah four times. Why? Most likely because when Judah turned away from God, the prophet 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 10-11).

Daniel has been sentenced to death, and Daniel needs to learn the king's dream and what that dream means if he is to have any hope of living. So what does Daniel do? He has spent some time at the University of Babylon, so what has he learned? Does he pull out his crystal ball? Does he open his Astrology 101 textbook? No. Daniel prays. Daniel and his three friends "desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret." Daniel was in total agreement with the magicians on one point — only God could reveal the thoughts of the king.

There are so many lessons for us in these verses!

Notice that Daniel doesn't do this all by himself. Instead, Daniel asks his three friends to pray with him.

Notice also that Daniel understood the power of prayer. Daniel knew that, despite how things might look to physical eyes, those with spiritual eyes know that prayer is where the action is!

As someone described it, "any church without a well organized and systematic prayer program is simply operating a religious treadmill." And I think that is also true on a personal level.

As another said, "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."

Here we have a beautiful picture of four young men, still in their teens, united in prayer to God while facing death far from home.

Some commentators think that Daniel and his friends prayed and then went to sleep (so as to have a dream revealing the king's dream), but the text does not say that. The vision in verse 19 could be received while awake (9:20-23) or while sleep (7:1). Some say it is difficult to imagine that the young men had gone to sleep with an imminent death penalty hanging over their heads. But perhaps having prayed to God about it, and having turned things over to God, they were able to quit worrying and get some sleep. As I said, there are a lot of lessons in here for us!

Notice that Daniel has already promised in verse 16 to give the king the interpretation even before Daniel had started praying for the answer. What confidence! What utter dependence on God! Daniel is confident that God will give him the answer that he needs.

Why was Daniel so confident? Because Daniel saw the hand of God in these events! Daniel saw them as an open door! Daniel saw them as an opportunity!

And, of course, Daniel was right. His confidence was not misplaced. The "mystery" or "secret" is revealed to Daniel during the night. In fact, the word "secret" occurs nine times in this chapter.

And here, perhaps, we should recall that statement from Ezekiel 28:3 that we discussed in the introduction. Using irony against the prince of Tyre, Ezekiel 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 the Daniel who wrote this book, then the late-date theory falls in ruin. Have we seen anyone in this book who fits that description from Ezekiel? Someone named Daniel who is wise and from whom no secret is hidden? I think we all know the answer to that (including those in the late-date crowd!).

DANIEL 2:20-23

20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the

wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: 22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

Before rushing off to see the king, Daniel pauses to pray to the one true king. And this prayer is not a petition for help, but rather is a prayer of thanksgiving. Daniel thanks God for answering his prayer and for saving him from certain death.

And this prayer by Daniel is one of the most beautiful prayers of the Bible. It has rightly been called a model of thanksgiving.

In his prayer, Daniel highlights two aspects of God's character that play a pivotal role in this chapter and throughout this book.

First, God is the one who is in charge. As verse 21 tells us, Nebuchadnezzar is a king only because God set Nebuchadnezzar up as such.

It is God who changes the times, not Nebuchadnezzar. It is God who changes the seasons, not Nebuchadnezzar. It is God who gives wisdom and knowledge, not Nebuchadnezzar. And it is God who reveals secret, not Nebuchadnezzar — as Nebuchadnezzar would soon find out!

It is God who changes times and seasons, who removes and sets up kings, and who gives wisdom and knowledge. Despite how things might look, God is in control here. His people are in exile only because God wanted them to be in exile and because God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take them into exile. When God no longer wants them to be in exile, then they will return — and in fact that will happen soon under King Cyrus. And when God no longer wants Nebuchadnezzar to be king, then Nebuchadnezzar will no longer be king.

That God set up Nebuchadnezzar as king meant that Nebuchadnezzar deserved Daniel's respect as king, and Daniel showed him that respect. When we are disrespectful to the human authorities ordained by God, then we are ultimately being disrespectful of God and God's authority.

Romans 13:1-2 — Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

We must honor and show respect to earthly authorities just as Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar. But, of course, at the same time we must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29), which Daniel also did.

In verse 23, 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. God 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. There is no doubt in Daniel's mind at all. In fact, what we see here is Daniel thanking God for his deliverance before he had received that deliverance from the king.

In verse 23, Daniel said that God had made it known "to me" and "to us" what "we" asked of him. Again, we are reminded of the power of combined prayer. Daniel asked his friends to pray with him, and Daniel did not forget their contribution when he thanked God.

DANIEL 2:24-25

24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

Incredible, isn't it? All by himself, Arioch (the Chief Butcher) has managed to solve the king's problem. Notice how he takes all of the credit in verse 25. Perhaps he is remembering the reward mentioned back in verse 6!

Arioch's complete confidence in Daniel is interesting. He shows no doubt that Daniel will be able to interpret the king's dream. Daniel must have already made quite an impression on Arioch.

Think for a moment about the situation that Arioch would be in had Daniel failed to describe and interpret the dream! The executioner would likely have faced execution himself. We can see both the hand of God and the character of Daniel in why Daniel was so readily believed by Arioch.

Daniel's concern for others is shown in verse 24. His first words to Arioch were not "Don't kill me," but were instead "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon."

So Arioch brings Daniel to see the king.

DANIEL 2:26-30

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and

that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

Notice that Daniel reminds the reader of his Babylonian name (Belteshazzar) but then immediately resumes using his Hebrew name (Daniel).

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. Daniel’s response, unlike Arioch in verse 25, is not self-seeking. Daniel does not even mention himself in verses 27-28! Look at verse 28. Daniel does **not** say, “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to me what shall be in the latter days.” Instead Daniel saw himself as just the middle-man, and so he says, “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and **maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar** what shall be in the latter days.” Daniel was very concerned that all the glory would go to God.

Rather than say look what I can do, Daniel says look what God can do. The power was not within Daniel, and Daniel knew it. God had told him what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed — and absent that message from God, Daniel would have been just as clueless as the magicians were.

Again, we are faced with the stark truth about astrology, magic, and fortune telling. In verse 27, Daniel says that it does not work: “The secret which the king hath demanded **cannot** the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king.” It was very clearly not working here!

Notice how teenage Daniel speaks to Nebuchadnezzar with great boldness. Keep in mind that Daniel was under sentence of death, yet he takes this opportunity to effectively tell the king that all of the king’s gods are worse than useless. But Daniel tells the king that there is a God who reveals mysteries — and it is not one of Nebuchadnezzar’s false gods. If it were, then presumably one of the king’s magicians could have told him the dream.

Daniel’s answer to the king in verse 28 is that “there is a God in heaven.” That’s a very good answer, isn’t it! We should use that answer more often ourselves.

Why don't you believe we got here by evolution? Because there is a God in heaven!
Why are you against gay so-called "marriage"? Because there is a God in heaven!
Why do you believe there is only male and female? Because there is a God in heaven!
Why do you live the way you do? Because there is a God in heaven!

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 that phrase refer?

The "latter days" could simply mean the future. That is, God was going to tell Nebuchadnezzar what would happen later. This seems to fit well with the parallel passage in verse 29 ("To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be hereafter").

The "latter days" could refer to the latter days of Jewish history, which ended as far as God was concerned, first at the cross when the old covenant was replaced with the new, and then with complete finality in AD 70 when the Jewish temple and sacrificial system was destroyed never to return. And we know from Jesus' statements in Matthew 24 that at least one of Daniel's prophecies reached that far into the future.

Premillennialists teach that the "latter days" refer to a short time of tribulation preceding the "second coming" of Christ. But does that make sense? 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 Anti-christ who will be living in Rome in the end time..." Remember — if our understanding of this book lacks any message for the those who first heard it, then our understanding is wrong.

A survey of how the phrase "the latter days" is used in the Old Testament reveals that the expression denotes the future, but the exact time in the future that is in

view must be determined by the context. Sometimes the phrase is used to speak of events in the near future.

Deuteronomy 31:29 — For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in **the latter days**; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

But don't the "latter days" always refer to the end of the world? No. They do not. We just saw an example of that from Deuteronomy. And we see another example in Acts 2. There Peter refers back to a prophecy from Joel 2 and tells his listeners that that prophecy was on that day being fulfilled: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."

So when we see the "latter days" or the "last days" in the Bible, how do we know what it refers to? Sometimes we know because the Bible tells us explicitly as it does in Acts 2. But sometimes we need to look at the context and the time frame of the prophecy and the events being described. But one thing we know with absolute certainty from Acts 2:16-17 is that the phrase does not always mean the end of the world.

Here in Daniel 2 we will be given a clear historical context — the vision will begin with the present king and the present kingdom, and it will end with the third kingdom that follows (Rome). If we ignore or twist that time frame, then there is no hope that we will properly understand this vision. As Jesus reminded his listeners in Matthew 24:15 in speaking of the book of Daniel — "Whoso readeth, let him understand!"

DANIEL 2:31-35

31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part

of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

At last the dream is revealed, and what Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream turns out to be one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible.

Can you imagine the king's astonishment when Daniel started describing his dream? Can you imagine the astonishment and the relief of his wise men? Daniel had just saved their lives, and we will see later how they repay him.

Not only could Daniel reveal the meaning of the dream to the king, but Daniel could also reveal the content of the dream — and that was something the wise men had just said had never been done, had never been asked of anyone, and could never be done! And here was Daniel (an exiled Jewish teenager) doing it!

There is no way to explain this scene apart from God, and the Chaldean wise men had earlier admitted as such!

So what did Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream? He saw a great image of a man, excellent in brightness and terrible in form, consisting of four parts:

- A head of gold.
- Breasts and arms of silver.
- Belly and thighs of brass.
- Legs of iron with feet of iron and clay.

But that was not all. The king also saw something else. He saw a stone.

The stone smashes into the feet of the statue, which were of iron and clay, and breaks them into pieces, causing the entire statue to collapse into pieces and be carried away like dust by the wind. The stone then becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.

Another very important feature of the stone is revealed in verse 34 — it was cut out without hands. What that means is that this stone was not of human origin. It was not cut out by human hands.

So why was Nebuchadnezzar so concerned about this dream? As we said earlier, he had only recently assumed his throne, and he was likely felt insecure in his position. And so he must have seen a giant statue smashed into pieces as a very bad personal omen for his future as king.

But is that what the dream meant? Was Nebuchadnezzar the focus of the dream? And if so, why were all of the different materials used in the great image? And what was this stone that was going to bring it all down?

The king must have had many questions. And fortunately for him and for us, Daniel had been given many answers.

DANIEL 2:36-38

36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

We are not left to figure this vision out for ourselves. God told Daniel what the dream means, and Daniel tells both us and the king what the dream means.

And for those interpretations of this dream that change with the headlines, let me say again that whatever this dream meant on the day that Nebuchadnezzar learned what it meant is precisely what that dream means today. And if our view of this

dream would not have made any sense to Nebuchadnezzar in his day, then our view is wrong. Let's keep the historical context in mind.

Daniel's boldness before King Nebuchadnezzar is incredible! He was not afraid to speak truth to power! But, of course, Daniel's confidence and boldness came from God and from Daniel's faith in God. Daniel's boldness came from the word that he had received from God. We also have a word from God. Shouldn't God's word make us just as bold today to speak truth to power?

So what does Daniel tell the king? Daniel makes it very clear right from the start who is in charge here — and it is not the king!

Yes, Nebuchadnezzar was a king of kings, but he had been given his kingdom, his power, his strength, and his glory by God. And wherever the children of men dwelt and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven had all been given into his hand by God, and God had made him ruler over them all.

Nebuchadnezzar may have thought he was a self-made man, but he was not. God made him what he was, God gave him whatever he had, and God would use him however God wanted to use him.

As I said, this was a very bold thing to say to King Nebuchadnezzar! Had Daniel said that to the king under other circumstances, he would likely have been killed on the spot. But after hearing Daniel describe his dream, Nebuchadnezzar was in the mood to listen to whatever else Daniel had to say!

So what does the dream mean?

The explanation begins at the end of verse 38 when Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold."

So does the head of gold represent a king or a kingdom? The answer is that it represents both. Here we see that it represents a king, but later we will see that the gold head also represents a kingdom. And we will see this again later in the book.

How do we explain that? Simple. A king and his kingdom were inseparable — and that was especially true of Nebuchadnezzar. He was a true despot. The explanation

of this vision treats the king as a stand-in for his kingdom, and it uses the terms interchangeably.

“Thou art this head of gold.” The king may have initially taken this declaration as a great compliment, until he remembered what had just happened to that head of gold! What Daniel was telling King Nebuchadnezzar in verse 38 was that he with his kingdom would one day be smashed into dust!

Again we see the hand of God. What if the king had told the wisemen his dream? Then he would have gotten the wrong meaning from their book of dreams. But what if the king had told Daniel the dream like Pharaoh told Joseph? Then why would the king have believed Daniel’s answer? Wouldn’t the king just had Daniel thrown into the fire for his effrontery? For this to work out as it did, Daniel had to reveal both the content and the meaning of the dream, and that is what happened.

So what do the other parts of the dream mean?

DANIEL 2:39-40

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

Remember what the wise men said to the king in verse 4? “O, King, Live Forever.” Is that Daniel’s message to the king? Hardly! Verse 39 begins with the phrase “And after thee...”

Nebuchadnezzar was just a man, and one day he would face the same appointment of Hebrews 9:27 that awaits us all. And Daniel had the courage to remind the king of that fact!

That the head represents both the king and the kingdom is shown in verse 39 — “After thee shall arise another kingdom, and another third kingdom.” We will also see that in verse 44.

In fact, what we see is that the four parts of the great image each represent a kingdom. The head represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, and the remaining three parts of the image are also kingdoms — the “another” kingdom in verse 39, the “third kingdom” in verse 39, and the “fourth kingdom” in verse 40.

So what are these kingdoms?

The first one is easy. It is Nebuchadnezzar's own kingdom, which was Babylon, or more precisely the Chaldean kingdom that ruled from Babylon.

So what about the other three? Let's look at the clues.

First, we have a temporal order here. These three kingdoms would arise “after” Nebuchadnezzar. The second comes after the first, and it seems that the third must come after the second given that the third would rule over all the earth. In fact, that description of the third kingdom also tells us that the fourth kingdom must come after the third. So we have four kingdoms in temporal order.

Second, we see in verse 39 that the second kingdom would be inferior in some way to the first.

Third, and as we just mentioned, we see in that same verse that the third kingdom would rule over all the earth.

And fourth, we see that the fourth kingdom would be as strong as iron and would break in pieces and subdue all things.

And fifth, we see from the vision that all four of these kingdoms would be destroyed by a stone, but we don't yet know what that stone is.

So what are the second, third, and fourth kingdoms?

I have an idea. This might have been a tough question for someone in Nebuchadnezzar's day, but is it a tough question for us? Why don't we just open a history book and see what three kingdoms followed the Babylonian kingdom? What do we find when we do that?

What we find is that the Babylonian kingdom was overthrown by the Medo-Persian kingdom about 60 years after this vision. In fact, we will see that event described in this book of Daniel.

But what then does it mean in verse 39 that the second kingdom would be inferior to the first? After all, if the second kingdom defeated the first kingdom, then wouldn't that mean it was superior?

The Hebrew word for "inferior" just means "beneath you." So verse 39 may simply mean that the second kingdom was beneath the first kingdom in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw.

A second possibility is that the second kingdom was inferior to Nebuchadnezzar in the sense that the Persian leaders did not share the same absolute and unfettered power that Nebuchadnezzar enjoyed. Later in Daniel 6:12 we will see that a Persian ruler lacked the power to annul a law once he had made it.

In fact, the choice of materials itself denotes a decline of each kingdom from the one above it as we move from gold to silver to bronze and then to iron and iron mixed with clay.

The second kingdom is Medo-Persia (often just called Persia). The Bible tells us that, and secular history tells us that. Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC.

And, as we saw in the introduction, Daniel does not consider the Medes and Persians to be separate kingdoms, but instead explicitly treats them as what they were at the time — a single unified kingdom.

So Babylon is the first kingdom, and Persia is the second kingdom. Daniel was living now under Babylonian rule, and he would later live under Persian rule.

What kingdom came next? What is the third kingdom that verse 39 says would rule over all the earth?

It must be the Greeks under Alexander the Great. The Persian empire ruled for about two centuries but was never able to completely subdue the Greeks on its western border. Eventually Persia was conquered by Alexander the Great. He invaded Persia in 334 BC and completely defeated it in 331 BC. We saw a prophecy of that event in our study of Zechariah.

Did Greece rule over all of the earth? At one point, Alexander ruled an area from Yugoslavia to India, which was the largest empire of ancient times.

But wait, some might say, I take every word in the Bible literally, and verse 39 says that the third kingdom would rule over all the earth. Greece did not rule over all the earth, and therefore Greece cannot be the third kingdom.

How do we respond to that? We respond by saying in all kindness that God does not want us to check our brains at the door. The phrase “over all the earth” does not require Alexander the Great to have conquered Peru. How do I know that for sure? Because I have read the rest of the Bible.

Luke 2:1 — And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that **all the world** should be taxed.

Romans 1:8 — First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout **the whole world**.

Likewise, the Greeks under Alexander ruled over all the earth. Common sense goes a long way in understanding the Bible!

After Alexander died young in Babylon in 323 BC, his kingdom was split into four pieces that were ruled by his four former generals. We will see some remarkable prophecies about the Greeks and Alexander the Great when we get to Chapters 8 and 11.

So if Babylon is the first, Persia is the second, and Greece is the third, then what is the fourth kingdom?

Any history book will answer that question for us, and the answer is Rome.

Eventually most of the Greek empire was annexed by Rome. By 146 BC, Greece was permanently subdued, and Egypt became a Roman province in 31 BC.

What about the descriptions in verse 40 — do they apply to Rome? “And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.”

Verse 40 is a perfect description of Rome, written long before Rome was any sort of world power. How is that possible? The Roman empire started out as a dusty village on Italy’s Tiber River in the 8th century BC. How could anyone have ever predicted that such a group would someday rule the known world as mighty Rome?

Historians today are still asking that same question. Listen to a few sentences from the introduction to the recent book, *Rome and Her Enemies: An Empire Created and Destroyed by War*, by Jane Penrose:

Lying at its heart is a mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization. How on earth did the Romans do it? How did a single city, one that began as a small community of cattle-rustlers, camped out among marshes and hills, end up ruling an empire that stretched from the moors of Scotland to the deserts of Iraq?

The answer to that profound mystery is found in the book of Daniel. Those cattle-rustlers became the Roman empire because God made them so.

And once Rome had arisen, who would have thought it would ever fall? And again, historians ask the same question. Gamaliel Milner, in his 1931 book *The Problem of Decadence*, wrote:

The general impression that we receive from the story of Rome’s fall is that vast cosmic forces were at work which frustrated the counsels of the wisest statesmen, and rendered nugatory the skill and valour of the greatest generals; ... if ever in human history we can discern the working of destiny or inevitable fate, it is here.

Yes, Rome’s fall was inevitable, but it was not due to fate or destiny. Rome’s fall was inevitable because, long before Rome had ever risen, God had said Rome would fall. And Rome did fall.

When did Rome fall? We will look at that question later, but whatever method we use to date the fall of Rome, two things are certain: (1) Rome fell, and (2) Rome fell because God determined that it would fall — and God did so centuries before that fall occurred.

And we know at least one reason *why* Rome fell because Daniel told us in the next few verses. Let's keep reading.

DANIEL 2:41-43

41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

We learn some more about Rome in these verses that were written centuries before Rome became a world power.

What we learn here is that Rome would *become* in some sense a divided kingdom. Why do I say become? Because only the feet and toes are iron mixed with clay, and the flow of time is moving downward on this giant image from the head in Nebuchadnezzar's day to the legs and feet in the days of Rome. The iron lets us know that we are looking at the same kingdom, but the mixture with clay lets us know that that kingdom has somehow been divided and weakened.

Was that true of the mighty Roman empire? Did Rome have feet of clay? Yes! Rome began its history with great strength but that strength declined over time until Rome eventually fell.

But why did Rome fall? Historians have been debating that question for centuries. I have a book entitled *The Fall of Rome: A Reference Guide* that lists 260 different theories about the fall of Rome including:

- the decline of agriculture (22)
- failed tax policies (25)

- soil exhaustion (48)
- a general decay in intelligence (76)
- lead in the diet of upper class women and long hot bathing by men (86)
- a large infusion of alien races (97)
- slavery (108)
- deforestation (112)
- climate change (114)
- malaria (121)
- rats and fleas (154)
- unions and legislation on prices and wages (179)
- crudity (230)

Gibbon's famous *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* gives four primary reasons why Rome fell: external invasion, inner decadence, inner strife, and the injury of time and nature. OF those four reasons, the inner strife sounds most like what we see in this prophecy about the feet of clay.

That inner strife was due in part to the client kingdoms that Rome set up to rule the borders of its empire. The Visigoths were the first such group to receive federate status, and they sacked the city of Rome in AD 410 marking the first time in 800 years that the city had been taken by a foreign invader.

So, one way we can view the fall of Rome is to look at it from a long perspective.

The imperial period of ancient Roman history began in 27 BC when Octavian, later called Augustus, became the first emperor of Rome and ended in AD 476 when the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was overthrown. The Roman empire continued in the East for another 1000 years until the invasion by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century. So Rome in the west fell in 476, and Rome in the east fell 1000 years after that.

But Rome also fell in another way. We can also view the fall of Rome from a shorter, more focused, perspective. And this perspective fits better with the time frame we are given in this chapter.

Why do I say that? Because the stone we are about to look at hits the statue's feet of clay. So we need to align our explanation of the feet of the clay with our explanation of the stone.

So what do I mean when I say that the fall of Rome can be viewed with a shorter perspective? What I mean is that there is a sense in which Rome fell in the first century, not once but twice!

The key to this view is to recall something we have already seen in this vision. Sometimes Daniel uses the words "king" and "kingdom" interchangeably. We saw that with the head of gold, which denotes both Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

The Julio-Claudian dynasty of Rome was the first dynasty, and it included the first five emperors of Rome (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero). That dynasty fell when Nero died in AD 68. Nero was a terrible persecutor of God's people, and Nero's fall and the fall of his dynasty are described in Revelation *after* it happened.

After Nero, Rome had three civil war emperors that all reigned within a single year, the so-called year of four emperors. The fourth of those four emperors was Vespasian, who returned to Rome leaving his son Titus behind to destroy Jerusalem.

Vespasian's dynasty was called the Flavian Dynasty, and it included three emperors (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian). Domitian was another terrible persecutor of God's people, and Domitian's fall and the fall of his dynasty are described in Revelation *before* it happened.

Those two falls are linked together in the Bible, and they are linked together by history. In fact, Domitian was commonly called Nero Redivivus (Nero Reborn).

Both of those persecuting dynasties fell in the first century, and both of them fell because of inner weakness and division.

In what sense was Rome divided at this time? The most immediate answer is to recall those three kings who reigned between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties. They are called the **civil war** kings! You can't get much more divided than that!

Another way Rome was divided can be seen by how the Roman Senate reacted immediately after they heard that Domitian had been assassinated. Here is how Suetonius describes their reaction.

The Senators however were filled with joy and rushed to the House to denounce the dead Emperor, shouting out bitter insults, and calling for ladders so that his votive shields could be torn down and his statues toppled to the ground before their eyes. Then they decreed that all inscriptions mentioning him should be effaced, and all record of him obliterated.

Again, that sounds to me like there was some serious internal strife and division during the reign of Domitian.

We will look at these various falls of Rome in more detail as we work through the book, but I favor the shorter, more focused, view of Rome's fall for two reasons: First, it fits the time frame of the stone perfectly. And second, these Roman dynasties are described with great detail in the book of Revelation, which we will also see as we study the book of Daniel (especially Chapter 7) and compare it with the book of Revelation.

So why did Rome fall? Daniel tells us. Rome fell because God wanted Rome to fall. Whatever the reason or reasons, God was the cause. The fall of the Roman empire had been prophesied long before the rise of the Roman empire.

So what then are the four kingdoms represented by this statue? They are Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

And is that it? Is that the end of the story? Just those four kingdoms? No! There is a fifth kingdom! Let's keep reading.

DANIEL 2:44-45

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall

never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Verse 44 is one of the most important verses in the Bible, and certainly one of the most important linking passages between the Old and the New Testaments.

In many ways the Old Testament slowly pulled back the curtain on the mystery of the gospel that was fully revealed in the New Testament. We see glimpses of the gospel and of the eternal kingdom all throughout the Old Testament — and perhaps nowhere in the Old Testament do we learn more about the church than we do here in verse 44 (although some of the verses we studied in Zechariah are very close!).

Verses 44-45 explain the part of the image that must have been the most interesting part to Nebuchadnezzar — the stone. What was this stone that would cause his great golden head to collapse to the ground and be blown away as dust? And when would that happen? Daniel answers both of those questions.

Let's first remember what we learned about the stone back in verses 34-35.

We learned that the stone smashes into the feet of the statue and breaks them into pieces, causing the entire statue to collapse into pieces and be carried away like dust by the wind. We learned that the stone then becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. And we learned that the stone was cut out without hands.

What more do we learn about the stone here in verses 44-45?

Verse 44 tells us that the stone is yet another kingdom, but it is nothing like the other four kingdoms. Why? Because it will be set up by God, because it will never be destroyed, because it will not be left to other people, and because it will stand forever. In fact, not only would this kingdom never be destroyed, but it would

“break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.” And verse 45 repeats a very important feature of this stone that we saw earlier: it was “cut out of the mountain without hands.”

Do we learn anything more about this stone? Yes. Daniel gives us the all-important time frame of the prophecy. Daniel tells us **when** the kingdom represented by this stone would be set up. “And **in the days of these kings** shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.”

Which kings? Either “these kings” are all of the kings of the vision including Nebuchadnezzar (meaning that this kingdom would be set up before all of those other kings and kingdoms passed away) or, more likely (in my view) based on the immediate context of verses 41-43, “these kings” are the kings of the fourth empire. They are the kings of Rome.

So whatever this eternal kingdom is, Daniel is telling us that it would be set up by God during the days of the Roman kings.

So what is this great kingdom set up by God? We know that answer to that question. This great kingdom is the church. But how do we know that for sure?

First, we can look at other Old Testament prophecies about the church.

Here in Daniel 2 we see that the stone becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. Have we seen anything like that elsewhere in the Bible? Yes, we see it in the great prophecy about the church in Isaiah 2.

Isaiah 2:2-3 — And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

When was that prophecy from Isaiah 2 fulfilled. Luke answers that question.

Luke 24:46-49 — And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among

all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem**. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: **but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high**.

When did they received that power in Jerusalem? When did the word of the Lord first go out from Jerusalem? That all happened in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached the first gospel sermon. That day was when this great kingdom was established.

But if that's true, then shouldn't we see the disciples talking somewhere about being in a great kingdom? Yes, and we do.

Colossians 1:13-14 — Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into **the kingdom of his dear Son**: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins

Hebrews 12:28-29 — Wherefore **we receiving a kingdom** which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

Revelation 1:9 — I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and **in the kingdom** and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

So Daniel told us about a kingdom, and Paul and John told us about a kingdom. Maybe we have two kingdoms? Does that make sense? I like how Foy Wallace answered that question:

Daniel's kingdom is indestructible. Paul's kingdom is immovable. If they are not one and the same thing, how can Paul's kingdom be moved to let Daniel's kingdom begin?

The answer is that they are one and the same thing. The eternal indestructible kingdom of Daniel 2 is the immovable kingdom of Hebrews 12. It is the kingdom of God's dear son from Colossians 1. It is the church. The kingdom of God's dear son into which we have been translated by God is the church of Christ into which we have been added by God.

And just as Daniel prophesied centuries earlier, the church was established during the days of the Romans kings. We see that great event in Acts 2 as it occurred during the reign of Tiberius, the second emperor of Rome.

And what can we learn from the fact that this kingdom started out as a stone and then later became a mountain that filled the earth?

First, the stone was no less powerful when it was just a stone — that stone destroyed Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome!

Second, we can learn the same thing Jesus told us about the kingdom in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:31-32 — The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Third, we see in that description of the stone another indication of the timing of these events — they occurred when the church was still in its infancy. They occurred before the stone became a giant mountain. And any premillennialist who tries to tell us that the feet of the statute represent a yet future kingdom should pay very close attention to the timing here — those feet were destroyed before the stone became a giant mountain that filled the earth. Those feet were destroyed while the church was still in its infancy.

And that was precisely when Rome tried to destroy the church, just after the church was established. But things didn't turn out the way Rome thought they would! The Roman empire is long gone, but the church is still here.

Let's ask another question: Is the stone Christ or is the stone Christ's kingdom? Many commentators say that the stone is Christ, and there is a sense in which that is true. It is the same sense in which the head of gold can represent both Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Christ the king and the kingdom of Christ cannot be separated.

And we see Jesus as a stone in Psalm 118.

Psalm 118:22 — The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

That verse is quoted in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, and 1 Peter 2:7. We also see Jesus as a stone in Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:14 — And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.

Isaiah 28:16 — Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Those verses are quoted in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6, 8. We may even see a reference back to Daniel 2 in the description from Luke 20.

Luke 20:18 — Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

But verse 44 is very clear on this point — the focus of the stone is on the kingdom. Verse 44 says that God shall set up a kingdom. The reason why many commentators say that the stone is Christ is because they don't want to admit that God established an eternal kingdom in the first century. (But how could we have a king without a kingdom?) Verse 44 leaves no doubt — this stone is a kingdom. It is the kingdom of Christ.

Finally, at the end of verse 45, Daniel reminds Nebuchadnezzar who it was who had revealed his dream to him — it was not Daniel but rather it was “the great God” who had made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter. And, of course, that meant the dream was certain, and the interpretation was sure.

So what do we learn about the church from this vision? Many things.

We learn that the church is not a mistake or a fallback plan. The church was 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” God decided instead to set up the church until Jesus could return a second time to set up an earthly kingdom. 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, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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.

Does that sound like a Plan B to anyone?

This eternal kingdom is the church of Jesus Christ, and it will demolish and outlast any human organization just as Daniel says it will. That includes every man-made organization that calls itself a church. And that brings us to another important point that we learn from Daniel about the church.

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, 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, 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 the eternal kingdom:

Ezekiel 37:22 — And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.

The church cannot be split! God has set up an eternal kingdom that cannot be divided. We are not made of clay!

Another thing we learn is that 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 denomination. The church was not built by man or established by man. The church is the church of Christ. That is, the church was built by Christ, was bought by Christ, and belongs to Christ.

Matthew 16:18 — And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

John 18:36 — Jesus answered, **My kingdom** is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is **my kingdom** not from hence.

Acts 20:28 — Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which **he hath purchased** with his own blood.

I think a lot of the problems and division in the religious world can be traced to the false idea that the church is ours and we can do with it what we please. It is similar to what we hear in the abortion debate today — my body is mine, and I can do with it what I please. The Bible teaches me that neither my own body nor the body of Christ belongs to me, and I am not free to do with either as I please. The phrase “my church” appears once in the Bible, and that is when Jesus said, “I will build my church.”

We also learn from Daniel 2 that the church is powerful and eternal. It completely demolishes and replaces and outlasts its opposition.

So here is how God sees the church:

- It is eternal.
- It is powerful.
- It is beautiful.
- It is not man-made.

- It is more important than any earthly kingdom.
- It is the focus of all human history.
- It is not changed by history; it changes history.

But is that how we see the church?

Or do we see ourselves as just a footnote? As powerless to affect the world as it rushes by? As just another man-made religious group? As something that is swept away by the kingdoms of this world rather than the reverse?

If we want to be the people God wants us to be, our first step must be to see ourselves as God sees us. How can we be powerful if we see ourselves as powerless? How can we be the beautiful city of God if we have an inferiority complex?

Yes, it may sometimes look as if human institutions and man-made kingdoms are in control — but they are not. God is in control, and God's kingdom will outlast and destroy every man-made organization that has ever been or ever will be — be it a man-made government or a man-made church.

Daniel 2:44 — And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

THAT'S US! DO WE BELIEVE IT?

DANIEL 2:46-49

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all

the wise men of Babylon. 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

The end of Chapter 2 is a truly remarkable scene! Of all the scenes in the Bible that I would like to travel back and see in a time machine, this event would be near the top of my list. 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 had somehow found the right answer.

Nebuchadnezzar is likely very relieved. He is the head of gold, and although trouble is coming from this stone and from the second kingdom, it is apparently a long way off. Perhaps he is having the same reaction we saw earlier from Hezekiah after he was told by Isaiah that maybe he shouldn't have shown the Babylonians all of his royal treasures. Yes, trouble is coming, but not in my lifetime!

Did Daniel approve of the king's worship of himself in verse 46? No. How do I know? The Bible doesn't say one way or the other, but I know Daniel. After all Daniel has said and done, do we really think that he could have approved of someone falling down to worship him? Daniel had already said that God had interpreted the dream and not himself.

We must understand verse 46 in the light of verse 47, where Nebuchadnezzar praises the power behind Daniel. God is "God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets." Daniel is honored because of what his God has done, not because of what he has done — and I think that must be how Daniel saw it. Otherwise Daniel would have reacted as Paul did at Lystra.

Was the king "converted" in verse 47. No, and we will soon see evidence of that. All verse 47 shows us is that Nebuchadnezzar was not a fool. Nebuchadnezzar was saying the right things, but only because he had 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 as we will soon see.

Did the king make Daniel great? That is what verse 48 says: "the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon." But we have already been told where Nebuchadnezzar got his power and his rule — from God. And we have seen the hand of God throughout all the events leading up to this one. So even though Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as the giver in verse 48, we know that God is behind that gift. Daniel has these honors because God wanted him to have them. God made Daniel great. Nebuchadnezzar just noticed it.

The king fulfills the promise he made in 2:6 and loads Daniel down with gifts and royal honors. The king also makes Daniel governor of the capital city, and ruler over the wise men. (Don't you imagine the wise men 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, as we see in verse 49. Their new positions will lead to the jealousy of native officials, which results in the conflicts in Chapter 3.

The final phrase in Chapter 2 ("Daniel sat in the gate of the king") means that Daniel was an advisor to the king and remained in the court of the king. As we said in the introduction, this explains in part why Daniel was not considered an official prophet by the Jews. Ezekiel and Jeremiah worked among the people (Ezekiel among the exiles and Jeremiah among those still in Jerusalem). But Daniel worked in a pagan court away from the people. And the lesson for us? We can do the work of God wherever and whenever we find ourselves. God gives us open doors of opportunity, but often we each get different open doors. We just need to look for them and take advantage of them while they remain open.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, we discover what it means to take a stand for God and what it means to stand against the gods of this world. We also learn more about Daniel's three friends, who are truly profiles in courage.

Two of the central themes of this book are on display in this chapter: the absolute sovereignty of God and God's unfailing love for his people.

The apocalyptic sections of Daniel will later portray these attributes of God with signs and symbols. In this chapter, we will see historical demonstrations of these attributes of God.

In Chapter 2, God made known his great wisdom. Here, God reveals his great power. The message to the people of Daniel's day is clear: in spite of present appearances, God is in control! And, of course, that is an important message for us as well.

DANIEL 3:1

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Note first these events are not taking place in the city of Babylon itself. They are instead taking place in the plains of Dura, which was in the province of Babylon. We don't know for sure where Dura was, but it was likely southeast and nearby to the city of Babylon.

The king makes a giant golden image and sets it up before the people. Daniel does not tell us whether the image was of a god or of the king himself, and commentators differ on that question.

The gold of this statue links this event with the dream in Chapter 2 in which the king was the head of gold. Perhaps this link is a clue that the statue was an image of the king, but historians tell us that Mesopotamian kings rarely presented themselves as gods, and we have no other evidence that Nebuchadnezzar ever did so.

Also, if the king considered himself divine, then why did he build a statue of himself for people to worship when he was there in person to be worshiped? Perhaps the statue's likeness was of one of Babylon's gods such as their principal god, Marduk.

But with that said, I think we must admit that the similarity between this image and the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream seems to be more than just a coincidence.

Recall that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold in his dream. If this image in Chapter 3 was of the king himself then it seems that Nebuchadnezzar was not 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...)

Even if this image was of Nebuchadnezzar's god rather than of Nebuchadnezzar himself, I bet Nebuchadnezzar's god looked a bit like the king himself. And isn't that always the case? When men fashion their own gods, don't those false gods resemble their maker?

One thing is very clear from the first verse of Chapter 3 — it did not take long for Nebuchadnezzar to forget all of those newly found religious insights that we saw at the end of Chapter 2!

Why did Nebuchadnezzar build the image?

Maybe what we are seeing here is the great arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar, something we will see later in this book. Perhaps the king was saying to Daniel and to God, “OK. Here is the image. Now where is your big stone?” Daniel's prediction that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be destroyed had probably not set too well with him.

Or perhaps Nebuchadnezzar's plan was simply to boost his own political power through the use of religion. Can we think of any modern-day examples of that? We said a moment ago that one characteristic of an idol is that it resembles its maker. Another characteristic of an idol is that it *serves* its maker, and I suspect we are seeing that here with this giant statue.

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, and it was almost as slender, which means it looked more like an obelisk than a traditional statue. Rising

to a height of roughly a nine-story building, and expanding to a width of nine feet, the statue was enormous.

Liberal critics see the size of the image as a problem. They claim that the odd proportions would have made the image look preposterous. But the colossus at Rhodes was 10 cubits taller. Also, perhaps the image was on top of a large pedestal. Evidence for such a base may have been discovered by the French archaeologist Oppert, who located the remains of a brick structure about four miles south of ancient Babylon that he believed was the pedestal of this colossal image.

The liberals also complain that there would not have been enough gold in all of Babylon to make such a large image, but where does the Bible say that the image was made of solid gold? Like smaller statues that have survived and like the idol described in Isaiah 40:19, this image was likely gold plated.

And, as with most of the liberal's arguments, this one can be turned around against them. The record of the construction of this large image is in fact more evidence that points to an early date for the writing of Daniel. Why?

Because archaeological discoveries have shown that 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 participate. And this seems to be what we see here in Daniel 3. Sir Leonard Wooley wrote 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 had been written 400 years later? If the author of this book lived under Greek rule as the liberals tell us, how did he know so much about ancient Babylon?

DANIEL 3:2-3

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Verses 2 and 3 set the stage for the events to follow, and it is a very impressive stage full of dignitaries who the king wants to impress. And we should keep that audience in mind as we move through the chapter.

Let's look more closely at the list of titles in verse 2. The KJV has "the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces." The RSV has "the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces."

The titles used in this section point to a very well-organized bureaucracy.

- Satrap or Prince is the Persian term for "realm protector."
- Prefect or Governor refers to what we might call a lieutenant governor.
- Governor or Captain refers to the ruler of an administrative district. Malachi 1:8 says that the province of Judea was administered by a "governor."
- Counselor or Judge is the Persian term for "counsel-giver." This term is unique to Daniel in all known Aramaic literature.
- Treasurer is the Persian term for "treasure bearer."

- Justice or Counsellor is the Persian term for “law bearer.”
- Magistrate or Sheriff is the Persian term for “over chief.”
- The terms for “judges” and “magistrates” occur so far only in Daniel and in Aramaic documents of the sixth and fifth century.
- Provincial Officials or Rulers is a general term for government officials.

After looking at that list, one big question should immediately come to our mind — why are five of those terms Persian? In Chapter 3, we are still in the Babylonian or Chaldean kingdom when Daniel was a young man. Persia won’t arrive until the end of Chapter 5 when Daniel is an old man. How do we explain these Persian terms?

The simplest explanation may be that, while these events occurred during the Babylonian kingdom, Daniel wrote them down during the Persian kingdom. And so perhaps when Daniel wrote the book he simply substituted the then current Persian titles for the older Aramaic terms.

Another possibility is that some Persian titles had already made their way into use among the Chaldeans at this time. We will soon see that such is true with some Greek musical terms.

And once again, this argument can be turned around on the liberal scholars. The use of these words Persian by Daniel actually points to an early date rather than a late date for the book of Daniel. Why? Because by the second century BC some of these Persian loan terms had become obsolete and could no longer be correctly translated by the Alexandrian Jews.

DANIEL 3:4-7

4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is
commanded, O people, nations, and languages,
5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the
cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dul-
cimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down
and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar
the king hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth
not down and worshipping shall the same hour

be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

We asked a moment ago why Nebuchadnezzar built this statue. We may see a clue in verse 4, which tells us that the command applied to all people of every nation and language. It may have been Nebuchadnezzar's intention to unite his growing kingdom under one religious umbrella. Rome also did this several times — first with Caesar worship in the first century, and later with the Roman version of Christianity under Constantine.

Whatever the reason, it presents us with a humorous scene. As one commentator wrote:

Here we see 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.

But is Nebuchadnezzar really the one holding the baton? Let's keep that question in mind as we proceed.

Let's look at the musical terms in verse 5. The KJV has "cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer" while the RSV has "horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe."

- "Cornet" or "Horn" is the only musical term found here that is also found elsewhere in the Old Testament.
- "Flute" or "Pipe" may come from the Hebrew word meaning to hiss or whistle.
- "Harp" or "Lyre" is a loan word from the Greek language.
- The term "Sackbut" or "Trigon" comes from the Greek word used in the Septuagint meaning a triangular harp.
- "Psaltery" or "Harp" comes from a Greek word that refers to a stringed instrument.

- The term translated “Dulcimer” or “Bagpipe” may not be an instrument at all, but may simply mean “in unison.” Others think it refers to a percussion instrument.

As we saw with the list of titles, we again are faced with an immediate question from this list of musical terms: why are three of them Greek words? Greek rule wouldn’t come along until after Persia, and Persian rule was nearly 70 years away when these events occurred. The liberals argue that such words would have been used only after Greek influence had spread throughout Asia following the conquest by Alexander the Great. How do we explain these Greek words?

The simplest explanation is to look at what type of words are being used here — they are all musical terms: harp, sackbut, and psaltery. Such terms are frequently borrowed when the instruments they describe become known.

And let’s apply the modern liberal argument to another book — our song book. The word “legato” appears in some of the music. It is Italian for “tied together,” meaning that the notes should be sung smoothly or connected. The word “fine” (pronounced “fen-nay”) is also common. (It does not mean that you are doing fine!) It means “end” in Italian. When we see those terms in our song book, do we conclude the author of those songs must have been steeped in Italian culture? Silly, right? Why isn’t it just as silly to conclude that the author of Daniel was steeped in Greek culture?

Experts now agree that Greek culture had penetrated the Near East long before the Neo-Babylonian period. These three 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.

Also, we could ask how much cultural spread is required to learn three new words? If the book of Daniel had been written 400 years later and after 160 years of Greek rule over Palestine, then wouldn’t we expect to find many Greek words instead of only three? As one commentator 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 BC.

In verse 6 we finally reach what we knew as coming — the punitive elements of the king's decree. And what we see is that those who do not fall down and worship the image will be cast immediately into a burning 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 bricks that we still have today may have been fired in the very furnace spoken of here.

The fuel for the furnace was charcoal, and it burned at a very high temperature. Here is how one commentator has described a typical Babylonian furnace, some of which have been excavated:

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 event. 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.

Let's pause for a moment and look more closely at this fiery furnace. Was Nebuchadnezzar the last person to ever threaten the people of God with such a punishment? Hardly! Nebuchadnezzar's message in these verses has always been the world's message to God's people: Comply or face the consequences!

The world still has its burning fiery furnaces, and the world still loves to throw God's people into them. If we step out of line in our woke but godless society, we too can expect to be cast into a fiery furnace!

Today, the world threatens us with furnaces of scorn and laughter, furnaces of criticism, furnaces of isolation, furnaces of intimidation, and furnaces of economic hardship.

- A photographer in New Mexico was fined \$6700 for refusing to photograph a lesbian "wedding" ceremony.

- A baker in Oregon faced jail time for refusing to bake a cake for a gay “wedding” ceremony.
- A florist in Washington was sued by the state for refusing to prepare an arrangement for a gay “wedding” ceremony.
- A sportscaster was fired by ESPN after only one day on the job for expressing his support for traditional marriage.
- A student was dismissed from the counseling program at Augusta State University for her religious reservations about the homosexual lifestyle.
- A hotel in Vermont was fined \$30,000 and forced to shut down its wedding reception business after refusing to host a lesbian “wedding” ceremony.
- A student was kicked out of a doctoral program in education at Roosevelt University for expressing in class her belief that homosexuals are not born that way.

People in the United States are being fired from their jobs or are being thrown out of school or are being accused of sexual harassment simply for stating the long considered obvious truth that we are all born either male or female and that we all stay that way our entire lives.

That is what the Bible teaches. That is what common sense teaches. That is what science teaches. But that is not what the world teaches.

And let me ask this question — why do all of those people who tell us to just follow the science all start heading off in another direction when it comes to gender? Have we suddenly discovered a new chromosome?

Here is the truth about gender:

Matthew 19:4 — Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?

Who would have ever thought we would have reached such a depth of depravity in this country that not only would Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19 no longer be believed, but that those who remind the world of the obvious and self-evident truth of Jesus’ statement would be persecuted?

One of my favorite books is *1984* by George Orwell, and one of my favorite quotes in that book is this: “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.” From a practical economic perspective, we no longer have that freedom in this country. That freedom went out the window when we could no longer read Matthew 19:4 out loud in public absent persecution.

And that reminds me of another favorite Orwell quote: “The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those that speak it.”

The emperor has no clothes. And we must never be afraid to say so.

And let me tell you the sad truth — we should not expect the situation to improve. Instead, we should expect increased hostility and pressure from the world to conform to the world’s view of things, but we must not conform.

Romans 12:2 — And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

That verse should be the starting point whenever we are pressured to conform. Be not conformed to this world! We are about to see a wonderful example of three young men who lived that verse.

DANIEL 3:8-12

8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

“At that time certain Chaldeans came near.” The world remains full of those “certain Chaldeans!” They are watching, and they are ready to pounce! The word “accused” in verse 8 is a translation of the idiom to “eat the pieces of flesh torn off from someone’s body.”

Who were these Chaldeans? We don’t know for sure, but most likely they either included or were being influenced by the prominent Chaldean wise men who lost much of their prominence in Chapter 2. These “certain Chaldeans” likely resent the Jewish youths who had been given power over them in Chapter 2. And now was the time for revenge!

Yes, the Chaldeans were likely resentful, and yes they were likely jealous. But is that all that was going on? Was there perhaps another reason behind this hostility against the Jews?

Yes, there was almost certainly some racial animosity going on here. Very often in history, the greatest racial animosity has occurred between peoples that have some sort of a distant affinity. Think, for example, about the Jews and the Samaritans. Was there a distant affinity between the Chaldeans and the Jews? Yes, one that goes all the way back to Abraham.

Genesis 11:31 — And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

So perhaps we can add racial hatred as a motivation here.

What is the first thing they do? They quote the king’s edict word for word. It makes me wonder if they had in fact written it knowing that it would not be followed by the faithful Jews.

And after quoting the edict, they inform the king that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have paid no heed to the king or to his decree. “There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

Notice the subtle accusation against the king himself in that statement. “here are certain Jews whom **thou** hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon.” We didn’t create this problem, O king! You did! Perhaps you should have listened to us!

And the Chaldeans are appealing here to the king’s sense of vanity. The disobedience of these three Jews is a personal affront to the king that is made even worse in view of all that the king had done for them. Where was their gratitude?

Was the accusation in verse 12 a truthful accusation? Yes and no.

The accusation is that “these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

The true part is that they refused to serve the Babylonian gods and worship the golden image. Just as they earlier refused to eat the unclean food, here they refused to worship the golden image for the same reason — it was against the law of God.

Exodus 20:3-5 — Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.

But that accusation was also partly false. It was not true that they had no regard for the king himself. They just had more regard for God. And when the law of the king came in conflict with the law of God, these three young men followed the law of God.

DANIEL 3:13-15

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds

of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

The Bible is full of satire and humor, and only those who have never read it could say otherwise. Here we see a wonderfully satirical scene being acted out in real-life by the mighty Nebuchadnezzar.

Remember how these events started out? Whenever Nebuchadnezzar waved his baton, his subjects would faithfully dance to his tune like puppets.

But who is the puppet here in verse 13? And who is pulling the strings?

These verses answer those questions. It is the all-powerful Nebuchadnezzar who is the real puppet who dances while the Chaldean wise men operate the strings.

They pulled Nebuchadnezzar's strings, and the king does not disappoint. Nebuchadnezzar's response is exactly what these troublemakers wanted — he is in a furious rage.

Is there another reason why the king was so mad? A reason other than these three refusing to bow down to the statue? Yes, and I think we see it all the way back in verse 2. These events were occurring in front of “the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces.” The king was being embarrassed in front of a group he very badly wanted to impress.

So not only do we see the king dancing as a puppet for the Chaldeans, we also see him dancing as a puppet for his distinguished visitors! It is all starting to make us wonder who is really in charge here! Maybe we will find out soon...

Yes, the king is very angry. But as mad as he was, the king was not willing to condemn these three without some hard evidence. Perhaps that tells us that the king knew something about their character and their integrity. Whatever the reason, it seems that the king's justice would not allow these men to be condemned on just the word of their accusers, so the king gives them an opportunity to recant.

Notice how incredulous the king is in verse 14. “Is it true?” he asks. How could these three young men do this to him after all he had done for them? And, in fact, the king had done a lot for them in response to Daniel’s request at the end of Chapter 2. It must have seemed inconceivable to the king that these three would refuse to obey this simple command. He many have wondered whether they were plotting a rebellion against him.

And notice the arrogance of the king in verse 15: “Who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?” The king seems to have forgotten all about what he said in Chapter 2 about the God of Daniel.

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, where he asked, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?” I love what Jim McGuiggan said about that question: “You recall that Moses signed him up for a ten-lesson correspondence course!”

DANIEL 3:16-18

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee 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 thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Well, it looks like these three had a really big decision to make. Is that what we see here? Do we see them agonizing over what to do? Do we see them trying to figure out some clever way to answer the king that might save their lives?

No. We see none of that. In fact what we see in the KJV for verse 16 is these three telling the king that they “are not careful to answer” him in this matter. The ESV translates it this way: “we have no need to answer you in this matter.”

What does that mean? What it means is that 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.

After you decide to obey God no matter what, there aren’t too many other things left to decide! In verse 16 they tell the king that they have no need to answer him — God will provide an answer to the question he asked in verse 15.

And perhaps verse 16 is not a so subtle message to the king that he should have already known their answer before he asked them for it. He was the king. He had conquered the Jews. He had promoted some of the Jews to be rulers in his kingdom. How could he not know the first thing about the Jews?

If we are looking for an all-powerful all-knowing king, Nebuchadnezzar is clearly not it!

We looked earlier at some modern-day examples of fiery furnaces. How should we respond when the world threatens to cast us into one? We should follow the example in verse 17-18.

We have an incredible statement of faith in verse 17: “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand.”

And we have an incredible statement of courage in verse 18: “But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

“You are going to lose your job if you keep saying that gender is an unchanging and unchangeable God-given attribute.” And our answer? “My God whom I serve is able to deliver me from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver me out of your hand. But if not, be it known unto you, that I will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.” And that I suspect will end the discussion.

There are so many wonderful lessons in the answer of verses 17-18!

In verse 17 they begin by acknowledging God's ability to save them and by declaring their belief that God will save them. We see in that verse their great faith in God. They are not just saying that God can save them; they are saying that God will save them. There is no doubt in verse 17.

And I don't think there is any doubt in verse 18 either. Instead, in verse 18 they are simply acknowledging the possibility that God may choose not to save them from this sentence of death. Perhaps God has some plan in mind that requires their deaths, and if so, then that is fine with them.

But verse 18 also has another message. What they are saying in that verse is that if God decided they should die, then that would make no difference at all in their faith in God and in their obedience to God's word.

Job 13:15 — Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

Some people are willing to serve God only so long as God always does what they want him to do. Which, of course, make us wonder who is serving whom? These three were going to serve God no matter what happened, and sometimes that decision leads to physical death.

Revelation 2:10 — Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Here in Daniel 3, as we will see, it served God's purpose to spare these three and to show his power to Nebuchadnezzar. Later in Revelation, God did not physically spare many of those who were being persecuted by Rome. But whether spared or not, God's people remain faithful in the face of persecution. Why? Because God's people understand that what is seen in temporary, but what is unseen is permanent (2 Corinthians 4:18).

And that is not just a New Testament concept. Recall what Hebrews 11 tells us about Moses:

Hebrews 11:26-27 — Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Where does a Christian today find the strength to make such a courageous stand and to remain faithful unto death? From Jesus. Jesus is our perfect example in all things, and especially in remaining faithful unto death.

Hebrews 12:2 — Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stand to lose by their refusal to bow down before this image? They would lose their royal favor with the king. They would lose their high government positions. They would lose their newly found fame and fortune. They would lose their lives.

From a worldly perspective, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were the worst sort of fools! Look at what they could gain just by bowing down! Look at what they would lose by not bowing down!

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not operating on a worldly level. They were not focused on the seen, but rather on the unseen.

How would we have responded in their shoes? How do we respond when in their shoes today?

- No one will see us in this big crowd.
- Everyone else is bowing down.
- Bowing down will advance our careers and help us do a lot of good later.
- They will kill us if we don't bow down!
- There are only three of us, and we are a long way from home. What does God really expect us to do all by ourselves?
- When in Rome, shouldn't we do as the Romans do?
- We know that the idol really isn't a god. Can't we just cross our fingers when we bow down?
- We can do so much more for God if we remain alive.

- Doesn't God want us to be happy?

However we try to rationalize it, disobedience is disobedience.

John 14:15 — If ye love me, keep my commandments.

If we are disobedient — whatever the excuse — then we are unloving. If we love Jesus, then we will keep his commandments. Period. There is no way to misunderstand John 14:15, and there is no way to rationalize disobedience into anything other than an unloving action directed at Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

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.

John 15:18-19 — If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

1 Peter 4:4 — Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.

People who wallow in sin 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 and its desires. The world wants to make us just like everyone else.

The real question was not what men thought about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — but rather what did God think about them?

Of the thousands who were present at the dedication of this giant idol, how many do we know by name? Other than the king, just these three. In fact, their names are mentioned thirteen times in this chapter! God seems to have been very proud of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! And I think Daniel was, too.

Notice again the respect that these young 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 rul-

ers, who have all been given their power by God. They orally acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as king, while committing their ultimate allegiance to the King of kings. The allegation that they had no regard for the king was a false accusation.

Let's pause to consider a question that you may have already been asking yourself: where was Daniel during this big event?

To answer that question, we should start with the last verse of Daniel 2:

Daniel 2:49 — Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

The purpose of Daniel 2:49 was most likely to explain why Daniel was not involved in the events of Daniel 3. That verse tells us that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, but then makes a point of telling us that Daniel was different — he sat in the gate of the king. That difference between Daniel and his friends at the end of Chapter 2 was likely intended to explain why Daniel was not present in the events of Chapter 3.

But how is Daniel's absence in Chapter 3 explained by that last verse of Chapter 2? That's a good question, and commentaries differ on the answer.

Perhaps the explanation is simply that, with the king and other important officials in the plains of Dura, someone was needed to stay behind and govern in the city itself. That would mean that Daniel had a very good excuse for not bowing down to the image — he was unable to leave Babylon and travel to the plain of Dura for this big event.

That explanation is a simple theory that seems to fit well with the available evidence. But there are some other possible explanations.

Perhaps Daniel was absent from Babylon at this time because he was away on government business in some other part of the kingdom.

Or perhaps Daniel was ill and unable to attend the public ceremony. We will see something similar later in Daniel 8:27, where we will find Daniel sick for some days

and unable to attend to the king's business. But that sickness was brought on by a vision when Daniel was much older, so I'm not a big fan of this theory.

Another possibility is that, as chief of the wise men, Daniel may not have been required to bow down. Daniel's loyalty to the king may have been beyond question. Presumably, Nebuchadnezzar himself did not bow down, and he may have extended that privilege to others as well.

Yet another possibility is that Daniel's reputation may have been such that even the Chaldeans did not dare to accuse him in front of the king. So perhaps Daniel was there and refused to bow down but the king was not told about it.

We don't know for sure that Daniel was not present for these events, but I think the evidence of Daniel 2:49 suggests that he was not present. Had Daniel been present, I think we would have seen him make a spirited defense of his friends to the king even if he had not himself stood accused.

Whatever the reason we don't see Daniel in Chapter 3, one thing is absolutely certain: Daniel did not and would never have bowed down to that false idol.

How do we know that? Because we know Daniel, and because we already know what kind of person Daniel was. We know with certainty that if Daniel had stood accused before the king along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, then there would have been four people tossed into that fiery furnace instead of only three.

And one more thing — Daniel's omission from Chapter 3 is additional proof of the book's authenticity. Why? Here is how one commentator explained it:

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.

If someone were just making all of this up hundreds of years later, then there would be no reason to leave Daniel out of this exciting episode. So, Daniel's absence here is evidence of the book's authenticity.

So that explains why Daniel was not there with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But what about all the other Jewish exiles? Did they bow down to the giant statue?

We don't know, and we should not assume the worst about them. Some of the reasons we just discussed for Daniel may have applied to others as well. Maybe these three were the only ones who were accused by the Chaldeans even though many others could have been accused as well.

But, with that said, we might be seeing the beginning of a theme here. Only a few of the Jews were shown as not eating the unclean food, and now only a few of the Jews are shown as not bowing down to the idol. After a while we have to start wondering whether the reason only a few faithful people are shown is because there were only a few faithful people.

And if history is any guide, then there were likely just a few faithful people at this time. But we know that there were quite a few faithful people of God about 70 years later when Cyrus allowed the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem, so we shouldn't be too pessimistic about the others here in Daniel 3. There may have been more than we think who refused to bend their knee to Nebuchadnezzar's false god.

DANIEL 3:19-23

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in 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 coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and

**Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of
the burning fiery furnace.**

I'm sure that we all love the response given by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in verses 17-18, but Nebuchadnezzar has the opposite reaction. The king becomes furious and the image of his face changes to show his fury. Again, we may be seeing a bit of satire here in this description of the king.

“The one who in his pride has created an image with the purpose of assuring uniform loyalty finds his own image provoked beyond his control.”

Why was the king so furious? Likely many reasons, but a big reason that we mentioned earlier was that these events were taking place before a crowd of very important people that the new king wanted very badly to impress.

And so, to show that he was in complete charge and control of the situation, Nebuchadnezzar orders the three young men to be cast into the fiery furnace, which then happens at once.

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.

And if there was any doubt about the heat of the furnace, that doubt is removed when we see the deaths in verse 22 of those who threw them into that furnace.

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 words in the process. The liberals would have us believe that the writer of Daniel lived within 50 years of the Septuagint, but how could that be true? How in just that short time could these words for court clothing have become so completely forgotten so that they could no longer be correctly translated in the Greek Septuagint?

As someone who grew up in the sixties and seventies, these verses remind me of a favorite TV show — Batman! Remember how at the end of an episode, Batman and Robin always find themselves tied up and facing certain death. And remember how they would still be in their costumes? We see something similar here. They even had their hats on!

Nebuchadnezzar's commands in verses 19-21 were intended to leave no room for escape. The already deadly furnace was made even hotter. And the three young men were fully dressed, even with their hats on, so the flames would completely and quickly envelop them. They were tied up and thrown like logs into the fire so that there could be no opportunity for escape.

Will Shadrach escape? Is it curtains for Meshach? Are things finally too hot for Abednego? Tune in next week...

Let me ask another Batman question — did anyone watching that show ever have the slightest doubt about how things would turn out for Batman and Robin? Yes, the show always left us with a cliffhanger, but did anyone ever spend the week worrying about it?

Again, we see something similar here. Things look pretty bad for these three young heroes, but can anyone having read this far in the Bible have any doubt about the ultimate outcome?

These three did not. We already saw that in verses 17-18. Even if they died in that fire, they still had no doubt about the ultimate outcome. They were part of God's faithful and obedient people, and they knew that God would deliver them one way or another.

But wait, someone might say. They were facing the most horrible thing possible — death by burning — and so how they could be so confident?

I think they would have disagreed with the premise. They would have disagreed that the most horrible thing possible is being cast into the fire and burned alive. Instead, the most horrible thing possible is not being cast into the fire and burned alive because you compromised and bowed down to that false god! What we see here is a historical demonstration of what Jesus taught us.

Luke 17:33 — Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Some may think the situation is hopeless at the end of verse 23, but we know that the situation is not hopeless at all. We know that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are doing just fine at the end of verse 23! And we know that before we ever get to verse 24! Why? Because we know God! Things are not what they seem!

DANIEL 3:24-25

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 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.

After a while you have to almost start feeling sorry for poor Nebuchadnezzar. Once again, things are not going quite as he had planned. The all-powerful king is apparently unable to execute three young Jewish exiles, and the all-knowing king finds himself dumbfounded in verse 24!

Why was Nebuchadnezzar dumbfounded? Why was he astonished? Because instead of seeing bound and burning bodies, he sees men who are loose and walking around in the flames! And instead of seeing three such men, he sees four! And the fourth is different from the other three. “The form of the fourth is like the Son of God,” the king says.

There is so much for us to talk about here!

Let’s start with some easy lessons. “I see four men loose,” the king says in verse 25! Why was that such an astonishment? Because of verse 21 — they had been “bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments” before being tossed in the fire. As one commentator summed it up, “What men had bound, God loosened — and isn’t it ever so!”

And even today it is only through fire that we find freedom from our bonds.

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. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

As one author has written: “How we long for holiness without pain; sanctification without a cross, and growth without tears.”

We all face fiery furnaces of one sort or another, and it is through such events that we can grow and bear much fruit.

We could pause and preach some sermons here, but let’s move on to the million dollar question — **who was the fourth man?**

Let’s look at the clues, and we don’t have too many. In verse 25, the king said, “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” And in verse 28, the king refers to the fourth man as an angel.

So who was he? What was he?

For starters, what Nebuchadnezzar said about the fourth person was not inspired. We know from inspiration that the king actually made those statements, but inspiration does not vouch for the accuracy of what this pagan king said. So all we can really say about the fourth man from what the king tell us is that the fourth man looked different and seemingly more impressive in some way than the other three. The king had no apparent difficulty in distinguishing this fourth person from the other three.

The KJV clearly suggests that the fourth person was Jesus with the translation “the Son of God,” but a better translation is “a son of the gods,” which also fits better with the king’s polytheism.

It seems that Nebuchadnezzar immediately jumped to the conclusion that this fourth being was divine, which is understandable given the circumstances! We might very well end up with the same conclusion.

So who was the fourth person?

I think we have two possibilities. Either the fourth person was a delivering angel (and we will see such angels later in this book), or the fourth person was a preincarnate appearance of Christ as the KJV translation suggests.

We spent a great deal of time talking about the Angel of the Lord in our study of Zechariah. As you recall, some believe that the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is Jesus, and there is some evidence in support of that view.

Let me stress here (as we did in Zechariah) that Jesus is not an angel as we ordinarily use that term. Angels are created beings, but Jesus is not a created being. But the word “angel” means “messenger,” and God the Son is a messenger from God the Father, and so in that sense we could refer to Jesus as the Angel of the Lord or the Messenger of the Lord.

Why do some think the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is Jesus?

Who spoke to Moses from the burning bush?

Exodus 3:2 — And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.

But also note verse 4:

Exodus 3:4 — And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

Who stayed Abraham’s hand in Genesis 22?

Genesis 22:11-12 — And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

The “me” at the end of verse 12 is the angel of the Lord in verse 11!

So which is it? Is the fourth person Jesus, or is the fourth person an angelic deliverer? Either could be true, and we can’t say for sure.

Either way, we know that Jesus was with them in that fiery furnace. But perhaps Jesus made a personal appearance.

Is there any more evidence that Jesus was there in person? Perhaps, but not from the book of Daniel. We may see some evidence in the book of Acts. Remember when Steven was stoned to death in Acts 7, and he looked up and saw Jesus? What did Steven see?

Acts 7:56 — And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

What was Jesus doing? Jesus was standing. The Bible usually describes Jesus as sitting in heaven (Colossians 3:1), but Steven saw him standing. I love the fact that Jesus was standing when Steven was killed! What an encouragement that is to all who face persecution!

If you want my opinion it is that just as Jesus was standing when Steven was killed, so Jesus was standing when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were threatened with death, and in my opinion Jesus was standing right there with them in that furnace for all the world to see! That is my opinion.

DANIEL 3:26-27

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

Don't you just love how Nebuchadnezzar is still giving commands? Here the king commands that the three come out of the furnace.

Did you catch the humor in the king's command in verse 26? "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither." Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar was not too anxious for the fourth person to come out! He was certainly reluctant to give that person any commands!

We have to picture this incredible scene. The furious king who had just had the three young man bound and tossed like logs to a certain fiery death is now talking to them while they are walking around in the flames — and the king is calling them by name and asking them to come out of the flames!

Most of us, when we get too close to a flame, don't need any encouragement to move away from it — but this king is having to plead with these three to come out of the furnace! Perhaps their reluctance to leave the furnace is yet another clue as to whom they were talking to in there!

All of the king's illustrious visitors are still there to see everything that is happening, and they all gather with the king to look at the men. Not only are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego unharmed, but there is no smell of smoke or fire about them. Not a single hair is singed. Only their bonds were gone. It is as if they had never been in the fire at all.

DANIEL 3:28-30

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

And once again the king has a religious conversion! Will this one last longer than the one at the end of Chapter 2? We shall see in Chapter 4...

In verse 28, Nebuchadnezzar realizes that it was God who had changed the king's word. That is, it was God who countermanded the king's order. Politicians, kings,

and judges like to think that they have the last word on various subjects, but they do not. God always has the last word. Always. We may think we can redefine things that God has defined, but we cannot. God's definitions always control. Nebuchadnezzar learned that lesson here.

The king makes another decree in verse 29. He seems to have the same disease that our modern legislators have — when you run out of things to say, just make a new law!

Remember that Nebuchadnezzar's first decree back in verse 4 had not turned out very well. The king now once again pronounces death, but this time it is on anyone who says 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 instead he simply says that God is the greatest god among many. Nebuchadnezzar is just adding another god to Babylon's pantheon here in verse 29.

Finally, the king promotes these three, which no doubt really thrilled their accusers! If you want an example of a plan that completely backfired, you can't find a much better example than this (at least not in the Old Testament)!

So where are we at the end of Chapter 3? Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are in positions of power within the Babylonian government, just as God wants them to be. And Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are remaining faithful to God and are refusing to compromise God's word. It is clear to all that they will remain faithful unto death. And when the world knows that you will go that far to remain faithful, the world suddenly realizes that it has very little power over you!

As we will see, the book of Daniel is filled with many fascinating and wonderful visions and events, but perhaps the most wonderful of all is the faithfulness of these young Jewish exiles in the first three chapters. They have left for us all a wonderful example of faithfulness to follow.

CHAPTER 4

Daniel 4 is unique in all scripture. Almost the entire chapter is written from the perspective of a pagan king — notice the personal pronoun “I” that starts in verse 2 and continues through the end of the chapter in verse 37. That pronoun “I” refers to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Apparently what happened is that Nebuchadnezzar instructed Daniel to write a largely dictated account of what occurred, perhaps as part of a government record, which Daniel then did.

What can we say about the inspiration of Chapter 4?

In Chapter 3 we saw some statements from Nebuchadnezzar about the fourth person in the fiery furnace, and we noted that, although inspiration tells us that the king actually made those statements, inspiration does not vouch for the accuracy of what the king said.

For example, Genesis 3:4 accurately records what Satan said to Eve (“Ye shall not surely die”) — but we know that statement was a lie because God had said the opposite in Genesis 2:17.

For another example, think for a moment about the book of Job. In that book, Job has extended debates with his three friends. What does that mean for us? What it means is that we need to be very careful when we start picking verses out of that book to support some argument of ours? Why? Because Job disagreed with his friends on most things, which means they can’t both be right! Many of the statements in the book of Job about God are wrong! How do I know that for sure? Because that is what God says at the end of the book:

Job 42:7 — And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: **for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right**, as my servant Job hath.

So be careful if anyone ever asks you if every statement in the Bible is true — that is a trick question! In some cases, inspiration is telling us only that a statement was made, not that the statement is true.

So which is it here in Daniel 4 with this long statement from Nebuchadnezzar? Inspiration tells us that the king said it; but does inspiration also vouch for the truthfulness of what Nebuchadnezzar said? And, if so, how is this situation different from what we saw in Daniel 3 or in Genesis 3?

I think that inspiration does vouch for the accuracy of what we read in Daniel 4, even though it is a recorded statement from a pagan king. Why?

For starters, much of the chapter is a quote from Daniel himself interpreting yet another dream from the king. Yes, the quote is from the king recounting what Daniel had said to him — but Daniel is writing it down, and Daniel knew what the king had said to him about the dream. And Daniel also knew what he had told the king about the dream and that what he had told the king about the dream had come from God. I don't believe that either Daniel or the Holy Spirit would have allowed any inaccuracies on these points to enter the Bible — even if Daniel is just recording the king's recollections about the events.

The king's recollections were correct (which I believe) or Daniel would have corrected them, or perhaps the Holy Spirit would just not have included it in the book of Daniel. That we have this historical account tells me that it is correct, even though this is a very unusual chapter. (In fact, perhaps we can see such corrections by Daniel when Daniel reminds the reader in this chapter that his real name is Daniel and not Belteshazzar.)

Also, later in the chapter we will see Nebuchadnezzar made like a beast in the fields, and he certainly was in no condition to record what was happening while in that condition. That we know what happened to him is because of this inspired account written down by Daniel.

Much of what the king is saying in this chapter had come from Daniel in the first place, which again is evidence of its accuracy.

So, yes, even though Chapter 4 records the statements of a pagan king, we can trust the accuracy of these statements. Chapter 4, as with Chapters 1-3, is intended to show God's power over the Babylonians — and that power would not have been shown had King Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel provided an inaccurate report of what happened.

In Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is all knowing. In Chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is all powerful. In Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar will learn of his own weakness and folly before God and of his own utter dependence on God and of the terrible danger of human pride.

Nebuchadnezzar was but an instrument in God's hand. Nebuchadnezzar will come face to face with the two central themes of this book: The absolute sovereignty of God, and God's faithfulness to his covenant people. The first of those themes is repeated three times in this chapter:

Daniel 4:17 — 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.

Daniel 4:25 — That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

Daniel 4:32 — And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

By the end of Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar may have finally learned this lesson.

DANIEL 4:1-3

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are

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 Nebuchadnezzar made a giant graven image. After God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar again praised God. And here in Chapter 4, we see Nebuchadnezzar once again praising God, but (as we will see) he is doing so only after he has undergone a very humbling experience.

Even if Nebuchadnezzar's motives are dubious, he speaks the truth about God. God's kingdom (unlike Nebuchadnezzar's) is an everlasting kingdom, and God's dominion (unlike Nebuchadnezzar's) is from generation to generation.

This is also what Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar earlier about the church.

Daniel 2:44 — And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and **the kingdom shall not be left to other people**, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

That the kingdom will not be left to other people is just another way of saying that God's dominion is from generation to generation. That is not at all like an earthly kingdom. No matter how powerful an earthly king is, that king knows someday he will die and leave his kingdom to someone else. Not so, with the eternal kingdom of Christ.

And while that is all true of Christ's kingdom (the church), it is also true in a larger sense. The church has sometimes be called a kingdom within a kingdom, and that is an accurate description. Why? Because the entire universe is God's kingdom.

Jesus is (not will become) King of kings and Lord of lords. That means that Jesus is King and Lord over everyone and over everything. Why? Because "all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3), and because God (not us) crowned Jesus king (Hebrews 2:7-9).

God's kingdom and dominion are eternal. God has always and will always rule over everyone and everything. Nebuchadnezzar thought his own kingdom was eternal, but it was not. Human rule is transient. God's rule is permanent.

Yes, the church is a kingdom, but the church is a kingdom within a kingdom because the universe is also a kingdom of God. The eternal kingdom of Christ consists of God's faithful people, while the universal kingdom consists of everyone and everything.

History is full of kingdoms that thought they would last forever: Babylon, Greece, Rome, Nazi Germany, and on and on. Hitler's thousand year Reich lasted only eleven years! And perhaps Daniel 4 contains an important message for those today who would wrap a flag around the Bible. The United States is no more permanent than any nation or kingdom that came before it.

There is but one eternal kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar finally understood that — as will all earthly rulers someday.

And we see something interesting here in Nebuchadnezzar's statements about God. They don't sound much like the typical Babylonian descriptions of the false Babylonian gods. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar's statements sound a lot like the Old Testament.

Psalms 145:13 — Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

Isaiah 40:17 — All nations before him are as nothing

Isaiah 14:27 — For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

So here is a question for us: Where did Nebuchadnezzar learn all of this Hebrew terminology that we reading here in Aramaic? Nebuchadnezzar is starting to sound a bit like Isaiah here. How do we explain that?

Simple. Nebuchadnezzar had been hearing words like that from Daniel since they first met. Most likely about 25 years has elapsed between the end of Chapter 3 and the beginning of Chapter 4. And so Daniel is now in his forties, and the king is in his

fifties or sixties (about ten to fifteen years older than Daniel). And after being with Daniel all that time, Nebuchadnezzar was starting to sound a lot like Daniel!

And that raises another question for us: What sort of words and phrases are our friends picking up from us? Are they starting to sound like us, or are we starting to sound like them? Are our friends starting to quote the Bible more and more as they hear us quote the Bible?

Matthew 5:13 — Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Colossians 4:6 — Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

When we are around others, do we lift them up (as Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar) or do they pull us down? Or worse, do we pull them down? Again, we have a good example to follow from Daniel.

DANIEL 4:4-7

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

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.

Verse 4 tells us that the king was at ease and was prospering. Verse 30 later in the chapter will suggest that Nebuchadnezzar's building activities had been completed when this all occurred. If so, that means these events probably took place after Egypt had been conquered and after Jerusalem had been destroyed and likely about eight or nine years before the siege of Tyre in 573 BC, which is mentioned in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 26:7 — For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.

What that means is that the seven year illness of Nebuchadnezzar that we will see in this chapter may have been from 582 to 575 BC, a period in which we know of no military operations by the king.

In the quarter century between Chapters 3 and 4, it seems that perhaps the king had mellowed a bit. Notice that he does not make any threats in verse 6.

Notice also that Daniel was no flash in the pan. After 25 years, he was still master of the wise men (as we will see in verse 9). And that success had not changed Daniel; he was still faithful to God.

And so the king was at ease and was prospering — and that may have been a big source of his problems! This chapter reminds us of Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. There we had a man who had everything except God — and God called him a fool.

There is a big change in the king's peace of mind between verse 4 and verse 5. He goes from being at ease to being afraid and being troubled. And again, in response, the king makes a decree. (He does that 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.

As before, the Chaldean wise men are unable to interpret the dream. Note that unlike in Chapter 2, 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. But even if they knew or guessed the meaning, they probably would have lacked the courage to tell the king. Even Daniel will hesitate to tell the king what the dream means.

DANIEL 4:8-9

8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, 9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

Why was Daniel the last one called and not the first one called? There are many possible reasons.

- Perhaps Daniel was out of town or was ill.
- Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to ask Daniel unless it was absolutely necessary. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar did not like having to go to Daniel for answers.
- Perhaps Daniel deliberately delayed his coming to first give the pagan wise men an opportunity to prove their inability to interpret the dream.
- Daniel was the master of the wise men, so perhaps the boss was just the last one called.
- Finally, perhaps the king already suspected what the dream meant, and he just wanted to delay the inevitable. Perhaps the king was hoping that the Chaldeans would give him good news about the dream!

It is clear from verse 8 that Nebuchadnezzar is still a card-carrying polytheist. When Nebuchadnezzar calls Daniel, he reminds us that Daniel's Babylonian name is Belteshazzar "according to the name of my god." The king also says that Daniel has the "spirit of the holy gods."

As we said earlier, Nebuchadnezzar's "god" was presumably Nebo, and Belteshazzar means "Nebo, protect my life." Let's see whether Nebo will be able to protect the king.

DANIEL 4:10-12

10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

So far so good: The king had dreamed of a giant tree that gave shelter and food to all the beasts and birds of the earth.

Already the king was likely identifying himself with this tree. He like the tree had grown tall and strong with roots and limbs covering the earth. He like the tree provided health and wealth to those who lived under him.

This looks like a happy dream so far. What was troubling the king? We are about to find out.

DANIEL 4:13-14

13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

What troubled the king was that this beautiful tree was going to be cut down, and its foliage was going to be stripped away. And one effect of cutting down the tree was that the birds and beasts that had found shelter under it would be scattered. First, the head of gold came tumbling down in Chapter 2, and now the giant tree is cut down.

The order to cut down the tree came from “a watcher and an holy one” who “came down from heaven.” Who was this?

The word for “watcher” (and its plural in verse 17) used here occurs nowhere else in the Bible. The word does occur in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (a commentary on Genesis), where it is used to denote an angel. This usage has caused some to believe that the watchers are a special class of angels whose duty is to watch and patrol the earth and who are responsible for executing the decrees of God on the earth.

But, as with many things about angels, we can quickly run out of scriptural support and enter instead the realm of speculation. I think that what C.S. Lewis said about demons could also be said about angels:

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.

The Babylonians believed in heavenly beings whose task was to keep watch over the earth — and perhaps the king is just substituting his own Babylonian word for what he saw, which was likely just an ordinary angel sent by God to cut down this tree (if the word “ordinary” can ever be applied to an angel!).

DANIEL 4:15-16

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

Although the tree would be cut down, the stump would be left, and the stump of the tree was to have a band of iron and brass placed around it. Most likely these bands of iron and brass are intended to protect and preserve the stump, and to keep it from being removed along with the rest of the tree. But I think we are also seeing a glimpse of what is about to happen to that stump — it will be strongly bound and controlled in some way.

Why iron and brass? Commentaries seem to be stumped on that question, with one calling it a “mystery to interpreters.” Perhaps the best suggestion was that it points to “fettters of iron and brass,” which is a metaphor for the binding of men, and we are about to see that this stump is a man.

Although Daniel has 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 at the end of verse 15:

And let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the
beasts in the grass of the earth.

The watcher quits referring to the stump as “it” and begins instead to refer to the stump as “he”! Even before Daniel provided the interpretation, the identity of this stump was likely already very clear to the king.

So what was going to happen to this stump/man? The heart of this stump was to be changed from that of a man to that of a beast. Some translations have “mind” in place of “heart,” and that is the correct sense of how the word “heart” is used here. Perhaps those fettters of iron and brass would be used literally!

How long was this change going to last? It was to last for “seven times.” What does that mean?

Most commentators take the phrase to mean “appointed times” or “seasons,” which would mean that “seven times” refers to seven 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 (when used figuratively) denotes perfection, and so this period of seven times might denote a period of time that would be just right for Nebuchadnezzar to learn his lesson. This view may be supported by the wording used later in verse 25:

And seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High
ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

But I think the better view is that a literal seven years is meant here. We have not yet arrived at the apocalyptic sections of this book, where we would expect numbers to be used figuratively. But just because the number seven here is literal does not

mean it not also figurative. God chose this number, and when God chooses a number to use for a literal purposes, we often see a figurative meaning as well. For example, I think we also see that with the 70 years of captivity.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have a bizarre view of the "seven times." They say that the seven times denotes seven years, each day of which also denotes a year. Using 360 days for the number of days in a year, they get 7 times 360, or 2520 years. They refer to this period of 2520 years as the "times of the Gentiles" — the period of Gentile opposition, which they say is depicted by Nebuchadnezzar's madness. This period of 2520 years supposedly began in 607 BC when they say the temple was destroyed. (That event actually happened in 587 BC.) Counting 2520 years from 607 BC brings us to AD 1914, which is when the Jehovah's Witnesses say the kingdom was established.

That is what the Jehovah's Witnesses say. What did Jehovah say? He said in Daniel 2 that the eternal kingdom would be established in the first century — not in the 20th century!

DANIEL 4:17

17 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.

Notice the *plural* "watchers" and "holy ones" here in verse 17. Although only one "watcher" was mentioned in verse 13, there are apparently more than one involved in this decree. The watcher who is speaking continues to give the decree, and he gives the reason behind the decree, which happens to be one of the central themes of the entire book — the absolute sovereignty of God. It is God who rules, and it is God who sets up earthly rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar.

The term "basest of men" in verse 17 is interesting from several perspectives. God chooses who will wear the crown, and God has often chosen those who are humble and of low social standing.

1 Samuel 2:7-8 — The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.

But this term “basest of men” also has a particular application to the history of Nebuchadnezzar. The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an inscription made by his father, Nabopolassar, was found in which he referred to himself as “the son of a nobody,” “insignificant,” “not visible,” “the weak,” and “the feeble.”

This knowledge of the lowly origin of Babylon's greatest king would have quickly been forgotten — but the author of Daniel knew about it. How could a Jewish writer writing after nearly 200 years of Greek rule have produced such an accurate record 400 years after the fact? The answer is that he did not. Daniel wrote the book near the time of Nebuchadnezzar, not 400 years later.

DANIEL 4:18

18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

The king turns at last to Daniel for the interpretation of the dream because the other wise men could not interpret it.

Daniel will get the interpretation from God, but I suspect that Daniel could have done pretty well interpreting this dream all by himself.

For starters, the portrayal of man in his pride as a lofty tree is common in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 2:12-13 — For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan.

Isaiah 10:34 — And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

Ezekiel had used a very similar picture to describe Assyria just a few years before Nebuchadnezzar had this dream.

Ezekiel 31:3-6 — Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

And I suspect the Chaldean wise men also had a pretty good idea what was meant by the dream, but they were too cowardly to explain the bad news to the king. Daniel, on the other hand, was willing to proclaim the whole counsel of God to Nebuchadnezzar.

But while the general meaning of the dream might have been clear, there were some specific details in the dream that were not clear. What, for example, did it mean that the stump had a band of iron and brass? And what was meant by the “seven times”? That part of the interpretation would have to come from God, which means that the king has finally called the right person to interpret his dream.

It is clear that there is something bad in store for the king, but what is it?

DANIEL 4:19

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

The meaning of this dream is so bad that Daniel is reluctant to tell the king what it means. In fact, Daniel is shocked at the meaning of the dream. The Aramaic used here literally reads “he was stupefied for one hour” but the word used here for “hour” can simply mean a short period of time.

This verse gives us an interesting picture of the relationship between these two men, who as we said had now known each other for about 25 years.

Daniel could have been vindictive against the king who had exiled him and who had destroyed Jerusalem, but he was not. Instead, we see that Daniel was not happy at all about the bad news he had for the king. I think we can see not only loyalty to the king, but also perhaps some friendship with the king.

And notice also the concern of the king for Daniel. After seeing Daniel’s reaction, the king says, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee.”

Their relationship seems to have involved mutual respect and perhaps mutual affection. Their concern for each other in verse 19 seems very genuine.

But with that said, there could have been a personal reason for Daniel’s distress at the bad news he had for the king. Nebuchadnezzar evidently had treated the Jews well throughout most of his reign. If he were deposed, there would be no guarantee of a like-minded replacement. A ruler could easily arise who knew not Daniel, as happened with Joseph in Exodus 1:8.

When Daniel at last begins to speak, he begins by wishing that the dream would apply instead to Nebuchadnezzar’s enemies — but Daniel, the king, and the reader all know that such will not be the case. What Daniel is about to say will apply to the king, and it is not good news.

DANIEL 4:20-22

20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;
21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under

which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

Daniel has both good news and bad news — and he starts with the good news.

As we and everyone else suspected, the mighty tree represents Nebuchadnezzar in all his military success and genius. His kingdom stretched from what is today Egypt to western Iran and from modern Syria into Saudi Arabia.

But did Nebuchadnezzar's dominion extend to the end of the earth as verse 22 says? No, and neither did it reach unto heaven as that verse also says. The hyperbole used here is just intended to describe the incredible extent of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

It takes three verses to tell the king that he is the tree. I don't know about you, but it seems to me that Daniel is taking his time with the good news to delay the bad news as long as he can.

DANIEL 4:23-27

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the

kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Now for the bad news.

The decree of the watcher, Daniel says in verse 24, is a decree of the Most High. This judgment, whatever it will be, is a judgment from God. It may have been relayed by a watcher, but the decree itself is from God.

And the bad news? The bad news is that the king is going to lose his position, his kingdom, and his sanity until “seven times shall pass over” him and he understands the lesson that God wants to teach him — that God rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will.

And the banded tree stump? The banded stump represents Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom while the king is driven from men by the watchers.

That the stump was protected is a promise to the king that his kingdom would not be taken away permanently. And why was that important? Why not just remove Nebuchadnezzar permanently?

If Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom while he was out of the picture then that would prove Nebuchadnezzar’s point. That is, it would show that Nebuchadnezzar was the real power and that it was his genius that kept the kingdom together. And once the great king was gone, his kingdom fell apart.

But God wanted to show Nebuchadnezzar that the opposite was true. Nebuchadnezzar ruled and had his kingdom only because it pleased God for him to rule and to have his kingdom. If God could keep Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom together while the king was out in the field living the life of an ox then God clearly did not need Nebuchadnezzar’s brilliant leadership to hold his kingdom together. God could put

Nebuchadnezzar in power, God could remove him, and God could put him back in power — and that is exactly what happened.

In the ordinary course of events, any ruler suffering from such an illness would have been immediately deposed and replaced. History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar's sons were worthless, and we know that they were unable to retain power very long after his death. But it was God's will that the kingdom would be returned to Nebuchadnezzar after he recovered — so that is what happened.

And how did God accomplish that? We aren't told, but I think we know. I think it must have been Daniel who held things together for those seven years. By this time, Daniel was no doubt already powerful, but he must have quickly become much more powerful as he likely became the de facto ruler for this period of time. Only through God's hand could Nebuchadnezzar's throne have been preserved during his period of insanity.

Verse 27 ends with a bit of a good news.

There was still a possibility that Nebuchadnezzar could avoid or perhaps just delay this misfortune if he would amend his ways and acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God.

What did the king need to do? Verse 27 tells us that the king needed to break off his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. That's good advice for any earthly ruler, but not every earthly ruler has this incentive!

Did Nebuchadnezzar do this? Perhaps he tried because verse 29 will tell us that the judgment was delayed for a year, but we are also told that the judgment eventually came.

DANIEL 4:28-30

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the

kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

Notice that the narrator has switched from the king (“I did this, and I did that”) to Daniel (“he did this, and he did that”). The narration will switch back to the king later in the chapter.

Daniel may have hoped in verse 27 that the king might change his ways and avoid this judgment, but verse 28 gives us the sad news. “All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.”

What did Nebuchadnezzar see as he strolled about on the roof of his palace? He saw a lot!

Babylon contained two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the hanging gardens and the city walls. The location of the hanging gardens is in doubt but the walls have been found. The outer wall stretched for more than five miles and, according to Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, the wall had enough space on top to enable a four-horse chariot to turn around.

During Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Babylon was undoubtedly the most magnificent (and probably the largest) city on earth. Herodotus visited Babylon about one hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar’s time and was overwhelmed by its grandeur.

As for the hanging gardens, according to the Babylonian historian Berosus, Nebuchadnezzar constructed them for his wife (Amytis) who had left the mountains of her native Media for the plains of Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar built a mountain in the city to remind his wife of her homeland. One text stated:

These were elevated gardens, high enough to be seen beyond the city walls. They boasted many different kinds of plants and palm trees. Ingenious hoists had been contrived by which to raise water to the high terraces from the Euphrates River.

Most of the bricks taken out of Babylon in the archaeological excavations bear the name and inscription of Nebuchadnezzar stamped on them. One of the records of Nebuchadnezzar sounds almost like the boast we see in verse 40. The brick reads, “The fortifications of Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever.”

What was the straw that broke the camel's back with regard to the timing of this judgment against Nebuchadnezzar? It happened when the king looked out over his kingdom and said "Look what I have done!"

Nebuchadnezzar was not the last ruler to claim all the credit, and neither was he the last to suffer a terrible fate for having done so.

Acts 12:21-23 — And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Nebuchadnezzar, like Herod, was filled with pride at his own achievements. He had not given glory to God despite all that the king now knew about God.

This is an important lesson for the church. Sometimes we may be tempted to boast about all that we have done and all that we have built in God's kingdom. But God deserves all of the glory for whatever is accomplished in his eternal kingdom.

There is also an important lesson for us here about the danger of human pride. And that is a lesson our society needs to hear, especially in this current month of June, which is now called "Pride Month"!

1 John 2:15-17 — Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, **and the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Sounds like "Pride Month" to me, but those dangers are not limited to "Pride Month." God's lesson to Nebuchadnezzar should be a lesson for us all.

DANIEL 4:31-33

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they

shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

God interrupts the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar while the words were still in his mouth. I love how Jim McGuigan described it: "The king was bragging one moment and munching the next!"

Poor Nebuchadnezzar. After all that he did, this is what he is most remembered for. Even Shakespeare mentions 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 "is departed" from Nebuchadnezzar. So sure was the coming judgment that God speaks of it has already having happened. We see this so often in the Bible that it has a name — the prophetic past tense.

And here is a Bible study tip: When God starts using the past tense, it's time to watch out! The sky is about to fall on someone, and there's not anything on earth that can stop it.

Verse 33 tells us about the condition of Nebuchadnezzar during his insanity. He grazed in the field like a beast. His hair, matted and coarse, looked like eagle feathers. His fingernails and toenails became like claws. This description suggests a long period of time, which is further evidence that "seven times" most likely means "seven years."

Liberal critics claim that this 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 Dr. Phil Show.

Not only is this event NOT that incredible, but it has a name: boanthropy (thinking you are a bovine). 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.

Another example that was mentioned in a commentary was that of a man who believed himself to be a cat for a period of over thirteen years and yet was gainfully employed the entire time. (The commentary failed to answer one big question: what job did he have?)

Here is the really interesting part: No Babylonian record has been found that mentions any activity by Nebuchadnezzar during the seven year period from 582 to 575 BC. What do you think the king was up to? I think he was out standing in his field — literally!

Who was in charge? As we said, it may have been Daniel. Or perhaps Nebuchadnezzar's son, Amel-Marduk, reigned while his father was grazing. Whoever was in charge on earth, we know who was really in charge here, and Nebuchadnezzar was learning that lesson the hard way. God was in charge, and God preserved Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom for him.

But how do we respond to those who complain that this very unusual event is found nowhere in the secular Babylonian histories that have been discovered? Simple. This is not the type of thing that Nebuchadnezzar or his relatives would have wanted preserved for perpetuity in his royal inscriptions. For a modern comparison, we might think of Roosevelt and his rarely seen (even to this day) wheel chair.

DANIEL 4:34-35

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him

that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto 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 terrible his great pride was.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that God deserves all of the glory and praise because he has an everlasting dominion and an eternal kingdom — unlike Nebuchadnezzar himself whose kingdom could be taken from him.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that God is all-powerful — unlike Nebuchadnezzar himself, whose weakness had been on display for seven years for all the world to see.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that no one can stay God's hand — unlike how God had stayed Nebuchadnezzar's hand.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that no one can question God's actions — unlike how God had repeatedly questioned Nebuchadnezzar's actions.

If it is foolish ask an earthly king, "What are you doing?" as we read in Ecclesiastes 8:4, then how much more foolish is it to ask God, "What doest thou?" (verse 35).

DANIEL 4:36-37

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that 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 here that even more greatness was added unto him. It sounds to me like Nebuchadnezzar finally understood where that greatness came from — it was added unto him by God. It was not something the king accomplished on his own. This is very different from how the king described his greatness prior to his seven year lesson.

Again, the significant part of this account is that Nebuchadnezzar regained his kingdom. That proved to him and to all the people that his kingdom was not his because of his own power or his own genius. His kingdom was a gift from God — and perhaps at last Nebuchadnezzar understood that. It sounds like he did — but we have been here before!

Did Nebuchadnezzar finally learn his lesson? We don't know for sure because this book will tell us nothing more about him. History tells us he died a natural death after reigning for more than 40 years — both being very unusual events for rulers of that day! So perhaps he did learn his lesson.

Before we start Chapter 5, let's pause to note the historical accuracy regarding Babylonian history that we have seen so far in this book. That accuracy makes it very difficult to believe that the book was written 400 years after its historical setting as the liberal critics would have us believe.

As we just saw, Daniel 4:30 gives an accurate picture of Nebuchadnezzar's building activities:

The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

One commentator has written:

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.

And that is far from the only example.

Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel's friends thrown into a fiery furnace, and yet the Persians will later have Daniel thrown into a lions' den. Why? Because the Persians were fire worshipers. How would someone have known details like that in 168 BC?

Daniel tells us about the participation of women at royal banquets in Daniel 5:3. The Persians did not permit women to feast in the presence of men but the Chaldeans did. How would someone have known details like that in 168 BC?

Here is what one commentator says:

(Lenormant) 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].

(J.D. Wilson) 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.

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

In short, we can trust the Bible!

CHAPTER 5

The fourth chapter of Daniel was focused on Nebuchadnezzar's pride. The fifth chapter of Daniel will focus on the pride of another king, Belshazzar.

The major difference between Chapters 4 and 5 is in the response of each king. In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar ultimately repented of his arrogance and was restored to his former position. In Daniel 5, Belshazzar will not repent and will be killed.

We will see Belshazzar's sins on display in this chapter — and we have seen those same sins before: arrogance, blasphemy, and idolatry.

The theme of Daniel 5 fits into a central theme of the whole book: In spite of present appearances, God is in control.

That theme was important in the context of the oppression of God's people at the hands of arrogant pagan rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Do we still face oppression today from arrogant pagan rulers? If so, we should remember the theme of Daniel — in spite of present appearances, God is in control!

Chapter 4 was the end of the story as far as Nebuchadnezzar is concerned in the book of Daniel or in the Bible.

By any measure, Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most towering figures of human history, and certainly one of the most powerful rulers ever to walk the earth. But was Nebuchadnezzar in charge? Was Nebuchadnezzar in control? Or was he just a tool in the hand of God?

And when parents today choose a name for their son — do they choose the name Nebuchadnezzar, or do they instead consider the name of a Jewish exile who, from a human perspective, would have been considered utterly insignificant when compared with the mighty Nebuchadnezzar? We must learn to see things as God sees them! That is a central message of this book.

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 in Chapter 4 to the very end (in fact, to the very last day!) of the Babylonian empire in Chapter 5.

As we said earlier, there was a jump of about 25 years between Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Likewise, there is a jump of about 35 years between Daniel 4 and Daniel 5.

Later we will see other large breaks in time that occur without warning — but when we see them later, they should not come as a surprise to us because we now know that such breaks occur in the book. We should be on the look out for them!

How do we know when such a break occurs? We look very carefully at the text and at the context, and we also compare what we read with what we know from history.

Nebuchadnezzar died in 563 BC. He was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach. (Perhaps when you name your son “Evil” you have only yourself to blame when he turns out bad!) Evil-Merodach or Amel-Marduk means man of Marduk. (Marduk was the patron deity of the city of Babylon.) He was the king who released Jehoiachin from prison and gave him an honorable place in the court (2 Kings 25:27-30).

Two years later, Evil-Merodach was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who was married to a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Neriglissar is mentioned in Jeremiah 39:13.

Neriglissar died four years later. He was succeeded by his young son, Labashi-Marduk, who was murdered by the next king after only nine months.

When the dust cleared, Nabonidus was on the throne. Nabonidus may have been of Assyrian ancestry, and he most likely married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimize his claim to the throne.

Belshazzar, whom we will meet in the first verse of Chapter 5, was the son of Nabonidus.

The final year of the Chaldean empire was 539 BC. The ruler who defeated them was Cyrus the Great, and the ruler who took charge of the city of Babylon at that time was someone Daniel calls Darius the Mede. We will spend some time looking at the identity of Darius the Mede, which has long been the subject of great debate.

DANIEL 5:1-4

1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink

therein. 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

If we are looking for controversy in Chapter 5, we don't have to look any further than the first word of the first verse — Belshazzar.

In this chapter, Daniel tells us that Belshazzar was the last Chaldean king of Babylon and that Nebuchadnezzar was the father of Belshazzar. Many historians have told us that Nabonidus was the last Chaldean king of Babylon and that Nabonidus was Belshazzar's father. How do we explain that?

For many years, liberal critics said that Belshazzar was a fictional character invented by the author of Daniel. But, as with so many attacks from the liberal critics, archaeology has now confirmed the Biblical account. Both they and we should remember this when we get to Darius the Mede at the end of Chapter 5! Never bet against the Bible!

Thirty-seven discovered archival texts dating from the first to the fourteenth year of Nabonidus have proved to all that Belshazzar was a real person. We now know both from the Bible and from extra-Biblical history that Belshazzar existed, that he was the son of Nabonidus, that he was reigning as co-regent at this time in history, and that he was in charge of the city of Babylon when it fell to the Persians — all exactly as Daniel tells us here.

Yes, once again the liberal critics have egg all over their faces, but there are some additional questions that we need to consider.

First, why doesn't Chapter 5 mention Nabonidus?

We know that Daniel was aware of Nabonidus. How do we know that? Because of what is recorded in verses 7, 16, and 29 of this chapter. In those verses, Belshazzar promises to make someone the third ruler in his kingdom.

That is very different from the offer that Pharaoh made to Joseph in Genesis 41:40 — he offered Joseph the second position. Why did Belshazzar promise only the third position and not the second position? Because Belshazzar was already the second, and his father Nabonidus was the first! The third was the only open spot! How would a Jew writing 400 years later have known this?

Incredibly, 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.

If that liberal scholar believed in God, he would know!

But why not mention Nabonidus by name? Because Nabonidus did not play any part in the events described in this chapter.

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. So, for all practical purposes for anyone living in Babylon, Belshazzar was the only king at this time.

Our second question is this — why is Nebuchadnezzar called the father of Belshazzar four times in this chapter and why is Belshazzar called the son of Nebuchadnezzar once in this chapter when Belshazzar was actually the son of Nabonidus?

The answer to that question hinges on the meaning of the word “son.” One scholar has listed seven ways in which the term “father” was used at this time and twelve possible meanings for the word “son.”

“Father” and “son” can simply mean “ancestor” and “descendent.” (For example, Jesus is the son of David, and the Jews were the sons of Jacob with Abraham as their father.)

But was Nebuchadnezzar an ancestor of Belshazzar? Possibly.

It is possible that a genetic relationship existed between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimize his rule,

then his son by her would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. That view is strengthened by the fact that Nabonidus named one of his sons Nebuchadnezzar and by the fact that an earlier king (Neriglissar) is known to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

It is even possible that Belshazzar was the literal son of Nebuchadnezzar. How would that be true?

Only six or seven years elapsed between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and when Nabonidus came to the throne. It is possible that the new king married a wife of Nebuchadnezzar who had a son by Nebuchadnezzar, and that Nabonidus then adopted that son. I would not call this explanation likely, but it is possible.

The most likely explanation is that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, which means that Belshazzar was a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

Another explanation is that, as one commentary explains, “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:

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.

But why then not just call Belshazzar the “son of Nabonidus?” Because Nabonidus was a very unpopular king. And that may also explain why Nabonidus was absent from the city of Babylon for 14 years.

Also, inscriptions have been found that show Nabonidus claimed to have received his authority from Nebuchadnezzar. So perhaps Nabonidus’ sons were required to be addressed as sons of Nebuchadnezzar to stress that connection. Belshazzar and the Queen-Mother will both refer to Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter.

Once again we have evidence for an early date for this book. Knowledge of Belshazzar seems to have faded by the time of Herodotus (fifth century BC) and Xenophon (fourth century BC). If the book had been written in the second century, the name “Nabonidus” would have been used rather than the then-forgotten “Belshazzar.”

Now that was covered **the first word** of Chapter 5, let's study the other words!

It was bad enough when Nebuchadnezzar looted the temple and stole the gold and silver vessels, but now Belshazzar and his friends are using the temple vessels in a drunken feast while they praise their false gods and idols.

The Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon both tell us that a banquet was in progress on the night that Babylon fell. The date would have been October 12, 539 BC, about thirty or forty years after the events of Chapter 4. Daniel is now in his eighties.

What was going on outside the city during this feast? The Persian armies were camped outside the city walls. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Babylonians had suffered a crushing defeat just days before at the hands of the Persians, and Nabonidus (Belshazzar's father) had fled. Only the city of Babylon remained unconquered. The Nabonidus Chronicle also says that the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without any battle, which as we will see is precisely what Daniel 5 also tells us.

What was the purpose of this feast? Was it to rally and encourage the leaders? Was it to give the people a diversion in the face of the Persian onslaught? Was it to eat and drink today for tomorrow we die? Perhaps it was a bit of all three.

Perhaps Belshazzar was simply trying to drown his fears with alcohol. Verse 1 says that Belshazzar drank wine, or more accurately, "tasted the wine." Some commentaries say that this phrase refers to a ritual that preceded the feast in which the king tasted the wine. But others think that "tasting the wine" is just a euphemism for saying that the king was drunk — which seems to fit the context very well.

Perhaps the feast was intended to build morale and encourage the king's people — to show the king's confidence in the face of the Persians. After all, the walls of the city likely seemed invincible, and the Euphrates River ran through the city; so there was an ample water supply. Herodotus tells us that the city had been stocked with enough food to last for many years.

Or, perhaps when news of Nabonidus' defeat at Sippar, fifty miles to the north, and his subsequent flight two days earlier became known in Babylon, Belshazzar may

have moved quickly to proclaim himself the first ruler of the empire, the real king (with Nabonidus being moved to the second slot). If so, then the festival may have been a celebration of Belshazzar's coronation.

Or, perhaps the Babylonians were simply observing a customary festival that happened to fall on this day. Xenophon and Herodotus appear to support that view.

Notice how the vessels mentioned in the first chapter (written in Hebrew) play a prominent role in this event 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 different languages were used.

Why were the Jewish temple vessels used?

First, I don't think it was an accident that the king used these particular vessels for his wine. Later in verse 23, Daniel will tell the king that he had lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven. It seems clear that Belshazzar had made a deliberate decision to challenge and blaspheme the God of Israel this way.

But why? Why had the king gone out of his way to challenge God?

Perhaps Belshazzar wanted to show that he was greater even than Nebuchadnezzar himself. In effect, Belshazzar may have been saying to God, "You may have humbled Nebuchadnezzar, but you will never humble me!"

Another possibility is that Belshazzar may have already known about the prophecies of his defeat. In Chapter 8, we will see that Daniel had already prophesied in the third year of Belshazzar's reign about Babylon's fall to the Persians.

Also, Isaiah had mentioned Cyrus, the Persian king who conquered Babylon, by name 150 years before Cyrus was born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). That sort of prophecy would get anyone's attention, and Daniel or someone else may have shown it to the king. If so, Belshazzar may have been challenging those prophecies from God by using the temple vessels during his drunken feast.

Whatever the reason, this challenge to God by Belshazzar will work out the same way such challenges always work out. Men may raise their fist to God and challenge

his word (as they still do today), but God's word always prevails. God always has the last word, and such challenges always fail.

DANIEL 5:5-6

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

Chapter 5 opens a window for us to view one of the most remarkable and most important events in history — the very day that the Persians conquered ancient Babylon. And verses 5-6 are without doubt the most remarkable thing that happened on that very remarkable day. Here is how one commentary describes it:

Suddenly, at the height of Belshazzar's blasphemy, drunkenness, and immorality, the revelry stops. No trumpet blast, no earthquake, no fanfare. Just the fingers of a hand that appear, write four words (two of which are identical), and then vanish — leaving only the words on the wall.

As the king gazes at the words, his color changes, his limbs give way, and his knees knock together. The word "color" or "countenance" in verse 6 literally means "brightness." It means that his bright looks, his cheerfulness, and his hilarity were very suddenly changed. The text literally says that "the joints of his loins were loosened," which may suggest various other symptoms of extreme panic that we won't go into!

Here is how one older commentary described the situation:

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 Belshazzar crouch and shiver. How did his joints loose, and his knees knock together!

If, as we suggested, the king has used the temple vessels from Jerusalem to shake his fist at God, he was now getting God's response.

The archaeologist Koldewey, who led a number of excavations at Babylon beginning in March 1899, may have discovered the very room where this event took place. Off the largest of the five courtyards in the king's palaces was a huge chamber with three entrances that Koldewey identified as the throne room. Koldewey described it this way:

It is so clearly marked out for this purpose [as a throne-room] that no reasonable doubt can be felt as to its having been used as their principal audience chamber. If any one should desire to localize the scene of Belshazzar's eventful banquet, he can surely place it with complete accuracy in this immense room.

Along one of the long walls, as Koldewey described it, was a niche opposite the entrance in which Koldewey suggests the king's throne stood. Koldewey tells us that the walls of the throne room "were washed over with white gypsum." Verse 5 tells us that the wall was covered with plaster.

Now how would the author of Daniel have known this fact if he had been writing from Palestine hundreds of years after this time as the liberal critics ask us to believe? How would that unknown Jew writing four centuries later have known the color of the walls in Belshazzar's throne room? Daniel knew the color of the walls because Daniel was there to see those walls!

DANIEL 5:7-9

7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

The king calls out loudly or “with strength.” It is easy to picture him screaming for his wise men — and no doubt these so-called wise men will prove just as effective as they have the other times they have been summoned! It is not clear who else in the room saw the words, which may explain why the room was still noisy enough that the king had to shout in verse 7. Or perhaps the king shouted just because he was afraid.

Belshazzar promises to make the interpreter the third ruler in the kingdom. Why the third? Because that was all Belshazzar could promise. He himself was the second ruler, and his father Nabonidus was the first ruler (or perhaps vice versa by now). The top two slots were already taken!

The wise men could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Why not? 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.)

Let’s look at that question more closely.

First, what language were the words written in?

Most commentators think that the words were written in Aramaic because that is the language used in Chapter 5. But others argue that the wise men would have been able to read the words had they been written in Aramaic, and verse 8 tells us they could not read the writing.

But verses 25-28 will later suggest very strongly that the words were in fact written in Aramaic because those verses appear to give us the actual Aramaic words.

If they were written in another language, then verses 25-28 must be giving us the Aramaic translations of the words, but that seems an odd conclusion in view of verse 25: “And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

Also, as we will see, there is some word play involved with the final of the four words, and that word play likely would not have come across in a different language.

But if the words were written in Aramaic, then why couldn't the wise men read them? We will come back to that question in a moment.

Others think that the words were written in Hebrew. If so, then that would explain why the wise men could not read the language.

This is a popular view, but it means that verse 25 is not giving us the actual words that were written, but is instead giving us their Aramaic translations. Even so, this is certainly a possible explanation.

Other suggestions include the Phoenician language and an unknown language known only to Daniel. There is no evidence for either of those suggestions.

I think the description of these events in Chapter 5 strongly suggests that the words were written in Aramaic. Hebrew is the next best option, but I think the most likely answer is Aramaic — and that the actual words written on the wall are the four Aramaic words found in verse 25.

So, then, back to our earlier question: If the language was Aramaic, then how can we explain why the wise men were not able to read it?

According to Jewish tradition, the letters were not comprehensible because they were written vertically, forming an anagram, instead of horizontally. Others suggest that the letters were written with unusually shaped characters. Others think that only the first letters of the words may have been given, or that the words may have been jumbled.

Some suggest that the wise men were stricken with blindness, but the king was apparently also unable to read the message, and he was certainly able to see the writing on the wall. Others suggest that the writing vanished after the king saw it, but later in verse 16 the king will ask Daniel to read it, which suggests that it was still there to be read.

These three words can also be translated to mean three different measures of weights. This ambiguity provides another theory why the king's advisors were unable to tell the king to what the words referred. For example, does the word "pound" refer to a weight or to a monetary value? You need to know the context.

In short, all we know is that the wise men could not read or understand the words — we are not told why.

This event gives us a wonderful example of the unity of the Bible. The Bible was written by many different authors over about 1500 years — but each writer was writing words inspired by God, and so we see a unity throughout the Bible, from the first book to the last book. There are no contradictions. As the plan of God is revealed from the beginning to the end of the Bible, we see a single unified message.

How do we see that in Daniel 5? Because the Babylonian Empire was coming to an end this very night — and what was happening? There was confusion about language. And how did Babylon begin? With a confusion of language in Genesis 11:1-9. God is taking them out in Daniel 5 the way they came in!

No one who studies the Bible can fail to see that one author is behind it all — and not just in **writing** it, but also in **doing** it!

DANIEL 5:10-12

10 Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and sooth-sayers; 12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

“O king, live for ever!” It was the usual greeting for a king, but in this case “for-ever” was just a few hours!

The queen in verse 10 is not the wife of Belshazzar because verse 2 tells us that Belshazzar’s “wives” were already present at the feast and this queen was not initially present at the feast, but came in only later when she heard about the trouble.

So who was she? She must have been a highly prestigious person to enter the banquet hall uninvited. Also, when she arrived, she seems to have taken charge.

For these reasons most commentators have identified her as the queen-mother, either the widow of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus (who was possibly the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar) or both the widow of Nebuchadnezzar and the wife of Nabonidus (if Nabonidus married the widow of Nebuchadnezzar as some suggest). She was most likely the mother of Belshazzar. If she was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, then she may have been the famous Nitocris.

At any rate, this woman had firsthand information about Nebuchadnezzar that would not have been known by a younger wife of Belshazzar, and she seems to have personally witnessed Daniel’s earlier activities in Nebuchadnezzar’s court.

This queen seems to have known a lot about Daniel and his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. That would be easy to explain if Nebuchadnezzar was her father. Notice that even the queen herself refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the father of Belshazzar in verse 11, which suggests she had a very strong link to Nebuchadnezzar.

Whoever this queen was, she was not initially at the drunken feast. That suggests that she may have been the real power here since someone was presumably worrying about the Persians who were camped just outside while everyone else was drinking themselves into a stupor!

Notice that the queen twice refers to Daniel by his personal Hebrew name, which suggests that she knew him well. Belshazzar, on the other hand, does not seem to have known Daniel. How can that be explained?

It could be that the king had forgotten Daniel, it could be that the king did not recognize the now much older Daniel, or it could be that the king was too drunk to remember anyone.

Also, Nebuchadnezzar had died over 20 years ago, and Daniel apparently did not now enjoy the same exalted position he had under Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had likely retired (or perhaps had been forcibly retired) from public life when Nebuchadnezzar died, at which time Daniel would have been in his sixties. He was now in his eighties.

The appearance of this queen may answer another question from earlier in the chapter — how did Belshazzar know about the temple vessels in the first place? Perhaps his mother had told him about the items that her father Nebuchadnezzar had brought back from Jerusalem many years earlier.

Notice in verse 10 that the queen enters 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 a 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 Nabonidus? She likely didn't need permission to do anything!

Again we are faced with the 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 that is what happened each time.

But here, of course, we have another perhaps even more likely possibility for why Daniel was not called earlier — the king did not know or remember Daniel, and it was not until the queen entered that he found out about Daniel.

DANIEL 5:13-16

13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Belshazzar relays the story of what has happened and offers Daniel the same rewards he offered the others if he can interpret the writing.

In verse 13, Belshazzar refers to “the king my father.” He is not speaking of Nabonidus but of Nebuchadnezzar, which tells us that even Belshazzar himself referred to Nebuchadnezzar as his father.

It was apparently very important to both Nabonidus and Belshazzar that they legitimize their rule at every opportunity by linking themselves to Nebuchadnezzar. Also, by mentioning Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar gives Daniel an opportunity to give him a little history lesson, which Daniel proceeds to do.

Why did Belshazzar remind Daniel that he was a Jewish exile? What was the king’s purpose? He may have been attempting to intimidate Daniel by reminding him that he was just a lowly captive. Let’s see how that plan works out for the king! Let’s see how easy Daniel it to intimidate!

Why does Belshazzar use the name “Daniel” rather than the Babylonian name “Belteshazzar” in addressing the prophet? Possibly because the latter name was so similar to his own name!

DANIEL 5:17-24

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: 19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; 23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

It seems that Daniel was not easy to intimidate! In fact, Daniel, the Jewish exile, tells Belshazzar that his “father” Nebuchadnezzar was a donkey! Or at least he ran with them!

Why did Daniel refuse the king’s gifts? It would not have been wrong to accept them — he had earlier accepted the gifts and favors of Nebuchadnezzar, as had his three friends.

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. But he did serve a role in the Persian government, which took over the very next day.

The best explanation is that Daniel knew that neither Belshazzar, Belshazzar’s rule, nor the Chaldean kingdom over which he ruled was going to last through the night. These promised gifts were meaningless! Daniel was being offered the position of third ruler for just a few hours! For a modern day analogy, it would be like getting a lifetime warranty from Sears!

Before Daniel interprets the message, he gives the king both a history lesson and a stern reprimand.

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 much less mighty.

Would Nebuchadnezzar have spent the night in a drunken feast with the enemy camped just outside the city? To paraphrase a famous quote of a former Texas senator, Daniel was telling the king: “I knew Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was a friend of mine. You, sir, are no Nebuchadnezzar!”

The great Nebuchadnezzar had submitted to God’s sovereignty, while Belshazzar, who was hardly worthy to be compared with the earlier king, had not.

The “but” in verse 20 was the turning point in this event from the life of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was great, but....

Nebuchadnezzar had been filled with pride and had refused to give the glory to God. But as bad as Nebuchadnezzar's punishment was, Belshazzar's punishment was going to be worse. As with 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.

But how would Belshazzar have known about Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation?

Certainly rumors about the event would have been known, but evidence suggests that Belshazzar may have seen those events firsthand.

Belshazzar served as a chief officer during the administration of King Neriglissar in 560 BC according to Babylonian historical texts. That means that the king was old enough to fill a high position in government only two years after Nebuchadnezzar's death. Since Nabonidus was an official in Nebuchadnezzar's administration, Belshazzar would have lived in Babylon and would have observed personally the last years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. If true, that would make Daniel's strong rebuke even more understandable. Belshazzar had seen with his own eyes what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and yet he had refused to humble himself before God.

Do you get the feeling that Belshazzar may already be regretting having summoned Daniel! If he had wondered what could be worse than having his feast interrupted by a writing finger — he is now finding out!

Notice that although Chapter 4 describes Nebuchadnezzar's seven year humiliation, only in verse 21 here does Daniel divulge that Nebuchadnezzar lived with the "wild donkeys." That must have been quite a sight!

DANIEL 5:25-28

25 And this is the writing that was written,
MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the
interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath
numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27
TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and
art found wanting. 28 PERES; Thy kingdom is
divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Daniel finally interprets (and possibly translates) the four words (one being repeated so that there were 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 “Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided.” Daniel will need to tell the king (and us) what the words mean.

Let’s look at the message word by word.

The first and second word was “MENE.” It was repeated twice likely to stress the certainty of its fulfillment.

The 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. If Belshazzar had ever wondered how long he would reign as king (or live, for that matter), he now knew. The count was complete. Both his days and the days of his kingdom were numbered — they were both coming to a swift end.

The third word was “TEKEL.” That word means “weighed,” and Daniel explained that Belshazzar had been weighed and found wanting.

Belshazzar did not measure up. He was the classic example of a light-weight ruler! (That description reminds me of what the late William F. Buckley said when he learned that Geraldo Rivera wanted to be the first reporter to travel into space. He said that would be a great idea because it would allow us to test the effects of weightlessness on weightlessness!)

The fourth word was “PHARSIN.” That word means “to divide,” and Daniel says that Belshazzar’s kingdom had been divided and given instead to the Medes and the Persians who were at that time besieging the city. The word “divided” here means “separated” — the kingdom was divided or separated from Belshazzar and given to another.

There is a double word play at work with this final word. This fourth word is similar to the word “Persian,” which means that Daniel knew that the kingdom that defeated the Chaldeans was the Medo-Persian kingdom — and not the Medes all by themselves as the liberals suggest.

Verse 28 specifically states that Belshazzar's kingdom would be given to the "Medes and Persians," which proves that the writer of Daniel was well aware that there was no separate Median world empire followed by a separate Persian kingdom.

Why is that so important? Because we saw four worldwide empires in Chapter 2. If the Medes and Persians together make up one of those four kingdoms — then Rome must be the fourth. And we have copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls that predate the Roman empire. That is why the liberals are forced to argue that Daniel treated the Medes and Persians as separate kingdoms even though just a casual glance at the text of Daniel is enough to show that he did not.

While we are talking about the liberal views of the text, let's look at another example.

We mentioned earlier that these three words can also be translated to mean three different measures of weights. Liberals have latched onto this possible meaning and have suggested that instead of being written by God, the words were really written by a waiter at the feast who was just trying to remember how much food to serve. (This sort of crazy theory would be funny if it were not so sad. Maybe some day those liberals will also see the writing on the wall!)

Other commentators have also stressed the connection of these words with measures of weight — even though Daniel gives an interpretation in verses 26-28 that does not deal with measures of weight. We know what the words meant because Daniel tells us, and he did not say that they meant different measurements of weight. Nevertheless, some commentators have created elaborate theories based on these words meaning measures of weight.

For example, some argue that mene refers to mena, which equalled 50 shekels, and that upharsin (half a mena) equalled 25 shekels. They also say that tekem refers to shekel. Thus, the four words would then have stood for: mena, 50 shekels; mena, 50 shekels; tekem, 1 shekel; upharsin, 25 shekels. If you add that up you get 126 shekels. We are also told that a shekel can be divided up into 20 gerahs (Ezekiel 45:12). That would mean that the 126 shekels of Daniel 5:25 is equivalent to 2520 gerahs.

Where have we seen 2520 before? That was the number of years that the Jehovah's Witnesses counted from their (incorrect) date for the destruction of the temple to arrive at 1914 as the year the kingdom was established! So does this prophecy relate to something 2520 years away? No, both the text and history tell us that the prophecy was fulfilled within hours of when it was given. Also, Daniel gave us the meaning of the terms in verses 26-28, and he did not interpret them to mean various numbers of shekels.

Yes, numbers are used figuratively in the Bible. We will see some used that way in later chapters of this book. But when numbers are used figuratively in the Bible — we are given the numbers! The numbers are in the text! Here there are no numbers — not in the words on the wall, and not in the interpretation of the words on the wall. Once we start making up numbers, or assigning numeric codes to non-numeric words in the Bible, there is no end to what we could come up with. The first step to determining what a number in the Bible means is to actually have a number in the Bible — and we don't get past that first step here.

This is a good lesson for us as we approach some of the more difficult chapters in this book. Context is crucial, and we need to pay very close attention to what the text itself tells us about the visions that will be described.

You can “prove” just about anything with letters and numbers if you are willing to disregard context and common sense. You may have seen the books that purport to find secret codes embedded in the letters of the Bible when they are shifted and counted in certain ways.

The number 2520 coming up twice must mean something, right? Wrong. How old was William Shakespeare in 1611 when the King James Version was published? He was 46. What is the 46th word in Psalm 46? “Shake.” What is the 46th word counting backward from the end of Psalm 46 (ignoring the word “Selah” at the end)? “Spear.” Therefore William Shakespeare wrote Psalm 46. Right? Wrong! If you think that is about the silliest theory you have ever heard about the Bible, then you should read more Daniel commentaries!

One final point about these three words: the King James Version has UPHARSIN (rather than PHARSIN) for the fourth word in verse 25, but has PERES for the

fourth word in verse 28. Why the difference? The “U” in “UPHARSIN” in the King James Version simply means “and.” So the final word on the wall was “PHARSIN.” PHARSIN means “and they are dividing.” PERES is a passive participle form of the same root word and means “divided.”

DANIEL 5:29

29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation 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.

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. But if the king had survived the night, Daniel might not have fared very well after the guests were gone. The king may also have thought that Daniel's God would change his mind and spare him if he bestowed gifts on Daniel and made him his prime minister.

Why did Daniel accept the king's gifts in verse 29 after he had refused them in verse 17? First, verse 29 doesn't make it sound like Daniel had much choice in the matter. Second, as we have said, the gifts were meaningless. What good was it to be proclaimed (to the people in the room, not throughout the empire) the third ruler in an empire that would collapse in only a few hours?

DANIEL 5:30-31

30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

With its typical understatement of world events, the Bible uses only a few words to report one of the most significant events in world history, the fall of the Babylonian

Empire and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire in its place. That night the city fell, the final shreds of the Babylonian kingdom came to an end, and Belshazzar was executed only a few hours later.

If we are keeping track of the kingdoms in Daniel 2, it was on this day that we moved from the head of gold to the breast and arms of silver.

According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the date on which this occurred was the sixteenth of the month Tishri, which most scholars agree would have been October 12, 539 BC. The banquet would then have been held on the night before, October 11, 539 BC.

The Greek historians Herodotus (484-425 BC) and Xenophon (434-355 BC) tell us how the Medes and the Persians took the city.

The walls surrounding the city of Babylon were huge — there were two sets of double walls extending for miles (the outermost system being 17 miles in length). The outer walls were approximately 25 feet wide and rose to a height of at least 40 feet.

These fortifications were too difficult to challenge, and so according to Herodotus and Xenophon, the Medo-Persian army diverted water from the Euphrates River (which ran under the walls of Babylon) into a marsh. With the level of the water lowered, the soldiers were able to wade the river under the walls and enter the city.

Xenophon confirms what 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.

Here is how 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.

Xenophon tells us that Gobryas, commander under Cyrus, led his soldiers into the palace, where they found the king holding a dagger, evidently with which to take his own life. According to Xenophon, the king and his attendants were overpowered, and the invaders “avenged themselves upon the wicked king.”

The Nabonidus Chronicle tells of Cyrus’ invasion of Babylonia and the subsequent flight of Nabonidus after Sippar was taken on the fourteenth of Tishri (October 10, 539 BC). On the sixteenth day of Tishri (October 12, 539 BC), Cyrus’ commander (Ugbaru) and the Medo-Persian army entered Babylon without a battle. Cyrus was welcomed by the city’s inhabitants when he arrived on the third day of the month Arahshamnu (October 29, 539 BC).

The Cyrus Cylinder also records that Babylon was captured without a battle and that the citizens received Cyrus warmly.

Xenophon says that Gobryas was originally one of Nabonidus’ governors and that he defected to Cyrus partly because the son of Nabonidus (Belshazzar) killed his only son in a fit of jealousy during a royal hunt. One of the ancient tablets says that the city yielded to Gobryas, that Cyrus did not appear for several weeks, and that Gobryas was made governor and appointed other governors.

We see in these verses the fulfillment of prophecies from Isaiah 21 and Jeremiah 51 about the fall Babylon.

Isaiah 21:9 — And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.

Jeremiah 51:52-55 — Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: Because the

Lord hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered.

Was all of this good news or bad news for God's people?

It could have been bad news because it would have been possible for the next kingdom to be worse than Babylon, but that is not what happened in this case. In Ezra 1:1-4 we learn about the Decree of Cyrus, which allowed the return of the Jewish people to Palestine to rebuild their city and their temple.

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?

The liberal critics claim that Darius the Mede never actually existed but was instead a confused reflection of a later Persian ruler, Darius I (Hystaspes), by someone writing hundreds of years after the actual time frame of the book.

We have already looked extensively at the question of when the book was written, and we have seen that the evidence points to the book having been written at the same time as the events it records occurred.

Also, in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus used a prophecy of Daniel to provide a warning sign for his disciples to escape the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Jesus tells us that Daniel was a **prophet**, and that fact alone tells us when the book of Daniel was written. And, I might add, also tells us with certainty that the fourth kingdom from Daniel 2 is Rome.

But even so, we need to respond to the allegation that Darius the Mede is a fictional creation. One commentator writes:

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 does that mean this commentator rejects the message of Daniel? Not at all! Here is what else that same commentator wrote:

[The book of Daniel's] very historical mistakes add to the fulness 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.

That commentator is wrong on both counts. If the book of Daniel has no historical reliability, then the book of Daniel has no religious message at all. You cannot separate the two! If the word of God cannot be trusted to tell us the truth about the things we can see, how can we trust it to tell us the truth about the things we cannot see?

But let's examine the most serious charge from that commentator and from many others — that Darius the Mede never existed and that Daniel 5:31 contains a glaring historical error.

And before we begin, we might pause to note that the same allegations were once made against another person in Chapter 5, Belshazzar, but those allegations were proved wrong by the discovery of an ancient inscription. And before that, the critics argued that Sargon of Assyria mentioned in Isaiah 20:1 never existed, which was also proved wrong by archaeology. So the liberal critics' track record is not very good, but **so far** we have no ancient inscriptions that mention Darius the Mede (at least not by that name).

Any, I think, even the liberal critics would have to agree that Darius does not seem fictional in the book of Daniel. In fact, Daniel gives far more information about the background of Darius than he does about Belshazzar or even about Nebuchadnezzar.

- Daniel 5:30 says that King Darius was 62 when he began to reign.
- Daniel 5:30 also tells us his nationality — Darius was a Mede.
- Daniel 9:1 says that Darius was the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.
- And, perhaps most importantly for our question here, Daniel repeatedly refers to Darius as king and never refers to him otherwise, which means that we might not expect Darius the Mede to be an obscure character.

So, unlike even the great Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel tells us the age, the nationality, and the parentage of Darius. That sort of detail does not sound like someone just being made up out of thin air.

So let's ask two questions — did Darius the Mede exist, and, if so, who was Darius the Mede? The first question is easy; the second question is not.

Let's start with the easy question — did Darius the Mede exist?

Why is that an easy question? Because we believe the Bible. Because we trust the Bible. Because we have faith in the word of God.

But, some might say, that's all well and good, but where is your evidence? Our evidence is the book of Daniel itself.

We have already looked at evidence showing that the book of Daniel is an eye witness account of the events it records. What that means is that the book of Daniel is the best evidence we have of the events that transpired with the fall of Babylon to the Persians.

Here is how one commentator describes the situation:

Among the sources available to describe the transition of power from Babylon to MedoPersia, the most objective and best informed is undoubtedly Daniel. Herodotus and Xenophon were reporting stories second hand, long after the events. Daniel described events that he had witnessed and participated in as a high official in the royal courts of both Babylon and MedoPersia.

Why the most objective? Because the leaders of that day (much like the leaders of our own day) used propaganda to placate the crowds and glorify themselves. And because the Greek historians writing centuries later likewise often had their own separate agendas. Daniel, on the other hand, was not political. He wrote what he saw. He reported on what happened. His only agenda was to show the power of God in the pagan world, and that agenda required a completely accurate historical record.

So we can believe that Darius the Mede existed both because the Bible says that he existed and because the evidence supports the Biblical record.

So now let's move to the difficult question: who was Darius the Mede?

A very popular view (and a view that I once favored) is that Darius the Mede was an early governor of Babylon under Cyrus.

If so, which governor was he? If we are looking for a governor, we have at least three possibilities: Ugbaru (Cyrus' general from the Nabonidus Chronicles), Gubaru (Cyrus' governor from the same source), and Gobryas (the defector mentioned by Xenophon).

How are these three people related? As it turns out, that is a very difficult question to answer.

Gobryas is the Greek form of both Ugbaru and Gubaru, and so the use of that name by Xenophon could refer to either person (and even he seems to have confused the two). Some argue that Gobryas and Ugbaru were the same person, while others argue that Gobryas and Gubaru were the same person. Still others argue that Ugbaru and Gubaru were the same person.

Rather than wade into all of that, let's back up a step and look at this first theory from a different angle. If Darius the Mede was just a governor, then why does Daniel refer to him as a king, not once, not twice, but over thirty times?

But Daniel 5:31 literally reads, "Darius the Mede received the kingdom," and some say that means Darius "received the kingdom" from some other ruler, such as Cyrus. Likewise, some argue that the declaration in Daniel 9:1 that Darius "was made ruler" suggests that Cyrus gave Darius his authority.

But does that fit with the theme of this book — a theme that we saw repeated three times in the prior chapter? "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." If Darius received a kingdom and was made a ruler, was it due to Cyrus? Or was it due to God? Nebuchadnezzar knew the answer to that question at the end of Chapter 4, and we do as well.

And as for Daniel calling Darius king, some argue that a governor could loosely be spoken of as king because he represented the royal authority when the king was away. But does that make sense? How do we think a king would react if he learned

that people were referring to his governor as king when he was out of town? Don't you think that might make the king a bit nervous and might drastically lower the life expectancy of that governor?

Daniel knew the difference between a king and a governor, and when I read the descriptions of Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel, I see a king.

So if we limit our search to kings, are there any other possibilities for Darius? Yes, there are at least two, and perhaps **only** two.

First, Darius may have been none other than King Cyrus himself.

At first glance, this seems like a strange explanation. After all, Cyrus and Darius are both mentioned by name in this book. We saw Cyrus all the way back in Daniel 1:21, where we are told that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus."

Why would Daniel use two names for the same person?

We could ask that same question of Daniel himself, who is called both Daniel and Belteshazzar in this book. Or we could also ask Shadrach, who is also called Hananiah. Or we could also ask Meshach, who is also called Mishael. Or we could also ask Abednego, who is also called Azariah.

Rather than seeming strange that Cyrus would have two names, in this book it might seem strange if Cyrus had only one name!

In any event, it is not great argument to say that Daniel would not have used two different names for the same person given the number of times that he does that in this book.

But is there any evidence for saying that Darius and Cyrus are the same person? Yes, there is some.

Dual titles were not uncommon, and Cyrus and Darius were both titles. Since Cyrus was king of both Median and Persian territories, it might be expected that Cyrus the Persian would have had another title, such as Darius the Mede, that was specific to the Medes. Herodotus says that Cyrus was sometimes called the "king of the Medes" even after the fall of Babylon.

But the title “Darius the Mede” (5:31) suggests that Darius was of Median lineage, and later Daniel specifically states that Darius was “a Mede by descent” (9:1). How can that be explained if Cyrus was a Persian?

Cyrus’ father was a Persian, but his mother was the daughter of Astyages, the king of Media, and so Cyrus was half Median.

Also, Daniel may have preferred the title “Darius the Mede” for Cyrus because it had particular significance for the Jews. Jeremiah (51:11, 28) had predicted the downfall of Babylon to the Medes, and Daniel may have used the title “Darius the Mede” to emphasize the fulfillment of those prophecies.

And having two titles for the Medo-Persian king would not be out of place in the book of Daniel. The prophecy was written in two languages, and Daniel and his three friends each had two names.

There is some evidence that Cyrus was in his forties rather than in his sixties when Babylon fell, but there is also some evidence to the contrary. Cicero reports Cyrus’ age as 70 when he died and cuneiform texts tell us that Cyrus reigned nine years after he conquered Babylon. What that means is that in 539 BC, Cyrus would have been about 62 years of age, the same age given by Daniel for Darius the Mede.

But what about Daniel 6:28, which reads: “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian”? How do we explain that verse if Cyrus and Darius are the same person?

The answer is that that verse could be translated as: “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” That is, verse 28 may actually be where Daniel explains to the reader that Darius and Cyrus were the same person.

A close parallel is found in 1 Chronicles 5:26, which reads, “So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria.” Assyrian records identify Tiglath-Pileser and Pul as one and the same person.

In Daniel 9:1, Darius is designated “son of Xerxes” (literally, “Ahasuerus”). How do we explain that if Cyrus and Darius are the same person? Xerxes was a royal title,

and here it could refer either to Cyrus' father, Cambyses, or to Cyrus' grandfather, Astyages, the king of the Medes.

So maybe King Cyrus and King Darius were the same person.

But are there any other possibilities? Or have we run out of kings? The answer is that, depending on whom you ask, we have not run out of kings, and there is another possibility.

What do I mean by it depends on who you ask? What I mean is that we can ask Herodotus or we can ask Xenophon. I have mentioned those two Greek historians several times, and they each give an account of the fall of Babylon to Medo-Persia. But their accounts do not always agree.

And one place where their historical accounts disagree relates specifically to the question we are considering here — the identity of Darius the Mede.

The book of Daniel describes Medo-Persia as what it was — a unified kingdom. And we know that eventually Persia became the dominant partner in that unified kingdom, but that was not always the case. In fact, the Bible shows the Medes as the primary partner at the time of Babylon's fall.

Daniel refers four times in Daniel 5–6 to “the Medes and the Persians.” Later, the book of Esther reverses that order to instead be “the Persians and the Medes.” Also, the vision of the ram in Daniel 8 indicates that the Medes were initially dominant when the Medo-Persian Empire began, but that the Persians subsequently became dominant. That is further shown by Isaiah 13:17 and Jeremiah 51:11, 28, where God says that he will bring the Medes against Babylon.

So perhaps Cyrus the Persian was not the highest ranking person around at this time, but was perhaps outranked by a Median king. If so, who was that king?

This is where we get back to the disagreement between Herodotus and Xenophon. Herodotus tells us that Cyrus was the only king at this time, but Xenophon tells us that there was also a Median king at this time. And, as we just saw, Xenophon seems at times to be closer to the Biblical record than does Herodotus.

So, if we ask Xenophon, then who was this other king, and what role was Cyrus playing when Babylon fell?

That other king is Cyaxares II, who according to Xenophon was reigning as the head of the Medo-Persian confederation at the time of Babylon's fall. Darius would have been his throne name. Cyrus would have been his coregent, the hereditary king of Persia, the crown prince of Media, and the commander of the Medo-Persian army.

So which theory do I favor?

I favor the second theory — that Darius the Mede was the king of Media who reigned over Medo-Persia before Cyrus, who was at that time the hereditary king of Persia and the crown prince of Medo-Persia. In other words I think Xenophon's view is the correct view.

If Herodotus is correct instead, then I think Darius the Mede is most likely just another name for Cyrus.

Yes, there are some ancient inscriptions that disagree with Xenophon, but that does not mean Xenophon is wrong. Ancient inscriptions sometimes, and perhaps often, were created to spread propaganda, and once King Cyrus came to power he very likely started to rewrite history about how he came to power. It seems much easier to explain why Herodotus omitted Cyaxares than to explain why Xenophon would have made him up.

Also, and most importantly, Xenophon is much closer to the Biblical record. For example, while Xenophon does not mention Belshazzar by name, he does refer to Nabonidus as “the king who then was, the father of the one who now is” at the time of Babylon's fall.

Again, we have evidence for an early date. If this book had been written centuries after these events as the liberals suggest, then wouldn't we expect it to have Nabonidus ruling in Chapter 5 and Cyrus ruling in Chapter 6? That instead we see Belshazzar and Darius shows that the book was written at the time these events occurred. No one who was trying to create a forgery would have used those two names.

CHAPTER 6

The theme of Chapter 6 will be the same theme we have seen in the prior chapters: Despite all appearances to the contrary, God is in control.

But what do we mean when we say that God is in control? Do we mean that God was in control of Daniel — that Daniel had no choice but to obey? No, it can't mean that. We know that Daniel, like us, had free will, and he could choose to obey or disobey. God can't give us free will and simultaneously control us like a puppet.

Do we mean that God was in control of these pagan kings — that God forced them to take the actions they did, so that they were not personally responsible? No, it can't mean that. God held them responsible for their bad decisions. He often turned their evil into something good for his people, but that they were held accountable for their deeds tells us that they were not puppets.

What then does it mean when we say that God is in control? We mean exactly what we see happening here in Daniel. That God has a plan for his people, and that plan was going to happen — and no one or no nation could do anything to stop it. We mean the same thing Paul meant:

Romans 8:38-39 — For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul was not far from his own death at the hand of the Romans when he wrote that. Do you think Paul ever doubted that God was in control — even as Paul was being executed by Nero?

God is in control. Yes, men have free will, and yes, the situation may at times look bleak. But God loves his people and has a plan for his people, and that plan has happened, is happening, and will happen exactly as God intends — God is in control! That is the message of Daniel 6, just as it has been the message of the prior chapters.

DANIEL 6:1-3

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

The “kingdom” in verse 1 over which Darius ruled was the old Chaldean kingdom that Cyrus had just conquered. This was the only earthly kingdom that Daniel has been concerned with so far, and so he continues to refer to it as just “the kingdom.” In particular, he is not referring to all of Medo-Persia.

Verse 1 says that Darius appointed 120 princes over the whole kingdom. The word translated “princes” in the KJV is better translated “satraps.” What is a satrap? Edwin M. Yamauchi, in his book *Persia and the Bible*, wrote:

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.

Darius’ first responsibility was to appoint these 120 administrators over the newly won territory. He appoints 120 satraps and three presidents or commissioners of which Daniel becomes the chairman.

Liberals argue that there weren’t really 120 satraps. Are they correct? Be careful — that’s a trick question.

Satraps operated in areas called satrapies, and the ancient records give various figures for the number of satrapies. Herodotus says there were 20, the Behistun Inscription of Darius I gives 23, and a tomb inscription gives 29 — none is close to 120.

So why does Daniel say there were 120 satrapies? He doesn’t. He says there were 120 satraps. That word can apply to various levels of administrators, including lower officials of which there could be many in a single satrapy.

Verse 2 tells us that three head administrators (including Daniel) watched over the 120 satraps so that the kingdom would not be damaged. That means Daniel was in charge of watching the tax collectors so that they could not steal from the king. (And perhaps we see another motive at play here why some of these satraps might want to remove honest Daniel from such a position!)

We see in verse 3 that Daniel's character and integrity are such that Darius plans to make him his prime minister. If Darius and Cyrus were coregents, then this position would have made Daniel third in power, which is what the late Belshazzar had promised him!

Why did Darius think so highly of Daniel? Hadn't they just met?

- Daniel had a good reputation. Verse 3 says that an excellent spirit was in him!
- Daniel had recently made a very successful prediction concerning Belshazzar.
- Daniel was not a Chaldean, but he was very familiar with their system.
- Daniel was experienced. (He was over 80 years old at this time!)
- And, most importantly, God was on Daniel's side, and God wanted Daniel in this position to influence the new government.

We have seen Daniel from age 13 to age 80, and one thing we can say for sure is that Daniel was not one to ever shrink back from a challenge! When Daniel was 13, he did not say he was too young. When Daniel was 80, he did not say he was too old. When God called on Daniel to do something, Daniel answered the call! God never got a busy signal when he called Daniel! What about when God calls me?

DANIEL 6:4

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, jealousy and likely greed quickly rear their ugly heads. Those who are jealous and envious of Daniel seek at once to bring him down.

But nothing they could possibly do could bring Daniel down one inch. They could lie about him and change the opinion of other men, but they could do nothing to change God's opinion of Daniel — and that is ultimately the only opinion that 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. We know that Satan is an accuser of God's people and that he accuses us night and day (Revelation 12:10). We just need to make sure that whatever he accuses us of is not true.

This is not the only place in Scripture where something like this occurs. Jesus, also, was delivered up because of envy, and he also faced false accusers.

In Proverbs 6, God lists seven things that he hates:

Proverbs 6:17-19 — Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.

Of how many of these seven things were these envious men guilty? All seven!

So we know what God thought about the actions of this mob, and we know what God thought about the faithfulness of Daniel.

DANIEL 6:5

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning 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 the most anyone can ever truthfully accuse us of is following the law of God!

And the time is now here where that accusation alone is enough to get us cancelled, fired from our job, or worse. In other countries, proclaiming God's word on homosexuality can get you jailed, and in other countries proclaiming God's word on anything can get you killed.

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 (and they knew what he would choose!).

Two questions: (1) Is that true of us? (2) Does the world know that it is true of us?

Daniel's life was such that these men knew he would choose God when forced to make that choice. They were counting on it! Are our lives such that the world knows that we too will choose God when we are called to make such a choice? Or have we already shown them otherwise?

But these accusers had a problem: Persia had no law against monotheism. The solution? They would just create a law that would look merely political to Darius, but would pose a religious issue for Daniel.

Again we see history repeat itself. The so-called "hate speech" and "hate crime" laws may sound good on the surface until you ask how their authors define "hate." For most of them, mere disagreement is equated with hatred, and so just reading Romans 1 out loud has been classified by some as a hate crime.

DANIEL 6:6-9

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law

**of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.
9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and
the decree.**

Notice that these envious accusers show up in a group to work their plan. Such people always seems to travel in a pack! Daniel stood alone before a pack of false accusers, as did Jesus.

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.

What was the proposed law? For one month, all petitions and all prayers in the realm must be directed toward Darius only. Those who disobeyed would be cast into a den of lions.

Verse 7 uses the phrase “whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man.” The word for “petition” just means request, but the reference to “any God” certainly suggests that religious requests are in view, as does the motive for this law to target Daniel for his prayers.

But what then is meant by a petition to a man? It likely refers to priests to whom petitions were directed so that the priest could mediate with the gods.

Darius likely did not see this law as making him a god to whom prayers would be directed, but rather as making him for 30 days the only priestly mediator to whom such requests could be made. He wanted to be the only middleman, and he wanted everyone to pray through a middleman. For 30 days, Darius was to be the only legitimate representative of deity.

Why did Darius agree with such a suggestion?

- It was very flattering, which is always a good first step with any politician.
 - It reinforced the idea that the empire was now under new management. It would help unify the kingdom under Darius and Cyrus.

- It was a reasonable time limit. What harm could it cause to impose this seemingly modest requirement for only 30 days?
- And 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.

Although the penalty was severe, Darius no doubt thought that it would never be imposed. Who could possibly fail to follow this simple 30 day requirement to which everyone had already agreed?

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 in his book *Persia and the Bible*:

But it is especially to fire and water that they offer sacrifice. ... Fire stands at the center of the Zoroastrian cult; no ceremony can take place without fire being present.

If Daniel had been written by a second century Jew living in Palestine as some suggest, then how did such an author know about this subtle difference between the Chaldean and Persian methods of execution?

Verse 8 tells us that the law could not be altered. Verses 12 and 15 will tell us the same thing. 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 (and sadly is at risk of becoming rare once again!).

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.

History tells us that it also played a role during the reign of Darius III who ruled from 336 to 331 BC. Diodorus of Sicily reported the case of a man put to death under Darius III even though he was known to be perfectly innocent.

[Darius III] immediately repented and blamed himself for having committed such a great error, but it was impossible to have undone what had been done by royal authority.

And so secular history also shows us that the Persians had this sophisticated system of government.

DANIEL 6:10

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Verse 10 tells us plainly that Daniel at some point learned that the document had been signed. And so whatever Daniel does next is not done in ignorance of the decree. Daniel knows the new law, and he knows the penalty for breaking it.

The chamber in verse 10 should be translated as an upper chamber. That Daniel's house had such a chamber likely indicates his high status.

And what did Daniel do when he heard about the decree? Did he run to the king to ask that it be changed or that he be excused? No — Daniel went before a different King! Daniel went to God in prayer.

Notice what we do **not** see in verse 10. We see no inner turmoil on Daniel's part — no wondering what to do. This was not decision time for Daniel — his decision to follow God had occurred nearly 80 years ago! All we see now is Daniel's unflinching obedience.

Daniel's prayers had been his lifeline all those years under the corrupting Babylonian influences. What would he do now that this decree had become the law of the land?

What were Daniel's options?

One option would be for Daniel to do nothing — that is, Daniel could compromise and simply not pray for one month. But Daniel could not simply do nothing because to do nothing would have been a sin.

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

A second option would be for Daniel to go underground and pray silently or pray at night when no one could see him.

Sadly, many today seem to have adopted this plan. But God 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 at every opportunity.

Had Daniel quit praying as he normally did and instead began to pray in secret — how would the world have viewed that? What sort of example would that have set for the Persians or for the other exiles?

The world usually has no problem with our religion — as long as we keep it to ourselves. But we cannot please God if we keep our religion to ourselves. And we can't be the salt of the earth if we keep our religion to ourselves.

A third option would have been for Daniel to just rationalize the situation. 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 Daniel to lose that power again so quickly, would he?

We too are faced with such choices every day. Remember what Joshua said:

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. 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.

The false gods of the Amorites haven't gone anywhere! They are with us to this day. We must make a choice.

We must choose whose side we are on, and, once we do that, all of our other decisions will be easy.

As a fourth option, Daniel could concern himself with pleasing God instead of pleasing men and not worry about the consequences — and that is exactly what Daniel did.

There was no decision to be made. Daniel had made the decision to follow God long ago, and whether he was 13 or 83, Daniel would not compromise with the world. What a wonderful example of faithfulness and loyalty to God!

Why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem? It seems to have been based on statements by Solomon made at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8.

1 Kings 8:44-45 — If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way thou shalt send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause

Also, 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, 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 BC, Ezekiel 43:2 tells us that God promised to return — and in fact Cyrus' order to rebuild the city had probably already been given.

Why did Daniel pray three times a day? That likely came from Psalm 55.

Psalm 55:17 — Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Daniel had a habit of praying to God, and that is what he was going to do. There is nothing wrong with habits if they are good habits, and we too should pray habitually and study God's word habitually — and we should not let anything stop us. Not even lions were able to stop Daniel! What does it take to stop us? Daniel would rather have been eaten by lions than stop praying to God!

For what was Daniel praying? 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.

And so Daniel knew it was time for his people to return from their exile, and many may have already returned. And so 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.

At first glance, this event looks just like what we saw earlier with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — but there is an important difference. Here evil men were trying to force Daniel to shirk his duty for true worship, while the earlier event with Daniel's three friends was focused on an attempt to make them engage in false worship.

Chapters 3 and 6 together warn us to avoid false worship and to pursue true worship, no matter the cost. We must avoid the strange fire, and we must use the approved fire.

DANIEL 6:11-12

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. 12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

This group waited around for Daniel to pray, and then they went and reported to Darius as soon as he did.

“Like little children, they were peeking around corners and looking in windows.”

Notice the word “thou” in verse 12. “Hast thou not signed a decree?” Suddenly this law has become the king’s idea!

Darius is reminded of his decree, and Darius not only remembers it, but he 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 cannot stand in the face of verse 12. Daniel treats Media and Persia as a unified kingdom — which all historians agree they were.

We are about to watch God as he changes and revokes a law that cannot be changed or revoked!

Mark 10:27 — With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

DANIEL 6:13-17

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 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 the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Notice the statement in verse 13 tying Daniel to the captivity of Judah. They are telling the king that Daniel is not one of us — likely to plant the idea that Daniel is disloyal.

The charge made against Daniel is similar to the charge made against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego:

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.

Likewise, verse 13 charges Daniel with having no regard for the king.

This was a false charge both times. It was not true that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego paid no heed to the king, and it was not true that Daniel did not regard the king. They just did not give their ultimate loyalty to any earthly king because that belonged only to God.

But Darius' response is not what the conspirators had hoped for! Yes, Darius becomes very upset (as they had hoped), but (unlike Nebuchadnezzar with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) Darius does not become upset with Daniel or Daniel's prayers. Instead, Darius becomes upset with himself (verse 14) when he suddenly realizes the real reason for the decree.

He had been duped by Daniel's enemies, and I am sure he now regretted not having discussed the matter with Daniel personally. Darius was likely more angry at himself than with anyone else.

Verse 14 tells us that the king labored to deliver Daniel until the sun went down. What did the king do? He likely called the lawyers! What they needed was a loophole! Why only until the sun went down? (Well, lawyers do charge by the hour...) Perhaps swift justice was also required by Persian law.

Darius 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.

In verse 16, Darius seems to know something about God. Where did that knowledge come from?

As we discussed before, the most likely identity of King Darius is either that he was King Cyrus or that he was a Median co-regent with the Persian King (or perhaps Crown Prince) Cyrus.

If Darius was Cyrus, then we have our answer. We know that Cyrus knew quite a lot about God, and, in fact, Isaiah had mentioned Cyrus by name before Cyrus was even born! Here is what Cyrus was saying at about this same time.

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.

If Cyrus and Darius were different kings, then perhaps Cyrus told Darius about God. Darius, at least, would have been familiar with the decree found in the book of Ezra.

Also, perhaps Darius had already been around Daniel long enough to learn about God. We already know that Daniel had become a very trusted advisor, and as such Daniel must have spoken to Darius about God — just as he had years earlier to Nebuchadnezzar. And I suspect you couldn't be around Daniel for very long without hearing about God!

After being reminded of his own decree, Darius finally resigns himself to carrying it out. But, still concerned, Darius goes with Daniel to the pit, into which Daniel the faithful octogenarian is cast.

The verb in verse 16 could be translated as either “he **will** deliver thee” or “he **may** deliver thee.” In any event, Darius certainly hopes that God will deliver Daniel, and perhaps Darius was confident that God would deliver Daniel. (We often talk about the faith of Daniel, but the faith of Darius in verse 16 is also impressive!)

Notice also the reference in verse 16 to Daniel serving God continually. Daniel had already made quite an impression on this king! And I suspect that Daniel's impression on the king had strengthened considerably once the king knew that Daniel was willing to face death rather than be faithless to God. Once the world knows that fact about a person, then or now, the world also knows that it has no power over that person.

Luke 12:4 — And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

The pit is closed and sealed by Darius and by 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 give the lions a little help!

DANIEL 6:18-19

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

The king returns to his palace very troubled. He eats no food, he enjoys no entertainment, and he is not able to sleep.

Do you think the conspirators may have been worried by the king's reactions? They should have been! I suspect they were starting to sweat.

Darius had suffered through a very bad and sleepless night because of his worry about Daniel, but Darius is about to discover that his night had been much more difficult than Daniel's night!

Very early in the morning, Darius runs to the den of lions to check on Daniel.

Again, we should picture the scene. King Darius and his entourage hurrying down to the den of lions early in the morning, likely with the king leading the way. And Daniel's accusers perhaps nervously looking on to see if their plan had worked, and perhaps by this time already regretting that plan.

DANIEL 6:20-22

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

In verse 20, the king calls out to Daniel in a "lamentable voice." Darius is really worried about Daniel, and it seems in verse 20 from his tone of voice that perhaps he has given up hope.

But he calls out to Daniel and says, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

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. Once again, Daniel's faithfulness to God is giving God an opportunity to show his power to a pagan ruler.

How does God work in this world? In large manner, the answer to that question has not changed since the days of Daniel. God works in this world through his faithful people. Yes, we are seeing God work through a miracle here in Daniel 6, but we also see God working through the actions of Daniel here. And today? We are the body of Christ. Just as we operate with our body, so does Christ. And Jesus has given us our marching orders in the Great Commission!

And you know what? Jesus is not the only one today who works through his faithful followers. Satan also works through the actions of those who faithfully follow him, and we see his workers in this scene as well.

And once again, we are called upon to visualize an incredible scene!

Can you imagine the king's relief when Daniel answered? Can you imagine the accusers' reaction when Daniel answered? And what were the lions thinking!

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 in verse 22 that this was proof of his innocence.

But was Daniel innocent? Daniel had violated the law of the land, but Daniel had not violated the law of God, and that meant Daniel was innocent no matter what men might say about him. As Daniel says in verse 22, “**before him** (God), innocence was found in me.”

We too may be approaching a time when those who obey the law of the land are guilty before God and those who violate the law of the land are innocent. But that should be expected in any society such as our own in which everything is becoming reversed — in which evil is called good and good is called evil.

Verse 22 may give us a clue as to who the fourth person was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

Daniel says he was delivered by an angel, but again the word angel could simply mean a divine messenger, and, as before, some believe that we have yet another Christophany (as we discussed earlier).

But the most common view and perhaps the most likely option is that, while the fourth person in the fiery furnace may have been Christ, the deliverer here was just an angel in the ordinary sense. But we don't know for sure.

In any event, it is wonderful to picture eighty year old Daniel sitting in that lion's den all night talking to that angel while being stared at by a pride of hungry lions!

And perhaps it is an encouragement to us to know that those are not the only lions whose mouths were ever shut by God! God is still shutting mouths today!

Isaiah 52:15 — **The kings shall shut their mouths at him** [Christ]: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider

DANIEL 6:23

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

We don't have to just imagine the king's reaction when he hears Daniel's cheerful voice call to him from the lions' den. Verse 23 tells us that the king was exceedingly glad. He was overjoyed.

Darius brings Daniel out and looks him over. Not a scratch is found on Daniel. Verse 23 tells us that "no manner of hurt was found upon him."

Why had Daniel survived? Verse 23 answers that question — "because he believed in his God."

Daniel was delivered because Daniel was faithful to God. And Daniel rightly takes his place in the great roll call of faith, along with his three friends:

Hebrews 11:32-34 — And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, **stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire**, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Do you mean Daniel stopped the lions' mouths? I thought verse 22 said that God shut the lions' mouths by sending an angel. So who was it? God or Daniel?

The inspired answer is that it was both! Daniel 6:22 says that God did it, and Hebrews 11:33 says that Daniel did it. How do we explain that?

Matthew 9:22 — "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Matthew 17:20 — “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

Ephesians 6:16 — “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

1 John 5:4 — “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

God shut the lions’ mouths, and Daniel shut the lions’ mouths. How? Faith is how. That is the answer the Bible gives to that question.

Paul knew all about that. In 2 Timothy 4:18, Paul wrote: “I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” Paul was following Daniel’s example!

Daniel is a wonderful example of someone who absolutely refused to compromise with the world throughout his entire life but instead remained loyal and true to God despite the earthly consequences and despite living in an evil pagan nation. We should all aspire to be Daniel! God needs more Daniels!

And yes God delivered Daniel from death, but even if the lions had killed Daniel (as they would later kill many faithful Christians under the Roman persecution), that would not mean that God had failed to deliver Daniel.

God was going to deliver Daniel one way or another — that was certain! Either Daniel would be delivered from death or Daniel would be delivered through death. Either way Daniel would have been delivered.

Colossians 1:13 — Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Hebrews 2:14-15 — That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

We have already been delivered from the power of this world! And if we remain faithful unto death, then we will receive the promised crown of life .

Revelation 2:10 — Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The question here was not **whether** God would deliver Daniel. The question was **how** God would deliver Daniel. Daniel's deliverance was never in doubt.

DANIEL 6:24

24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

The word "accused" in verse 24 means falsely accused. It literally means those who "had eaten his pieces." The same word was used of the earlier accusers in Daniel 3:8. They had not falsely accused Daniel of praying (that part was true), but they had falsely accused him of being disloyal to the king.

Without any trial or hearing, Darius has Daniel's accusers and their families paraded past Daniel and thrown into the den of lions. And they were killed by the lions before they reached the bottom of the pit. (These lions seem to have been in a foul mood for some reason, maybe because they had been forced to just stare at their dinner all night!)

What was their crime? They had lied to the king, and they had tried to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor. And worse, they had made the king look like a fool by establishing a law that he immediately regretted.

Why were their families killed as well? Probably to teach everyone else a lesson and to minimize the chance of revenge. Darius wanted Daniel to be a secure prime minister.

And Daniel's reaction? He did not object. God has told us that vengeance belongs to him — and perhaps the lesson here is that we should not get in God's way when God takes that vengeance!

Romans 12:19 — Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

DANIEL 6:25-27

25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

Darius makes a public proclamation just as Nebuchadnezzar did earlier in Daniel 3:29 and 4:34.

We have seen many royal decrees so far in this book. In fact, it seems that making decrees is all these kings know how to do — but whose decrees have mattered? Not theirs, but God's. And that is a good lesson for us today as we see our government making decrees that are opposed to God and his word.

This decree, however, was a good decree. As with Nebuchadnezzar, Darius now had a new understanding of God, and it shows in his decree.

It was now clear to all that God was alive and that God was working in history to bring about justice and to further the welfare of his people. In fact, while this was going on, his people were, as promised, returning to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.

Why did God allow all of this to happen to Daniel? Why not just thwart the evil plan right from the start? Why instead did God wait to deliver Daniel only after he had been cast into the lions' den? One answer is the same answer we have seen earlier in this book — God wanted to show his power to these pagan rulers.

But there may be another reason at work here. If we use early Christian art as a basis, then Christians have long viewed Daniel's emergence from that lions' den as typological of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Both Daniel and Jesus faced false accusations from religious leaders. Both were accused of disloyalty to the king. Both Daniel and Jesus were arrested shortly after prayer. Pilate and Darius both sought to release their prisoner, but, in the end, both Daniel and Jesus were turned over to the executioners.

But here is where we have a big difference: Daniel emerged from the lions' den after having not died, while Jesus emerged from the tomb after having died. God spared Daniel, but God did not spare his own son.

So much in the Old Testament points straight to the cross and the resurrection. We can see comparisons with Joseph in the pit, with Isaac on the altar, with Jonah in the fish, and with Daniel in the lions' den. Don't ever let anyone tell you that the rejection of Christ came as a surprise to God. It did not. And no one who reads the Old Testament could ever think otherwise.

DANIEL 6:28

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

Wait! How could Daniel prosper if this unalterable law was still in effect? How could that unchangeable law be changed and replaced with this new decree?

First, the law had a 30 day time limit, and we aren't sure of the exact timing of these events within those thirty days.

Second, after these events, there were likely not too many people lining up to accuse Daniel of anything.

And third, Daniel had been vindicated by his trial.

There was an ancient Babylonian custom that a victim would be pardoned if he were tortured and had not died by the following day.

And this event may have been viewed as less of a torture and more of what is called an ordeal. Its purpose may have been to determine guilt rather than to punish guilt. That may be indicated by Daniel's statement in verse 22 — "forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me."

But for whatever reason, we know that Daniel continued to pray, and we know that Daniel was not thrown back to the lions because verse 28 says that he prospered. Daniel's usefulness to the king continued, and he prospered as he had during the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

As for Darius and Cyrus in verse 28, we talked about this verse when we looked at Darius the Mede earlier. Either verse 28 is explaining that Daniel prospered while both Darius and Cyrus were reigning (one as king of Medo-Persia, and the other as crown prince of Medo-Persia and hereditary king Persia), or verse 28 is explaining that Darius and Cyrus are in fact the same person (the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus).

With the end of Chapter 6, we have reached the end of the historical narrative part of the book, and we are about to begin the part of the book that shows us the visions that Daniel received from God.

CHAPTER 7

Daniel 7 is also one of the most important chapters in the Bible.

Why? Because of verse 13.

Daniel 7:13 — "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven."

That phrase, Son of Man, occurs 84 times in the New Testament and is the Messianic title most commonly used by Christ to speak of himself. For example:

- The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
- But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.
- Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

- The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.
- For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.
- And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.
- For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.
- The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.
- Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
- There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

And those are just a few examples, all from Matthew.

Each time that phrase "Son of Man" is used it points us back to this incredibly beautiful Chapter 7 of Daniel.

Of all the Messianic titles in the Old Testament it was this one that Jesus used most often. And what does that fact say about those today who would attack the historical veracity of Daniel? It tells us that their attack does not end with Daniel; they are attacking Christ and his Messianic claims.

In Chapters 7-12, we will be reading about Daniel's dreams and visions from God, and much of the language we see will be what is called apocalyptic language. We have already seen some examples of this language in the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, but we are about to see a great deal more of it.

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 sometimes in the gospels and epistles.

What is the purpose of apocalyptic language?

It denotes conflict and victory and judgment. 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?

I think the reason God uses such language is because of its emotional impact. Apocalyptic books have been called 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.

Of course, each word of apocalyptic language is inspired, just as with the historical narrative sections, but that inspired language uses vivid symbols to convey emotional imagery. Numbers 12:8 reminds us that God does not always speak clearly, but sometimes uses dark language. Perhaps such language is reserved for times of conflict and judgment.

How do we interpret apocalyptic language?

First, we need to pay particular attention to numbers and periods of time. They have symbolic meanings that must be deduced from the evidence.

- Three is the symbolic number for God.
- Four is the symbolic number for the earth or the creation.
- Twelve is the symbolic number for God's people.
- Ten is the symbolic number for completeness.
- Seven is the symbolic number for perfection.
- Six is the symbolic number for imperfection.
- Eight is the symbolic number for renewal.

These numbers can be combined. For example, how could we denote divine perfection? By combining the divine number three with seven, the number of perfection — and that might give us 777. So how then could we denote someone who thought he was divine, but who fell hopelessly short of divine perfection — not 777, but 666.

Sometimes numbers are raised to powers (squared or cubed) to add emphasis. For example, if ten means completeness, then 1000 means complete completeness! So if we found that someone was bound for 1000 years or someone reigned for 1000 years, then that would mean that that binding or that reign would be absolutely and totally complete.

As another example, how could we denote ALL of God's people? We could start with twelve for God's people under the Old Testament, and then another twelve for God's people under the New Testament. Then we could use ten to denote completeness, and then raise it to the third power either to emphasize it or perhaps even to denote that these are God's people (with three denoting God). What would we then have? Twelve times twelve times ten to the third power, or 144,000.

If seven denotes perfection, how could we denote imperfection? We have already seen one way — we would use six as something that falls hopelessly short of seven. But we could also use a broken seven to denote imperfection — and a broken seven is three and a half, which is a figure that is often used for that purpose.

Why these numbers? Why not some other numbers?

The answer to that question is that the figurative meaning of these numbers comes from their literal meaning! Why three for God? The trinity. Why four for earth? The four directions and the four seasons. Why twelve for God's people? The twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles. Why ten for complete? Ten fingers. Why seven for perfect? The seven days of the creation week. Why eight for renewal? The eighth day is the start of a new week.

In fact, sometimes the literal usage may arise from the figurative usage. For example, why are there four earthly kingdoms between the time of Babylon and the time of Rome? God could easily have used only three kingdoms or five or more kingdoms.

Why four? Is it because of the use of four to denote the world? That is, these kingdoms are earthly kingdoms as opposed to the eternal heavenly kingdom.

And why did the captivity last 70 years? Is it because 70 also denoted the perfect and complete period of time in which they could learn the lesson that God wanted to teach them?

There are some guidelines we should follow in interpreting apocalyptic language.

(1) Apocalyptic language always has historical significance, so we must study history to interpret it properly.

(2) We should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise. The usual approach to scripture is to understand a passage literally unless we are forced to do otherwise. How could we ever be forced to not understand a passage literally? In Matthew 5:30, 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 usual rule of interpretation is reversed for apocalyptic language — we should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced (or at least have a very good reason) to do otherwise.

(3) 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.)

(4) Dissimilarity of language does not prove distinctness of subjects. (Sometimes the Bible views the same thing from different angles, and thus uses different language to describe the same thing.)

(5) Easy to understand scriptures should be used to understand harder passages. The Bible is its own best commentary. 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.

(6) The time frame is crucial in properly understanding apocalyptic language. Why? Because often the same language is used to describe different judgments or events, and so the time frame lets us know which judgment or event is in view.

(7) Sometimes in Daniel, just as later in Revelation, we will be given an inspired explanation about the meaning of a symbol. That explanation is, of course, the correct explanation. It sounds simple, but you might be surprised how often commentators disagree with God's own commentary!

DANIEL 7:1

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

The first thing we learn in Chapter 7 is when Daniel received this vision from God, and we are told that it came in the first year of Belshazzar's reign as king of Babylon.

The second thing we learn is that, while the book progressed chronologically through the first six chapters, that is no longer the case with Chapter 7. Instead, we have backed up in time to before the events of Chapter 5, where King Belshazzar was weighed, found wanting, and killed.

This vision was received while the Chaldeans were still in power and before the Medo-Persians conquered the city of Babylon.

The first year of Belshazzar probably refers to the year 553 BC. That, we are told, was when Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, left the city of Babylon for 14 years to live in north and central Arabia. If so, then the first year of Belshazzar's reign in verse 1 refers to the first year of his co-regency.

Verse 1 is very clear — Daniel received a dream and a vision in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, and he wrote that vision down.

Do we believe that? I'm certain we do, but many do not. In fact, some who would otherwise like to call themselves Bible believers do not. But they cannot have it both ways. Either the Bible is true on all things, or the Bible is false. If we cannot trust the Bible about the things of history that we can see, then how can we trust the Bible about the things we cannot see?

Verse 1 tells us that Daniel was a real person who lived in the 6th century BC and who wrote down what he saw. The late-date crowd states just as clearly that Daniel was an impostor who lived in the second century BC.

If the late-date crowd is right, then verse 1 is a lie, and this impostor who called himself Daniel was a liar. But if this Daniel was a liar and an impostor, he fooled even Jesus because Jesus refers to Daniel as a prophet in Matthew 24:15.

Daniel was neither an impostor nor a liar. Verse 1 of Daniel 7 is just as much the inspired word of God as any other verse, and we can trust what it tells us. And we can also trust the evidence. So far, this book has been spot on about the history it has recounted, and these same liberal critics once told us that Belshazzar in verse 1 was a fictional character until they were able to see his name with their own eyes on historical engravings.

You would think that the liberal critics might learn something from that, but they have not.

DANIEL 7:2-3

2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

In verse 2 we see winds and a great sea. Both wind and sea are images that we frequently see in apocalyptic sections of the Bible, and elsewhere.

The wind very often denotes the action of God. Why? Because, like God, the wind is invisible yet can have very dramatic effects.

Psalm 18:10 — And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, **he did fly upon the wings of the wind.**

Hosea 13:15 — Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, **the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness,** and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

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

Isaiah 17:12-13 — Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

And so the wind striving on the sea in verse 2 might be expected to depict the actions of God on the restless nations of this world, and in fact that is exactly what we are about to see in this chapter.

Why are there four winds? That stresses that these winds are directed to the earth. Why? Because the number four is very often used as a symbol for the earth.

And why does four denote the earth? There are four great elements: earth, air, fire, and water. There are four directions: north, south, east, and west. There are four seasons: fall, winter, spring, and summer.

These symbols are not chosen randomly. Instead, there is some link or often (as here) many links between the symbol and the thing that is symbolized.

Another reason why there are four winds is given in verse 3 — there are also four great beasts.

There is a great deal of similarity between the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, both in the symbols that are used and in what those symbols depict. Here we see four great beasts coming up from the sea, and in Revelation 13:1, John sees “a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”

A good way to interpret these symbols is to ask ourselves what we would expect them to mean given the context. Here, for example, we see a great beast coming up out of the sea. If the sea represents the restless nations of the world, then what might be depicted by a great beast coming up out of that sea? Wouldn't we expect that great beast to be some great earthly power that arose from those restless nations?

One thing rings very loudly in these verses — the world. We see it in the image of the restless sea, and we see it in the symbolic number four, which we see in both verse 2 and verse 3.

Anytime we see the number four, we should generally be on the lookout for something of worldly origin that will most likely be contrasted with something of heavenly origin.

Not to give everything away too soon, but we will not be left entirely to ourselves in figuring out what these images depict. Starting in verse 17 of this same chapter, Daniel will be given an inspired explanation of some of what he is seeing. There, for example, we will learn that these four great beasts from the sea depict four kings from the earth. And that, of course, will immediately bring our attention back to the four great kingdoms we saw in Chapter 2.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Instead, let's take in this vision the same way Daniel did. Let's study the symbols before we study what the angel will later tell us about them.

But let's deal with one objection now. How can the number four be both symbolic and literal? How can it symbolically depict the earth while literally describing the four kingdoms of Daniel 2 (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome)?

The answer to that complaint is simple, and we have already mentioned it — these numbers were not chosen at random and did not occur randomly. The reason there were four great kingdoms between Daniel and Christ was that God wanted there to be four great kingdoms between Daniel and Christ. The reason the people were in captivity for 70 years was that God wanted them to be in captivity for 70 years? Why did God choose those numbers 4 and 70? Perhaps because those numbers by themselves teach a lesson — the four kingdoms are earthly kingdoms unlike the eternal kingdom, and the 70 years taught a perfect and complete lesson to God's people.

Let's next ask a question we should constantly be asking ourselves to make sure we don't go astray in our interpretation of these visions: How do verses 2 and 3 fit into the central theme of this book?

And what is that central theme? “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (4:32). In short, God is in control. Yes, things may look bad, and yes it may seem that earthly kingdom have the upper hand, but things are not what they seem. “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

We see that theme in verse 2 and 3. We see four earthly powers, diverse from one another, rising up out of the restless sea. But what do they find? They find four winds of heaven coming against them. These four beasts will not be able to do whatever they want. Instead, these winds from God will turn them one way or the other.

And something else we see in verses 2 and 3 is a great contrast. We see a great contrast between the kingdoms of this world and the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2:44. These four beasts come from the sea, which tells us that they are of human origin. But the eternal kingdom was not cut out by human hands (Daniel 2:45).

And that gives us another great theme of this book, a theme that we have seen already but that we will see much more often in these final chapters. And what is that great theme? There is a great dividing line in this book between the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God. No man-made kingdom is eternal, whether it is a man-made political kingdom or a man-made religious kingdom.

The last thing we learn from verse 3 is that these four beasts are not all the same, but instead they are diverse from one another. How are they different from each other? We need to keep reading.

DANIEL 7:4

4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

The first great beast is like a lion with eagle's wings. But those wings are plucked, and the lion is made to stand on its feet as a man, and it is given a man's heart.

What does all of that mean?

Let's start with the easy part — if (as we will learn in verse 17) this beast represents a king or a kingdom, then this beast must represent Babylon.

We will have more to say later about whether the beast is a king or a kingdom, but recall from Chapter 2 that we have already seen those two words used interchangeably in this book, and I think we will see that the same thing is happening here.

Why must this verse beast be the kingdom of Babylon?

First, as we will see, Chapter 7 is closely related to Chapter 2, and in Chapter 2 we saw four kingdoms represented by the giant image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Those four kingdoms were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Here we also see four kingdoms, so we should not be surprised if Chapter 7 turns out to be showing us the same four kingdoms but from a different perspective.

Second, a winged lion was a very common symbol for Babylon, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. One of the most common images for Babylon (still seen today in many museums) is that of a winged lion with a human head.

Third, ALL commentators agree on this point, and, although that unanimity might make us justifiably a bit nervous, here it turns out to be correct. Just as Revelation would later use a symbol for Rome that no one can miss (a woman seated upon seven hills), so Daniel 7 here uses a symbol for Babylon that no one can miss (a winged lion). (Daniel and Revelations are like bookends on these four kingdoms, with Daniel looking forward in time and Revelation looking backward in time to describe them.)

Fourth, like Babylon, this first great beast is hindered and humiliated by God. Its wings are plucked, and it is made to stand up and act like a man rather than act like a lion. In historical fact, the king of Babylon was a man who was humiliated by being given the heart of a beast. In this vision, Babylon is pictured as a beast who is given the heart of a man. Either way, that role reversal points us straight back to the events in Daniel 4 when the great King Nebuchadnezzar lived as a beast with the donkeys for seven years.

The first beast in this vision is the kingdom of Babylon.

DANIEL 7:5

5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

The second beast is like a bear. It is raised up on one side, it has three ribs in its mouth, and it is told to devour much flesh.

If we are correct that these four beasts represent the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, then this second beast should be Medo-Persia. Do these descriptions apply to Medo-Persia? Yes, they do.

First, the historical order is correct. The Medo-Persian empire followed the Babylon empire, and in fact in Chapter 5 we saw the very day when that transition occurred.

Medo-Persia was the second kingdom in Daniel 2, so it should not surprise us that Medo-Persia is the second kingdom in Daniel 7. Daniel and secular historians are in complete agreement on this point — the combined Medo-Persian empire conquered the Babylonian empire.

Second, one side of this bear is higher than the other side. That part of the image stresses another historical fact about the Medo-Persian empire — the Persians quickly became the dominant partner in that confederation.

Third, this bear is told to continue eating even before it has finished its last meal. It is voracious and greedy, and that image is a perfect description of the Medo-Persian empire, as Babylon found out!

But what about the three ribs in the bear's mouth?

Usually when we see the number three in apocalyptic language we should look for a reference to God. Can we find such a reference here? How can God be shown by three ribs in the mouth of a bear?

I think the best answer is that the three ribs depict the three major Medo-Persian conquests that occurred under Cyrus and his son Cambyses.

- The conquest of the Lydian kingdom in 546 BC.
- The conquest of the Chaldean kingdom in 539 BC.
- The conquest of Egypt in 525 BC.

If so, then this image of the three ribs is another example where the literal number was chosen by God because of its figurative meaning.

What do I mean? What I mean is that God was the reason why Cyrus achieved those three great military victories, and that there were three of those great victories was also determined by God. Perhaps the number three was chosen by God to remind us that God was the one behind King Cyrus' success.

That fact was known to Isaiah long before Cyrus was even born!

Isaiah 44:28-45:1 — That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut

And that fact was also known to Cyrus himself.

Ezra 1:2 — Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

So, I think the three ribs are both literal and figurative — literal in that they point us to Cyrus' three great military victories, and figurative in that they remind us that those victories came from God.

DANIEL 7:6

6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

The third beast is a leopard that has four wings and four heads, and dominion is given to it.

If we are correct that these four beasts correspond with the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, then this leopard should be Greece. Do these descriptions apply to Greece? Yes, they do.

And here we should keep in mind that these prophecies were written long before Alexander the Great led Greece to conquer the Persians in 331 BC. In fact, it is prophecies such as this one that explain why liberal critics try so hard to move the date of this book until after the Greek conquest.

How does this image of the leopard apply to Greece?

First, as with a leopard, Greece was known for its speed. The Greeks, especially under Alexander the Great, moved and conquered very rapidly.

Second, this beast has four wings and four heads. What does that mean?

I think we once again see a number that is both literal and figurative.

How is the number four literal?

After the death of Alexander, Greece was split into four pieces that were ruled by his four generals: Cassander in Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus eastward in Thrace and Asia Minor; Ptolemy in Egypt, Cyprus, and nearby Asia Minor; and Seleucus to the Indus River.

And how is the number four also figurative?

Because anytime we see the number four we should be thinking about something that is of this world, something that is earthly. And despite Greece's claims to grandeur, Greece was just another in a long line of earthly kingdoms. Greece was not the eternal kingdom, and Alexander was not the son of God. The number four is a reminder of that — as is the reason why the kingdom was split into four pieces. That happened only after Alexander's death!

So, the second beast is Medo-Persia, and this third beast is Greece.

What is meant by the end of verse 6 — that dominion was given to it?

That phrase is a reminder that God is controlling things here, and I think it confirms that we are on the right track with our understanding of the number three and the number four.

There is only one explanation for how Greece conquered Persia, and that is because God wanted it to happen. Why? Because God was creating the perfect cradle into which his son and his kingdom would be born — Roman peace combined with Greek language and culture.

As Horace famously stated, Rome may have conquered Greece, but Greek culture conquered Rome. The combination of Greek culture with Roman might created the perfect cradle for the coming of Christ and the beginning of his kingdom, and it was not by accident! The Greeks brought reason, rationality, logic, and language. Rome brought peace, roads, trade, law, and communication.

Although Roman religion later brought emperor worship and persecution (which Daniel will also be told about), initially it was open and tolerant, particularly during the time when Christianity was viewed simply as a Jewish sect and allowed to freely spread across the known world.

What we are seeing so far in these images is simply a figurative restatement of the central theme of this book — “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” (Daniel 4:32)

DANIEL 7:7

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

And finally we meet the fourth beast. It is dreadful and terrible. Unlike the three prior beasts, there does not seem to be a known creature to which this fourth beast

can be compared. It is exceedingly strong, it has great iron teeth, it devours, it brakes in pieces, it stamps the residue from its feet, and it has ten horns.

Even if we had not seen Chapter 2, we would know the identity of this fourth beast. With this description the fourth beast can be none other than the mighty Roman empire. And yes, Rome was mighty, but as we saw in Chapter 2, Rome also had feet of clay.

Rome, like this beast, was different from the beasts that came before it. The world had never seen anything like Rome. Like this fourth beast, Rome was dreadful and terrible and strong. Like this fourth beast, Rome devoured and broke and trampled its enemies.

Why did God create such a kingdom? Two words — Pax Romana! Roman peace! It took a kingdom such as Rome to establish peace across the known world, and God used that peace to spread the gospel to the known world. And that peace was no accident!

And we learn one more thing in verse 7 about this beast — it has ten horns. What does that mean? We will get an answer to that question when we get to verse 24. But as a preview, any time we see a horn, we should be thinking about a king or a kingdom. So don't be surprised if these ten horns turn out to be ten kings. But is 10 literal or figurative? Let's save that question for now until we learn more about these horns in this chapter.

As we saw with the rise of Greece, the only way to explain the rise of Rome is that God wanted it to occur. And, in fact, God had told Daniel about the rise of Rome hundreds of years before it happened. God was behind all of this.

How else can we explain the rise of Greece under Alexander the Great? How else can we explain the ascendancy of Rome over such great powers as Carthage, and the Hellenistic kingdoms of Macedon, Syracuse, and the Seleucid empire?

Listen to a few sentences from the introduction to the recent book, *Rome and Her Enemies: An Empire Created and Destroyed by War*:

Lying at its heart is a mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization. How on earth did the Romans do it? How did a single city, one that began as a small community of castle-rustlers, camped out among marshes and hills, end up ruling an empire that stretched from the moors of Scotland to the deserts of Iraq?

I love that! “A mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization!” It isn’t a mystery at all to those of us who believe in God!

These secular historians ask why — Daniel answers that question. The answer to their question is that it happened because God made it happen. The answer to their question is that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will!

DANIEL 7:8

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

Daniel considers the ten horns of verse 7. If we find ourselves having trouble understanding parts of this image, we can take comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Daniel also struggled to understand here! Here he is considering the horns, and later in verse 16 Daniel will ask for an explanation.

While Daniel considers the horns, something happens. An eleventh horn (called a little horn in verse 8) comes up among the ten horns from verse 7. So I guess it’s a good thing we didn’t spend a lot of time in verse 7 trying to figure out why the number 10 was used. Why? Because we instead need to explain the number eleven! There are 11 horns — the ten from verse 7 and the little horn from verse 8. And in verse 8, three of the horns are uprooted, which leaves only 8 horns. What does all of that mean? Let’s save that question for later in the chapter.

This eleventh horn has eyes like a man and has a mouth that speaks great things. Who or what is this little horn? We will discover that when we get to verses 24 and

25, but for now let's just notice that there are at least two other similar descriptions in the Bible.

Revelation 13:5 — And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 — Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Are those verses related to what we are seeing here in Daniel 7:8? For now, let's just say maybe. They certainly sound the same on the surface, but we need to dig down some more into the text before we make up our mind on that question.

But before we move on, let me say a few things about those verses we just read from 2 Thessalonians.

First, we sometimes hear it said that the apostles all thought incorrectly that Jesus would return very quickly during their own lifetimes. There is nothing in the inspired record to support such a notion. In fact, in 2 Thessalonians, Paul says just the opposite. There he said that the end of the world could not happen until something else happened first.

Second, we today often say that Jesus can come at any time. And that is correct. Jesus could return five minutes from now or five millennia from now. But has that always been true?

When Jesus ascended to heaven in Acts 1, could Jesus have returned five minutes later? The answer is no. Why? Because Jesus had just told them about the something that was about to happen but that had not yet happened — the restoration of the kingdom to Israel in Acts 2. That prophecy had to be fulfilled before Jesus could return again. How could Jesus return to deliver a kingdom to God the Father if that kingdom had not yet been established?

Paul's point in 2 Thessalonians is similar. "For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed." Paul was telling

them that Jesus could not return until something else happened first. There was a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, and that had to happen first before Jesus could return. That is what Paul was saying in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

What was that prophecy, and when was it fulfilled? Let's hold off on those questions until later in this chapter, but perhaps we shouldn't be surprised if the prophecy turns out to have been fulfilled in the days of the Roman empire. Why? Because that is the context here in verse 8, and Daniel's prophecy here sounds quite a bit like the prophecy Paul was pointing to in 2 Thessalonians.

DANIEL 7:9-10

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down,
and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment
was white as snow, and the hair of his head
like the pure wool: his throne was like the
fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.
10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from
before him: thousand thousands ministered unto
him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood
before him: the judgment was set, and the books
were opened.

Here we have a great 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.

There are many different judgments in the Bible. Which judgment does this great scene depict? Is this the final judgment? Is this the end of the world?

Yes, this looks like what we might expect to see at the end of the world, but we need to be very careful before we leave the context of the previous verses and suddenly jump thousands of years (at least) into the future.

Remember one of our guidelines — similarity of language does not imply similarity of subject. And nowhere is that guideline more important than when it comes to language about judgment.

Why? Because there are many judgments in the Bible, and many of them are described with very similar language.

Let's look at some examples.

Isaiah 13:10, 13 — For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. ... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Babylon (Isaiah 13:1).

Ezekiel 32:7 — And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Egypt (Ezekiel 32:2).

Isaiah 34:4 — And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Edom (Isaiah 34:5).

Matthew 24:29 — Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:34).

Joel 2:30-31 — And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Is that the end of the world? No. It is the end of the earthly kingdoms on the day the eternal kingdom was established (Acts 2:16).

2 Peter 3:10 — But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Is that the end of the world? Yes, it is. And that language in 2 Peter, I believe, is not apocalyptic, but rather is a literal description of what will happen on that last great day. The descriptions we looked at of other judgments borrow those descriptions of the last day and use them to figuratively describe earlier judgments by God.

When Babylon and Jerusalem fell it was as if the sun had quit shining and the stars had fallen from heaven, but those things did not literally happen at that time.

So what we can say now about verses 9-10? Could such language be used to describe the final judgment at the end of the world? Yes, and such language is used elsewhere in the Bible for that purpose. Is that the case here? Is the end of the world being described here in verses 9-10?

I don't think so. Why? Because of the context and the time frame. In verse 8, we were looking at Rome, and, as we will find out later in this chapter, we were looking at Rome in the first century.

What about the context after verses 9-10? Are those verses also talking about first century events? Let's look at them and see. And then we can circle back and look at verses 9-10 again after we have the full context in view.

DANIEL 7:11-12

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

The judgment of the court was that the fourth beast be destroyed, and this event is pictured in verse 11. The beast is burned with fire and utterly destroyed.

We should keep in mind the identity of this fourth beast, which we saw all the way back in Chapter 2 and which we learn more about later in this chapter. This fourth beast is the Roman empire, and as we will soon see, the Roman empire in the first century. That time frame is important as we try to figure out what is going on here and in the surrounding verses.

Verse 12 tells us that the other three beasts (which we now know are Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) have lost their power (their dominion was taken away),

but they are pictured in verse 12 as still being around (their lives are prolonged for a season and a time).

Why are the first three beasts still here? Weren't they defeated earlier? Yes, they were, but they are here so that, with Rome, they can hear their own fate. They are shown here awaiting their own judgment.

And there is another reason they are shown as still being here — in a sense they were still here. The first three beasts lived on in the fourth beast. They were all earthly kingdoms that were trying to take the place of and were intent on destroying the work of God.

And they had something else in common — they would all be swept away by the eternal kingdom that was established by God in the first century.

We saw this image earlier in Chapter 2, where all four kingdoms were shown by a single giant statue — and all four were destroyed by the same stone made without hands. God is showing us here in Chapter 7 that same event using different imagery. These four beasts are that giant statue, and once again they are being destroyed.

We also see this same image in John's description of Rome:

Revelation 13:1-2 — And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a **leopard**, and his feet were as the feet of a **bear**, and his mouth as the mouth of a **lion**: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

In Revelation 13, the beast (Rome) is like a leopard, a bear, and a lion. Where have we seen those three animals before? In Daniel 7, we just saw a lion, a bear, and a leopard (in that order). In Revelation 13, 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 while John is looking BACKWARD through time!

DANIEL 7:13-14

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which 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 and to be given a kingdom. Two questions — who is this, and when is this?

First, who is this?

We know that this son of man is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In fact, this is where the Messianic title “the Son of Man” came from. When Jesus used that title of himself what he was saying was that he was the Son of Man of Daniel 7! Jesus was taking a Messianic title familiar to every Jew and applying it to himself.

Jesus was applying verses 13 and 14 to himself — that he would come before the Ancient of Days to be given dominion, glory, and a kingdom! We often read right past that title “Son of Man,” which occurs over and over in the gospels, but after studying these two verses, we will never be able to skip over that title ever again! Jesus is the Son of Man!

Second, when is this?

So far our time frame for this fourth beast has been the first century, and I see no indication of a change anywhere in these verses.

Once again, as in Chapter 2, we see here in verse 14 a fifth kingdom — one totally unlike the other four we have seen. This fifth kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed (verse 14), unlike the other four that were just destroyed! This kingdom in verse 14 is the same eternal kingdom we saw in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:44 — And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.

When was that kingdom set up? Daniel told us that in the verse we just read: “In the days of these kings.” Who are those kings? The kings of the fourth kingdom.

The eternal kingdom of Christ — his church — was established in the first century as described in Acts 2, just as Daniel told us it would be in Daniel 2. Here in verses 13 and 14 we are once again being shown those same wonderful first century events that we saw in Chapter 2.

But when did Jesus come with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days? Did that happen in Acts 2? No it did not. That happened in Acts 1.

Acts 1:9 — And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Verses 13 and 14 are showing us the ascension of Christ back to heaven following his resurrection from the dead. And once there, he was given the kingdom that was established in Acts 2.

But why can't this be the end of all time? Because when that great day happens Jesus will **deliver** a kingdom to God, not **receive** a kingdom from God.

1 Corinthians 15:24 — Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

Jesus receives a kingdom in Daniel 7:14. When did that happen? That happened as soon as the kingdom was established — in the first century. The kingdom is the Lord's kingdom, the church.

In Acts 1, Jesus received a kingdom (Daniel 7:14). At the end of time, Jesus will deliver that same kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Acts 1 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those on earth. Daniel 7 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those in heaven — and what an incredible scene it is!

The victorious Christ returns to the glories of heaven and is presented before the Father to receive the eternal kingdom that he purchased with his blood. And all of

this is described after the judgment scene at which the earthly kingdoms of this world — including the fourth kingdom, which had put Jesus to death — are judged and destroyed to make way for the eternal kingdom of Christ — the church of Christ! Can anyone ever look at the church in the same way after studying these verses?

Daniel 7:13-14 — I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The church of Christ is that kingdom! We are that kingdom! Do we believe it? Is that how we see ourselves? If not, then we need to spend more time reading Daniel 7!

And who is crowning Christ in Daniel 7? Who is giving him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom? The Ancient of days. Not us. We do not crown Jesus king despite sometimes singing that we do. God the Father crowned Jesus king. I obey Jesus because he is king, not to make him king. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, which means he is king and lord of everything and everybody.

Now let's circle back to a question we looked at earlier.

If verses 13-14 are showing us a first century event, then isn't that even more evidence that the great judgment scene we saw in verses 9-12 was also a first century event?

Those verses showed us the judgment of Rome, just as Jesus used similar language in Matthew 24 to describe the judgment of Jerusalem and just as God uses similar language elsewhere in the Bible to described other past judgments.

Will there be a great judgment at the end of the world? Yes. Is that great judgment described in the Bible? Yes. Is that great judgment being described here? I don't think so. I think we are looking at the judgment of the four beasts when the eternal kingdom of God was established in Acts 2 and swept them all away.

DANIEL 7:15-16

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

At this point we still have some unanswered questions. For starters, we haven't yet determined who those eleven horns are.

Fortunately, Daniel was just as curious as we are, so he asks someone standing nearby for the truth of the vision, and he receives the interpretation.

But Daniel was more than just curious — Daniel was also grieved in spirit and in body. Daniel had just seen some incredible and disturbing images, and he wanted to know what they meant.

At this point we should pause to consider another question: why was Daniel given this vision?

One possible reason comes from Isaiah. A surface reading of Isaiah might have led some of the exiles to believe that the Messiah would appear immediately following the Babylonian captivity. In fact, liberal critics even today incorrectly believe that many of Isaiah's prophecies about Christ are instead statements about Zerubbabel, who proved to be a disappointing Messiah. If the liberal critics are confused today, then maybe some of Isaiah's readers were also confused.

But Daniel's vision says NO. Daniel's vision tells us that the Messiah would not come immediately after the exile. Instead, Daniel's vision tells us that the Messiah will not come until two other kingdoms had first come and gone (Medo-Persia and Greece). Instead, the Messiah, Daniel was told, would come during the days of the fourth kingdom (Rome), which, of course, is precisely what happened.

DANIEL 7:17-18

17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.
18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

The first thing we are told in this interpretation is that, as we have been suggesting, these four beasts are kings or kingdoms. But what are they? Kings or kingdoms?

The terms “king” and “kingdom” are sometimes used interchangeably, and we have to look at the context to see what is meant. In ancient kingdoms, the king was the kingdom, and the kingdom was the king. The king was the embodiment of the kingdom. This is what we already saw in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2:39 — And after thee [King Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.

The fourth beast is called a king here in verse 17, but the same fourth beast is called a kingdom later in verse 23. And verse 24 later tells us that “the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings.” Those ten horns were on this fourth beast — so verse 24 will confirm that the beast is a kingdom and the horns are the kings of that kingdom.

This also makes sense from our comparison of Chapter 7 with Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, the four parts of the great image were four kingdoms, and here the four beasts are also four kingdoms. In fact, they are the same four kingdoms.

Should God’s people have been frightened of these four fierce beasts that had arisen from the earth and sea? No. Why? Because of a small but crucial word that begins verse 18 — “but.”

Things look bad, BUT we are going to win. God’s kingdom (unlike these earthly kingdoms) will never pass away. God’s kingdom will outlast them all. Verse 18 is a message of comfort to Daniel, and it is a message of comfort to us as well. Today we are the “saints of the most High.”

Verse 18 says that we would take and possess the kingdom. A better translation is that we would receive and possess the kingdom, and that is what we have done. God has given us the eternal kingdom; we have received the eternal kingdom; and we possess the eternal kingdom. And we know from our study of Daniel 2 that that eternal kingdom is the church, which was established in Acts 2 during the days of the Roman kings.

DANIEL 7:19-22

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Daniel skips quickly in verse 19 to the fourth beast, which in this vision was different from all the other beasts.

What about the other three beasts? Either Daniel does not ask about those beasts or Daniel does but does not give us the details regarding the answer he received about them. We will learn a great deal about the third kingdom in the visions that occur later in the book, and also about the second kingdom.

Daniel repeats the details regarding the fourth kingdom and in doing so we learn more about the vision.

Notice, for example, that we again see the three uprooted horns from Daniel 7:8. Here in verse 20 these three horns fall before the little horn. We started with 10

horns, and then we added a little horn so that we had 11 horns, and now three have fallen, making the little horn the eighth horn.

Notice also in verse 21 that this little horn wages war against the saints and prevails against them. But verse 22 tells us that that situation would not last forever, but only until a time of judgment by God, when the saints would possess the kingdom.

Which judgment is this?

What is the context? What is the time frame?

The context is the fourth beast — Rome. And particularly Rome in the first century when the Messiah came and established his eternal kingdom. We have even seen the ascension of Christ from Acts 1 in this chapter. This chapter is describing the establishment of the kingdom from Acts 2, not the deliverance of the kingdom at the end in 1 Corinthians 15:24.

So with that context in mind, who is being judged here in verse 22? The text answers that question for us. The little horn is being judged along with the kingdom of the little horn. And that kingdom is the fourth beast, Rome. Verse 22 is describing the judgment of Rome because of its persecution of God's people.

This judgment is given to the saints in verse 22. What that means is that the saints are the reason for the judgment, and the judgment is their vindication. The judgment of Rome, which is described here and later in the book of Revelation, was motivated by the prayers of the saints. In fact, the entire book of Revelation could be seen as God's answer to the question in Revelation 6:10.

Revelation 6:10 — How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

DANIEL 7:23

23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

The explanation of the fourth beast that Daniel receives in verse 23 is a completely accurate picture of the Roman empire, which grew from a dusty village on the Tiber River in the eighth century BC to control virtually the entire known world by the first century AD.

The world had never seen anything like Rome. Rome was different from all the other kingdoms in its organization, in its unity, and in its power.

This fourth kingdom is not Greece as the liberal critics would have us believe; this fourth kingdom is Rome. This fourth beast breaks things into pieces, unlike Greece which was itself broken into pieces.

DANIEL 7:24-25

24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Verse 24 confirms what we said earlier. The four beasts are four kingdoms, even though they are also called four kings. As we said last week, and as we saw earlier in Chapter 2, the words “king” and “kingdom” are used interchangeably in this book.

And that usage is not unique to Daniel. Remember what Jesus said:

Luke 17:20-21 — Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

The Pharisees were looking for the kingdom, and Jesus told them that the kingdom was already in their midst? Why? Because the king was there! The kingdom was in their midst because the king was in their midst.

Likewise here, the four beasts are both kings (verse 17) and kingdoms (verse 23).

Here in verses 24-25 we once again meet the ten horns and the eleventh little horn, and now that we know from verse 24 that these horns are kings, let's figure out who they are.

And to do that, let's look at the evidence.

We know that these kings are kings of Rome because they are horns on the fourth beast, which represents the kingdom that was in power when Christ came and established his eternal kingdom and ascended back to Heaven. And so, in fact, we know not only that they are kings of Rome, but they are kings of Rome at the time Christ did those things. First century Rome is our context and our time frame for the fourth kingdom, both here and also back in Chapter 2.

That fact really narrows things down for us, but let's keep looking at the clues.

We also know the number of horns. We had 10 horns, and then we had 11 when the little horn was added, and then we had 8 when three of the other horns were uprooted. So we have 10, 11, 3, and 8.

But are those numbers literal or figurative? Yes! At least, maybe yes at this point for at least some of them. So far we have seen other numbers that were literal, but were most likely chosen by God because of their symbolic significance. Maybe that is what we have here as well. Let's hold off on that question for now.

Let's move on instead to the million dollar question: Can we find 11 Roman kings in the first century? Yes, and we don't have to look any further than our handout (which can be found at the end of these notes)!

There were precisely 11 Roman emperors in the New Testament period of the first century, starting with the first emperor of Rome, Augustus, and ending with Domitian near the very end of the first century.

Those 11 emperors can be divided into three groups:

- The first group of five makes up the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and they take us from before the birth of Christ during the reign of Augustus up to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul by Nero.

- The second group of kings are the three civil war kings who reigned and died in a single year, AD 69, the so-called year of four kings.
- The third group is the Flavian dynasty, consisting of Vespasian and his two sons Titus and Domitian. Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, and that dynasty continued until Domitian's death in AD 96.

Between Augustus and Domitian we have the entire first century New Testament period. So it should not surprise us at all if these prophecies in Daniel are focused on Augustus, Domitian, and the kings in between those two — who together make up eleven kings — the precise number of kings we see in Daniel 7, written half a millennium earlier!

But what about the three uprooted kings of Daniel 7:8, the three fallen kings of Daniel 7:20, and the three subdued kings of Daniel 7:24? Who are they?

That question really answers itself when we look at the list of kings. You have two complete dynasties separated by three civil war kings who all reigned and died within a single year. Who else could the three fallen kings be other than Galba, Otho, and Vitellius?

I think those three would have been the first to agree with their description here of being “uprooted”! One was hacked to pieces in the Roman forum, one killed himself, and the other was killed when Vespasian's army entered the city — and that all happened in a single year! Can you imagine the turmoil in our country if we had four presidents in a single year? That is what happened to Rome in AD 69.

So who is the little horn? Who is this eleventh king who raise after the 10 horns and who becomes the eighth king after three kings are uprooted?

Earlier when looked at two similar descriptions from elsewhere in the Bible. Let's read them again.

Revelation 13:5 — And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 — Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of

sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

I believe Daniel 7, Revelation 13, and 2 Thessalonians 2 are all describing the same person — the Roman emperor Domitian, who was both the 11th king (if we count the three uprooted kings) and the 8th king (if we ignore the three uprooted kings).

Do the numbers 8 and 11 have a symbolic meaning? Yes, 11 falls short of 12, the number for God's people, just as 6 falls short of 7. And 8 is the number of renewal, with the 8th day being the start of a new week. Do those symbols 8 and 11 apply to Domitian? Yes, they do, but let's come back to that question after we first look at what Domitian was like.

Do the descriptions from Daniel 7, Revelation 13, and 2 Thessalonians 2 fit with what we know about Domitian? Yes, they do.

For starters, we need to understand that Domitian was the worst sort of leader — arrogant, vicious, and crazy. (I'm sure glad we don't have any rulers like that around anywhere today...) As for the crazy part, listen to what Suetonius had to say about Domitian in his book *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

In the beginning of his reign, [Domitian] used to spend daily an hour by himself in private, during which time he did nothing else but catch flies, and stick them through the body with a sharp pin. When some one therefore inquired, "whether any one was with the emperor," it was significantly answered by Vibius Crispus, "Not so much as a fly."

As for why his book was called *The Lives of Twelve Caesars*, he included Julius Caesar, who, though certainly a Caesar, was not a king. He wanted to be a king, and that was why he was assassinated, but he was not a king. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome. Rome was still a Republic when Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Rome did not become an Empire until about 15 years later, when Octavian became Augustus and adopted the title "Imperator Caesar" (which all followed the suicide of Antony and Cleopatra in 30 BC.) We will see some of this history foretold in Daniel 11.

But back to Domitian. Was Domitian arrogant? Suetonius wrote:

From his youth [Domitian] was far from being of an affable disposition, but was on the contrary presumptuous and unbridled both in act and word.

Did Domitian claim to be deity? Did Domitian, as verse 25 says, think that he would change the times? In Daniel 2:21 we read that God changes the times. Did Domitian claim to be in the place of God? Again, Suetonius wrote:

With no less arrogance [Domitian] 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.

Was Domitian a persecutor of God’s people? 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.

Domitian began an empire policy of persecution that did not end until 311 AD under the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and Constantine.

But Domitian was not the first to persecute God’s people. Nero had also done that, and it began again with Domitian. Domitian renewed the persecution inflicted by Nero. Tertullian called Domitian a “limb of the bloody Nero,” and that name was associated with him even into the third century. Eusebius called Domitian “the successor of Nero.”

In life, Domitian was the eleventh king, but here in Daniel 7 Domitian is also shown as the 8th king after three are uprooted. Later, in Revelation 13, Domitian is shown only as the 8th king, with the three uprooted Civil War kings being ignored.

Why was it important to depict Domitian as number eight? 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 (Leviticus 14:10). In early Christian literature, Christ was referred to as 888.

How does the number eight fit with Domitian? It fits because of what Domitian did — he renewed the persecution of God’s people. Nero had been 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.

And Tertullian referred to Domitian as a “limb of the bloody Nero.” In fact, a rumor arose during the reign of Domitian that he was *literally* Nero, raised from the dead. How else would Domitian be described except by the number eight — the number of renewal?

But the number 11 also has symbolic significance, falling short of the number 12, the symbol for God’s people. Rome thought they were the special people. Rome thought they were the eternal kingdom. But they were not. They fell hopelessly short, and that is depicted by the number 11. Rome was not a 12! Rome was an 11! And neither Nero nor Domitian was a 777! Instead, they were a 666!

How was Domitian different or diverse from the former kings as verse 24 says? For one thing, Domitian was the first to make it a policy of the empire that all who refused to worship him be persecuted. In fact, Domitian began an empire policy of persecution against Christians that lasted for years after he died.

What does it mean in verse 25 when it says that the saints would be given into his hand for “a time and times and the dividing of time” or “a time, two times, and half a time”?

That phrase denotes three and a half years, a period of time that is also found frequently in Revelation. In each case that symbol of three and a half years denotes a state of affairs in which God’s people are persecuted but sustained. That symbol denotes a temporary state of affairs — something that will not last.

But how does the number three and a half denote a temporary state of affairs? Because it is a broken seven, and seven denotes perfection — something that will last. A broken seven denotes something that is temporary.

And again, we sometimes see God using a literal three and a half for that same purpose. The drought for which Elijah prayed lasted three and a half years (James 5:17). It was a temporary affliction.

The duration of the eternal kingdom is a seven! The duration of the Roman persecution is a broken seven! Whatever persecution we face in this life, we can take comfort in the knowledge that it is a broken seven — it will not last forever.

I think we can also learn something about Domitian from how news of his death was received by his fellow citizens. We are told that upon Domitian's death, the Roman Senate was:

Overjoyed ... [and assailed] the dead emperor with the most insulting and stinging kind of outcries ... Finally they passed a decree that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him obliterated.

That decree, which is called the *damnatio memoriae*, destroyed all the statues and inscriptions of Domitian, such as Domitian's arch at Hierapolis and dedicatory inscriptions at the Temple of the Sabastoi in Ephesus.

But they did not destroy everything. A Roman coin has been found that provides strong circumstantial evidence that Domitian was a persecutor of Christians. The front of that coin shows Domitian. On the reverse is shown Domitian's infant son, who was born in the second consulship of Domitian in AD 73 and who died in AD 82, the second year after he became emperor. That child of Domitian is depicted on the coin as seated on a globe with his arms outstretched surrounded by seven stars! The inscription surrounding the child, *DIVUS CAESARIMP DOMITIANIF*, means "the divine Caesar, son of the emperor Domitian." If Domitian believed his son was divine, what does that tell us about how he viewed himself? And where else have we seen the image of someone called the son of God surrounded by seven stars?

Revelation 1:13-16 — And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt

about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. **And he had in his right hand seven stars:** and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Coins minted during Domitian's reign show his son as a god reaching for seven stars. How could such a person not come in conflict with Christianity? Particularly when we know how unbalanced he was?

Now let's pause for a moment to consider just how incredible this prophecy is.

Daniel received this vision in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, which was probably the year 553 BC. At that time, the Babylonians were still in power, and the events of Daniel 5 had not yet happened.

And so between this vision and the fulfillment of this vision we have two entire kingdoms that would rise and fall (Medo-Persia and Greece) before Rome would come to power.

And between the vision in 553 BC and the death of Domitian in AD 96, we have nearly 650 years! That would be like someone giving prophecies in 1372 about the number of U.S. presidents in our own century as well as the kingdoms that rose and fell in between!

Now we see why the book of Daniel has always been such a target of the liberal critics. They refuse to recognize the hand of God in anything, and no one who believes Daniel can possibly fail to see the hand of God at work! And so the liberal critics attack Daniel and call him an imposter. But Jesus called Daniel a prophet in Matthew 24!

And one more thing — the liberal critics can't move the book of Daniel beyond the prophecies in Chapter 7 no matter how hard they try. Why not? Because we have physical copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls that predate the prophecies in this chapter! And that is why those same critics tell us the fourth kingdom is Greece despite all of the evidence to the contrary. If they agree that the fourth kingdom is Rome, then they must also agree that the Bible is from God and not from man — and that fact is something they will never accept.

DANIEL 7:26-27

26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Verses 26 and 27 contain one of the most incredible and wonderful prophecies in the Bible. We find here a prophecy that could never have come from the mind of man, and that no one would ever believe absent faith in the God who revealed it to us. These two verses are a prophecy that the church would overthrow and outlast the mighty Roman empire!

Who could believe such a thing? The Roman empire — with all of its vast wealth and power? The Roman empire — with all of its soldiers and politicians? The Roman empire — with all of its far flung territories? The Roman empire — which feared nothing and no one? How could such an empire ever be defeated by anything — much less by a small religious sect composed mainly of the lower classes and slaves? What could such a group ever do to damage Rome in any way, much less defeat it?

Well, for starters, that small seemingly powerless group had very powerful friends! And that small group had very powerful weapons — the word of God and prayer! And if Rome had taken the time to read the writings of that group, they would have known, not only that they would be defeated by that small group, but that their fate had been sealed over 500 years earlier!

What we see in verses 26 and 27 is the stone of Daniel 2 not made with human hands striking and destroying that giant statue made up of the earthly kingdoms of this world, including Rome as the base of that statue — the part that was struck by the stone.

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

That kingdom is the church, and we are the saints of the most High! And the kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom. And all dominions shall serve and obey him! Why? Because God’s kingdom is the only eternal kingdom; it has no competition. It will destroy and outlast all of the kingdoms of men.

When I teach the book of Revelation I often make the point that when we understand what that book is saying about the church, then the book of Revelation becomes a book of Revolution! Why? Because it shows us how God views the church, and it shows us just how important and beautiful the church of Christ is. I think the same can be said for Daniel. This book also shows us the beauty and importance and power of the church. This book also shows us how God views the church. And if we aren’t viewing the church the same way, then we need to look again!

One final point on these verses — was such a beautiful and important kingdom really established in the first century?

Many premillennialists say no. They say that God intended to set up a kingdom in the first century, but God changed his mind when the Jews rejected Christ, and so instead, they say, God postponed the kingdom and set up the church instead.

Is that what the Bible teaches? No. Of course not. the Bible teaches just the opposite. And would we really expect otherwise? God told Daniel that the eternal kingdom would be set up in the days of those Roman kings. Do we really think God would change his mind about that? After all the planning that we see in this book, do we really think God would postpone what he had promised? I don’t see how anyone could ever believe such a thing!

And if the kingdom was postponed, that postponement seems to have fooled the New Testament writers. Why? Because they said they were in the kingdom! They told us that the kingdom was around in the first century!

Revelation 1:9 — I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the

isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13 — Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Hebrews 12:28 — Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Mark 9:1 — And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The church is the eternal kingdom, and that kingdom was established in the first century in Acts 2 just as God had promised.

DANIEL 7:28

28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Daniel was greatly troubled by what he had seen. Why? Because Daniel had been given a glimpse of a great persecution that awaited the people of God — and that disturbed him.

Daniel loved God and God's people — so Daniel was troubled by the persecutions that lay ahead for them. Also, Daniel bore the burden of this knowledge alone because he was either unwilling or unable to make the vision known when he first received it. Instead he kept the matter in his heart for a time.

Are we concerned about future Christians? Are we concerned about the state of the church 500 years from now? Are we concerned about the persecution God's people 500 years from now? Daniel was concerned about these things.

But some might ask, what can we do about it? First, we can pray about it. And second, we can realize that our own faithfulness today will strengthen future generations of Christians. And third, we can understand the converse — if we fail to live

and teach as we should today, then perhaps Jesus will ask again, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

We can learn much from the example of Daniel!

And with the end of verse 28, we switch from Aramaic back to the Hebrew language for the remainder of the book. As for why that switch occurred, we discussed that question back in Chapter 2, verse 4, where the switch from Hebrew to Aramaic occurred.

CHAPTER 8

DANIEL 8:1-2

1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. **2** And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

Daniel received this vision in the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. If that is the third year of his coregency with his father Nabonidus, then Daniel received this vision around 550 BC. By now Daniel was about seventy, and he was still faithfully serving God.

Although we have moved forward in time two years from when Daniel received the vision in Chapter 7, the subject of the vision has moved backward in time from what we were seeing in Chapter 7. While the primary subject of Chapter 7 was the *fourth* kingdom (Rome), I think we will see that the primary subject of Chapter 8 is the *third* kingdom (Greece).

About the time that Daniel received this vision, Cyrus was establishing the Medo-Persian Empire, which would bring an end to the period of Babylonian supremacy within twelve years (as we saw in Chapter 5).

Nabonidus, observing this union, became apprehensive about Cyrus's intentions and attempted to forge an alliance with Lydia and Egypt to protect himself against a possible Medo-Persian threat. The whole world was anxiously watching to see what Cyrus would do.

God may have given the vision at this particular time to assure Daniel and his fellow exiles that the Jews would survive as a people long after Cyrus and Belshazzar had passed from the scene. God had plans for them!

The city of Susa or Shushan in verse 2 has been identified, and the palace of Xerxes (the king from Esther) 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 former view because it occurs after the vision and shows Daniel on the banks of the Ulai river, which was near Susa (but verse 16 could also be a second vision, so we can't say for sure).

Also, verse 27 says that after the vision Daniel rose up and did the king's business — but the king there could be either Belshazzar (in Babylon) or Nabonidus (possibly in Susa). Most commentaries think that Daniel was in Babylon and saw Susa only in a vision, but I'm not so sure. Josephus said that Daniel was in Susa, and it does seem to fit well with the evidence.

This "river" in verse 2 was actually a wide artificial canal (about 900 feet across) that connected the Choaspes River and the Coprates River.

If Daniel was in Susa, then what was he doing there?

There is evidence that Nabonidus was in Susa, and Daniel may have accompanied him there. As we said, Nabonidus was likely negotiating with Lydia and Egypt, hoping to form a triple alliance against the Medes and the Persians. Perhaps Daniel was acting as an ambassador in those negotiations, which may explain what he was doing in Susa. It would also explain why Daniel was still serving as an official during at

least part of the reign of Belshazzar, but seems to have been unknown to Beleshazzar in Chapter 5.

If you travel to Susa today (it is in Iran, so not recommended!) you can see the supposed tomb of Daniel. Both Jewish and Arab traditions say that Daniel was buried in Susa.

In 1901 archaeologists discovered the famous Code of Hammurabi in Susa, where it had been taken as plunder in the twelfth century BC. That famous code had been in Susa 700 years by the time the events in Daniel occurred!

DANIEL 8:3

3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

Daniel sees a ram with two horns, with one horn higher than the other and the higher one coming up last. What does the ram denote?

We saw something similar with the bear in Daniel 7:5. It also was higher on one side, and you'll recall that the bear was the second kingdom — Medo-Persia, with the higher side denoting the dominant Persians.

But, similarity of symbols does not denote similarity of subject, and so we need more than just that similarity to conclude that this ram is also Medo-Persia.

Fortunately, we have much more. We have verse 20 later in this same chapter: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." So there is no doubt at all about the identity of this ram. (We will discuss those kings when we get to verse 20.)

Again, one must wonder where the liberal critics get their idea that Daniel thought the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms. How could the text be any more clear? We have one ram, and that one ram represents the Medes and the Persians. In the previous chapter, one bear represented the Medes and the Persians.

The ram and the bear each act as a single unified entity. And what about Daniel 5:28? “Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” And what about Daniel 6:8? “And sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians.” How does the phrase “the law of the Medes and Persians” make any sense if they were separate kingdoms?

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 after their merger with the Medes (just as we saw with the higher side on the bear in Chapter 7). This higher horn comes up last. This temporal order is in perfect accord with history. The Medes were the dominant power until Cyrus the Great came along and brought prominence to the Persians.

There is something here in verse 3 that tells us without any doubt that this vision was not written in the second century BC, as the liberal critics would have us believe. What is it?

After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever thereafter 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.

Now, of course, we know that the reason Daniel used a ram for Medo-Persia and a goat for Greece is because those were what he saw in the vision he received from God. But, if, as the liberal critics tell us, the book of Daniel was just made up by some unknown Jew writing from Palestine in the second century BC — such a person would NEVER have depicted Medo-Persia as a ram.

It would be as if someone today wrote a book about the Eisenhower administration and the Kennedy administration and referred to the Eisenhower era as the days of Camelot. It would be as if someone today wrote a book about Reagan's defeat of Carter, and referred to Carter as the Gipper. Ridiculous, right? Yes, it is.

And referring to Medo-Persia as a ram in the second century is just as ridiculous! And yet that is what we would be seeing here if Daniel was written in the second century as the liberals argue.

But why did God use a ram to denote Medo-Persia when God knew that Alexander would be so closely associated with a ram? Of course we don't know for sure, but maybe we are not the only ones who enjoy poking holes in the liberal critics' theories!

DANIEL 8:4

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might

stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

Verse 4 gives us a completely accurate picture of the military conquests of the Medo-Persians. The three areas of the Medo-Persian expansion were:

- Westward to Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, and Macedon.
- Northward to the Caspians and the Scythians.
- Southward to Babylon and Egypt.

In these campaigns, the Medo-Persians were invincible and, as pictured here, their targets were helpless against them. Medo-Persia and its king, Cyrus, became arrogant, and Cyrus “did according to his will, and became great” (verse 4).

Cyrus has a fascinating history in the Bible.

First, he was mentioned in Isaiah by name long before he was even born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

Second, Cyrus was the king who allowed the exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem, and Ezra 1:1 tells us that Cyrus did that because God stirred up his spirit to do so. Why? Again, Ezra 1:1 tells us why — so that the word of God by the mouth of Jeremiah would be fulfilled.

DANIEL 8:5-7

5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped

upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

Who is this goat from the west? If we had to guess, it would not be difficult. History tells us that Greece was the great power that conquered the Medo-Persians, but, once again, we are left with no doubt. Verse 21 will soon tell us explicitly that this goat denotes Greece. “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.”

This goat with one conspicuous horn comes from the west and charges the ram with the two horns. Again, this description is in perfect agreement 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!)

So, who was this conspicuous horn? As we just said, 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. In fact, Alexander was the one who consolidated it.

This attack by the goat against the ram appears to be unprovoked. History tells us that the Greeks launched just such an attack in 334 BC, and Alexander emerged victorious just three 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.

But Daniel is telling us here that Alexander had help! Alexander was just acting out his part in a plan that God had put into place hundreds of years earlier.

Let’s pause for a moment and look at the life of Alexander the Great.

For a long time in world history, Greece was a side-show — a small, divided country at the extreme western end of the known world. They were a seemingly insignificant

player in global events that saw the Babylonians and Persians rise and become world powers.

How did Greece come to take center stage and supplant major, world-crushing empires? And how could Daniel possibly have known about that centuries before it happened? How else but from God?

Unable to ever successfully put up a united force or government, the Greek tribes developed as city-states. The most famous were Athens, Sparta, Thebes, and Macedonia.

For 500 years, Greek history was characterized largely by a series of internal conflicts, although they had also been battling Persia off and on for quite a while.

Xerxes is the Persian king in the book of Esther, and Herodotus describes his Greek expedition in 480-479 BC, which included the Battle of Thermopylae depicted in the movie, 300, which showed the famous three day suicidal stand in a narrow pass. Although the 300 Spartans arrayed against 100,000 Persians lost that battle, that Persian invasion eventually ended in their defeat.

In 470 BC, the Persian army was defeated by the Greeks, which ended their fifty year struggle with Greece. Persia maintained control over Egypt and Cyprus, but lost control over the Greek colonies of Asia Minor. Xerxes was killed in a conspiracy in 465 BC and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes I, who is the king who later allowed Ezra and Nehemiah to return.

In the last Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, which happened around 420 BC, Sparta made an agreement with Persia to use part of the Persian navy to bottle up the Athenian fleet. The Spartans won the war, but their victory came at a price — the Persians were now back in Greece.

In 370 BC, a Greek king arose in Macedonia known as Philip II of Macedon. In seven years he was able to subdue all the Greek city-states and unite them, something that had not happened in almost five centuries.

But Philip wanted more than just a unified Greece. He also wanted Persia. In 336 BC, when his invasion of Persia was in its very early stage, Philip was assassinated, and he was succeeded on the throne by his son Alexander III (Alexander the Great).

Alexander had been educated as a child by a very famous tutor — Aristotle! Alexander came to power when he was just a teenager, and he would be dead by the time he was 30. In that short period he conquered the entire civilized world.

One of his campaigns brought him to Jerusalem. He arrived most likely around 329 BC. (He was dead by 323 BC.) The Jews were terrified of the now victorious Greeks because the Jews had backed Persia in the war. The High Priest had earlier refused Alexander's demand for provisions and men to help him conquer Tyre claiming that a treaty with Persia prevented Israel from helping the Greeks.

The Talmud describes what happened. The High Priest came out with other members of the priesthood, as well as the Sanhedrin, to greet Alexander at the gates of Jerusalem as he sat on his famous white horse. When Alexander saw the High Priest he dismounted and bowed to him. Instead of destroying and subjugating them, Alexander made an arrangement with the Jews. As long as they would be his loyal vassals and pay their taxes, they could remain autonomous.

Out of gratitude to Alexander, the Jews did several things. First, they agreed to name every child born the next year "Alexander," which must have caused some confusion on the first day of school a few years later!

Second, the Jews agreed to install a system of tax collection, which would later lead to terrible corruption (as it would again later under the Romans). It was so corrupt that the Talmud held that anybody who was a tax collector was presumed to be a thief.

Ironically, by showing Alexander their gratitude by naming their children after him they unwittingly opened the door to the Greek language. And with the Greek language came the Greek culture, which would create many problems down the road.

Why did Alexander spare Jerusalem? Josephus tells us that the High Priest brought out the scroll of Daniel written 200 years earlier and pointed to Daniel's vision of a

one-horned goat defeating a ram in Chapter 8 and explained that it shows a king from Greece defeating the Persians, the very same verses we are now studying!

DANIEL 8:8

8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

This goat “waxed very great” or “magnified himself.” What does that mean?

It could mean that Alexander magnified his empire, in which case it would likely refer to Alexander’s advances into Afghanistan and India, which occurred in 327 BC.

It may also refer 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 Alexander took that very seriously, even requiring his comrades to prostrate themselves before him.

Perhaps we have yet another leader who put himself in the place of God. We saw that with Nebuchadnezzar, and we saw how he was humbled. In Chapter 7, we saw that with Domitian, and we saw what happened to him. In Acts 12, Herod was eaten by worms because he gave not God the glory. Here in verse 8, Alexander the Great turns out to not be that great after all!

This horn is broken at the height of its power, and in its place arise four other horns. (The High Priest likely did not show Alexander this part!) Here again we see that four is used both literally and figuratively — Alexander was followed by a literal four rulers (called four notable ones in verse 8), but the number four figuratively stresses that they were earthly man-made kingdoms.

Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC 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 Alexander's death, attempts were made to hold his empire together, but they failed. By 311 BC, four of his generals had claimed independence and by 301 BC they had it. At one point thirteen men were trying to carve out a piece of the Greek empire, but when the smoke cleared only four were left standing.

- Ptolemy in Egypt (including Palestine).
- Seleucus in Babylonia.
- Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor.
- Cassander in Macedonia and Greece.

History tells us that Alexander's kingdom was divided into four parts and that is what Daniel tells us as well. The difference is that Daniel told us that many years before Alexander was even born!

The "four winds of heaven" in verse 8 reminds us that God is behind this. These four winds denote the activity of God as he works his will on the earth.

DANIEL 8:9-12

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

In verse 9 we meet another little horn.

We saw a little horn in Chapter 7, and we identified him with Domitian, the eleventh emperor of Rome. Should we expect this little horn to be the same person? 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). This little horn in verse 9 is a perfect example of our guideline that similarity of language does not prove identity of subject.

Should we be surprised at seeing two little horns? No. The world has always had plenty of little horns shaking their little fists at God. Domitian was a little horn in the Roman Empire, and we will soon see that the Greeks also had a little horn.

Who then is this little horn that arises out of the Greek empire? We are given a few clues here and a few more clues later in the chapter. Let's summarize those clues:

- (Clue #1) He arose from one of the four pieces of the Greek kingdom that came about after Alexander's death (verses 8-9).
- (Clue #2) He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).
- (Clue #3) He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).
- (Clue #4) He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).
- (Clue #5) He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).
- (Clue #6) He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).
- (Clue #7) He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).
- (Clue #8) He understood riddles or dark sentences (verse 23).
- (Clue #9) He had great power (verse 24).
- (Clue #10) He caused great destruction (verse 24).

There is only one Greek ruler who fits all ten of these clues. The little horn of Daniel 8 must be Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire.

Who was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and why must he be the little horn of Daniel 8?

As we said earlier, after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy and his successors established themselves in Egypt and at first controlled Palestine as well. The Seleucids

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, Antiochus 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 that he had to tax the Jews more heavily, and understandably his popularity began to wane.

Antiochus III was killed in 187 BC while raiding a temple treasury in Elam 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. This period gave rise to Jewish opposition and the gradual emergence of a Jewish 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. Antiochus sought to accomplish this unity by fostering Hellenism; that is, by encouraging the adoption of Greek culture and ideals.

Antiochus particularly identified with Zeus and took the name Theos Epiphanes (“the god appearing”) because he considered himself to be a divine personification of Zeus. Due to the Roman taxes, Antiochus 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 out bribe each other in an effort to have Antiochus make them High Priest. The winner 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. Also, when First Maccabees says that they made themselves uncircumcised, it 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. An altar to Zeus was built in the temple and sacrifices were offered on it. And that was not all.

Antiochus issued decrees forbidding the practice of Jewish religion on pain of torture and death; the Sabbath and the festivals 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, he rose up and killed the king's officers who were trying to force him to comply. This event led to the Maccabean Revolt, which eventually gave rise to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian captivity. This nation lasted only 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 Daniel 8?

Clue #1: He arose from one of the four pieces of the Greek kingdom that came about after Alexander's death (verses 8-9).

Antiochus came from the Seleucid Empire, which was established by Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals after his death.

Clue #2: He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).

This clue accurately describes the expansion of the Seleucids. The “glorious land” is Palestine, which they took from Ptolemy.

Clue #3: He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).

The phrases “stars of heaven” and the “host of heaven” refer to the people of God, the faithful Jews. This symbol of stars for the Jews 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.

Clue #4: He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).

Antiochus declared himself to be the divine personification of the Greek god Zeus. He called himself Theos Epiphanes, which means “God Manifest.”

Verse 11 says that he “magnified himself even to the prince of the host.” The prince of the host is God or perhaps Christ.

Not only did Antiochus consider himself God’s equal, he set himself against God. Antiochus believed that he and his Greek gods were above God, and he attacked God and God’s people.

Antiochus commanded that the Jews refrain from following the Jewish law. He desecrated the temple. He required allegiance to himself and the Greek gods rather than to God. As verse 11 says, Antiochus “magnified himself even to the prince of the host.”

Clue #5: He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).

The Hebrew in verse 11 simply says that the daily was taken away. That is, the daily activities of the priests were stopped. As we have seen, Antiochus did just that.

Clue #6: He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).

Antiochus looted the temple and set up an altar to Zeus in the sanctuary.

Clue #7: He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).

Even the Roman Pompey refused to disrupt the Jewish worship, but not so with Antiochus. He definitely had a bold countenance.

Clue #8: He understood riddles or dark sentences (verse 23).

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.

Clues #9 and #10: He had great power, and he caused great destruction (verse 24).

This, of course, as we have seen was also true of Antiochus. He had great power, and he used that power to destroy.

So where are we?

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 Greek gods.

Verse 12 gives us the reason behind Antiochus' success. It was through transgression. These events didn't occur because God lacked power. These events occurred largely because the people were evil. They followed Antiochus in accepting Greek ideas, and they allowed Antiochus to do what he did.

Verse 12 tells us that Antiochus cast the truth down to the ground. He forbid the teaching of the law, and he tried to destroy the law. According to 1 Maccabees 1:56-57:

The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death.

Antiochus was neither the first nor the last person who tried to destroy the word of God. It has happened many times, but all who try come up against the same fact:

1 Peter 1:24-25 — For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

DANIEL 8:13-14

13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Daniel hears a “holy one” or “saint” (probably an angel) ask how long the sanctuary and the people would be trampled underfoot. A second “holy one” provides the answer — the sanctuary will be restored after 2300 days (literally 2300 “evenings and mornings”).

The phrase “how long” reminds of us of the same question in Revelation 6.

Revelation 6:10 — And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

As we mentioned earlier, that verse has been called the theme of the book of Revelation. Here we have the same question, “How long?,” but the answer we get in verse 14 is curious — 2300 days. What does that mean?

The 2300 days of verse 14 presents one of the most difficult interpretive problems in the book of Daniel — and, not surprisingly, the commentaries are all over the map on what it means!

As for clearly wrong views of the 2300 days, they are numerous. Here is one example.

The Millerites were followers of William Miller, who in 1833 decided that Jesus would return in 1843. Why? He started with 457 BC (which is about the year that Ezra led the second return from exile, with the return under Cyrus being the first and the return in Nehemiah being the third), and then he counted forward 2300 years based on verse 14 and based also on the “year-day method” of Biblical interpretation (about which we will soon have much more to say). Christ’s failure to

return as Miller predicted became known as the Great Disappointment, out of which arose the Seventh-Day Adventists, and eventually the Branch Davidians. So, yes, we can draw a straight line between Miller's false views of verse 14 and the events that happened in Waco in 1993.

Yes, it matters what we believe about Daniel. And, yes, it matters when people purport to know when Jesus will return even when the Bible tells us that Jesus himself does not know when that day will be (Mark 13:32). We can see what happens when false teaching such as that creates the inevitable "great disappointments."

Before we try to determine what is meant by the 2300 days, let's ask another question: what would we expect the answer to the question "how long?" to be? How long will God's people be trodden under foot? Elsewhere with similar questions we have seen God answer "not long," and we have seen God provide comfort by telling his people that their troubles will be only temporary. Perhaps we should not be surprised if we see a similar answer here.

We are going to look at three possible explanations for the 2300 days, at least two of which are wrong, but I don't think we will be able to say definitively which of those three is right.

Why is Miller's view a false teaching if we can't say for sure what the 2300 days means? Because not being able to say for sure what something means is very different from not being able to say for sure what it does not mean!

We know that Miller's view was wrong because it violates other Scriptures — namely, Mark 13:32, which tells us that not even Jesus knows that day of his return. It also violates the Scriptures that tell us Jesus' return will not come with signs but instead will come as a thief in the night. Also, we know that Jesus did not return in 1843, which means that Miller falls under the condemnation of all false prophets:

Deuteronomy 18:22 — When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

And worse, Miller's false teaching about Daniel would put Daniel under that same condemnation if Miller had been correct about what Daniel was saying — but, of course, Miller was not correct.

So, back to the 2300 days in Daniel 8:14. That 2300 day period is the answer we are given to the question of how long the sanctuary will be trodden under foot until it is cleansed. Literally, the answer is “evening, morning, two thousand and three hundred.” What does the 2300 days mean? Is it literal or figurative?

We have at least three choices:

- The “evening, morning” could refer to the evening and morning sacrifices, in which case 2300 evening and morning sacrifices would occur over a literal 1150 days, with possibly a figurative meaning as well.
- The “evening, morning” could be taken as a Hebrew day (as in Genesis 1, “there was evening and there was morning”) so that we have a literal 2300 days, with possibly a figurative meaning as well.
- The number 2300 could be entirely figurative with no literal counterpart.

View #1: Under this view, the time period is a literal 1150 days, which would be three years and 55 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 1150 days before it was cleansed. Historians tell us that the period between desecration and rededication was 1106 days, but we can't be sure of the point of the initial desecration in view here, and it is possible that the Bible is rounding the numbers.

View #2: Under this view, the time period is a literal 2300 days, which would be a little over six years and 100 days.

Some commentators argue that a Hebrew reader would never have understood the language in verse 14 to refer to only 1150 days. They point out that when the Bible wants to express half days it uses two numbers, as in 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:4). So under this view verse 14 is referring to 2300 days.

But a problem with this view is that nothing really notable (that we know about) occurred six years and 100 days before the temple was cleansed. Antiochus came to the throne in 175 BC, and some argue that his persecution of the Jews started around 170 BC, which is about six years prior to 164 BC. But the appointment of the High Priest by bribery and the construction of the Greek gymnasium near the temple all occurred prior to 170 BC, and in fact Antiochus was busy fighting the sixth Syrian War against the Ptolemies in 170 BC, with the real persecution picking up with his return in 168 BC — so the date of 170 BC for the beginning of the persecution seems to be without much basis.

View #3: Under this view, the time period of 2300 days is entirely figurative.

But there is a problem with this view — the number 2300 is not an obvious symbolic number or a multiple of such numbers.

The period of 2300 days is a little over six years (which falls just short of the perfect seven). If we instead take 1150 days, then we are a little short of three and a half years (a broken seven). Both of those figures are used elsewhere to refer to a persecution that is temporary.

Either 2300 days falling short of 7 years or 1150 days falling short of 3.5 years would stress the same point — this persecution would end; it would not be permanent. And that is just what we would expect the answer to be.

My View: I think either View #1 (a literal 1150 days) or View #3 (a figurative 1150 days being just short of 3.5 years) is correct, and I slightly favor View #3 over View #1.

But why do I prefer 1150 days over 2300 days? The phrase “evenings and mornings” in place of “days” is a key phrase here, and I think it stresses that the removal of the “daily” sacrifices was the center of attention in this event. Verse 26 refers to the vision as the vision of the evening and the morning.

And why do I prefer the symbolic view? Our guideline is that we choose the symbolic meaning in apocalyptic language unless we have a really good reason to do otherwise. A literal 1150 days makes sense, so that is an option, but the use of a broken seven to denote a temporary persecution is a common symbol in the Bible.

But why did God use 1150 for a broken seven? That is a very good question.

In Revelation 12:6, we see 1260 days used to denote a broken seven — 1260 days is three and a half lunar years (with 360 days in a lunar year). But in Revelation 11:2, we see yet another symbol used for a broken seven — 42 months, which is also three and a half years. In Daniel 7:25, we saw “a time and times and the dividing of time” used to denote a broken seven.

So all we can say is that various symbols are used in the Bible for a broken seven, and we can't say for sure why 1150 was used here rather than 1260. Perhaps God wanted to assure Daniel that the terrible persecution would not just be temporary, but would **really** be temporary, and so God used a symbol slightly shorter than three and a half years.

Perhaps it is important that 1150 days is three years + 70 days if we use a 360 day lunar year because we have certainly seen the number 70 used elsewhere in the Bible.

But perhaps our struggle to make 1150 fit the usual symbolic scheme suggests that we should interpret the number literally, in which case it most likely denotes the time between the first offering of swine to Zeus in the temple until the cleansing of the temple.

We can't say for sure which of these three views is correct, but we can say that the interpretation of the 2300 days does not appear to be a critical feature in understanding the vision — why? Because Gabriel's interpretation in the second half of this chapter says nothing about it, and Daniel does not ask him about it.

Why didn't Daniel ask about it?

If Daniel took the number literally, then he was likely very relieved to hear that the trampling would last only 2300 days, or perhaps only 1150 days — there was no need to inquire further. If Daniel understood it figuratively, then he would have experienced the same relief — the persecution would be temporary. And I like what one commentary says about the use of days rather than years in verse 14: “The fact that it is expressed in days reminds the troubled Israelites that the Lord will not let this period extend a day beyond what they can bear.”

Remember that the question in verse 13 (how long?) is also found in Revelation. How long? In Revelation the answer is soon (1:1, 1:3, 22:6, 22:10). The answer here is the same. God's people are being persecuted, but their affliction is temporary — unlike the affliction of their persecutors, which will be eternal.

We may be tempted today to ask, “how long?” How long until we are no longer trampled underfoot by societies and governments that reject God and that have thrown his word behind their backs? How long? The answer today is the same answer that Daniel heard when that same question was asked — our current situation is temporary. The permanent is yet to come. Whatever we are facing here on earth, it can be measured in days.

2 Corinthians 4:18 — While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

DANIEL 8:15-17

15 And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. 17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.

These events happen after the vision. Some commentators think that Daniel is now having a second vision, and this is possible, but I think Daniel is most likely literally in Susa and literally near the Ulai river for the reasons we talked about earlier.

In verse 15, Daniel sees someone who looks like a man, and in verse 16 Daniel hears a man's voice. The voice is directed to the one who looks like a man, and it says, “Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.”

Who is Gabriel? Daniel may have wondered about that, but not us. We know Gabriel from Luke 1.

Luke 1:19 — And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

Daniel is seeing the angel Gabriel in these verses.

And whose voice is it asking Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel? We aren't told, but it could be God or another angel from God.

Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament that gives us the name of an angel. The only other angel who is named in the Bible is Michael, and we will meet him in Chapter 10 of Daniel.

The War Scroll from the Dead Sea scrolls lists four angels by name: Michael, Gabriel, Sariel, and Raphael. The book of First Enoch expands the list to seven by adding Uriel, Reuel, and Remiel. But we only know two of those names from the inspired text.

We have two questions about that statement.

First, why did Gabriel call Daniel “son of man”? I thought that was a title for Christ?

The phrase “son of man” means just what it says — a human. Literally, the Hebrew is *ben-Adam*, son of Adam. With Christ, the Messianic title Son of Man stresses the humanity of Christ. Jesus is both entirely God and entirely man. He is not part God and part man; Jesus is both God and man. The title “Son of God” stresses the divinity of Christ, while the title “Son of Man” stresses the humanity of Christ. Both titles apply to Christ, and Christ is the one and only person to which both of those titles apply. But the description “son of man” applies to everyone.

Daniel, like us but unlike Christ, is just a man, and calling Daniel “son of man” is a reminder of that fact. And Daniel was not the only prophet to get that reminder. Ezekiel is called “son of man” 93 times in his book. With Christ, the title “son of man” is a reminder that, although God, Jesus is also a man. With Daniel and Ezekiel, the phrase is a reminder that they are merely mortal. They are not divine. What they are seeing and speaking is coming from God; the power is not within themselves.

Second, Gabriel tells Daniel that “at the time of the end shall be the vision.” 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 carefully. 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. Why? Because the vision ends with the cleansing of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus. That means this “end” refers to something that ended even before the birth of Christ. We see similar uses of the word “end” elsewhere in the Bible.

Ezekiel describes the end of Jerusalem under the Babylonians.

Ezekiel 7:2-3 — Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; **An end, the end is come** upon the four corners of the land. Now is **the end come upon thee**, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

Habakkuk describes the end of the Babylonians 70 years later.

Habakkuk 2:2-3 — And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but **at the end** it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

These uses of the word “end” mean the same thing — the end of whatever is being described in the vision or the prophecy. Here in Daniel 8 the focus is on Greece and specifically on the little horn, Antiochus.

In each of these examples, the statement about the “end” is made to show that God is in charge of the timing and that God will determine when the “end” occurs. The fulfillment is sure and will not occur by accident.

And the “end” may have an even more particular significance — it may refer to the end of Antiochus.

When was the temple cleansed? On the 25th of the month Kislev in 164 BC, which is where Hanukkah started and also where the world gets December 25 for Christmas.

What else happened in 164 BC? Antiochus Epiphanes died that same year. The angel Gabriel may have been making a remarkable prophecy in verse 17.

The book of Second Maccabees describes the death of Antiochus.

2 Maccabees 9:5-9 — But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him with an incurable and invisible blow. As soon as he stopped speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there was no relief, and with sharp internal tortures— and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions. Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to drive even faster. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay.

That is not an inspired account, but we will get an inspired confirmation of its basic premise when we get to verse 25. In fact, this description reminds us of what happened later to another little horn who thought he was a god — Herod in Acts 12:23, who was eaten of worms.

DANIEL 8:18-19

18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

In verse 18, Daniel is in a deep sleep. What happened?

The same Hebrew verb used here is used to describe Jonah's "deep sleep" as he slept through a violent storm in Jonah 1:5, and a related Hebrew word is used for the "deep sleep" that God caused to come upon Adam when he took part of his flesh to create Eve in Genesis 2:21.

It is not clear whether Daniel fainted or was just exhausted from all that he had seen. From verse 17, where Daniel fell on his face, I think it is most likely that Daniel fainted, but when he faints in verse 27, the word “fainted” is used, so maybe something else is in view here.

Daniel had stood before earthly kings without wavering, but standing before the angel Gabriel it seems is a different matter!

And again, verse 18 suggests to me that Daniel is not having a second vision here unless the intent is to tell us that he was asleep in the vision but not in real life, which seems odd.

In any event, the angel sets Daniel on his feet again, and says: “Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.”

Here we see even more clearly what is meant by the time of the end. The “time of the end” in verse 17 is called “the last end of the indignation” and “the time appointed the end” in verse 19. Those descriptions reinforce what we said about verse 17 — this “end” is the end of the indignation (not the end of the world), and this “end” is a time appointed by God.

What is the indignation?

The indignation is the sentence of God that must eventually fall on those who rebel against him and who fail to repent. His own people were not exempt, and neither were the nations.

Jeremiah 10:10 — But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

The question here was how long God would allow his earthly sanctuary to be trampled on, and the answer (as both we and Daniel should have expected) is not long. There will be an appointed end and which time the desecration will end and the persecutors, and specifically this little horn, will experience the indignation of God.

DANIEL 8:20-22

20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

Here we have the explanation of the vision, which we have already referred to a number of times to make sure we stayed on the right track.

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,” meaning they were ruled by Alexander’s generals and not by Alexander’s sons. Alexander had a son that was born after Alexander’s death, but that son and his mother were soon murdered.

Verse 20 speaks of the “kings of Media and Persia.” Does the plural word “kings” mean that Daniel believed that the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms when these events occurred? No. We know that is not the case because Media and Persia are represented by a single ram. And elsewhere Daniel refers to the law (singular) of the Medes and the Persians, which makes no sense if they were separate kingdoms with separate kings.

So why, then, does Daniel refer to the “kings” (plural) of Media and Persia when in fact Cyrus was in charge of both? There are at least two possibilities.

First, as we have already seen, the word “king” is sometimes used in Daniel to mean “kingdom,” and so perhaps verse 20 just means that the ram denotes the combined **kingdoms** of Media and Persia.

A second possibility goes back to our study of Darius the Mede. We considered the possibility that Darius was the last king of Media who ruled with Cyrus as his prince

regent. Perhaps these two kings are those two kings. But I am not a fan of that theory because Cyrus died in 530 BC and Alexander conquered Persia in 334 BC, 200 years later.

I don't think the focus would still be on Cyrus in this vision, which is why I favor the simpler view — that king and kingdom are being used interchangeably here, as we know those words are being used elsewhere in this book. If Cyrus is in view here, then God is using him to represent the kings who came later.

DANIEL 8:23-25

23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

Here we have a description of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and, as we have seen, each of these descriptions fits Antiochus precisely. In Jewish writings, Antiochus is referred to as Antiochus the Wicked.

Verse 23 tells us that Antiochus would arise in the latter time of their kingdom. 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 clearly in Daniel 11). The kingdom began to decline with the death of his father Antiochus III.

This type of focus is not unusual in the Bible. There were many Roman emperors, but as far as God was concerned there were only eleven. God talks about the first eleven 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 as soon

as they were judged and sentenced — and that may be the most frightening thing about these visions!

In the Bible, nations rise against God's people, and those nations are judged and sentenced by God, often when they are still at the height of their power. But powerful or not, their fate is sealed and their downfall is certain once God judges and sentences those nations. God's attention moves elsewhere, while the judged nation lingers on and eventually leaves the stage. This should serve as a warning for any nation that shakes its fist at God and at the people of God, but sadly very few nations have ever heeded that warning.

Something interesting happens between verses 22 and 23 that we should pause to note because it will be helpful to us later. What is it?

Without warning there is about a 150 year break between verse 22 and verse 23. Alexander died in 323 BC, and Antiochus came to power in 175 BC. How do we know about that break in time? It would not have been clear in Daniel's time, but it is clear to us because we can compare the prophecy with what actually happened. We need to keep this point in mind as we get closer to Daniel 11, where we will again see such sudden and unannounced breaks in time.

Verses 24 and 25 have some curious phrases, especially in the King James Version.

- “He shall destroy wonderfully” — that means he shall cause fearful or extraordinary destruction.
- “He shall cause craft to prosper in his hand” — that means he will cause deceit or trickery to succeed.
- “By peace shall destroy many” — that means he will destroy many without warning or while they are at ease.

Verse 25 tells us that “he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.” Who is the Prince of princes?

We saw the Prince of the host in verse 11 and said that it could be a reference to God or to Jesus. I think we see the same Prince here, and again this could be a reference to Jesus. If these are not references to God the Son, then they must be references to God the Father. Why? Because the use of the phrase “without hand” at the end of

verse 25 suggests that Antiochus is standing up against God and then being broken by God.

But how did Antiochus fight against God? Simple. He fought against the people of God. Remember what Jesus said to Saul on the road to Damascus after Saul had been persecuting the church — “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 22:7) An assault against God’s people is an assault against God.

Verse 25 tells us that Antiochus IV would be broken by no human hand. As we saw earlier, history tells us that after making an unsuccessful attempt to pillage a wealthy temple in Elymais, Antiochus died of a sudden mysterious illness. Daniel is telling us here that the illness was anything but mysterious!

God removed Antiochus from the scene just as God removed Alexander from the scene and would later remove Herod from the scene and Domitian from the scene. The Bible, and particularly the book of Daniel, is full of men who thought they were God, but who learned otherwise.

DANIEL 8:26

26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

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. So the “many days” in verse 26 refers to 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, and so Daniel was told to seal it up.

Now let’s take a little side trip and fast forward to the book of Revelation. Is that book all about the end of the world? If you ask most religious people, they will say

yes. If you ask the man of the street, he will say yes. If you ask Hollywood, they will say yes. But what does the Bible say?

Here Daniel is told to seal up a vision because it won't happen for nearly 400 years. What was John told to do with his own vision?

Revelation 22:10 — And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

And in fact the book of Revelation opens with the same message.

Revelation 1:1 — The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.

The next time a premillennialist tells you that he takes every word in the book of Revelation literally, ask him if that applies to the very first verse! I suspect it does not!

Daniel was told to seal up a vision that referred to a time less than 400 years after he received it, but John was told not to seal up his vision. Does it make any sense at all to teach (as most do) that nothing in Revelation has yet been fulfilled 2000 years later and counting?

Those who begin their study of Revelation by ignoring the time frame in the opening verse of the book have no chance of correctly interpreting the book — and most commentaries begin just that way. 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, which I believe is focused on the fourth kingdom of Daniel and its war against the people of God, just as Daniel 7 was focused on the same fourth kingdom and Daniel 8 was focused on the third kingdom that preceded it.

DANIEL 8:27

27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Daniel fainted due to the vision and was sick 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, Daniel was still disturbed. This again is certainly a lesson for us. We should be concerned for God's people everywhere and for all time — present and future.

We should be distressed by the persecutions directed around the world at Christians and at those who profess to be Christians. And we should be very thankful for the freedoms we enjoy, while understanding that those freedoms will not last forever. There is but one eternal kingdom, and the United States is not it. During the time we enjoy these freedoms today we have a tremendous responsibility to take advantage of them to spread the word. God has opened a door of freedom for us, and he expects us to go through it while we can, because one day that door will close.

How can we show our concern for future Christians? One way is by carefully guarding the truth that has been entrusted to us. That is how we show our care and concern for God's people in the future.

1 Timothy 6:20 — O Timothy, keep that [or guard that] which is committed to thy trust.

Jude 3 — Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Another way to show our concern for God's people is by prayer — and we will see Daniel doing that very soon.

Notice that even after the explanation, Daniel confesses in verse 27 that he still did not fully understand the vision. That confession should provide some comfort to us in our efforts to understand these visions, although we have a lot more information today than did Daniel.

Daniel was about 70 when he received this vision, but verse 27 tells us that he got back to work doing the king's business as soon as he recovered from his illness, and we know that Daniel was doing God's business in his work for the king. There is no retirement from our service to God!

CHAPTER 9

Daniel Chapter 9 wins my award for the most difficult chapter in the Bible, but most of Chapter 9 is not difficult at all. The difficulty comes with the final four verses of the chapter in which we will find the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks.

What happens in the first 23 verses of Chapter 9? What we find in those verses is one of the most beautiful and powerful prayers to be found anywhere in the Bible. In those verses we discover the secret of Daniel's success.

Yes, the final four verses of Chapter 9 are difficult and yes, their meaning is hotly debated, but I think the greatest benefit to the modern reader from Daniel 9 likely comes from the first 23 verses and what they tell us about Daniel, about God, and about prayer.

DANIEL 9:1-2

**1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahas-
uerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was
made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2
In the first year of his reign I Daniel under-
stood by books the number of the years, whereof
the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the
prophet, that he would accomplish seventy
years in the desolations of Jerusalem.**

As with Chapters 7 and 8, Chapter 9 begins by giving us a time frame.

With Chapter 9, the time frame is the first year of Darius. We discussed Darius at length when we met him at the end of Chapter 5. I suggested that either Darius was the last Median king, who reigned for a time with Cyrus as his prince regent, or Darius and Cyrus were the same person.

Chapter 10 will begin "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia," and Chapter 11 will begin "in the first year of Darius the Mede" (as does this chapter). It might seem odd that Daniel would use both names to refer to a single person, but Cyrus would not be the only person in this book with two names. In fact, it seems to be the

norm in this book (written in two languages!) for people to have two names! So perhaps Darius and Cyrus were the same person.

Either way, the first year of Darius in this context would have been the first year of the Persian rule over the Chaldeans, which began in 539 BC. We saw that transition of power occur in Chapter 5 during the drunken feast of Belshazzar, the last Chaldean king.

Who “made” Darius king as verse 1 tells us? The best answer to that question in the context of the book of Daniel is to simply repeat the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way in Chapter 4. “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” (Daniel 4:32)

By this time, as we have been with Daniel all the way from age 13 to age 80, we likely have a question for him — what is your secret, Daniel? How were you able to remain so faithful to God for so long? How were you able to speak truth to power so courageously in the presence of kings? How were you able to remain faithful as a teenage exile in a foreign land? What is your secret?

The answer is that it was no secret at all. What is Daniel doing in verse 2? He is studying his Bible, and in verse 4 we will see Daniel praying to God.

Daniel’s so-called “secret” was prayer and Bible study. Daniel remained faithful by speaking to God in prayer and listening to God in his word.

Are we looking for modern-day Daniels? If we are, then we need to look for those Christians who focus on prayer and Bible study. Do I want to be a Daniel? Then I need to pick up my Bible and get down on my knees. That is how Daniel himself became a Daniel!

And notice that prayer cannot be separated from Bible study. In 1 John 5:14 we read that “this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” How can we know that we are asking for something according to God’s will if we are ignorant of God’s will? And how do we learn about God’s will? From God’s word. Prayer and Bible study must always go together.

Notice, also, that although Daniel was a prophet, he still found it important to read and study the written word of God. We are not prophets. How much more important a role should Bible study play in our own lives!

Daniel is doing in verse 2 here what Peter would describe many years later.

1 Peter 1:10 — Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently.

And Daniel, at age 80, did not think that he had nothing left to learn! He continued to study God's word throughout his entire life.

What was Daniel studying? Verse 2 tells us that Daniel was studying the writings of Jeremiah.

Notice that Daniel already knew that the book of Jeremiah was an inspired message from God even though Jeremiah had died just a few decades earlier. Daniel did not need to wait around to hear from some church counsel that Jeremiah belonged in the inspired canon. Daniel knew that it did, and Daniel calls the book of Jeremiah “the word of the Lord” in verse 2.

God gave us his word; God's word did not come to us from any counsel of men. Those counsels may have *recognized* the inspired word, but they did not *determine* or *create* the inspired word.

What part of Jeremiah was Daniel reading? The reference to 70 years in verse 2 helps us answer that question.

Jeremiah 25:11 — And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Notice that word “desolation” in Jeremiah 25:11 — “desolation” is a key word in this chapter.

Jeremiah 29:10 — For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

Stop and think about verse 2 the next time you are reading Jeremiah — Daniel was reading that same text 2500 years ago!

Our Bible is a link to the past. When we read Isaiah, we can think of Jesus being handed that Isaiah scroll in Luke 4. We can think of the books and the parchments that Paul asked for in 2 Timothy. And we can think of Daniel reading Jeremiah. The Bible is our connection to the people of God throughout history.

These passages from Jeremiah speak of 70 years of Babylonian captivity. Is this a literal 70 years or a figurative 70 years? As we have seen with some (but not all) of the numbers in this book, I think the answer is both. I think 70 has both a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning. And again, having both a literal and a figurative meaning should not trouble us. The number 70 did not occur by random. God chose the number, and God determined the length of the exile. In fact, Ezra 1:1 tells us that God stirred up Cyrus to allow the people to return from exile.

Let's start with the symbolic meaning, which is easy to see. The number seven denotes the perfection and the number ten denotes the completeness. So together the number 70 denotes the perfect and complete period of time during which God taught his people a lesson about their rebellion and disobedience. And that lesson worked. Idolatry was never the same problem for God's people after the exile as it was before the exile.

What about the literal meaning of 70?

Some commentators suggest that the 70 years is being used here just to denote the length of a normal life span. That is, the exile will last about the length of a normal lifespan. And 70 years is sometimes used that way.

Psalms 90:10 — The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Isaiah 23:15 — And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot.

But a problem with the notion that 70 is purely figurative or that 70 just denotes a normal lifespan is that Daniel knew how long he had been in captivity, and the prayer that follows in this chapter suggests that Daniel believed that about 70 years had passed since the exile occurred. In short, Daniel seems to have been watching the clock!

So, if the 70 year time period is to be understood literally as the duration of the exile, then to what period does it refer? When did the clock start? There are several theories.

Theory #1: The first deportation likely occurred in 605 BC. If we count out 70 years from that date, we get 535 BC, which is the year when, some suggest, the first exiles finally returned to Jerusalem. Remember that Chapter 9 is dated around 539 BC, a few years before 535 BC.

Theory #2: Others start the clock in 586 BC, when the temple was destroyed. Counting 70 years from that year brings us to 516 BC, which they say was when the temple was rebuilt. But this view would mean that, instead of being just a few years away from the 70 year fulfillment, Daniel in Chapter 9 would have been over twenty years away from its fulfillment. I don't see how Daniel could have possibly understood Jeremiah to mean 70 years from 586 BC.

The better view in my opinion is the first view. Jeremiah's 70 year clock began with the first deportation in 605 BC. By the time of Chapter 9, in 539 BC, 66 years had passed. Daniel reads Jeremiah and realizes that the time of exile is almost over. When we get to Daniel's prayer, we will see that a theme of that prayer is "hurry up!" (verse 19).

Daniel, it seems, was not planning to return himself, or at least there is no evidence that he did, but Daniel wanted his fellow exiles — most of whom had never seen their homeland — to return and rebuild the city and the temple, and Daniel wanted that to happen soon. I think Daniel wanted to see that great departure from exile with his own eyes! He had arrived as a teenager, and now in his 80's he wanted to see God's people return to their city.

Daniel must have wondered how this would ever occur. The Persians had just replaced the Chaldeans, but so far there had been no change in the Jews' situation. But Daniel knew with certainty, with his eye of faith, that it would happen!

We saw the word "desolation" in the verses that Daniel was reading from Jeremiah. We also see that word in verse 2 of this chapter, where Daniel quotes Jeremiah. That word "desolation" occurs eight times in the closing five chapters of Daniel,

and we also see that same word in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, where Jesus refers to Daniel in describing the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. As I said, the word “desolation” is a key word here.

I think we will find that in Daniel the word “desolation” is used in two ways — first, the word “desolation” is used to describe the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11) and, second, the word “desolation” is used describe the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century BC (Daniel 8:13 and Daniel 11:31).

What does the word “desolation” mean?

We all know the dictionary definition: laying waste; rendering uninhabitable; making unfit for habitation, wasted, or ruined; wretchedness; grief.

Why is that word so important?

Because desolation is the end that awaits anyone who is apart from God, and the Jews, God’s chosen people, had been on that sad path prior to their exile. They were heading for desolation, and that desolation occurred when the Babylonians captured the city, exiled the people, and finally destroyed the temple.

There would be repentance later under Ezra and Nehemiah, but once again the people would reject their covenant relation with God, and once again there would be a desolation — this time under Antiochus and the Greeks.

Again, there would be repentance (under the Maccabeans), but it would not last. God’s own people rejected God’s only begotten son, and the desolation that would follow from that rejection would be final — and it came not at the hand of the Babylonians (the first kingdom) or the Greeks (the third kingdom), but at the hand of the Romans (the fourth kingdom).

God provided a way of escape for the faithful remnant, but there was only desolation for the unfaithful. God’s long suffering toward the Jews came to an end in AD 70.

That word “desolation” is important because that one word tells us what the 70 week prophecy at the end of this chapter means (which we will study in depth

shortly). Listen as Jesus tells us what desolation means, in one of the most heart-breaking passages from the New Testament, particularly to students of the Old Testament:

Matthew 23:37-38 — O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you **desolate**.

That statement by Christ in Matthew 23 is the message of Daniel 9 and the meaning of the prophecy that ends this difficult chapter.

When you read commentaries that spin off in a thousand different directions with a thousand different wild theories about the 70 weeks of Daniel 9, keep the word “desolation” in mind — and read Matthew 23 and 24.

Jesus himself ties Matthew 24 to specific prophecies in Daniel — and Jesus himself in Matthew 24:34 tells us that those prophecies were fulfilled in the first century, as does this chapter as we will see.

DANIEL 9:3

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

Here is how one commentator described the great prayer that we are about to see in this chapter:

Daniel’s prayer in this chapter ranks as one of the finest in Biblical literature. Unfortunately, because of the tremendous impact of the prediction found at the conclusion of Chapter 9, the prayer in the opening section has received scant attention.

If so, that is very sad. Sad because of our neglect of this beautiful prayer, but also sad because this prayer will help us understand the difficult verses that close this chapter.

Verse 3 tells us something very important about Daniel, and something that we should have already known about Daniel — Daniel took prayer very seriously. He

was almost executed because of his praying! If we want to be like Daniel, then we should also take prayer very seriously.

And yes, the prayer in verses 4–19 is for a specific time and a specific situation, but this prayer can also teach us much about the power of prayer, and it can show us how a true servant of God should approach the God on behalf of his people — something that we should also be praying for daily.

Notice from verse 3 the spiritual preparation that Daniel went through before he even began to pray. He fasted, he mourned (ashes), and he clothed himself with sackcloth.

Yes, we are to pray without ceasing, and yes, we are to be instant in prayer, but prayer requires preparation, and particularly the type of focused petitionary, confessional prayer that we are about to see from Daniel. Daniel did not approach the throne of God flippantly or casually.

One attitude we see very clearly in Daniel's prayer is his earnestness. Daniel's prayer was fervent and impassioned. We see the most extreme earnestness in the prayer of Christ in the garden.

Luke 22:44 — And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And we see it in the church's prayers for Peter.

Acts 12:5 — Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him. [ASV]

James 5:16 tells us that an effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and James points to Elijah as an example of someone who prayed earnestly. James could have just as easily used Daniel as an example. As one author has written:

This should be our attitude as we pray. So often earnestness is missing from our prayers. They seem so rote, so mechanical, without passion.

How can we maintain earnestness in our prayers? Perhaps the writer of Hebrews gives us the answer.

Hebrews 13:3 — Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

The earnestness of prayer returns when we pray for people as though we were in their same situation — because when we actually find ourselves in that situation, earnestness in prayer is rarely a problem!

The attitude of Daniel shows us that we should come into the presence of the Lord with an earnestness that storms the gates of Heaven, but a humility that realizes that he is sovereign and we are sinful.

So how should we go about studying this great prayer?

The first time I taught Daniel, I divided this prayer up into subsections and read and commented on each subsection separately as we have been doing all throughout our study of this book.

But I now think that is not the best way to study this prayer. I am reminded of the adage that what we dissect, we kill!

To really see the beauty and power of this prayer, I think we need to see it all at once. We need to hear it from start to finish as Daniel prayed it and as God heard it. So before we talk about this prayer, I want to read the entire prayer in verses 4-19.

But I want you to do more than just listen while I read. You have an assignment while I read!

First, think back and imagine Daniel praying alone in his upper chamber.

Think about the great historic event that had just occurred — the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians. And think about what was happening behind the scenes, and think about God, who was in complete control of what was going on.

Daniel knew that God was in control. What was the greatest historical force of the time? Was it the great Persian army? Was it the mighty Babylonian army? Or was it perhaps the eighty year old Daniel praying alone in his room? I think we all know the answer to that question!

John Knox was a man famous for his power in prayer, and 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.

So think about Daniel praying alone in his room.

Second, notice the pronouns that Daniel uses in his prayer — pronouns for God, pronouns for himself, and pronouns for the people.

Third, notice Daniel's concerns in his prayer. Who is Daniel most concerned about? Who is Daniel seemingly not concerned about?

Fourth, notice Daniel's requests in his prayer. What does Daniel request? What does Daniel not request?

Fifth, notice Daniel's use of Scripture in his prayer.

Sixth, look for the word "desolation," and also for the word "covenant."

DANIEL 9:4-19

4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: 6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8 O Lord, to us belongeth 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 mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for

thy great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

Verses 4-6

Perhaps the first thing we notice in Daniel's prayer is that there is absolutely no evasion. Daniel confesses his own personal guilt and the guilt of the entire Jewish nation. Daniel makes no excuses — the Jews deserved their punishment.

Daniel loved his people, but Daniel knew that they had turned away from God despite his repeated warnings and mercy. They had forsaken the law; they had embraced idols; they had killed the prophets that God had sent to warn them. They were without excuse.

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.

And Daniel holds nothing back. Seven different aspects of Israel's sin are set forth in verses 5–6. Israel had “sinned,” “committed iniquity,” “done wickedly,” “rebelled,” departed from God's precepts, departed from God's judgments, and had not “hearkened unto thy servants the prophet.” Daniel knew exactly why he and his people were in exile.

The mention of the covenant in verse 4 is important. The prophets had long tried to bring the people back into their covenant relationship with God. But the people thought that they would be safe as long as God's temple was in their city. That is the attitude that Jeremiah spoke against in the temple sermon of Jeremiah 7:1-29.

Jeremiah 7:4 — Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.

But something had happened that the people did not ever dream would happen — God had abandoned his temple, as we see in Ezekiel 9-11.

Ezekiel 11:23 — And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city.

Daniel knew what had happened, and Daniel knew what had caused it to happen.

But notice that when Daniel prays for his people, confessing the sin that caused God to punish them by the deportation, Daniel does not distance himself from his people. Instead, Daniel identifies himself with them in his confession of sin. Notice how Daniel uses the first person plural pronoun.

- **Verse 5:** We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.
- **Verse 6:** Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets.
- **Verse 8:** We have sinned against thee.

And the same continues throughout the remainder of the prayer. When we confess sin, we sometimes have a tendency to confess the sins of others, or we sometimes confess sin in a way that excuses our own sins. Daniel was not like that.

But if anyone could ever have rightly pointed a finger at others, it would have been Daniel. What had Daniel done wrong to be dragged off at age 13? There is not a single bad thing said about Daniel anywhere in the Bible — and there aren't many people in the Bible about whom that can be said! Couldn't Daniel plead innocent? No — not before God. We all stand as sinners before God, even Daniel. Daniel identified with his people, and Daniel confessed his own sin along with theirs, saying, “we have sinned”

And while we are on the subject of pronouns, did you notice the variety of pronouns that Daniel uses for God? He uses both the third person for God (him, he, his) and the second person (thy, thee, thine). Why the difference?

Perhaps the third person is used more for praise, with the second person used more for petitions — but we can't say for sure. We do see it elsewhere. Psalm 23, for example — “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul” ... “for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” There the shift may be used to show the Psalmist becoming closer to God — the change in pronoun occurs right after he says “I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” And perhaps we have a similar reason here; we don't know for sure.

Verses 7-10

Verses 7-10 stress the humiliation of the Hebrew people in the eyes of the surrounding heathen nations. Why was that important to Daniel? Because the Jews had a special place in God's plan.

Deuteronomy 7:6 — For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

God had promised them military success as long as they remained faithful.

Deuteronomy 28:7 — The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

God had promised that they would be respected by the surrounding nations.

Deuteronomy 28:10 — And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.

But now all of that had changed. After the death of King Josiah in 609 BC, the Jews had become objects of scorn, they had lost their freedom, and they were being ridiculed for their belief in the one true God.

This was more evidence of how far they had fallen because of their disobedience to God, and, as we will see, Daniel's real concern is that the ridicule of God's people had become ridicule of God.

Verses 11-14

In verses 11-14 of his prayer, Daniel praises the justice of God. Specifically, Daniel praises God for how God had dealt with his people according to all of the warnings and promises that had been given to Moses.

Should we be surprised that Daniel was praising God's justice when Daniel and his fellow exiles were suffering under that justice? It is not surprising at all if you know Daniel. 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 conse-

quences 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. And that was why Daniel praises and exalts the justice of God.

Verse 12 says that the calamity was unlike anything that had ever happened in the world. Is this literal? Yes and no.

Yes, in the sense that this was the first of the three desolations targeted against God's people and Jerusalem — the first by Babylon, the second by Greece, and the third by Rome.

But no, with regard to the literal severity of the destruction. The language 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. The statement here in verse 12 is describing the destruction of the same city, but in 586 BC. A similar description the desolation caused by Babylon is found in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 5:9 — And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

Notice that Daniel twice reminds God about what God himself had said in the law of Moses (verses 11 and 13).

Is it proper to quote the Bible when we pray? I have heard some answer no. Why? Because, they say, God wrote the Bible, and God already knows what is in it. But if I can tell God only things that God does not already know, then I will not have much left to pray about! If we take Daniel as an example, then I think we can quote the Bible when we pray (although, as with most things, it is possible to go overboard with that).

Verses 15-19

In verses 15-19 of his prayer, Daniel appeals to God's pity on the exiled nation and the ruined city of Jerusalem. Daniel bases his appeal on God's honor and glory. He asks God in verse 17 to restore the sanctuary for God's own sake.

What is Daniel's primary concern in this prayer? It is not the discomfort of the Jews or his own discomfort. Instead, Daniels' concern is the tarnishing that Daniel and his people have inflicted upon God's image and God's reputation in the eyes of the world. In verse 19 Daniel 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 his people. Daniel did not pray, "Get me out of this!" Instead Daniel's primary concern was for God and for God's reputation.

Is this how we look at things? Do we think of God first as Daniel did? What do people think about Christ when they see those who wear the name of Christ wallowing in sin?

2 Timothy 2:19 — Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Am I a reflection of Christ, or am I a reflection on Christ?

In verse 19 Daniel asks God to do three things: hear, forgive, and act — and, as we will soon see, it doesn't take long for Daniel to get an answer to that petition.

But notice also that Daniel prayed for the very thing that the Bible had assured him would happen.

Daniel did not sit back, and apathetically say that God will do what God wants to do in God's own time, and there is nothing I can do about it. Que sera, sera. Daniel knew better than that.

Daniel knew that although God certainly works according to his own plans and timetable, God nevertheless works through people — God works in part through their actions and through their prayers.

God's people are not passive observers in the plan of God; they are active participants. We have a role to play, just as Daniel did. And, as Calvin said, "nothing ... can be better for us than to ask for what God has promised."

DANIEL 9:20-21

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

Sometimes God's people have to wait months or even years for God to answer their prayer. Not so with Daniel. While Daniel is still praying, the angel Gabriel comes to him in swift flight.

A first initial point here is that perhaps verse 21 is an indication that angels do, in fact, at least sometimes have wings as they are so often depicted. In any event, this particular angel was "caused to fly swiftly."

A second initial point is that Daniel says that Gabriel was who he "had seen in the vision at the beginning." So perhaps Daniel was in fact only seeing Gabriel in a vision earlier and had not personally seen Gabriel until now. But verse 21 could also just mean that Gabriel was the same angel that Daniel saw at the time of the vision, which makes more sense to me.

A third initial point is that the use of the term "man" in verse 21 does not mean that Gabriel was a man rather than an angel. The Hebrew word "man" here simply means that Gabriel appeared in human-like form.

Now that the initial points are out of the way, let's focus on the main point — the incredible power of Daniel's prayer!

Prayer has been called the world's greatest wireless connection — and perhaps there is no better example of that than what we see here. And that description of prayer is not just a modern illustration from the age of smartphones — a 1908 commentary on this section of Daniel included the subtitle, "The Electric Telegraph of Prayer."

We panic when we lose service on our cellphone and can't communicate with anyone. Would we be in the same panic if we were suddenly unable to pray? Would we even know?

One commentator on verse 21 wryly noted that if Gabriel was going to catch many of us in prayer, he would have to be swift indeed!

The final phrase in verse 21 is touching. The "time of evening oblation (or sacrifice)" just means late afternoon, so why is it touching? Because no actual sacrifice could have been offered in Babylon (or even in Palestine) without the altar, and the altar had been destroyed long ago along with the rest of the temple. But Daniel was still observing sunrise and sunset as appropriate times for offering praise and worship to God. And soon they would have a temple in Jerusalem in which they could offer the actual sacrifices.

DANIEL 9:22-23

22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider 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. Right?

Well, it is right that we don't see them, but because we do not see them as Daniel did, does that mean they are not there? The age of miracles is over, but we know that does not mean God is not at work in this world. We know that God hears and answers our prayers, and he may still use swift angels behind the scenes for that purpose. I like to think that he does.

Notice how eager God was to answer Daniel's prayer. Verse 23 says that "at the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth."

God is more eager to answer than we are to ask. That is the nature of prayer. Not that I am stumbling toward God but that God is running towards me just as the father ran to meet the prodigal son. What we are seeing here is how God responds to his children.

Verse 23 says that Daniel was greatly beloved by God. Why? We have already seen why!

- Because Daniel refused to compromise with the world.
- Because Daniel was faithful and true to God.
- Because Daniel was a man of prayer.
- Because Daniel studied his Bible and knew it was true.
- Because Daniel was a man of great faith.

Do we want to be "greatly beloved" by God as Daniel was? Then Daniel left us an example that we can follow. Daniel grew up in a pagan culture that was hostile to the ways of God and to the people of God. Does that sound familiar? We have much in common with Daniel, and we can learn a lot from how Daniel lived in that pagan world and remained faithful and true to God.

And once again Daniel is about to get an inspired explanation from God about what he had been seeing and praying about. But I think we will have to admit that this inspired explanation could use its own inspired explanation! In any event, let's proceed to study the final four verses of Chapter 9, which may be the most obscure four verses in the Bible!

A final thing we should emphasize is that the decree in the final four verses was given as an answer to the beautiful prayer in the preceding verses. Why is that important? Because that prayer provides the all-important context for the decree. The decree is an answer to Daniel's prayer, and so if our interpretation of the decree doesn't make sense as an answer to Daniel's prayer, then we know for sure that our interpretation is wrong.

Again, there is a parallel here with the book of Revelation. That book does not begin with the vision in Chapter 4. Instead it begins with the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Chapters 2 and 3. Not surprisingly, Chapters 2 and 3 are related to Chapters 4-22! In fact, those seven letters provide the all-important context for the rest of the book of Revelation, just as Daniel's prayer provides the context for the decree at the end of Chapter 9. And, as with Daniel 9, if our view of Revelation bears no relation to the letters to the seven churches, then our view of Revelation is wrong. Context is key!

And with that, let's dive into the decree!

DANIEL 9:24

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

As one commentator noted:

Reading commentaries on the last four verses of Daniel 9 is akin to entering a bewildering maze: so many choices of ways to take, so many blind alleys and dead ends; which is the way out?

In AD 400, Jerome simply listed nine conflicting opinions of "the great teachers of the church" and left it "to the reader's judgment as to whose explanation ought to be followed." Another noted:

The history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks is the Dismal Swamp of Old Testament criticism.

This section of Daniel 9 is one of the most commented upon sections in the entire Bible. It has been called the “backbone” of all prophecy, which we may determine is a bit of an overstatement. Yes, this decree tells us much about the work of Christ, but the beginning and the end of the decree are focused on the Jews and Jerusalem. Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 53 are perhaps closer to being the backbone of all prophecy (if there is such a thing) than is Daniel 9.

So how do we begin with such a difficult text? We begin as we always do, by asking two questions: What is context? What is the time frame?

What is the context?

We just talked about the context. The context is that Daniel has been reading and praying about a seventy year decree upon the Jews found in Jeremiah. And God uses that decree in Jeremiah as an opportunity to tell Daniel about another decree also regarding the Jews and Jerusalem — a decree, not of seventy years, but of seventy weeks.

As we said, whatever we determine about the meaning of this decree, it needs to make sense in the setting in which it was received. This decree came as a swift response from God to the prayer that began Chapter 9, and we must not forget that fact. If our interpretation of this decree goes adrift from Daniel’s prayer about his people and about their sin and their future and their city, then our interpretation is almost certainly wrong.

The decree gets its name from verse 24 — “seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” Those seventy weeks are divided into three subsets of weeks: Verse 25 will mention seven weeks and 62 weeks, which combined give us 69 weeks. Verse 27 will mention a final week, which then accounts for all 70 weeks. Verse 27 will also cut that final week in half.

The “seventy weeks” in verse 24 is literally “seventy sevens,” but all translators agree that the phrase means seventy weeks. In fact, the same word “sevens” is also translated “weeks” in Daniel 10:2 — “in those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.”

But we should not miss the symbolism in the Hebrew word for “seven” being used here to denote a week. When we see “week” in this chapter, we should be thinking “seven.” So when we see a week cut in half, what do we see? We see a broken seven, which is a symbol that should already be very familiar to us.

What is the time frame?

That question is a little harder to see here than in other prophecies, but as with almost all prophecies in the Bible, there is a time frame here. We just need to dig a bit for it.

Verse 24 is crucial in understanding verses 25-27. Many commentaries rush right past verse 24 in their hurry to get to the events in the following verses, but we must not make that mistake. Why? Two reasons. First, verse 24 gives us the focus of the prophecy, and second, verse 24 gives us the all-important time frame for the prophecies that follow.

What is the focus of the prophecy? “Thy people” and “thy holy city.” That is, the Jews and Jerusalem. Any interpretation of this prophecy in which the Jews and Jerusalem are not the focus is a wrong interpretation.

But how does verse 24 give us a time frame? Because verse 24 gives us a list of six things that are to be accomplished by the seventy weeks decree, so if we can figure out when those things were accomplished, then we will know the time frame for the prophecy.

The six items in verse 24 that are to be accomplished by the decree are listed across the top of your handout (which can be found at the end of these notes):

- To finish the transgression,
- To make an end of sins,
- To make reconciliation for iniquity,
- To bring in everlasting righteousness,
- To seal up the vision and prophecy, and
- To anoint the most Holy.

After reading that list, we should already have a good idea as to the termination point for this vision — but let's take a closer look at each of the six events.

Event #1: To finish transgression.

This event has two possible meanings.

“To finish transgression” could mean that under this decree the transgression of God's own people would reach its peak or its limit. That is, the transgression of the Jews who rejected Christ (as well as rejecting all of the prophets) would reach its peak and then be punished. We see such descriptions elsewhere.

Matthew 23:31-32 — Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. **Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.**

1 Thessalonians 2:14b-16 — For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: **Who both killed the Lord Jesus,** and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, **to fill up their sins alway:** for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

But “to finish transgression” could mean something else. It could mean that transgression would be dealt with effectively and finally under this decree, which of course is what occurred at the cross.

Hebrews 9:15 — And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, **for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament,** they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

I lean more toward the first view, but, either way, the first event in our list of six occurred in the first century. And either way, we are looking at something that happened at the cross.

Event #2: To make an end of sins.

This second event also occurred in the first century, and it was also accomplished at the cross. Jesus made an end of sins.

Hebrews 9:26 — For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Hebrews 10:12-14 — But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Romans 8:3 — For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

Event #3: To make reconciliation for iniquity.

Again, with this event we see a first century event, and again, we see an event that occurred at the cross.

Romans 5:10 — For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

2 Corinthians 5:19 — To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Event #4: To bring in everlasting righteousness.

Again, we see a first century event, and again, we see an event that occurred at the cross.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 — Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE Lord OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2 Corinthians 5:21 — For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Hebrews 1:8 — But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Romans 3:21-22 — But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

Romans 10:4 — For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Event #5: To seal up vision and prophecy.

As we saw with the first event, there are two possible meanings for the fifth event.

“To seal up vision and prophecy” could mean that this decree would bring about the fullness of God’s revelation, and that afterward there would be no further revelation by visions and prophets.

Hebrews 1:1-2 — God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

1 Corinthians 13:9-10 — For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

But, “to seal up vision and prophecy” 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 hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.

Romans 11:7-8 — What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

2 Corinthians 3:14 — But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

Again, I lean toward the first view, but also again, whichever explanation we choose, both happened in the first century.

Event #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, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, **And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him**, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Acts 10:38 — **How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power**: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Luke 4:16-21 — And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor**; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, **This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.**

The “most holy” could refer instead (or in addition) to the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ — the new dwelling place of God, which God has also anointed. This view fits well with the context because the decree ends with the desecration and destruction of the **old** dwelling place of God — the Jewish sanctuary.

2 Corinthians 1:21 — Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, **and hath anointed us**, is God.

1 John 2:27 — But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.

Ephesians 2:19-22 — Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for **an habitation of God through the Spirit**.

Here I lean toward the second view, but again, either way, this event occurred in the first century.

The Verse 24 Time Frame

What we have seen is that all six of the events in verse 24 occurred in the first century. These are the six things that the seventy weeks decree was to accomplish — and they were all accomplished in the first century.

We should always start with verse 24 if anyone ever tells us that the fulfillment of the seventy week decree is yet future. All of the things that decree was intended to accomplish happened 2000 years ago!

DANIEL 9:25-27

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: 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 unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

What is our Game Plan?

As we have said, these three verses are some of the most difficult and most commented upon verses in the entire Bible. How are we going to tackle them?

First, can we be dogmatic about the meaning of this prophecy? Yes and no.

There are some fine points about which we can easily differ and remain within the confines of Scripture. But there are some other points about which we must remain firm.

For example, the termination point of this prophecy was in the first century. Why is that important? Isn't it just a timing issue? Yes, it is a timing issue, but it is a very important timing issue.

Why? Because the focus of this prophecy is the people of Daniel, the Jews, and if the termination point of this prophecy is the end of the world, then this prophecy is telling us that God has a special plan of salvation for the Jews under the New Covenant that is different from his plan for non-Jews, which we know is not the case.

Galatians 3:28 — There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Yes, God has a wonderful plan for the Jews, but it is the same wonderful plan that God has for everyone else.

Romans 1:16 — For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

And note from that verse that the gospel went to the Jew **first**. Premillennialists tell us that the opposite is true; that the gospel will go to the Jew **last**.

Whatever we decide about this decree, we know even before we start that it cannot be telling us that God has a special plan to save the Jews at the end of the world. Now is the day of salvation — for both Jew and Greek!

So what then is our game plan in tackling these difficult verses?

There are nine events in these three verses, and those nine events are shown on your handout (which can be found at the end of these notes) next to the eight circled letters A through H. (Event F has two events.)

The seventy weeks are divided into three main divisions: a seven week period, a 62 week period, and a final one week period. That final week is further subdivided into two half weeks.

Our task is to place those nine events in their proper positions within the 70 weeks. Some of those placements are very difficult, some are less difficult, and some are easy. Let's start with an easy one!

What is Event A?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 25 — “From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.”

This event and the next event are easy to place.

Verse 25 tells us that Event A is the start of a 69 week period (7 weeks + 62 weeks).

“From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.”
Our only question is which commandment is in view here.

The natural answer would be the decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1, which led to the first return from exile that occurred shortly after this prophecy was received by Daniel from God.

Some argue that Cyrus's decree was to build the temple rather than to build Jerusalem, and so they argue that this commandment refers to a later return. I think those arguments are wrong, but let's save our discussion of that point until later when we look at some other views about the seventy weeks prophecy.

All we need for our purposes now is to note that Event A occurs at the **beginning** of the 70 weeks, and on this point all commentators are in agreement.

So we have placed our first event onto our timeline.

What is Event B?

Let's start, as always, by reading the text.

Verse 25 — “Unto the Messiah the Prince.”

All commentators agree that Event B ends the 69 weeks, and all agree that the Messiah is Christ.

But there is some disagreement over what part of Christ's life is in view here. His birth? His baptism? His death? His resurrection? His ascension? His coming in judgment against Jerusalem in AD 70?

We will investigate that question as we move on through the list of events, but for now all we need to know to place Event B on our timeline is that Event B ends the 69 week period.

One question, though, before we move on: why is the Messiah called a Prince?

In addition to being our perfect High Priest, Jesus is also King of kings and Lord of lords. We see that same combination in Zechariah.

Zechariah 6:13 — Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, **and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne:** and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

And Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of King David.

Hebrews 7:14 — For it is evident that **our Lord sprang out of Juda;** of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

So, the Messiah is both high priest and royal prince and king.

Why prince here instead of king? Both words denote royalty, and so no distinction may have been intended. But if there was a distinction, it may be that Daniel 7 showed Jesus receiving a kingdom at his ascension (the church), and so perhaps at this point, prior to that event, Jesus is shown as a royal prince.

What is Event C?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 25 — "The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."

Event C is a little more difficult to place than the first two events.

Verse 25 tells us that from the command to restore Jerusalem up until the Messiah will be seven weeks and 62 weeks. The end of verse 25 then describes the rebuilding

efforts. That ordering, along with the division into seven weeks followed by a much longer 62 weeks, causes almost all commentators to conclude that this rebuilding occurs during the initial seven weeks and is completed at the end of that seven week period.

That is, from the command to restore Jerusalem until the restoration of Jerusalem takes seven weeks, and then from that point until the Messiah comes is another 62 weeks. That means Event C occurs after the initial seven week period and before the following 62 week period.

And so this part of the decree speaks of the rebuilding efforts that occurred under Nehemiah and Ezra. And the events described in those two books explain what is meant in verse 25 by the “troublous times.”

Ezra 4:4 — Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and **troubled** them in building,

As we said, we will look soon at some different views of the seventy week prophecy that are based on the notion that each day in this seventy week period is a year. That chronological view really breaks down here. Why?

Because under that view, seven weeks would denote 49 years, but 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 construction material and garbage!) If we agree, as I think we must, that the seven weeks to rebuild the city is wholly figurative, then that should confirm that the seventy weeks is also wholly figurative. We will have more to say about this view later.

And so we have placed Event C on our timeline, and we are ready to consider Event D, but let’s skip Event D for now and look instead at Event E (for a reason that will become clear in a moment). We will come back to Event D later.

What is Event E?

Let’s start by reading the text.

Verse 27 — “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.”

When we get to Event E, we are faced with a crucial question for our interpretation — who is the “he” referred to in Events D, E, and F? (They are circled on your handout, which can be found at the end of these notes.) Does this pronoun “he” refer to the same person in each instance or to different people?

As for that last question, read verse 27 again — “And he shall confirm the covenant ... he shall cause the sacrifice ... to cease, and ... he shall make it desolate....” I think a natural understanding of that language suggests that only one person is in view: he does this, he does that, and he does this other thing. Unless we find some very strong indicator to the contrary, I think we should look for one person as the subject of the pronoun “he” in Events D, E, and F.

So who is it? If we look for the antecedent of the pronoun, we have two possibilities in verse 26 — either the Messiah or the prince that shall come (likely referring to the Roman General Titus).

Of those three “he” events (D, E, and F), I have skipped over Event D and started with Event E. Why? Because I think Event E is the most helpful of the three in determining the identity of that one person to whom the word “he” refers. After we figure out who is doing these things, we will circle back and look at Event D.

What happens with Event E? “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.”

The location of this event in the seventy weeks is easy — this event occurs during the final week, and unlike some other final week events, this event apparently occurs throughout the entire final week.

What is the event? “He shall confirm the covenant.” Two questions — which covenant, and how is a covenant confirmed? (And we still have our initial question remaining: who is doing the confirming?)

Which covenant?

We have two obvious possibilities: the old covenant and the new covenant. The focus of this prophecy is “thy people and upon thy holy city” (speaking to Daniel in verse 24), and so we might suspect that this covenant is the old covenant.

But, as we know, the new covenant was the culmination of the promises under the old covenant, and the new covenant came into force under the Messiah, who (as evidenced at least by Event B) seems to be the focus of the final week, and so we might just as easily suspect that this covenant is the new covenant.

We know that the new covenant came into effect at the death of Jesus, that is at the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16).

We know that the ordinances of the old covenant were nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

And we know that the new covenant made the first old, which then vanished away (Hebrews 8:13).

But surface vestiges of the old covenant remained for some time after the cross. Hebrews 10:11 says that “every priest standeth (present tense) daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” They were still going through the motions, as their old covenant waxed old and decayed (Hebrews 8:13), having been nailed to the cross. But after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, they no longer went through the motions because they were no longer able to do so — and to this very day the sacrificial system has never been restored after that complete and final desolation.

Are we saying that the old covenant remained in effect until AD 70? No. The old covenant was removed at the cross and was replaced with the new covenant. Hebrews 7:14 makes it very clear that Christ could not become a high priest until the old covenant was removed, and Hebrews 8:1 confirms that Jesus was High Priest when the book of Hebrews was written, which we know was prior to AD 70 from Hebrews 10:11.

So then which covenant is in view in Daniel 9:27? Let’s hold off some more on answering that question until we look at a related question.

How is a covenant confirmed?

To answer that question we can turn to Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:17 — And this I say, that the covenant, **that was confirmed before of God in Christ**, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

That verse is discussing two covenants: God's covenant with Abraham and the old Mosaic covenant with Israel. We are told in that verse that the law came 430 years after the covenant with Abraham was **confirmed**. What was that confirmation?

First, that confirmation cannot be anything that occurred during the lifetime of Abraham. Why? Because Abraham preceded Moses by over 600 years, not 430 years.

Abraham was 75 when God first called him (Genesis 12:4) and was 99 when Isaac was conceived (Genesis 17:1; 18:14). By the time Isaac was born, the original promise had been in effect for 25 years. Isaac then lived to the age of 180, died, and was buried in Canaan (Genesis 35:29). Isaac's son Jacob was an old man himself by the time his sons went down to Egypt to beg food from Joseph. The family of Jacob went to Egypt as honored guests, only to wind up as slaves generations later. They spent over 400 years in Egypt (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:15) before Moses led them out and they received the law at Sinai. The traditional period between Abraham and Moses is 645 years.

So what event then did Paul by inspiration have in mind when he wrote that the covenant was confirmed 430 years before the law?

The birth of Isaac could hardly qualify as "offspring as numerous as the stars" (Genesis 15:5). Neither could possessing the land (Genesis 15:7) be dated from the time of Abraham, who, as far as we know, never bought a square foot of land except the burial plot of Sarah.

What then is it that happened 430 years before the law and that confirmed the covenant with Abraham? It must be the fulfillment of the prophecy that Abraham's offspring would go down into a foreign land to be enslaved for 400 years (Genesis 15:13).

And that makes sense — a covenant is confirmed when the events of the covenant take place, or, perhaps, begin to take place.

So which covenant is the covenant in Daniel 9:27?

It could still be either one. Events from each covenant were occurring in the first century. The dire warnings from the first covenant were about to occur with finality in the events of AD 70, and the establishment of the eternal kingdom and the wonderful miracles and signs by the Messiah were occurring as part of the new covenant, starting even before the new covenant came into effect at the cross.

But, and this is the central clue that tips the scales in my view, which of those events were just **beginning** to occur under the covenant and were occurring during the **entirety** of that final week, which we know begins with the coming of the Messiah? In my opinion, the confirmation of the **new** covenant better fits a week-long confirmation.

And why would the old covenant need any confirmation? It had already been confirmed over and over again. What Jew in the first century could have possibly complained that God had not confirmed the old covenant? And who was it in the first century who needed the old covenant to be confirmed?

The better interpretation in my view is that the covenant in verse 27 is the new covenant. Jesus and the apostles confirmed the new covenant over and over again starting with Jesus' own miracles and continuing with the miracles of the apostles. Those who rejected that covenant had no excuse for doing so — it had been confirmed for them by the Messiah himself.

Matthew 11:3-5 — And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: **The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.**

Most of those signs had been prophesied of the new covenant under the old covenant (Isaiah 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 26:18-19, 61:1), and Jesus was confirming the new covenant by performing those signs. In fact, that was the point of Jesus' answer to the disciples of John — do you want to know if I am he, then look for the confirmation in “those things which ye do hear and see.”

Who then is confirming the covenant?

That is, back to our original question, who is the “he” who is confirming the covenant? We have now answered that question. Jesus confirmed the new covenant personally, and he did so through his miracles and through those he sent out to preach.

Mark 16:20 — And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs following**.

Hebrews 2:3-4 — How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, **and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness**, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

This type of confirmation had long been prophesied for this period of time.

Acts 2:16-17 — But **this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of 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.

Peter was saying in Acts 2 that the “last days” prophecy of Joel 2 was happening on that first day of Pentecost following the resurrection — “this is that,” Peter said. All present could see the confirmation of the new covenant, and many, seeing that confirmation, believed and were baptized.

The new covenant was confirmed by Jesus and the apostles. No one who rejected the new covenant had any excuse for doing so. It had been confirmed over and over again by mighty works.

And yet the Pharisees had witnessed those wonderful miracles and had ascribed them not to God but to Satan! Is it any wonder that it was always in that context that Jesus discussed the unforgivable sin? What could be worse than to witness the mighty works confirming the new covenant and to ascribe those mighty works to Satan? Yet that is what some did. And for that reason, their final desolation was coming.

God had promised Daniel long ago that the covenant would be confirmed to Daniel’s people during the prophetic week leading up to the end in AD 70.

We know from Romans 1:16 that the gospel was to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Why? Why to the Jew first? Was it just because the Jews were there first and it took longer to get the message to the others? I don't think the evidence supports that conclusion.

Matthew 10:5-6 — These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24 — I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

I think we see a much better explanation here in Daniel 9. God had promised that the covenant would be confirmed to the Jews in the time between the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of their city. I think that is why the message went first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel — their clock was ticking as the destruction of their city in AD 70 prophesied by Daniel here and by Jesus in Matthew 24 was getting closer and closer.

Let's now circle back to Event D.

What is Event D?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 27 — “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”

The “oblation” in verse 27 refers to the evening temple sacrifice, which would have been done around 3 PM. We saw the same word earlier in verse 21. Sometimes “oblation” was used to denote a grain offering.

Event D should be easier to place now that we know who the “he” is in this verse.

Had we started with Event D we might have thought “he” was the Roman General Titus who destroyed the city — and many commentaries adopt that view. And Titus certainly did cause the sacrifices to cease. 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 — and they have not returned even to this very day.

Antiochus had earlier done the same thing, and it is described as such in Daniel 11:31. So it would certainly be correct to say that Titus caused the sacrifices to cease, and if we were willing to say that the “he” in this clause does not have to be the same “he” in the prior clause, then maybe it is Titus. But if we take each “he” in this verse to be the same person, then it is Jesus who is causing the sacrifices to cease because we know that Titus did not confirm the covenant.

If the “he” is Jesus, then we have two possibilities for when the sacrifices ceased. They ceased first in substance at the cross, and second, they ceased in practice in AD 70 — and Jesus caused both cessations (using Rome as a tool in the judgment of AD 70).

The sacrifices ceased at the cross because at that time they lost their meaning and their reason for existence. Those sacrifices pointed forward to the cross, and so after the cross they ceased, even if the actions of the priests continued on for some time after the cross. Those actions became meaningless after the cross.

Hebrews 10:1-3 — For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Hebrews 10:11-12 — And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.

Notice that key rhetorical question in Hebrews 10:2 — “For then would they not have ceased to be offered?” Yes, they would have been ceased. Why? Because the perfect sacrifice would have made them meaningless, and it did in fact make them meaningless at the cross.

But the sacrifices also ceased in AD 70 with the judgment against Jerusalem, which Matthew 24 figuratively describes as a coming of Christ in judgment against the city.

So which is it? The cross or AD 70?

The timing we are given helps us answer that question — this cessation occurred midway through the final week. The destruction of the city is the focus and occurs at the end of the prophecy (Event F, which we will consider next), and so on that basis I favor the view that this midweek event is the cross. The Jewish sacrifices ceased at the cross.

And if the midweek event is the cross, then that helps us answer an earlier question — what event in the life of Christ is the coming of the Messiah in Event B? If the middle of the week is the cross, then the beginning of the week must be either Jesus' birth or his baptism, and I favor the latter because that is when Jesus began to confirm the covenant, which we know occurred all throughout this final prophetic week.

Jesus begins his ministry at the beginning of that final week, he is cut off midway during that week (Event G, which we will discuss in just a moment), and he comes in judgment against Jerusalem at the end of that week. And all throughout that week, his new covenant is being confirmed with signs and wonders.

What is Event F?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 26 — “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

Verse 27 — “For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

These verses describe the desolation that Jesus told us in Matthew 24:34 happened in the first century. So where do these verses go on our seventy week time line?

The language itself answers that question. Verse 26 twice refers to “the end,” and verse 27 refers to the “consummation.” Event F is located at the end of the seventy weeks, and it describes the first century destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Mathew 23:37-38 — O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under

her wings, and ye would not! **Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.**

Mathew 24:13-16 — But he that shall endure unto **the end**, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall **the end** come. When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.

Matthew 24:34 — Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Luke 21:20 — And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that **the desolation thereof is nigh**.

By the way, the use of a “flood” in verse 26 to depict the judgment presents a problem for the premillennialists. ”The end thereof shall be with a flood.” Is the “end” in that verse the end of the world as many teach? If so, then how do we reconcile that view that the world will end by a literal flood with the covenant in Genesis 9:15?

Genesis 9:15 — And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

These verses in Daniel 9 are not describing the end of the world. They are describing the end of Jerusalem, a first century event.

What is Event G?

Let's start by reading the text.

Verse 26 — “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”

Verse 26 tells us that this event and Event H occur after the 62 weeks, which tells us they occur in the final week, but verse 26 does not tell us when in that final week they occur.

We know what the cutting off means.

Isaiah 53:8 — He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? **for he was cut off out of the land of the living:** for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And we know what it means that the cutting off was *not for himself*.

Isaiah 53:4-5 — Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

This “cutting off” ushered in the blessings listed in verse 24. It also resulted in the destruction of the city in AD 70 because the Jews were at that time punished for having rejected and having cut off God’s son.

Other translations have “and after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.” What would that mean?

That language would point toward the faithless Jews who rejected Jesus. They were not his people. He had nothing in their city and in their sanctuary. And remember from Matthew 24 that Jesus had told his followers what to look for so that they could escape the destruction of the city. Those that were his escaped, while those no longer his were destroyed.

So when in the final week did this cutting off occur? We have already answered that question when we looked at Event D. If we were correct that Event D happened at the cross, then this cutting off must be pointing to the same location as Event D, midway through the final week.

What is Event H?

Let’s start by reading the text.

Verse 26 — “And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”

We have also already placed Event H. It refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened at the end of the final week, where we also placed Event F. The “people of the prince that shall come” refers to the Roman people and the Roman prince, most likely Titus.

Matthew 24:15 — When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)

Luke 21:20 — And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

And so the 70 week decree has explained just what God said it would explain back in verse 24 — “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” It has answered Daniel’s questions about the fate of his people, the Jews, and the fate of their city, Jerusalem.

So let’s quickly review each of the nine events, and ask for each a single question: Why was that event placed where it was on the “Seventy Week” time line shown on the handout (which can be found at the end of these notes)?

Event A: Event A is the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Why was it placed at the beginning of the seventy weeks? Because of the word “from” in verse 25. This event is the starting point of the seventy weeks.

Event B: Event B is unto the Messiah the Prince. Why was it placed at the end of the first 69 weeks? Because of the word “unto” in verse 25. From Event A unto Event B will be seven weeks and 62 weeks.

Event C: Event C is the rebuilt city. Why was it placed at the end of the initial seven weeks? Because of the order in verse 25 — seven weeks and 62 weeks — and because we would expect (and, in fact, in hindsight we now know) the rebuilding to occur after the command to rebuild and before the coming of the Messiah. If Event C did not occur after the initial seven week period, then why else would verse 25 split the 69 weeks into seven weeks and 62 weeks?

Event D: Event D is the cessation of the sacrifices. Why was it placed halfway through the final week? Because of the phrase “in the midst of the week” in verse 27.

Event E: Event E is the confirmation of the covenant. Why was it placed throughout the final week? Verse 27 tells us — he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.

Event F: Event F is the end and the consummation. Why was it placed at the end of the seventy weeks? Because it is the end and the consummation! Where else would we place “the end”? (And recall that this is the end of Jerusalem; not the end of the world.)

Event G: Event G is the cutting off of the Messiah. Why did we place it halfway through the final week? Because (a) we determined that the “he” in verse 27 must be Christ because Christ confirmed the covenant, (b) if the “he” in verse 27 is Christ, then Event D, the cessation of the sacrifices, also refers to the work of Christ, and (c) Christ caused the sacrifices to cease at the cross. Thus, Event D is the cross, and we know from the text that Event D occurs in the midst of that week. Event G is also the cross (“cut off” from Isaiah 53), and thus Event G must also be at the midway point in the final week.

Event H: Finally we have Event H, which is the destruction of the city by the prince that shall come, Titus the Roman general. That event must be placed where we placed Event F, “the end.”

Is that view the only possibility?

No. Some argue that the final week begins at the cross, which would then put the destruction of the temple by Titus at the midway point, and the final and complete destruction of the city at the end of the final week.

That is certainly possible, but I don’t think it fits as well. Placing the cutting off at the beginning of the final week seems unlikely because of the confirmation that is occurring throughout the entire week. Placing the cutting off at the end of the week wouldn’t work at all because that is when Jesus is coming in judgment against those who cut him off.

If for that reason we conclude, as I think we should, that the cutting off occurs mid-week, then that confirms we were right when we concluded that the cessation of sacrifices that occurred midweek also refers to the cross.

Either way, the seventy weeks end with the first century destruction of Jerusalem, and we can’t give on that point for any number of reasons, not the least of which is that Jesus himself pointed us back to Daniel for the fulfillment of that very event.

How are symbols used in this prophecy?

There are several important symbols in the prophecy of the seventy weeks (or the seventy sevens) — and, not surprisingly, they all involve the number seven.

First, the “week” itself is symbolic.

Recall that the word translated “week” is the Hebrew word for seven. Seven denotes perfection. That the week is the basis for the entire prophecy lets us know that this prophecy is going to perfectly accomplish whatever it is about (which, as we have seen, is the judgment of Daniel’s people and the holy city).

We see this same symbol with the use of seventy weeks, or seventy sevens, which reinforces the perfection of the judgment. The figure of “seventy sevens” is found elsewhere in the Bible.

Genesis 4:24 — If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech **seventy and sevenfold**.

Matthew 18:21-22 — Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until **seventy times seven**.

In each case, the “seventy times seven” figure denotes something that is perfect and complete — perfect and complete vengeance and perfect and complete forgiveness.

What was perfect 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. It was the perfect and complete end for the old covenant, which at that point vanished away with finality after waxing old and decaying. (And recall that we know from Hebrews that the old covenant was not in effect after the cross because otherwise Jesus could not be High Priest.)

This decree represented the completion of God’s 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 “seventy by seven” symbol was the perfect symbol to denote this statement of God’s completed activity. God is telling Daniel that this is a final decree. One day the Messiah would come, and the city would be destroyed. That all happened in the first century.

Second, we see seven weeks depicting the time in which the temple and the city are rebuilt and restored. Again, God had foretold these events, and God caused them to happen. The restoration was perfectly fulfilled, but that perfection did not prevent the people from once again rebelling and falling away from God.

Third, we have one week at the end of the seventy week period, which includes the time from the coming of the Messiah up until the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. The work of the Messiah was perfect. Jesus accomplished all that he came to do. (Premillennialists deny this, but they also fail to comprehend the meaning of these beautiful symbols.)

Fourth, we have a half week, three and a half days, which is a broken seven.

We have seen this symbol before, and we know it denotes something that is temporary. In this case, the key three and half day period is the second half of the week. Why? Because it begins when the Messiah was cut off; that is, it begins at the cross. Was that the end? Was that permanent? Not at all.

Any time we see a broken seven in the Bible, one thing we know for sure is that whatever that broken seven depicts is not the end of the story! It may look like the end, but it is not the end. It may look like a defeat, but it is not a defeat.

As for the cross, Jesus soon came with power and judgment against those who had cut him off. A broken seven is the perfect way to depict Jesus’ triumph over death after what to many looked like a defeat at the cross. The cross was not the end of the story! That is why the cross occurs halfway during that final prophetic week leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Other Views about the Seventy Weeks

How else do some interpret this “seventy weeks” decree? We could spend weeks answering that question, but we won’t. Instead, we will look briefly at a few of the more popular interpretations.

Despite some who loudly proclaim that they take every word in the Bible literally, no one does that, and this decree is a good example. Why? Because literally this decree would have to take place in only 70 literal weeks, which is 490 days, and no theory I have seen makes that claim. Instead, all theories start with the proposition that the 70 weeks period refers to a time period longer than 70 weeks.

It is at this point that we get the two main categories of interpretations, which have been called the chronological and non-chronological approaches. And which bucket you land in depends on how you interpret the 70 week symbol (and all agree that it is not a literal 70 weeks).

A chronological approach tries to map the 70 weeks to a specific chronological period, usually by taking each day in the 70 weeks to be a year.

A non-chronological approach views the 70 weeks wholly figuratively, with 70 being a combination of the symbol 7 (perfection) and the symbol 10 (completion), so that 70 weeks (or literally in the Hebrew 70 sevens) simply denotes a perfectly complete period of time determined by God.

How long was that period in actuality? There are several possibilities, but none of them under this view can be derived solely from the 70 week or 490 day period. Instead, we need to look elsewhere in the Bible and in secular history to see when the various events occurred.

The view we just looked at on the handout (which can be found at the end of these notes) is a non-chronological view, and the most likely answer to the actual time period of the 70 weeks is shown at the bottom of the handout — 608 years, which is the length of time between the decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1 and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

How can we get the number 608 from the number 70 or the number 490? You can't, which is why this approach is said to be non-chronological. (I'm not a big fan of those names because our approach certainly places events on a chronological timeline.)

What about the chronological approaches? We will briefly look at the two most popular such views, one of which is likely the most prevalent view in the church today.

Before doing that, it will be helpful to review the history of the exiles' three main returns to Palestine.

Return Number 1: 539 BC

In 539 BC Cyrus gave a decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (Some historians think the decree was given in 538 BC. We will use the 539 BC date instead.) This decree can be found in Ezra 1 and 2 Chronicles 36.

Ezra 1:2-4 — Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 36:23 — Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

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. This return is described in the first half of Ezra.

Return Number 2: 458 BC

Ezra, a descendant 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 speak of murder, adultery, perjury, and injustice.

Artaxerxes gave Ezra approval to rebuild the city. This decree is found in Ezra 7:12-26.

Ezra 7:11-13 — Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

Ezra led 1500 men with their families to Jerusalem. He read the law to the people, who were very moved when they realized how far they had strayed from the law of God. 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. (Some have suggested that the commands to send the women out of the city and to rebuild the city walls may not have been unrelated!)

The Samaritans again caused trouble. They reported the “treasonous” rebuilding of the wall to Persia, and they then proceeded to tear down the wall. This return is described in the second half of Ezra.

Return Number 3: 445 BC

Nehemiah, a cup bearer in the court of Artaxerxes, asked the king to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The king agreed, perhaps because he wanted a fort close to the Egyptian border. This is the decree found in Nehemiah 2.

Nehemiah 2:2-6 — Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

The Samaritans ridiculed their efforts and spread rumors that Nehemiah planned an insurrection and wanted to be king himself. The wall was rebuilt in 52 days. This return is described in the book of Nehemiah.

The Millennial Chronological Viewpoint

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 for this view is the third return.)

Verse 25 tells us that, from this point, it will be 69 weeks (7 + 62) until the Messiah comes. Using the so-called “universal prophetic Day equals a Year” principle (more on that later...), they add 69 weeks of years (69×7 or 483 years) to this starting point. 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 that when you add years to a BC date to obtain an AD date there is no year zero. For example, the year 1 BC + 1 year is the year AD 1.)

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.

The use of lunar years is called by some “the prophetic mode of reckoning.”

Are lunar years used in the Bible? Yes, they are, but typically such years are used in the Bible to figuratively depict only *short* periods of time, usually with a lunar month rather than a lunar year.

All sorts of problems arise when lunar years are used to literally depict *long* periods of time. The only reason the premillennialists use lunar years here is that they miss their target by a mile when they use solar years.

After the 69 weeks (483 lunar years), they tell us that the prophetic clock stopped and has not ticked once in the intervening 2000 years. Instead, they say, we have been living in a prophetic gap period that they call the church age.

The last of Daniel's seventy weeks will occur, they say, when the Rapture begins. The final three and a half years of these seven years will be the Great Tribulation when the Antichrist will reign on earth. Following those seven years, Jesus will return to reign for a thousand years on Earth.

There are enormous problems with this view. We will look in a moment at some of the specific problems of this approach, but I think we can already see some general problems with this approach.

First, it ignores the first century time frame of this prophecy that we got from verse 24.

Second, it ignores the focus of the prophecy on the Jews and Jerusalem that we also got from verse 24.

Third, it ignores the context of the prayer at the beginning of Chapter 9 that caused this prophecy to be personally delivered by an angel to Daniel.

Fourth, it causes the gospel to make a distinction between Jew and Gentile even though Romans 10:12 tells us "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek."

Fifth, it ignores the repeated warnings in the New Testament that the end will not be preceded by any signs but instead will come as thief in the night.

And there are also big problems when it comes to the specifics of the premillennial approach to Daniel 9. But before we look at those problems, let's pause for a few moments and consider the general premillennial approach to interpreting scripture.

Problems with Premillennialism

First, 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 how Professor Carroll Osburn of Abilene Christian University answered that question:

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 ... premillennialism, ... congregational organization, or ... whether baptism is "for" or "because of" the remission of sins.

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, 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.

Is premillennialism a side issue that doesn't really make that much difference? To answer that question, let's turn to John Walvoord, who was perhaps the leading proponent of premillennialism. Here is what he had 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 ... that is something else. ... 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 is no exaggeration. They manage to work those thousand years into practically everything even though the “1000 year” figure they rely on occurs only in Revelation 20.

With all due respect to Professor Osburn (which isn’t much), it does make a difference what we believe about premillennialism. It is not a side issue, it is a main issue. Why? Because 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 belittle his title of King of kings and Lord of lords.

They teach that Jesus’ mission on earth was a 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.

It makes a great deal of difference what we believe about this important issue. It strikes at the very core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Premillennialism is false, and we must continue to proclaim that.

We owe a great debt to Foy Wallace on this point. In 1933, Foy Wallace (then the editor of the Gospel Advocate) debated Charles Neal (minister of the Main Street Church of Christ in Winchester, Kentucky) about the thousand year reign. Brother Wallace was largely responsible for keeping that false doctrine from infiltrating the church.

Now let's circle back to the millennial view of Daniel 9 and look at a few of the major problems with that view of these verses.

Reasons Why the Millennial Chronological Viewpoint is Wrong

Reason #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 used with certainty only twice in the Bible.

Numbers 14:34 — After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

Ezekiel 4:6 — And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

How do we know the principle is in operation in these two passages? Because God tells us explicitly 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. Why tell us there but not here?

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 seven year period? I know of no one who believes that it was.

We know with certainty it is not a universal principle — not even in prophecies. Jonah was in the belly of that fish for three days, and we learn in Matthew 12:39-40 that those three days were a prophetic sign of the time between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Did that take three years? It would seem it must have if there is some sort of a universal principle in operation.

There is no universal principle of Biblical interpretation that requires us to view days as years. To take that view here requires an assumption because God does not tell us here (as he does elsewhere) that the principle is in effect.

Reason #2: Beginning with the 445 BC decree from Nehemiah is just an assumption, and not a very good one. 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, then 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 — That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Isaiah 45:13 — I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith 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 about!

The decree that Cyrus had just given must have been the one that God was referring to. And if the starting point was a decree that would not occur until after the days of Esther, then why was Gabriel in such a hurry to deliver this decree to Daniel?

The context virtually demands that we take the starting point of this prophecy to be the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC. And if we take that decree as our starting point, then we will never reach the cross in 69 weeks of years (483 years) — lunar or solar.

Reason #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) 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. None of those countries would have measured a long period of time with lunar years — and neither did God.

Yes, lunar months (not years) are sometimes used to give us nice round numbers for short prophetic symbols, but they are not used to pinpoint precise events hundreds of years into the future.

Reason #4: Even with all of these gymnastics, they still 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 strictest scrutiny will not detect an error on God's part. However, even a casual scrutiny is enough to detect numerous errors on the premillennialists' part.

The Non-Millennial Chronological Viewpoint

This view, which is popular in the church, begins with the decree of 458 BC when Artaxerxes gave Ezra approval to rebuild the city. (That is, it begins with the second decree — the decree found in Ezra 7.)

Again, verse 25 tells us that 69 weeks will elapse before the Messiah comes. Applying the “Day Equals a Year” principle to the 69 weeks gives us 483 years, as before. Taking the starting point of 458 BC and adding 483 (solar, this time) years, we arrive at the year AD 26, which is about the year that Jesus was baptized (which we agreed was most likely the event that marked the end of the 69 weeks).

Verse 27 tells us that in the middle of the seventieth week, the sacrifices will cease. This, they say, occurred when Jesus died on the cross and ushered in the new Christian age (which also agrees with our conclusions). Again, this seems to fit chronologically since Jesus' earthly ministry lasted about three and a half 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

Argument #1: Again, there is no proof that the "Day Equals 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 it is because each time God explicitly told us it was being used.

Argument #2: Verse 25 requires that seven 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 of Artaxerxes.

Argument #3: There is no particular reason to begin with the decree in 458 BC from Ezra 7, and there is much more reason to believe that the prophecy begins with the contemporaneous decree of Cyrus in 539 BC.

Argument #4: Verse 26 tells us that the seventy weeks includes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in AD 70. There is no way to make this AD 70 event fit with a 490 year chronology beginning in 458 BC. If the first half of that final week is a literal three and a half years, then why not the second half?

In short, I think the non-millennial chronological view is wrong, but just because it doesn't make sense — not because it violates the Scriptures (which makes the non-millennial chronological view very much unlike the millennial chronological view in that regard).

One last point about Chapter 9: Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 — is that number seventy somehow tied in with all of the other seventies we have seen here?

The answer is likely yes and no. The AD system of numbering did not appear until 500 years after AD 1, but we can say, at least, that the city of Jerusalem fell about seventy years after the birth of Christ, which is definitely interesting and likely not a coincidence given that God determined the timing. But we can't say for sure.

CHAPTER 10

Chapter 10 is a prelude to the final vision in the book of Daniel.

And although it is only 21 verses long, Chapter 10 shows us some of the most puzzling and intriguing events found anywhere in the Bible.

This chapter, perhaps more than any other, lifts the curtain on the unseen spiritual world that surrounds us.

It would be easy to go over a cliff of speculation in this chapter, so we will try to stay well-grounded with what has been revealed to us, realizing that much about these issues has not been revealed to us.

DANIEL 10:1

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

The third year of Cyrus would be the third year of his reign over the Chaldeans, not the third year of his reign over Persia — which could have been twenty years earlier depending on where you place his reign.

Each of the four visions in Chapters 7–12 is dated, and the visions appear in two groups of two: the first (Chapter 7) and third (Chapter 8) years of Belshazzar and the first (Chapter 9, Darius) and third (Chapter 10) years of Cyrus.

As we have discussed, it is possible that Cyrus and Darius are the same person, and it possible instead that Darius was the last king of Media, with Cyrus being the first king of the combined Medo-Persia and reigning as co-regent or possibly as crown prince with Darius. Either way, the first year of Darius coincides with the first year of Cyrus with regard to their rule over the Chaldean kingdom.

We know that this vision occurred after Cyrus's decree that the Jews could return to Palestine. Why? Because Ezra 1:1 tells us that decree went out in the **first** year of Cyrus.

Cyrus' **third** year would have been 536 or 535 BC, two years after Gabriel's appearance to Daniel in Chapter 9 and a short while after the first return of the Jewish exiles to Palestine.

The timing here is important because Daniel, who was very concerned about the exiles, may have just heard that work on the temple had been halted (Ezra 4:17-24). The arrival of that news may explain why will see Daniel mourning in verse 2 of this chapter.

Daniel was now close to 85 years old, having been in exile for over 70 years. Perhaps Daniel's Babylonian name (Belteshazzar) is used in verse 1 to remind us that (unlike those who have returned) he is still far away in exile.

Why didn't Daniel return with the others? It may have been because of his age, or perhaps he felt that he could be of more use remaining behind and continuing his service for the king.

What does Daniel tell us in verse 1 about the word that was revealed to him? He tells us three things.

The first thing Daniel tells us about the word that was revealed to him is that the word was true.

Daniel received this vision and this word from God, and so Daniel knew with certainty that the word and the vision were true. The vision contained prophecies that would certainly be accomplished. That is how we, too, should always approach God's word. God's word is truth (John 17:17).

The second thing Daniel tells us about the word that was revealed to him is that the word involved great conflict.

The King James Version translates this phrase as “the time appointed was long.” The Hebrew word translated “time appointed” in the KJV is more properly translated “army” or “host” going forth to war. The ESV translation is better — “And the word was true, and it was a great conflict.”

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.

The third thing Daniel tells us about the word that was revealed to him is that he understood the word and the vision.

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. Why 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 narrative, and in that sense it is more straightforward than the earlier visions.

DANIEL 10:2-3

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

Once again we see the extent of Daniel’s spiritual preparation. Daniel prepared himself to seek God and to study his word. And Daniel got results when he prayed. We have seen those results. 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. Here, Daniel abstains from the daily oil because he is mourning.

Daniel also abstained during this time from meat and wine. The inference of course is that normally Daniel did not abstain from this food and drink. What that means is that the dietary changes Daniel made when he first arrived in Babylon seem to have been just temporary. That is not to suggest that Daniel ever ate anything unclean, but rather that Daniel was not a vegetarian his entire life and some diet books have suggested.

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 the book of Ezra, the news was not all good. His people were facing hardships back in Jerusalem.

Also, Daniel may have mourned because he was left behind — he had not seen his homeland since he was 13, and he likely never would see it again.

Also, the vision in Chapter 8 had described 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 soon afterward the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed — and this would be God's last word with regard to the Jews.

The vision in Chapter 11 that Daniel is 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 (Ecclesiastes 3:4), and Daniel knew that time was now!

DANIEL 10:4-6

4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain

man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

Daniel received this vision on the twenty-fourth day of the first month.

The first month of the Jewish calendar was Nisan. The Passover celebration took place on the fourteenth day of that month, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day.

That means Daniel received this vision ten days after Passover. While traditionally this was a time of *feasting*, Daniel had instead spent the time fasting and mourning.

Daniel was standing on the banks of the great river Hiddekel, which the Septuagint identifies as the Tigris River. The Tigris River was the third river that went out of Eden in Genesis 2:14.

Earlier Daniel had a vision next to the River Ulai, which flows into the Tigris River. As we 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 seems to suggest that Daniel was actually present at this 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, which may have been a canal connecting the Tigris with the Euphrates.

In fact, what Daniel witnesses here has some other similarities to Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1. Daniel 10:6 mentions beryl, lightning, lamps of fire, polished brass, and the voice of a multitude. Ezekiel 1 mentions burnished brass in verse 7, burning coals of fire, lamps, and lightning in verse 13, beryl in verse 16, and "the noise of an host" in verse 24.

Who is Daniel seeing here in verses 5 and 6?

I think Daniel is seeing Jesus in this vision. Some say that this is just an angel, but I don't think so. I think Daniel saw Jesus. Why?

One reason I think Daniel saw Jesus is because of the context. Think about the vision Daniel had received just a few years earlier in Chapter 9. That vision specifically mentioned the Messiah, and it said that the Messiah would be cut off. I think Daniel needed some reassurance from God about the promised Messiah, and what better way to get that reassurance than for God to allow Daniel to see Jesus in a vision?

Another reason I think Daniel saw Jesus is because of Daniel's reaction in verses 7-9, which we will look at next.

Yet another reason I think Daniel saw Jesus is because of the descriptions we see here, and how they compare with the vision of Christ in Revelation 1. Here is the description in verses 5-6 from the ESV.

Daniel 10:5-6 — I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 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 sound of a multitude.

Compare that description with what we find in Revelation 1 when John sees Christ.

Revelation 1:12-16 — Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

I think Daniel, like John, also saw a vision of Christ.

DANIEL 10:7-9

7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8 Therefore I was

left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

Only Daniel saw the vision of the man in verses 5-6.

This scene reminds us of another appearance of Christ.

Acts 9:3-7 — Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

Daniel’s companions were likewise not able to see the vision, but they experienced a great quaking that caused them to be afraid and to flee, leaving Daniel alone.

Daniel’s outward appearance changed when he saw the vision in verses 5-6.

I love the KJV in verse 8 — “my comeliness was turned in me into corruption.” I also like verse 8 in the New English Bible: “My strength left me; I became a sorry figure of a man.” The ESV reads: “My radiant appearance was fearfully changed.”

As we saw before, Daniel again appears to faint dead away as a result of the vision, and specifically in verse 9 as a result of hearing the voice, which verse 6 tells us was like “the voice of a multitude.”

Remember the description we read from Revelation 1 of John’s vision of Christ? How did John react to seeing that vision? Very similar to how Daniel reacted here.

Revelation 1:17 — When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

I think Daniel and John were both seeing Jesus -- Daniel over 500 years before Christ came to this world, and John 40 years after Jesus ascended from this world, having accomplished all that he came to do.

DANIEL 10:10-12

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. 11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

Who lifts Daniel up in verse 10?

This person in verse 10 is not the same person we saw in verses 5-6. Why?

Because verses 5-6 was a vision as verses 7-8 tell us three times. Daniel faints as a result of the vision, and in verse 10 someone physically touches him and physically sets him upon his knees. And verse 11 tells us this person was sent to Daniel.

In short, verses 10-12 do not sound like a vision, but rather what happened is that Daniel saw Jesus in a vision in verses 5-6, and Daniel met an angel in person in verses 10-12.

Again, Daniel is said to be greatly beloved by God in verse 11. A literal translation is “man of preciousness.”

Why were Daniel’s prayers so effective? What was his secret? Verse 12 says that Daniel set his mind to understand, and he humbled himself before God. And so, the angel says, God heard his words.

James 4:6 — God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

It is a sad fact that although God is always able to hear us, sometimes God 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; 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.

That was not Daniel's problem! When Daniel prayed, angels were dispatched!

DANIEL 10:13-14

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

One commentary described these verses well when it said: "One of the strangest accounts in the Bible is now unfolded."

Several questions arise immediately from verse 13:

- Who is speaking? That is, who is the "me" in verse 13?
- What and who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia?
- What happened during those 21 days?
- Who is Michael (that one is easy) and what did he do to help?
- Who are the kings of Persia?
- When are the "latter days"?

Who is speaking?

We have already answered this one. I think it must be an angel, and I do not think it is Jesus (even though I think Daniel saw Jesus in verses 5-6) because of what we will soon learn about this speaker.

In short, I think the speaker is a powerful angel, but not an all-powerful angel because (a) there are no all-powerful angels, and (b) verse 13 confirms that this angel is not all-powerful.

What and who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia?

Let's start with **what** is the prince of Persia?

I think we can safely conclude that this prince of Persia was not just a man.

What ordinary man could withstand an angel sent on a mission from God and cause Michael to have to come to that angel's rescue? Almost all commentaries agree that the prince of Persia was an angel, and I think that is correct.

Was the prince of Persia a good angel or a fallen angel?

Again, most commentaries also agree on this point — this prince of Persia withstood and delayed an angelic messenger sent from God to Daniel, which strongly suggests that this prince was an evil angel.

What do we mean by a fallen angel? Jude answers that question.

Jude 1:6 — And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

We don't know too much about the fallen angels, but we certainly know they exist.

Why is this fallen angel called the prince of the kingdom of Persia?

I think what we are seeing here is the organization of Satan's kingdom. Again, we are seeing only a glimpse of it, but I think that is what we are seeing. This prince of Persia is apparently the fallen angel assigned to use Persia however possible in fighting the will of God.

I think Jesus also gives us a glimpse of that organization.

John 12:31 — Now is the judgment of this world: now shall **the prince of this world** be cast out.

John 14:30 — For **the prince of this world** cometh, and hath nothing in me.

John 16:11 — Of judgment, because **the prince of this world** is judged.

And, I think, Paul also gave us a glimpse of that organization.

2 Corinthians 4:4 — In whom **the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

This prince of Persia in Daniel 10:13 was most likely a servant of the prince of this world, who is Satan. It is even possible that the prince of Persia was Satan himself. We can't say for sure.

Are we surprised to learn that Satan is organized? I hope not. I hope we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11).

We would be foolish to think that Satan is not organized in his fight against God and against us, the people of God. Satan has a plan, and Satan is working to carry out that plan. And that was particularly true at this time when the plan of God was beginning to unfold as God was preparing the world for the coming of Christ.

Any time we find ourselves studying angels and demons, it is likely wise to recall what C. S. Lewis said on the subject of demons:

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.

And I think that warning applies both to good angels and fallen angels. We should not become preoccupied with them. This was a problem in the first century with the Gnostics, and it remains a problem today with many.

God has told us what we need to know about angels, and there is much that we have not been told.

But as we read these verses in Daniel and get a glimpse of the unseen world, it causes some to be anxious and fearful about the role of Satan in the world. So let's take a short detour and look at that issue.

How does Satan work in the world? How does Satan work in the world today?

Those are different questions with different answers. Why? Because what we see in the Bible is that Satan has worked differently in the world at different times throughout history.

And that should not surprise us because God has also worked differently in the world at different times in history.

Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

And I think the Bible shows us that God has placed different limits on what Satan can do in this world at different times.

We see that in the book of Job, for example, when God limits what Satan can do to Job. And I think we see that with demon possession in the first century, which we saw in Zechariah 13:2 was something that would pass away in the first century. There is no demon possession today.

So how does Satan work in the world today? I think we can make two errors in answering that question. It is an error to underestimate Satan's power, and it is also an error to overestimate Satan's power.

When I am asked how Satan works in the world today, I always respond with a question of my own: how does God work in the world today?

Why do I ask that question? Because perhaps if we can explain how God is at work in this world today it will help us understand how Satan is at work in this world today fighting the work of God and God's people.

And that, I think, is an especially good approach today when the age of miracles is over.

We know that the age of miracles came to an end after their purpose was accomplished and after God's word was fully revealed (1 Corinthians 13:10, Ephesians 4:13, Mark 16:20, Hebrews 2:4).

We know both from the Bible and from our own experience that the miracles we see in the New Testament are not being performed today. And that is not due to a lack of faith as the TV preachers tell us. In fact, the lack of faith is shown by those who seek a sign beyond the sign of Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 16:4).

So how is God at work today? We know at least three answers to that question from the Bible. God works in this world today through his providence (keeping the earth and the universe going and caring for his creation), through his people (the church, the body of his Son), and through his word (as his word is proclaimed and lived).

Does the work of God today involve miracles? Yes and no. No, in the sense we have already discussed — the age of miracles is over. But yes, in the sense that the creation of the universe was a miracle, the establishment of the church occurred with miracles, and the transmission of God's inspired word was a miracle.

But here is the main point — those miracles occurred long ago, but their effects continue to this day. Those miracles from long ago produced ripples that are still working today.

What we sometimes call the miracle of birth is a miracle that happened when God created us. And God's word is just as powerful and effective today as it was when the human writers of that word miraculously received and wrote down the words of God.

Each time God's word is proclaimed, we see God at work in this world through the word that he miraculously provided long ago. Each time we are at work in this world as the body of Christ, God is at work in this world through the church that he miraculously established long ago and through Christ who miraculously rose from that tomb long ago.

What about Satan?

Don't we see Satan working in the world in a similar way? Don't we see Satan at work today through his own people? Don't we see Satan at work today through the confusion that was sown by him long ago? Don't we see Satan at work today from the ripples of what he did in the Garden?

In short, if God can be at work today through his people, then why can't Satan be at work today through his own people?

If God can be at work today through his word, then why can't Satan be at work today through the confusion he and his people have sown about that same word?

And yes, Satan is at work today, and yes Satan is powerful, but no, we don't need to worry that Satan will override our free will and force us to sin.

We know that is not possible. God has given us each free will, and that free will choice to obey him or reject his is at the heart of the gospel call.

The gospel is something that we obey (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17, Romans 10:16), and the gospel is for all (Mark 16:15). We all have the free will capability to obey it or reject it. Neither God nor Satan overrides our free will. Temptation appeals to our own desires (James 1:14), and there is always a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

But what is Satan doing today? I think the answer is that Satan is doing what he has always been doing using whatever tools are at his disposal, and I think we can see evidence of Satan's work all around us today.

- Satan is fighting against the work of Jesus (Genesis 3:15)
- Satan is tempting people to evil (Luke 4:13)
- Satan is using his power of death (Hebrews 2:14)
- Satan is blinding people's minds (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- Satan is contradicting God's word (Genesis 3:4)
- Satan is inciting disobedience (1 Chronicles 21:1)
- Satan is accusing the people of God (Revelation 12:10)
- Satan is sowing weeds (Matthew 13:39)
- Satan is lying (John 8:44)
- Satan is filling hearts with evil (Acts 5:3)

- Satan is harassing God's people (2 Corinthians 12:7)
- Satan is working in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2)
- Satan is hindering the spread of the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:18)
- Satan is devouring people (1 Peter 5:8)
- Satan is throwing God's people into prison (Revelation 2:10)
- Satan is looking for opportunities (Ephesians 4:27)
- Satan is scheming against God's people (Ephesians 6:11)

But that's not Satan today, some might say. That's evil people. That's Hollywood. That's false teachers. Exactly! That is how Satan works!

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.**

So, yes, Satan is organized. And yes, Satan is at work, as he has always been. But no, Satan is not all-powerful. And no, Satan cannot override our free will. We can resist him (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9), and God promises that Satan will flee from us.

And the best news of all? Satan has already been defeated. That happened at the cross.

John 12:31 — Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Hebrews 2:14 — Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

1 John 3:8 — The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

This world will not end with some cataclysmic battle between good and evil. That battle was fought long ago, and Satan lost. There will be no battle at the end of the world, but only judgment and the bending of knees.

Next question: What happened during those 21 days?

We know from verse 12 that Daniel's prayers were heard from the very first day, but here in verse 13 we learn that it took 21 days for the answer from God to arrive.

What happened? Why the delay? The speaker in verse 13 says that "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days." We are not told anything more. (I really wish Daniel had asked that question!)

We do know the significant role that Persia played in the plan of God, and Satan must also have known this.

Why? Because one thing we know about Satan is that he is a Bible scholar! We see that in Matthew 4, but I think we also see that here.

Cyrus had been mentioned by name in Isaiah over 100 years before Cyrus was even born! Satan knew that Persia was important to God, and so Satan set his sights on Persia, and he appears to have placed a powerful fallen angel in Persia to thwart God's plans.

Who is Michael, and what did he do to help?

In the KJV, verse 13 says "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." A better translation is "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia." That is, the final clause is describing what was going on before Michael arrived, not after Michael arrived.

Michael, of course, is also an angel, and we will see him again in Daniel 10:21 and Daniel 12:1.

Here Michael is called one of the chief princes. In Jude 9, Michael is called an archangel, and Michael also makes an appearance in Revelation, where again he is shown as a leader of other angels.

Revelation 12:7 — And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

One conclusion we can draw here is that apparently there is a hierarchy of angels in which Michael occupies a very high position. The word archangel in Jude 9 means

first or chief angel. And I think we have already seen in these verses a hierarchy among the fallen angels as well.

We aren't told what Michael did to help, but he seems to have had no trouble with the prince of Persia. That the speaker in verse 13 needed help from Michael is further and absolute confirmation that the speaker in verse 13 is not Jesus.

These verses raise all sorts of questions that we can't answer, but they hint at great unseen events involving God's people.

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. What would we see if our eyes were likewise opened?

We don't know, and we need to be careful with speculation. There is much that God has not revealed to us on this subject, and when we reach that wall, it is best that we not try to go much further.

One final point here is that anyone looking at the world at this time would have seen Persia as powerful and significant and the Jews as powerless and insignificant — their temple destroyed, their land desolate, and their people captive in Babylon.

But was that the case in the *spiritual* realm? No, in that realm, the Jews had a powerful archangel on their side!

If we are ever tempted to see ourselves as insignificant, we need to look at ourselves with spiritual eyes — we need to see ourselves as we appear to God in the spiritual realm. And God has told us what we look like to him! Read Revelation 21, for example.

Who are the kings of Persia in verse 13?

The kings of Persia mentioned here are most likely the actual rulers of Persia. The other option is that these kings of Persia are also fallen angels working against God, but I favor the simpler explanation.

So which kings are they?

They could just be the rulers of Persia, including the king himself (Cyrus) along with others that Cyrus had placed in positions of power. This is the most likely explanation if Darius and Cyrus were the same person as we have suggested might be the case.

But there is an intriguing possibility here — these kings (plural) of Persia could be Darius and Cyrus, and verse 13 could be confirmation of the view that Darius was the last king of the Medes, that Cyrus was the first king of Medo-Persia, and that for a time they both ruled as co-regents, or possibly as king and prince. I lean toward this explanation here just as I leaned toward this view of Cyrus and Darius earlier.

Why was Satan so interested in Persia?

The short answer is that Satan was interested in Persia because God was interested in Persia. Satan constantly seeks to thwart God's plans.

Another likely reason why Satan was focused on Persia was that Persia was not wholly evil and was not wholly opposed to God's plans. In fact, it was Persian rulers, beginning with Cyrus, who permitted the three returns we talked about earlier. And it was a Persian ruler who was married to Queen Esther and who eventually spared God's people from destruction. In short, Satan had some ground to make up when it came to Persia!

Satan, no doubt, was very interested in preventing or hindering those returns and rebuilding activities — and we see his efforts not only here with Persia but also with the Samaritans causing trouble and with some of the Jews themselves who quickly fell away after their return.

Satan's target has always been where God's people dwell — in the garden in Genesis, in Israel, in Jerusalem, away in exile, during the returns, and now in the church. Wherever the people of God are — that is where you will always find Satan hard at work.

When are the "latter days" mentioned in verse 14?

The phrase “latter days” could simply mean “later,” or it could point to the latter days of the Jewish age, which fits the context of the closing verses of Chapter 9 better.

Even though there are a few years between Daniel 9 and Daniel 10, the context is the same. They are both focused on Daniel’s own people, the Jews (Daniel 10:14 and Daniel 9:24).

Many commentators assume that the “latter days” must always refer to the end of the world, but we know that is not true.

In Acts 2:17, Peter quotes the prophet Joel about something that was to occur in the last days. Was that the end of the world? We know it was not because Peter tells us in the prior verse that Joel was pointing to that very day in Acts 2 when the church was established. “But **this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.**”

The last days, the latter days, and the end. We cannot create a blanket rule that any of these phrases always means the end of the world. Why? Because we have examples of each of those phrases in the Bible that we know are not the end of the world. (In a prior lesson we looked at numerous such examples.)

So how do we know what those phrases refer to when we find them in the Bible? The context! We look at how they are used, and we look at what they are describing.

But what about here? Could the latter days in verse 14 refer to the end of the world? The answer is no. It could not. Why?

Because if we take the latter days here to mean the end of the world, then we have created a contradiction between these verses and other verses that we find in New Testament such as in Romans 10. And so, logically, if our view of Daniel 10 creates a contradiction with Romans 10, then our view of either Daniel 10 or Romans 10 must be wrong. And if Romans 10 is easy to understand, then the most likely source of our error is with the more difficult verse in Daniel 10. That is simply heremenu-tics 101.

So what is the contradiction here if we take “latter days” to be the end of the world?

Simple. Verse 14 states very clearly that this vision concerns the role of the Jews in the latter days. (“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.”) We know what befell the Jews in the first century — their temple and their city were destroyed just as Jesus had said would happen in Matthew 24, and it happened during their lifetimes just as Jesus said in Matthew 24:34.

But what about the end of the world? Is there something special that will befall the Jews at the end of the world? Is there some special plan for them as many today teach? No. There is not.

Sadly, there was a special plan for the Jews in the first century, but it was not a different gospel. Instead it was this prophecy from Daniel and elsewhere regarding those who rejected the gospel and who cut off the Messiah. And that special plan ended with the destruction of their city and temple in AD 70.

Does God have a plan for the Jews today? Yes, he does. God has a wonderful plan for the salvation of the Jews today, but it is the same wonderful plan that God has for the salvation of the Gentiles. There is one and only one gospel (Galatians 1:7). And there are not separate plans for Jew and Greek.

Romans 10:12 — For there is **no difference** between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Now there is a verses that is hard to misunderstand! No difference!

All of the promises to the Jews were fulfilled in Christ. What remains to be fulfilled for the Jews that is peculiar to them? Nothing.

Acts 13:32-33 — And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, **God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again**; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

Jeremiah 33:14-16 — Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

Notice the time frame in that prophecy from Jeremiah. When would all Israel be saved? When God causes the righteous branch to grow up among them — that is, in the first century.

Does God have a plan for the Jews today? Yes. Does God have a plan for the Jews today that is different from his plan for Gentiles? Absolutely not! There is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the church (Romans 10:12).

Finally in verse 14 Daniel is told that this vision is for many days. What does that mean?

We know what it means. Daniel received this vision in 535 BC, and what befell his people occurred in AD 70. So the “many days” in verse 14 was about 600 years.

DANIEL 10:15-19

15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

The first thing we likely notice about the closing verses of Chapter 10 (including the two verses we haven't gotten to yet) is that they sound a bit like the opening verses of Chapter 10.

There are many similarities between the first half of Chapter 10 and the second half of Chapter 10.

- Daniel's strength was sapped (twice in 10:8 and twice in 10:16-17).
- Daniel's face was toward the ground (10:9 and 10:15).
- Daniel was roused by an angel (10:10 and 10:18).
- Daniel was called greatly beloved (10:10 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told not to fear (10:12 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told why the angel had come (10:12 and 10:20-21).
- The prince of Persia is mentioned (10:13 and 10:20).

Why did two such similar events occur back to back? We aren't told, and there are some differences, but we may be seeing a very subtle theme here involving the number two.

Have you noticed how often the number two rises to the surface in the book of Daniel? How many people in this book have two names? How many languages are used in this book? (Hebrew and Aramaic) How many kings do we see that come in pairs? (Nabonidus and Beleshazzar, Cyrus and Darius)

To what could this be pointing? The two covenants perhaps? Doesn't this book tell us a great deal about the transition between the two covenants? It is also a very interesting study to investigate how often the number two appears just below the surface in the book of Revelation.

Daniel is unable to speak until "one like the similitude of the sons of men" touches his lips in verse 16. In verse 18, Daniel is touched by "one like the appearance of a man."

Most likely these individuals are angels, and most likely they are the same angel — but we are not told that with certainty. (We will see the same angel as before speaking again later in verse 20.)

What we do know with certainty is that Daniel seems to have been completely overwhelmed by what was happening to him in this chapter — and very understandably so when we step back and look at what happened to him here. He has certainly had an encounter with an angel, and possibly with more than one, and he began the chapter by having a vision of Christ.

Daniel is strengthened by the angel in these verses, and for good reason. There is bad news ahead! His people are going to undergo serious trials. Daniel has already been shown that, but soon he will learn more about those trials that lie ahead.

DANIEL 10:20-21

20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

The question here in verse 20 is rhetorical. The angel had already answered it in verse 14 when he told Daniel that he had come to help Daniel understand what would befall his people in the latter days.

Who is the prince of Grecia? I think we can repeat what we said about the prince of Persia, just with another earthly kingdom in place of Persia.

But this raises a question: Does every nation have its own fallen angel (or its own good angel, perhaps)?

We know from Daniel 10 that at least Persia and Greece had fallen angels assigned to them by Satan, and we know later from Daniel 12 that Israel had the archangel Michael sent by God.

But was that true of every nation? Is that true of every nation?

Some point to Deuteronomy 32:8 to argue that every nation has its own angel from God.

Deuteronomy 32:8 — When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

That last phrase, “the children of Israel,” in the KJV is better translated “the sons of God,” and it is the same phrase that we find in Job.

Job 1:6 — Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

The Living Bible (which I do not recommend for serious Bible study or much else) has the following (bad) paraphrase:

When God divided up the world among the nations, He gave each of them a supervising angel!

Whatever that is, it is most certainly not a translation! But it does give an idea of what some believe is being taught there.

Others also point to Isaiah 24 to argue for a linkage between kings on earth and angelic beings.

Isaiah 24:21 — And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

In short, we don’t know. All we know is that Persia and Greece had their own fallen angels during the days of Daniel.

And 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 war was never in doubt. God had already told Daniel how the war was going to end!

Daniel was very important to God. How do we know that? Because God’s dealings with the powers of the world were seemingly put on hold for a moment so that this angel could answer Daniel’s prayer.

Verse 21 says that the angel would show Daniel “that which is noted in the scripture of truth.” That is a beautiful description of God’s word.

But what Scriptures are being discussed here? It could be Jeremiah, which we saw Daniel studying in the previous chapter, but it could also be the book of Daniel itself

— either the part that Daniel had already received or the part he was about to receive.

The scripture of truth shows God's control and knowledge of the future, and the future that God is about to tell Daniel about is so certain that it is already written down. It is as if it had already happened.

Should Daniel have been worried when he heard the end of verse 21? It looks as if this angel and Michael were outnumbered. It looks like they were contending alone against the demonic powers of Persia and Greece. Were they alone?

And was Daniel alone? He may have felt that way at times. He had been living in exile since he was a teenager, and now he was in his eighties. And he lived much of his life in the King's court rather than among his own people. And many of his people had returned home from exile, but not him. Was Daniel alone?

No one is alone or outnumbered when God is on his side.

Romans 8:31 — What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

When I teach Revelation I always end by reading Romans 8:31-39, because in my opinion nothing better captures the central theme of that difficult book.

I think the same can be said about the book of Daniel. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

And God is with us! Amen!

Yes, there will be conflict. Yes, we are at war. But no, we are not alone. And that is the message of Chapter 10.

Daniel 11 Introduction

We have to admit right from the start that Daniel 11 is an unusual chapter, but we should not overstate the point. Here is an example of one commentator who did just that:

If this chapter were indeed the utterance of a prophet in the Babylonian Exile, nearly four hundred years before the events — events of which many

are of small comparative importance in the world's history — which are here so enigmatically and yet so minutely depicted, the revelation would be the most unique and perplexing in the whole Scriptures. It would represent a sudden and total departure from every method of God's providence and of God's manifestation of His will to the mind of the prophets. It would stand absolutely and abnormally alone as an abandonment of the limitations of all else which has ever been foretold.

That view of Daniel 11 is completely wrong. Yes, Daniel 11 is unusual, but, no, Daniel 11 is not out of place in the Bible.

The first verse of Hebrews tells us that “God ... at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.” So even if Daniel 11 were unique in Scripture, that would prove nothing. But Daniel 11 is not unique in the Bible — we see very detailed prophecies elsewhere in the Bible. Here is how another commentator described just one example:

The prophecy concerning the conquest of Babylon, Jeremiah 50 and 51, offers such exact details that history scarcely can present anything more minute — the city is to be captured by the Medes and the peoples allied with them — to be exact, by the strategy of laying bare of the bed of the Euphrates River (50:38; 51:32, 36) — during the course of a night where all within the city lie sodden with drink (51:39, 57) — the return of the Israelites to their fatherland shall come as a result of the conquest of the city — the conquest of this city marks the beginning of the utter desolation and the virtual disappearance of it.

We could also add Zechariah 9 about Alexander the Great, as well as Isaiah 13, Isaiah 14, and Isaiah 21.

The liberal critics' view of Daniel 11 is just another example of how you can't win with them no matter what you do.

If Daniel 11 had been some general statement that wars would come somewhere sometime, then the liberals would have complained that such general language is not really a prophecy.

But when Daniel 11 does just the opposite by providing very detailed descriptions of future events and wars, the liberals likewise complain that such detailed prophecies are not really prophecies.

Apparently, just like Goldilocks, the liberal critics are waiting for a prophecy that is just right!

Let's consider another question about this strange chapter -- why do we have it? Why did God give us Daniel 11?

Why did God give us such a detailed glimpse of the history between Daniel's day and the first century? And why do those details include big events (such as a famous battle seen by everyone as a major turning point in history) along with seemingly minor events by comparison (such as a divorce or a particular tax collector)?

To answer that question, I think all we need to do is ask another question — what is the theme of the book of Daniel? What key theme have we seen chapter after chapter and event after event in this book? GOD IS IN CHARGE!

Yes, we have free will, but we are not God. There is one God, and he is in charge. And nowhere was that more evident than when it came to God's eternal kingdom and the coming of his Son into this world at the perfect time and in the perfect cradle to usher in his eternal kingdom.

No detail was too small when it came to making sure that everything was perfect for Jesus' entrance into this world and for the subsequent spread of the gospel by which God would bless the entire world through Christ.

God is in charge! That is the message of Daniel, and that is the message of Daniel 11! In fact, that I believe is why we have Daniel 11!

So, yes, we need to work our way through Daniel 11 verse by verse, examining each and every detail. But we also need to make sure we stand back and get the big picture message of Daniel 11 because it is that big picture message that would have been important to Daniel, who received these remarkable prophecies before they were fulfilled, very unlike those of us today who are studying them after their fulfillment. We can pick up a history book and compare it with Daniel 11. Daniel was not able to do that.

But were all of these detailed events necessary for God to bring about his plans to bless the world through Christ in the first century? Is the extreme detail we see here a fair complaint from the liberal crowd? No, it is not.

That we can't see why a particular detail was important or necessary does not mean that it was not important or necessary. I am reminded of all the intricate details given in the old law about the tabernacle and the priestly vestments and activities. For some of them, we might have trouble explaining why this detail or that detail was so important. The short answer, of course, is that it was important because God commanded it. But the book of Hebrews gives us a longer answer.

Hebrews 8:5 — Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Hebrews 8:5 tells us that the detailed pattern for the tabernacle was a shadow of heavenly things; that is, Moses was copying a heavenly reality that he could not see. God cares about the details, and so should we!

We have already seen in this book of Daniel a spiritual war that is related to the activities on earth. Perhaps these details are likewise related to a spiritual reality that we cannot see.

And, as one commentator noted, there may be another reason why we see so many details (some seemingly minor) in this prophecy:

There is another deeper reason why such details as these are worthy of the work of the Spirit of prophecy, and that is that what is foretold here is in reality, with minor variations, the pattern into which all history falls. Is there not an appalling sameness about this business of leagues and pacts between rival nations, of disagreements, of wars, of alliances, of political marriages, of recriminations, of treachery, of temporary ascendancy, of defeat and utter downfall, of recovery through some aggressive leader; and then the same thing all over again with a slightly different sequence of events? From this point of view there is a drab sameness about history which allows us to say that, in addition to being a prophecy of a particular period of Syrian and Egyptian history, this may be regarded as a panoramic view of all history

So were all of these events in Daniel 11 preordained before the creation of the world as part of an eternal decree of God so that God here is just reporting to us what will happen — or instead is God telling us what he is going to cause to happen as this history unfolds? That is a very complicated question, but I favor the latter view.

If God wants to show us that he is the one in charge, what makes more sense? That God will just report history to us from the vantage point of a passive observer who is just in a position to see more than we can — or that God will tell us what he will do before the fact and that we can then see God actively doing those things? Which of those options better establishes that God is in charge?

Isaiah 46:11 — Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

That one verse may be the best description in the Bible about how prophecy works in general and how Daniel 11 works in particular.

As we will see, the focus of Daniel 11 is the history of the Jews in the latter days, where the latter days refers to the end of the Jewish age, which occurred with finality in the first century with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The focus in Daniel 11 is not the end of the world, and likewise the focus is not the many other nations that are mentioned. These other nations are important only with regard to how they are involved with the Jews.

Throughout Daniel 11 we will repeatedly see the king of the north and the king of the south. The names of the kings will change as the history unfolds, but for the most part north is Syria (and later, Rome) and south is Egypt — with the people of God sandwiched in between those two warring sides. The focus is not on the two sides of the vice but is rather on what is inside the vice, which is Israel. When we see the king of the north, we should ask north of what? When we see the king of the south, we should ask south of what? God's people were in between.

The prophecies in this chapter are some of the most detailed found anywhere in the Bible, and my view is not the only option. In fact, my view has changed a bit over the 30 years I have been teaching this book. But with that said, there are some thing about this chapter that we should not give on -- in particular, this is not a chapter

about the end of the world and the so called Antichrist. That view violates many Scriptures as we have already seen, and it also violates the context and the time frame that we will see in this chapter.

DANIEL 11:1

I Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

This verse really belongs at the end of Chapter 10, or perhaps, as some suggest, Daniel 11 should really have begun back in Daniel 10:20.

What can we say about the timing of these chapters?

Chapter 10, as we recall, was dated in the third year of Cyrus, and here we see that Chapter 11 begins with a reference to the first year of Darius.

We won't repeat all we have said about Cyrus and Darius, but we do know that the years of their reign over Babylon coincide, with the first year being 539 BC and the third year being 536 BC.

So is Daniel receiving this vision in 539? And if, so why did Chapter 10 jump ahead three years only to now jump back?

I think the solution is to read Daniel 10:21 and Daniel 11:1 back to back.

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. Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

I think what verse 1 is telling us is that this angel had been confirming and strengthening Michael since the first year of Darius -- that is, since the Persians had been in power over Babylon and over God's people.

Most commentaries (I think, properly) treat Daniel 10-12 as a unit, and I think the better view is that all of these closing visions were received by Daniel in 536 BC, the third year of Darius.

One thing we see very clearly in Daniel 10-12 is that the true focus of world history is the people of God. That is the focus as far as God is concerned, and so, as I said, that is the true focus. And it must be our focus. It is certainly Satan's focus. We see that here.

Chapter 10 tells us that Satan was actively seeking to destroy the Jews so that God's plan could not proceed. How can God succeed if Satan destroys the people of God or causes them to turn from God? Do we think Satan's game plan has changed? Do we think he is any less interested in destroying us than he was in destroying the Jews?

About 50 years after this vision, during the reign of Xerxes, Haman received permission 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 looked earlier at the outcome of that attempt. In each case, we can only speculate about the spiritual battles that were occurring behind the scenes, as we saw in Daniel 10.

Does the world believe today that we in the church are the true focus of world history? No, the world certainly does not believe that. But did anyone in the world of 536 BC believe that the Jews were the true focus of world history over the Persians and the other great powers of the time? No, they did not. But in each case, the world was wrong. The people of God are and have always been the true focus of world history.

We are why God created the world. We are why God sustains the world. We are why God will one day destroy this world. We are why God was at this time moving all the pieces into place so that he could bless the world through Jesus.

DANIEL 11:2

2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his

**riches he shall stir up all against the realm
of Grecia.**

When I prepare a witness for deposition, one of the first things I sometimes have to do is to get the witness to stop saying, “well, to tell you the truth!” Why do I dislike that phrase so much? Because it might suggest that the witness is not telling the truth at other times!

Is that what is happening here when the angel begins by saying, “And now will I shew thee the truth”? No, not at all. The reference to the truth here in Daniel 11:1 is a reference back to the “scripture of truth” at the end of Chapter 10. The angel is about to tell Daniel how history will unfold over the next few centuries, and the angel is in verse 2 telling Daniel the source of that knowledge — it is the truth from God as revealed in the scripture of truth!

The current king on the throne when this vision was received was Cyrus. Daniel learns in verse 2 that three more kings of Persia would follow Cyrus. The angel is not saying that only three kings would follow Cyrus because we also a fourth king in verse 2. Who were these three kings?

The three kings that followed Cyrus were Cambyses (Cyrus’ elder son, who began to reign in 529 BC and who conquered Egypt in 525), Gaumata or Pseudo-Smerdis (the impostor who passed himself off as Cyrus’ younger son, Smerdis, and who came to the throne in 522 BC), and Darius I Hystaspis (the cousin of Cyrus who killed the impostor and took the throne in 521 BC). Darius I is mentioned in Ezra 4:5, and it was during his reign that the temple was completed in 515 and Zechariah and Haggai preached in 520.

The fourth king after Cyrus was Xerxes (Darius’ son) who reigned from 486 to 465 BC. This king is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther, and Esther 1:4 talks about the “riches of his glorious kingdom.”

Xerxes invaded Greece with a huge army that he spent four years gathering, and he was very successful until his navy was defeated by a united Greek fleet at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. He retreated to Asia, and his remaining forces in Greece were completely defeated the next year at the Battle of Plataea.

Nothing is said here about the outcome of the conflict with Greece, but verse 3 will start talking about the Greeks — so it is not hard to figure out that Xerxes would not do very well!

One text has noted:

A number of historians believe that a Persian victory would have hamstrung the development of Ancient Greece, and by extension western civilization, and this has led them to claim that Salamis is one of the most significant battles in human history.

The mighty Persians were defeated by a much smaller Greek force. Who could have foreseen such a thing? God told Daniel about it long before it happened, and we know the importance of the Greek culture and language to the plan of God. All that remained was to add Roman peace to Greek culture — and we will see that happen before we get to the end of this chapter.

Now before we move on to verse 3, let's pause and consider just how shocking these opening verses must have been to Daniel.

What if I told you that I had been visited by an angel and that he had revealed to me the history of the United States from now until it was defeated and replaced by another nation, and that I had written down everything that the angel had told me about what would happen with the United States from now until when the U.S. came to an end. And one more thing — what if I told you I had written it all down on the back of a Post It note!

Likely the most shocking thing in those statements would be the last one! That the remaining years of U.S. history could be written down on a small slip of paper! That is what Daniel is hearing in these verses about mighty Persia!

You mean to say the remaining history of Persia (as far as God was concerned) takes up all of one verse! Yes, that is what the angel is saying, and that would have been shocking, not only to Daniel, but to anyone else who heard it at this time.

DANIEL 11:3

3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

Most of the kings in this chapter are called either the king of the north or the king of the south. This king in verse 3 is different — he is just called a mighty king. (We will see another example in verse 36.)

Who is this mighty king? The Hebrew in verse 3 literally reads “a king, a hero.” Who is this hero?

All agree that the mighty king in verse 3 is Alexander the Great who defeated the Persians in 331 BC.

Alexander died in 323 BC at the age of 33, and the phrase “shall stand up” in verse 3 emphasizes the brevity of his reign. It was like someone standing up for a moment and then sitting back down.

And Alexander was known for not listening to the advice of others, but rather he did according to his own will as verse 3 tells us.

Before we move on, let’s note something important about the transition from verse 2 to verse 3.

Not only have we moved from Persia to Greece, but we have skipped over six Persian kings and 134 years. And notice that this skip in time occurs here without any warning. We need to remain on the lookout for other such jumps in time in this chapter.

How did we know about the jump here? It would have been difficult for Daniel to know about, but it is not difficult for us. Why? Because we can pick up a history book and compare these prophecies with what actually happened. And when we make that comparison, this forward jump in time becomes evident.

Should these jumps concern us? Of course not. Show me any history book that does not also make jumps in time, some of which being unannounced. And we need to

keep in mind that Daniel 11 is not a history book but is instead a prophecy focused on God's people. That focus is what is driving the narrative, and when things start happening that are less related to God's people, the text does what we would expect it to do — it jumps over those events to get back to the focus of the prophecy.

Why the jump here? There wasn't much to say about Persia after the defeat of Xerxes, and on that point the book of Daniel and historians are in agreement.

After Xerxes, on author notes that "the Persian glory went on the decline so rapidly that hardly one of the remaining kings is worthy of notice." Persia was politically dead after Xerxes was defeated by the Greeks in the battle of Salamis.

This jump in time is also a reminder to us that when God judges a nation, he moves on to other nations, and while that earlier nation may linger on for a while, its future has been determined, and as far as God is concerned it has already come to an end. That fact should be a sobering reminder to any modern day nation that has been greatly blessed by God but that has cast God's word behind its back.

DANIEL 11:4

4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

Verse 4 literally begins, "while he is still rising." That is, Alexander is just standing up when he is broken, which again emphasizes his early death and his brief reign. And the standing up in verse 4 also I think tells us that Alexander had not weakened or lost power when he died, but instead he died at the height of his power.

But powerful or not, Alexander died, and his kingdom was broken and divided into four pieces.

Alexander conquered Persia in 331, but he died in 323, leaving his mentally challenged half-brother Philip III and his son Alexander IV (by his Persian princess wife Roxana) in charge. Philip III was murdered in 317, and Alexander IV was murdered

in 310. Alexander's kingdom did not go to his posterity and it did not remain unified, but instead it was divided up among his four leading generals: Lysimachus, Antipater (and his son Cassander), Seleucus I Nicator (Victor), and Ptolemy I Soter (Savior). (We will get some of these details on how this would occur in the verses that follow.)

As for the accuracy of this prophecy, one commentary noted:

Even after the events have taken place, it is hardly possible to give a more accurate description of what actually happened to this greatest of all the empires up to that time.

But, of course, these verses were written before the events took place!

Before we move to verse 5, let's pause and note something about the numbers we have seen, and particularly the number four, which was associated with Persia in verse 2 and which is associated with Greece here in verse 4.

We know that the number four in apocalyptic language often depicts the earthly powers arrayed against God, but this language is not apocalyptic but rather is a straightforward prophetic narrative.

Does that mean the number four is not being used figuratively here? No, all it means is that the number four is not being used only figuratively here. The number four here is certainly literal — there were literally four kings after Cyrus, and there were literally four generals who took Alexander's kingdom.

But why were there four? Who chose that number, and why do we see that number associated with Persia and Greece in the opening verses? God chose the number, and I think God chose the number for a reason. And I think this is further evidence that God is telling Daniel here what God is going to do rather than simply reporting to Daniel how history will unfold from the vantage point of one who can see into the future. Again, I am reminded of Isaiah 46.

Isaiah 46:11 — Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

DANIEL 11:5

**5 And the king of the south shall be strong,
and one of his princes; and he shall be strong
above him, and have dominion; his dominion
shall be a great dominion.**

Now we start getting some of the details about how Alexander's kingdom was divided into four pieces after his death.

The king of the south is Ptolemy I Soter, one of the four generals we mentioned for the previous verse. He had taken Egypt after Alexander's death. His ambitions extended far beyond Egypt to include Palestine and the rest of Asia, but for most of their history, the domain of the Ptolemies was restricted to Egypt and Cyprus.

Verse 5 also mentions "one of his princes" who would stronger than Ptolemy and have a great dominion.

Before we identify this person, we can already see that something strange is going on here. How can Ptolemy have a prince who is greater than Ptolemy? And how can this prince have a dominion of his own, and a great dominion at that?

This prince in verse 5 is none other than Seleucus I Nicator, another of the four generals we saw in the previous verse. But we are seeing him here before he took a fourth part of Alexander's kingdom. This verse is telling us how that came to be.

What happened is that Seleucus I had been given the province of Babylon in 321, but in 316 another general, Antigonus, seized Babylonia, and so Seleucus fled to Egypt and sought refuge with Ptolemy, becoming one of his commanders.

Ptolemy and Seleucus together defeated Antigonus in Gaza in 312, and Seleucus then returned to Babylon. In 301, at the Battle of Ipsus, Antigonus and his son Demetrius were defeated, and Syria-Palestine came under the control of Seleucus.

Seleucus's kingdom included Babylonia, Syria, and Media, and, according to Arrian, was the largest of all the divisions of the Greek Empire. His empire and authority stretched from India to Phoenicia and was ultimately much greater than that of Ptolemy.

So what do we have then? We have a prince of Ptolemy who becomes stronger than Ptolemy and who has a great dominion, just as Daniel was told would happen.

DANIEL 11:6

6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.

In moving from verse 5 to verse 6, we skip over about 60 years. And while new kings come to the throne, they are still just called the king of the north and the king of the south.

The phrase “in the end of the years” in verse 6 just means “at the end of some number of years” or “after some years.”

After the death of Ptolemy I in 285 BC, his son Ptolemy II Philadelphus (brother loving) fought with the Seleucids until 252 BC when a peace treaty was signed with Antiochus II Theos. This treaty is the joining together that we see in verse 6. Under this treaty, Antiochus II was to marry Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II.

One slight problem with this plan was that Antiochus II was already married to a very influential woman named Laodice. But he solved that problem by divorcing her and banishing her.

BUt when Ptolemy died two years later, Antiochus abandoned his Egyptian wife and took back Laodice. Not being one who was much inclined to forgive and forget, Laodice arranged to have the king assassinated. She also had Berenice and her infant son murdered. Afterward, Laodice took control as queen regent for her own young son, Seleucus II Callinicus (Beautiful Victor).

Some object to the inclusion of “he that begat her” (Berenice’s father, Ptolemy) in the list of those who are given up in verse 6. But the phrase “given up” does not

necessarily mean “killed” (although that is what happened to most of the people “given up” in verse 6). Being “given up” can also just mean “was unsuccessful,” which is certainly true of Ptolemy, who had died and whose plans for unity using his daughter had ended in a complete failure.

DANIEL 11:7-9

7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. 9 So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.

After Ptolemy II, his son, Ptolemy III came to power and marched off to avenge his sister Berenice’s death. Ptolemy III is the “branch from her (Berenice’s) roots” in verse 7.

The king of the north is now Seleucus II Callinicus, the son of Laodice.

Ptolemy III captured the capital city of Antioch and returned to Egypt with the spoil, which included long-lost idols that had been taken by Cambyses in 524 BC.

The return of these idols (along with great wealth that he also brought back) made Ptolemy III very popular with the native Egyptian populace, who named him Euergetes meaning benefactor. (At this time, the Ptolemies were not yet numbered, and so the Greeks differentiated them by these nicknames.)

Syria had suffered a defeat, but verse 9 lets us know it was not permanent.

Verse 9 is better translated, “Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land.” That is, despite the KJV translation, most translations take the subject in verse 9 to be the king of the north mentioned

at the end of verse 8 rather than the king of the south. As one commentary explains, this translation makes more sense grammatically and historically.

This latter king in verse 9 is the Syrian king Seleucus II Callinicus who reigned from 247 to 226 BC. It is known that he did conduct an expedition against Egypt, though without much success. Ptolemy III made a peace treaty with Seleucus II in 240 BC.

Seleucus II died in 226 BC, and Ptolemy III died in 222 BC, and so the king of the south continued more years than the king of the north, as verse 8 tell us.

DANIEL 11:10

10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.

The phrase “his sons” in verse 10 refers to Seleucus II and his two sons, Seleucus III Soter (Savior) and Antiochus III (Antiochus the Great).

Seleucus II was succeeded by his son Seleucus III Soter, who reigned for only three years before being murdered and who was then succeeded by his brother Antiochus III, who had a long reign from 223 to 187, which, along with his military successes, is why he was called Antiochus *the Great*.

Antiochus (the second son to reign) is the “one” who “shall certainly come.”

What about the end of verse 10?

In the south, Ptolemy IV Philopator (father-loving) took the throne but he was not up to the task. Antiochus III took back large tracts of his land, conquered the Egyptians at Sidon, and swept down through Palestine, going far enough south to attack Gaza. Gaza, which is on the doorstep to Egypt, is the fortress mentioned at the end of verse 10.

Antiochus the Great is significant here for two reasons. First, it was under his reign that Palestine finally shifted from Ptolemaic control to Seleucid control. And second, that shift in power set the stage for his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to arrive

and inflict all of the horrors on God's people that we saw back in Chapter 8 and that we will see again here in Chapter 11.

DANIEL 11:11-12

11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it.

The king of the south in verse 11 is Ptolemy IV Philopator, and the king of the north is still Antiochus III.

The pronouns in verses 11 and 12 are a bit confusing, but I think this is the best way to understand them:

“And he (Antiochus III) shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his (Ptolemy IV) hand. And when he (Ptolemy IV) hath taken away the multitude, his heart (Ptolemy IV's heart) shall be lifted up; and he (Ptolemy IV) shall cast down many ten thousands: but he (Ptolemy IV) shall not be strengthened by it.”

What we see in these two verses is the king of the South marching out in a rage against the king of the North, who loses despite having raised a large army.

That is a perfect description of the famous Battle of Raphia, which occurred on June 22, 217 BC.

Raphia was in the most southern part of Palestine. One reason that battle is famous is that it is the “only known battle in which African and Asian elephants were used against each other.”

The Ptolemaic side had the advantage in numbers and won the day.

According to Polybius, Ptolemy had 70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 73 war elephants, while Antiochus had 62,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 elephants. Antiochus retreated to his capital in Antioch after losing 14,000 men.

Ptolemy IV got back all of the territory of Phoenicia and Palestine, but Ptolemy's success did not last very long, which is what we see in the final phrase of verse 12 — “he (Ptolemy IV) shall not be strengthened by it (by winning the Battle of Raphia).”

DANIEL 11:13

13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.

Fifteen years after the Battle of Raphia, Antiochus III (the king of the north in verse 13) showed why he was called “Antiochus the Great.”

Ptolemy IV had died a year earlier in 203 BC, and his young son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (God Manifest), then between four and six years old, became the new king of the south.

Sensing weakness in the south, Antiochus invaded Phoenicia and Palestine, marching all the way to Gaza, which fell in 201 BC.

Ptolemy V was defeated at the Battle of Panium in 200, and Antiochus recaptured the territory that he had lost.

This is where we see a big turning point in history. The Ptolemies lost their dominance, but instead we see a period of Seleucid supremacy.

Ptolemy V is famous today for another reason — he is famous for one of his decrees.

The famous Rosetta Stone, which finally allowed us 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.

DANIEL 11:14

14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.

The king of the south here is still Ptolemy V, the young son of Ptolemy IV.

Agathocles was a chief minister under Ptolemy IV and was also a priest of a Ptolemaic cult that worshipped Alexander the Great. When Ptolemy V died, Agathocles and his allies kept the event secret so they could plunder the royal treasury. They also formed a conspiracy aimed at placing Agathocles on the throne or at least making him regent for the new boy king, Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

In 203/202 BC, the Egyptians and the Greeks of Alexandria rose against Agathocles, who eventually was killed by his friends to avoid an even worse fate.

This insurrection is part of what is described in the first half of verse 14: “And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south,” where the king of the south refers to Agathocles, the regent of young Ptolemy V.

But that word “many” in the first half of verse 14 also likely includes Philip V of Macedon, who was preparing to invade Egypt in 200 BC, and who became an ally of Antiochus the Great.

In short, the king of the south at this time was having lots of problems (in addition to the problem of being about 10 years old).

Things really start to get interesting in the second half of verse 14.

For the first time reference is made to the reaction of Jews, in whose land much of this military activity had been taking place. Verse 14 tells us that some among the Jews would also exalt themselves against the Egyptians, under whose control they had been living.

These “robbers” (better translated “men of violence”) were the pro-Seleucid Jews who rebelled against the Ptolemies.

The vision they were establishing in verse 14 may refer to the very vision that Daniel was now receiving and which at the time of this fulfillment these “men of violence” possessed and could read. That raises all sorts of interesting questions, but the “vision” here could instead just mean that they were inspired by some ideology. We don’t know for sure.

What we do know is that the Ptolemies had placed a corrupt, greedy high priest in Jerusalem, which led some Jews to support the Seleucid side.

These Jewish allies of the Seleucids may have believed that they were helping to fulfil the vision of bringing the temple and city’s desolations to an end, but they backed the wrong side. They had actually invited the help of a dynasty that would eventually defile the temple and city, the very thing they were trying to avoid.

We see here an early example of how closely the fortunes of the Jews were intertwined with those of the warring nations around them, and how soon the Jews could become deeply involved in trouble.

Verse 14 tells us that these Jewish rebels would fall, and that is what happened. The Egyptians, led by General Scopas, punished the Jewish rebels severely until his own defeat by Antiochus the Great at the Battle of Panium.

DANIEL 11:15-16

15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.

In 199 BC, the king of the north (still Antiochus the Great) defeated the Egyptian General Scopas at Panium (near Caesarea Philippi). Scopas then retreated to Sidon

(a fortified or fenced city) on the Phoenician coast. Antiochus's forces pursued him and besieged Sidon. General Scopas surrendered in 198 BC. His "chosen people" in verse 15 is better translated his "best troops."

After a century of Ptolemaic rule, Palestine (the glorious land in verse 16) came under the control of the Seleucids.

When Antiochus the Great entered Jerusalem in 198 BC, he was welcomed as a deliverer and a benefactor. We are told that:

"He released Jerusalem from all taxes for three years, and afterwards from one-third of the taxes. He also sent a large sum of money for the service of the Temple, and released the elders, priests, scribes, and singing men from all taxes for the future."

But the final phrase in verse 16 ("by his hand shall be consumed") is an ominous hint of what was coming. Although Antiochus initially treated the Jews kindly, that would change very soon, particularly when his evil son arrived on the scene.

DANIEL 11:17

17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.

The beginning of verse 17 is better translated, "He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them."

That is, after defeating Scopas, Antiochus had plans to invade Egypt again, but the text does not say that he actually did that, and history agrees. Instead of invading Egypt, Antiochus tried to get his way through an agreement, which in this case was a marriage agreement.

Antiochus' plan was to place the ten year old king Ptolemy V under the influence of Antiochus' daughter Cleopatra I. (This is not the "Elizabeth Taylor" Cleopatra from the movie. That was Cleopatra VII, and we will meet her later in this chapter.)

Antiochus knew that a son of Ptolemy V and his own daughter, Cleopatra I, would be the legal heir to both thrones and would give him a good excuse to interfere in Egypt anytime he wanted to without having to invade it.

But when the marriage finally did take place a few years later, Cleopatra became completely sympathetic to Ptolemy V and Egypt, which greatly disappointed her father. And so, their son, Ptolemy VI Philometor (loving his mother), gave no advantage to Antiochus III.

When Ptolemy V died, Cleopatra I became queen of Egypt, and her death years later put an end to any possibility of Seleucid influence in Egyptian affairs.

DANIEL 11:18

18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.

The “he” in verse 18 is Antiochus the Great.

Soon after his victory over Scopas at Sidon, Antiochus moved against a new front, Pergamum and the Aegean coastline island of Rhodes. This what we see in verse 18: “After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many.” The Rhodians appealed to Rome for help.

Meanwhile, Hannibal (who had been exiled by the Romans) joined forces with Antiochus as a military advisor. The Romans were not happy that Antiochus had given asylum to their enemy and that Antiochus had invaded territory over which Rome exercised some control.

The Roman commander Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus the Great in 190 BC at Magnesium. (This same general had defeated Hannibal in 202 BC.)

This is what we see in the second half of verse 18, which is better translated “but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him.”

And that is what happened because Antiochus was completely humiliated by the Romans.

Antiochus lost most of his land and his army, and his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was taken back to Rome as a hostage of the Roman Republic under the terms of the Treaty of Apamea in 188 BC, which also forced Antiochus to pay heavy tribute to Rome and to give up all of his war elephants.

We don't know whether Antiochus III was more grieved by the loss of his son or his elephants, but had Antiochus IV Epiphanes remained a Roman hostage, history would have been very different, but, as we will see, he did not remain a hostage.

DANIEL 11:19

**19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort
of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall,
and not be found.**

Verse 19 describes the end of Antiochus the Great, and what we find is that Antiochus the Great did not end in greatness.

After his humiliating defeat, Antiochus returned to his country, where he was killed by an angry mob in 187 BC.

In desperate need of money to pay the heavy Roman tribute, Antiochus pillaged the temple of Zeus at Elymais, where he was killed by his own people while they were defending their temple.

As verse 19 tells us, Antiochus the Great turned his face toward a fort of his own land (the temple in Elymais), he stumbled, he fell, and he was not found.

DANIEL 11:20

**20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser
of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but
within few days he shall be destroyed, neither
in anger, nor in battle.**

Antiochus the Great was succeeded by his oldest son, Seleucus IV Philopator (father-loving).

Seleucus IV was not popular with the people because of the heavy burdens he placed on them to pay the Romans the tribute they required.

The “raiser of taxes” in verse 20 refers to Heliodorus, Seleucus’ prime minister, who was tasked with raising the money Seleucus needed to pay Rome.

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.

According to Second Maccabees, the high priest Onias prayed to God, who then sent a horseman assisted by two young men to drive Heliodorus out of the temple.

This scene is the subject of a famous fresco by Raphael in the Vatican, which I saw on a recent visit to Rome (but you had to be a bit of a “Daniel geek” to know what you were looking at!).



Heliodorus went back and, perhaps seeking to gain the throne for himself or possibly working with Antiochus IV, he poisoned the king. Thus, as verse 20 tells us, Seleucus IV did not die in anger or battle.

DANIEL 11:21

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

We now arrive at a major focus of Daniel 11, which is a major focus that we also saw back in Daniel 8. Verses 21–35 are devoted to the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

As we recall, Antiochus IV Epiphanes did his best to completely wipe out the Jewish religion and culture by persecuting the Jews and forcing them to adopt Greek culture.

Let's pause to look at two issues about Antiochus IV.

First, we have been saying that Daniel 11 is showing us what was God was planning to do. Does that mean that this great persecution was part of God's plan?

We might be tempted to reject that notion at once, but maybe we should look a bit closer. As bad as persecution is when it occurs, there are some good things we can say about it.

For one thing, persecution purifies. The great heresies began, not when people faced death by the Romans for being a Christian, but later when it became fashionable to be a Christian. Perhaps God allows persecution at times when it is particularly important for his people to be focused and pure, such as in the infancy of the church under Roman persecution or when his people were close to the time when they would welcome Jesus into the world.

When the angel appeared to Mary in Luke 1:28, and said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women," what if Mary had responded, "Who?" What if there had been no faithful people to welcome Christ? What if there had been no descendants of King David who could be traced or identified?

The persecution we are studying here is a big reason why Mary and Joseph were who they were and what they were in the first century.

A second potential problem we should consider at this point is that it may seem as if this chapter spends a disproportionate amount of time on Antiochus IV. Why is there such a focus here on Antiochus? What was different about him?

The liberal critics say that Daniel spends so much time on Antiochus because that was when the book was written. But, in addition to ignoring the evidence of an early date that we have looked at, that view also ignores the time Daniel spends discussing Nebuchadnezzar who came long before Antiochus and the Roman kings who came long after Antiochus, especially Domitian.

What is it that distinguishes Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus IV, and Domitian from all of the other kings? What distinguishes them is that they each tried to unify their kingdom by imposing by force a particular ideology on everyone in their kingdom.

We saw that back in Chapter 3 with Nebuchadnezzar, and that was also true of Domitian and the other Roman emperors who took their claims of divinity seriously. And we have already discussed how that was true of Antiochus IV. He wanted everyone to be unified around Greek culture.

There is a great warning in the Bible and in history about rulers who attempt to unify their people through the adoption of a single ideology — one that is invariably opposed to the word of God. They often start out trying to look like our friend, but they never end up that way. Rome did much more damage to the church after it embraced the church than Rome did when it was persecuting the church.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the “vile person” in verse 21 to whom “the honor of the kingdom” has not been given, or better translated, “to whom royal majesty has not been given.”

Will Durant described Antiochus IV as “the most interesting and the most erratic of his line, a rare mixture of intellect, insanity, and charm.”

But how is he even here? Isn't he a Roman hostage? Not anymore.

Back in verse 18, we saw that, as a result of his father's humiliating defeat, Antiochus IV Epiphanes had been taken back to Rome as a hostage. After his older brother Seleucus IV Philopator followed their father onto the throne in 187 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes was exchanged as a hostage for his nephew Demetrius I Soter, the son and true heir of Seleucus. Why? Because Seleucus was now the king, and the Romans wanted their hostage to be the son of the current king. Antiochus was exchanged not because his brother loved him but because his brother cared nothing about him, which meant that Antiochus had suddenly become a worthless hostage.

After this exchange, Antiochus lived in Athens, and he was there when his brother was assassinated in 175 BC by Heliodorus, as we saw in verse 20. Antiochus IV then traveled back from Athens and reached Syria in November 175 BC.

So who would be the next king?

Seleucus' legitimate heir Demetrius I Soter was still a hostage in Rome, so Antiochus proclaimed himself co-regent with another of Seleucus' sons, an infant, whose murder Antiochus arranged a few years later.

Antiochus was able to set aside Demetrius' claims to the throne, but Antiochus was not the legitimate successor to the throne, which is why verse 21 says that he had not been given royal majesty.

As Durant describes him: "[Antiochus IV] enjoyed his own qualities so keenly that he labeled his coins Antiochus Theos Epiphanes — the God Made Manifest." But his enemies sarcastically referred to him instead as "Epiphanes," which means "madman."

Antiochus was a smooth talker who was able to bend people to his will by flattery and deceit. As verse 21 tells us, "he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries," which is what he did. He did not come to power by military conquest, but rather he came to power by political trickery and flatteries.

DANIEL 11:22-24

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.

Commentaries disagree over the placement of verses 22–24 in the overall timeline.

Some believe that verse 22 is a general statement about Antiochus IV's reign with a brief foreshadowing of a later event involving the Jewish high priest (which we will see in more detail later in this chapter). Verses 23–24 then go back to describing Antiochus' initial takeover of Seleucia from his nephew. Under this view, the high priest Onias III is the “prince of the covenant” mentioned in verse 22.

But others believe that verses 22–24 are chronological and discuss the first phase of the Syrian-Egyptian war. Under this view, Ptolemy VI is the “prince of the covenant” mentioned in verse 22.

As shown on the handout (which can be found at the end of these notes), I favor the first view that the “prince of the covenant” is Onias III, the Jewish High Priest. But I don't favor the view that verses 23–24 are describing the takeover of Seleucia by Antiochus. Instead, I think the focus in these verses is on Antiochus' interaction with the Jews.

Under this view, the “small people” or the “few people” in verse 23 are the Jewish collaborators with Antiochus IV.

Onias III was the high priest, which was not only the most important religious position in Jerusalem at the time but was also the highest political office. But Onias was pro-Egyptian.

Onias had a brother named Joshua, who preferred his Greek name, Jason. Jason was from the pro-Syrian Tobiad party, which wanted to turn Jerusalem into a Greek city.

Antiochus, of course, liked Jason and the Tobiads much better than Onias and the Egyptians, and so Antiochus manipulated the situation so that Onias III was replaced by Jason as high priest.

Second Maccabees 4:7b-10 describes these events:

Jason the brother of Onias obtained the high priesthood by corruption, promising the king at an interview three hundred and sixty talents of silver and, from another source of revenue, eighty talents. In addition to this he promised to pay one hundred and fifty more if permission were given to establish by his authority a gymnasium and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. When the king assented and Jason came to office, he at once shifted his countrymen over to the Greek way of life.

Jason was later replaced by Menelaus who offered a larger bribe. Menelaus then had Onias III, the legitimate high priest, killed.

The “league” or “agreement” in verse 23 is likely the agreement by which Antiochus assumed power by flatteries. But after that agreement, he worked deceitfully. Antiochus was not what he promised to be.

What do we mean by that? The remainder of verses 23-24 give us an example.

Antiochus came up (to Palestine) and became strong (by making his supporter the high priest) with a small people (with the Tobiad party).

But what about verse 24?

He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.

I think verse 24 describes the lavish gifts that Antiochus gave to his friends to win their support and keep their support. One commentary provides a good summary:

This king, Antiochus IV, will make covenants without the slightest intention of inconveniencing himself to keep them, motivated by desire for his own aggrandizement. Though his collaborators were a small people, he would succeed in penetrating the sources of wealth and use the plunder, spoil, and goods to lavish on those who would then support his cause. Plans to take further lucrative cities would be made, but only for a time. The living God whom he had defied would intervene.

DANIEL 11:25-26

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 be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. 27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

With verse 25 we again turn back to continuing fight between the Syrians and the Egyptians.

Polybius tells us that the south was the initial aggressor, but the first actual battle took place as the northern army passed into southern territory.

What was political situation in Egypt?

After the death of Cleopatra I, the wife of Ptolemy V, her young son Ptolemy VI Philometer became king.

Now we need to review the family tree. Remember that this Cleopatra was the daughter of Antiochus the Great, and that Antiochus IV was the son of Antiochus the Great. So what that means is that Ptolemy VI, the king of the south, was the

nephew of Antiochus IV, the king of the north. Ptolemy VI was married to Cleopatra II, who was also his sister. So, yes, the family tree was a bit complicated!

What happened next was the Sixth Syrian War. The cause of the war is unclear, but it seems to have arisen from a desire by Egypt to unify their people against a common enemy.

By this time, Ptolemy VI and his younger brother Ptolemy VIII (both between 10 and 16 years old) had been declared co-rulers.

Antiochus IV heard of the Egyptian preparations for war and was able to surprise and defeat the Ptolemaic army in the Sinai desert. Antiochus continued on toward Egypt and camped near Alexandria.

The Egyptians suffered internal unrest as a result of the war, and envoys were sent to negotiate a peace treaty. Antiochus took his nephew Ptolemy VI hostage under his guardianship with the intent of making Egypt a client state of Syria.

The people of Alexandria responded by proclaiming Ptolemy VIII as sole king. Antiochus then besieged Alexandria but eventually withdrew his army, leaving Ptolemy VI as his puppet king in Memphis.

Ptolemy VIII is also known as Ptolemy Physcon, which means “fat paunch.”

And, for those keeping track of such things, you may have noticed that we went from Ptolemy VI to Ptolemy VIII. What about Ptolemy VII? That was Ptolemy Neos Philopator (the new beloved of his father), who may have reigned briefly before being murdered by his uncle Ptolemy Physcon. Some sources suggest he never reigned at all.

In Antiochus’s absence, Ptolemy VI and his brother Ptolemy Physcon were reconciled.

So how does this all fit with verses 25-27?

And he (Antiochus) shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south (Ptolemy Physcon and Ptolemy VI as co-rulers) with a great army (the army that surprised and defeated Ptolemy VI in the Sinai desert).

The king of the south (Ptolemy Physcon and Ptolemy VI) shall be stirred up (by their advisors) to battle with a very great and mighty army (the army that marched against Syria); but he (Ptolemy VI, in particular here) shall not stand (because he was taken hostage by his uncle): for they shall forecast devices against him (Antiochus's plans against him, the activities of disloyal subjects in Egypt who quickly gave him up, and the poor counsel of his advisers).

Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him (his advisors failed him by unwisely urged the young king to recapture Syria and Palestine, thus incurring the wrath of Antiochus), and his army shall overflow (be swept away): and many shall fall down slain (die in the battle).

And both these kings' (Antiochus IV and his nephew, Ptolemy VI) hearts shall be to do mischief (plotting to make Egypt a client state and plotting against each other), and they shall speak lies at one table (to an oriental mind the worst sort of treachery); but it shall not prosper (Rome would soon ruin their fun): for yet the end shall be at the time appointed (a reminder that God is in control of these events; they are occurring at the appointed times).

DANIEL 11:28

28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.

Antiochus IV returned to his capital city of Antioch in Syria 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 in earnest.

The deposed illegitimate high priest Jason had heard a rumor that Antiochus had died in Egypt, and so he 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 eventually (after another foray into Egypt discussed next in verse 29) robbed and desecrated the temple in 168 BC. We saw some of these events back in Chapter 8.

DANIEL 11:29-30

29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.

Again, verse 29 reminds us that these events are not random events. They are occurring at appointed times.

These verses describe Antiochus' humiliation by Rome after his fourth invasion of Egypt and his subsequent return to persecute the Jews and desecrate the temple in Jerusalem.

The ships of Chittim are Roman ships. Chittim refers to Cyprus, which was under Roman dominion, and all areas beyond. The Greek translators understood this so well that they rendered this verse to say "the Romans will come against him."

Antiochus, angered at his loss of control over the king, invaded again in 168 BC. The Egyptians sent to Rome asking for help.

On the outskirts of Alexandria, Antiochus met the Roman Popilius Laenas, with whom he had been friends during his stay in Rome. But instead of a friendly welcome, Popilius offered the king an ultimatum from the Roman Senate: he must evacuate Egypt and Cyprus immediately.

Antiochus begged to have time to consider but Popilius drew a circle round him in the sand with his cane and told him to decide before he stepped outside it.

This ended the Sixth Syrian War and Antiochus' hopes of conquering Egyptian territory. Still, the Ptolemies were greatly weakened by the war as well as the conflict between Ptolemy VI and VIII.

Antiochus left in humiliation — and most likely for that reason he then turned his wrath on the Jews after he returned (which means that Rome was at least indirectly and partially responsible for this first desecration, as they were directly responsible for the second desecration in AD 70).

Those who “forsake the holy covenant” in verse 30 are the allies of Menelaus who did not protest as Antiochus pillaged the temple. Antiochus has “intelligence with them,” which means he plotted with the collaborators.

DANIEL 11:31

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

This verse gives more details about the desecration of the temple that occurred in December 168 BC.

The “abomination that maketh desolate” likely refers 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.

The Roman emperor Caligula later ordered that his own statue be placed in the Holy of Holies, but that order was never carried out due to the delays by the Roman governor and the intervention of Herod, who both knew what the result would have been.

In Matthew 24:15, Jesus speaks of the abomination of desolation of which Daniel the prophet spoke. 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.) And so Matthew 24:15 cannot be referring to Daniel 11:31 because the event prophesied by Daniel 11:31 came to pass before the birth of Christ. To what then was Jesus referring? Jesus was talking about a second desecration that we have already seen in Daniel 9:27, and that we will see again in Chapter 12.

This all seems a little confusing — two different events, both involving a desecration of the temple and both called an abomination of desolation. Shouldn't we expect some sort of warning to be extra careful in our interpretation of this particular language?

Whether we should have expected such a warning is open to debate, but this is not — we are given such a warning, and by none other than Jesus himself. In reference to the other abomination (the one by the Romans mentioned in 9:27 and 12:11) to which Jesus referred in his warnings in Matthew 24, Jesus said:

Matthew 24:15 — When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (**whoso readeth, let him understand**).

Whoso readeth, let him understand! Jesus warned us to be extra careful on this point, and I hope that we have been.

The abomination here in verse 31 is the one perpetrated by the Greeks. It occurred nearly 200 years before the birth of Christ, and so could not have been the one that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24, which occurred in AD 70.

DANIEL 11:32

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

Antiochus was a master at winning over people with flattery and empty promises. He convinced many of the influential Jews to adopt his pro-Hellenistic policies. These are the ones who “do wickedly against 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 “shall be strong and do exploits” are the Maccabeans 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.

Just as they were called to be faithful and loyal in the years leading up to Jesus’ first appearance, so are we called to be faithful and loyal as we await the second appearance of Christ.

That is a wonderful phrase in verse 32 — “the people that do know their God.” We want to be that people. Why? Verse 32 tells us. They do great things for God!

DANIEL 11:33-35

33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

The Maccabean leaders went throughout the countryside and preached a message of repentance and a return to the law of Moses. These are “they that understand” and “instruct many” in verse 33.

But they suffered great hardship. Many lost their lives as Antiochus pursued them and burned their fields and cities. Many of the initial leaders, including Mattathias himself, died early during the struggle. Those who were left received a “little help” (verse 34) from early supporters of their cause.

Some argue that Mattathias and his family provided much more than just a little help, but compared to the help that God was providing it was just a little help.

And that phrase also confirms that Daniel was not written by a second century imposter — such a person would never have described this help as only a little help. That description could only have come straight from God.

When it began to look like the Maccabeans were going to win, many more joined their cause. Many of these latter converts were insincere and switched over only to save their own necks. They joined “with flatteries” as mentioned in verse 34.

Verse 35 gives us some understanding of the reasoning behind God’s activities here. The persecution was to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end.

God wanted to know those who were on his side, and one way to do that is to bring about persecution. Would we all be here this morning if we faced persecution and possibly death by the authorities for assembling? There are places in this world today where such is the case.

The context of verse 35 suggests that the “time of the end” is the end of the Jewish struggle with the Seleucids, which came to an end in 142 BC 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.

Another possibility is that the “time of the end” may refer to the time of the end of the vision, which would take us to the beginning of the Roman empire.

Finally, we are once again reminded that God is in control of these events. Verse 35 tells us it was “yet for a time appointed.”

I think these repeated reminders of appointed times is yet another indication that God is not just telling Daniel what was going to happen — God is telling Daniel what God was going to do! These things were not happening by chance; they were happening at appointed times!

DANIEL 11:36

**36 And the king shall do according to his will;
and he shall exalt himself, and magnify him-**

self above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

Who is the king mentioned in verse 36?

The first thing we note about the “king” in verse 36 is that he is not designated as either the king of the north or the king of the south, but is just called “the king.”

Verses 28–35 have been discussing the “king of the north” so perhaps verse 36 is also discussing the “king of the north.”

If so, then the most likely king of the north in verse 36 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who we have been reading about since verse 21. This view has at least one thing in its favor — it does not require a sudden and perhaps unexpected break in the narrative. When we read verse 36 after verse 35, we could very easily conclude that verse 36 is still talking about Antiochus IV.

Why should we even consider another view?

First, as we just saw, verse 36 introduces “the king” who is not described as either the king of the north or the king of the south. That may be a pretty strong indication that there has been a change in subject.

Second, we should consider the possibility of a break between verses 35 and 36 because we have seen such sudden breaks before, not just in this chapter but elsewhere in the book. In fact, we should have been on the lookout for such breaks all throughout this chapter because we saw one near the very beginning of the chapter between verses 2 and 3.

That break in verses 2 and 3 involved a skip over six Persian kings and 134 years to a king of another nation, Alexander the Great of Greece. So, if verse 36 also skips over a hundred years without warning to another nation, it would not be the first time that has happened in this chapter.

Also, back in Chapter 5, the narrative jumped from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the very end of the Babylonian empire. Abrupt changes are not at all uncommon in

Daniel. We can think of it as fast forwarding a cassette tape past the part that is not of interest!

How did we know about the break between verses 2 and 3? Because we knew about Alexander the Great. There was no doubt at all about who verse 3 was talking about, so we knew with certainty that a break in time must have occurred.

Likewise, here in verse 36 we need to apply that same methodology. If verses 36-45 do not fit with Antiochus IV but instead fit with someone else, then we need to consider the possibility of a break, just as we saw in verse 3.

Do verses 36-45 fit with Antiochus IV?

In a word, no. They do not.

In fact, liberals argue that Daniel was written between verses 35 and 36, and that Daniel knew the history of verses 1-35 because it had already happened, and verses 36-43 are wrong (they argue) because Daniel was just guessing after verse 35.

McGuigan: "It is true that the thought processes of the Liberals are decidedly uncomplicated."

We know Daniel was a prophet for many reasons, but the main reason we know that is because Jesus told us Daniel was a prophet in Matthew 24:15.

Let's look at why verses 36-45 do not fit with Antiochus IV.

For starters, history tells us that Antiochus IV never fought a war against Egypt after 168 BC. And so, if that history is correct, then verses 40-43 (which we will consider soon) cannot apply to Antiochus IV.

Verse 40, for example, will tell us that the king of the north will come against the king of the south like a whirlwind. Rome expelled Antiochus IV from Egypt with just a word in 168 BC, and (as far as we know) he never went back. Egypt supplied Rome with its entire grain supply for four months of each year, so it was imperative to Rome that Antiochus not be in charge of Egypt. Verse 40 cannot be describing Antiochus.

Also, Antiochus IV never conquered Libya and Ethiopia as verse 43 suggests the king of the north would do.

And Antiochus IV never had all the riches mentioned in verse 43. In fact, he robbed temples in his spare time to pay the heavy Roman taxes that were levied against him.

So where are we? Verses 21-35 are definitely talking about Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and verses 36-45 are definitely not talking about Antiochus IV Epiphanes. So what is the logical conclusion? There must be a break between verse 35 and verses 36, just as we saw a break between verses 2 and 3.

Some commentators try to make verses 36-43 fit with Antiochus, but not (in my opinion) with any success.

Finally, some might object that if verse 36 refers to another king of the north, then Daniel 11 seems to have just dropped the subject of Antiochus IV Epiphanes rather than to have concluded it.

But we already know all about Antiochus IV from Daniel 8 (including his death in Daniel 8:25), so what more is there left to say here in Daniel 11? Rather than asking why Daniel 11 doesn't say more about Antiochus, the real question might be why Daniel 11 says as much as it does about him. But, of course, it does so because Antiochus was a major part of Jewish history, and a major threat to God's plan.

So who is the subject of verse 36?

The most popular view today in the denominational world is that the king in verse 36 is the Antichrist, who premillennialists say will show up just before Christ returns to reign on earth for a thousand years. But we know this view is false because of all of the problems associated with premillennialism, which as we have seen are legion. The premillennial view also violates the context and the time frame of this vision.

So far in Chapter 11, we have been marching through history from the time of Daniel up to the time of Christ, and I don't see any reason to think anything other than that is happening here in verse 36.

I think we have two options for the king in verse 36, either of which might be correct. Either the king in verse 36 is Rome, or the king in verse 36 is Herod the Great.

I have previously taught the book of Daniel three times, starting in the mid-90's, and up until this time I have always taught that the king in verse 36 is Rome. But having studied it a bit more, I now think that Herod may be the more likely subject. Let's look at both possibilities.

But first, why was verse 36 written this way? Why the lack of a clear transition in moving from Antiochus to either Rome or Herod?

I think it was to reinforce what I think we are seeing as a theme of Daniel 11 — the sameness of history apart from God. When God acts, we see unique events. When man acts, we see the same events over and over.

We look at the historical events of Greece and of Rome today, and we see two completely separate sets of events, separated by many years and involving different nations. I think God looks at them differently. I think God sees the same prideful arrogance of man that he has always seen, and perhaps God wants us to see it that way as well. There is truly nothing new under the sun. We still see that same prideful arrogance in our leaders today.

So, let's look at our two leading possibilities: Rome and Herod, starting with Rome. What is the evidence for identifying Rome with the king in verse 36?

Well, let's look at the problem in reverse. We have said that this vision deals with Jewish history up to the first century. And we have seen the Persians and the Greeks so far, with just a hint of Rome. Who haven't we seen yet on center stage? Rome!

How could a vision describe the history of the Jews up to the first century and not mention Rome? Rome was firmly in control of Palestine when Christ was born, and Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70! A discussion of Rome is required by the declared scope of this vision (and this point is true whether we take the king in verse 36 to be a Roman king or Herod).

What about Rome?

If the focus switches to **Rome** in verse 36, then which Roman king is being referred to in that verse?

We earlier looked at the first eleven Roman kings, from Augustus to Domitian, but I don't think we necessarily have to choose one in particular. Instead, it is possible that these verses are treating Rome itself as the king of the north — that here we are seeing the “king” refer to the “kingdom” just as we have earlier seen the “kingdom” refer to the “king.”

Why not a particular king? Well, for starters, some of what we will see in these verses happened toward the end of the Roman Republic and prior to Augustus becoming the first emperor in 27 BC. The famous Battle of Actium occurred a few years earlier in 31 BC, and in fact was what led to Octavian becoming Augustus, the first emperor, a few years later.

Also, if the sameness of history is something that Daniel 11 is telling us about, then one way to drive that point home is to point out the sameness of the Roman emperors. And perhaps that is done here by showing us a composite description of many Roman rulers, which in fact is a description of Rome itself.

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. It certainly fits well with how Paul described the emperor Domitian:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 — Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Under this view, what is the indignation in verse 36?

The indignation would be the final outpouring of God's wrath on Rome. Although the official fall of Rome occurred long after AD 70, Rome was judged by God and found wanting much earlier in the first century.

What that would mean is that Rome's judgment (and ultimate fall) is mentioned in this vision as just a side comment. But is that surprising? Don't 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 — And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

In that verse, 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.” Perhaps verse 36, like Luke 21, is saying that “yes, Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans, but the Romans are going to be destroyed as well.”

What about Herod?

To begin, let’s note something about Herod the Great that is particularly interesting — he is called Herod the Great!

If verse 36 is about Herod, then we have seen three people in Daniel 11 who were called “great” — Alexander the Great, Antiochus the Great, and Herod the Great. If the goal here is to show the arrogant pride of human kings, then you could hardly do any better than to look at these three! And note how each is described in this chapter:

Verse 3 — And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

Verse 16 — But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will.

Verse 36 — And the king shall do according to his will.

There is a theme here — these three kings did what they wanted to do with no thought of God and with no thought of those they were leading.

How did Herod the Great come to power?

That story begins with Herod’s grandfather, Antipas.

John Hyrcanus was a Hasmonean (Maccabean) leader and the Jewish high priest. He reigned over the Jews as ethnarch from 134 BC until his death in 104 BC. He

appointed Antipas to be the general over all Idumea or Edom. That may have seemed like a good idea at the time, but it proved not to be.

Just before his death, John Hyrcanus I wanted his wife to rule, but his son, Aristobulus I, grabbed the throne. Aristobulus I had his mother imprisoned and slowly starved her to death.

Aristobulus I's reign was short-lived, however. His brother, Alexander Jannaeus, was able to grab power and became high priest and king of Judea. His oppressive rule, together with his bitter feud with the Pharisees, led to open civil war, resulting in the slaughter of six thousand of his own people in a single day.

After his death, the feuding continued between Alexander Jannaeus's two sons, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II.

But now Antipater (Herod's father) made his bid for power.

Sensing instability among the Jews, Antipater cast his lot with Hyrcanus II, and they together tried to wrest power from Aristobulus II.

This regional dispute attracted the attention of the Romans.

Antipater quickly conveyed his allegiance to the Roman legions even as they marched toward Jerusalem.

The Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC. During the campaign, Aristobulus II took refuge in the temple, and the temple mount was besieged for three months.

The streets of Jerusalem flowed with blood. The priests were cut down at the altar as they performed their duties. Twelve thousand Jews were killed. Pompey and his men defiled the temple by entering into the holy of holies.

When the dust settled, Antipater convinced Pompey that Hyrcanus II would be loyal to Rome, and so Hyrcanus II was appointed ethnarch and high priest of the Jews.

At this time, the Romans came to see that the real help and money lay with Antipater, not with Hyrcanus II.

An opportunity for Antipater came in 49 BC, when the tensions between Julius Caesar and Pompey exploded into civil war.

As usual, Antipater waited until the balance of power tilted in a certain direction, and then he set his course accordingly.

As Caesar triumphed over Pompey, Antipater transferred all of his resources and influence behind the winner. And he was greatly rewarded by Caesar, who conferred Roman citizenship on Antipater and made him the governor of all Judea.

But Caesar realized that he had more than one player on the field in Jerusalem, and so he was careful to seek a balance of power among the Jews. To that end, he allowed Hyrcanus II to stay on as high priest.

When the Jews realized that the power of the Hasmoneans was being siphoned off by Antipater, they had Antipater poisoned at a banquet in about 43 BC.

But it was too little and too late. Before his assassination, Antipater had already appointed his son Herod to be ruler over Galilee.

Early on, Herod proved himself to be a friend of Rome, once again by exploiting the infighting of the Jews.

Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, was the last surviving Maccabean, and he had no desire to compromise with Rome. He also was the last great hope of the Jews to get rid of Herod.

Antigonus's bid for power succeeded through an alliance with the Parthians, the archenemies of Rome. Herod and Hyrcanus were driven from Jerusalem, and the latter's ears were sheared off so as to disqualify him from ever regaining the high priesthood.

Herod fled to Rome and used the Parthian-Antigonus alliance to get the full support of Octavian and Antony.

Josephus records that in 40 BC, with great fanfare and before the entire Roman senate, the Caesars declared the 33 year old “Herod the Great” to be “King of the Jews.”

All that remained was to drive the remnants of the Maccabees out of Jerusalem. The Romans defeated the Parthian forces in 39 BC, and Jerusalem fell after a 5 month siege in 37 BC.

King Herod took his place as king over Judea and Galilee, and the time of the Maccabees came to an end.

But does Herod the Great fit the descriptions in these verses?

Let’s see. We have a lot of information about Herod given that he is the subject of about one fifth of all of Josephus’ writings.

Verse 36 says: “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.”

Let’s take those descriptions one at a time.

And the king shall do according to his will.

If we are looking for a king who wanted to do things his own way with no thought of God, we have found such a person in Herod the Great. In fact, the entire Herodian dynasty fits this description.

It was Herod the Great who sought the death of Christ soon after his birth. And it successors of his own family who put to death John the Baptist (this was done by Herod Antipas) and James the brother of John (by Herod Agrippa I, who also imprisoned Peter, intending to deliver him to the Jews) and who sent Paul in chains to Rome (which was done by Herod Agrippa II, the last of the dynasty, the man who is best known as he who was “almost persuaded”).

Herod was not just self-willed (such people are a dime a dozen). Herod the Great, as the verse says, was in a position to do according to his will. And again, verse 3

says the same thing about Alexander the Great, and verse 16 says the same thing about Antiochus the Great.

Herod rose up from a lowly origin to the rank and authority of king, and he retained that despotic power through all the political changes of the times. He used his power to accomplish his own will, whether it was the rebuilding of the temple or the murder of his own wife, Mariamme, and three of his own sons. Augustus is reported to have said, “I would rather be Herod’s pig than his son.”

Along the way, Herod managed to secure the favor of Julius Caesar, then of Mark Antony, and then even of Octavius Caesar (later Augustus), although Herod had assisted Antony and Cleopatra against him.

He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god.

Herod was Herod’s god. He knew no other. He magnified himself above God and above every rule and authority in Israel.

He placed his own brother-in-law, Aristobulus, Mariamme’s brother, in the office of High Priest, and shortly afterwards had him murdered.

Herod’s way of making himself secure upon the throne was to put to death every suspected rival. And Herod tried to do that even with the long promised Messiah, who the Jews believed would come to occupy Herod’s throne on earth.

“He was a most impious king. His ambition, and selfish desires, and violent and angry passions, gave the law to his whole life; and every part of his conduct, down to his expiring moments, gave proof that he had no regard to God, that there was, in his breast, no feeling of responsibility to Him, and that all sense of religion was totally deadened within him.”

He shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods.

I think a better translation of this phrase is that this king would speak marvelous things **concerning** the God of gods, rather than **against** the God of gods.

Despite being an irreligious and self-willed leader, Herod could talk the talk and put on quite a show of piety when it suited his purposes. (We don’t know any leaders like that today, do we?)

Josephus gives us several examples. Herod once told his soldiers that “we have learnt from God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our law, by angels, or ambassadors.” And we Herod proposed to rebuild the temple, he said it was “to make a thankful return, after the most pious manner, to God, for what blessings he had received from him, by giving him the kingdom, and that, by rendering his temple as complete as he was able.”

Knowing Herod and seeing his true motives, we know that this was all just talk to placate the Jews and keep his own position of power secure.

He shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished.

This verse could have several meanings.

First, it could refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, an event that we have seen prophesied already in the book of Daniel.

Although Herod the Great died long before that event, his dynasty was there to see it happen. In fact, Herod Agrippa II stood with the Roman army, as had all the Herods before him. He fought side by side with the Roman general Vespasian against the Jews and was wounded in battle. After the fall of Jerusalem, he and Bernice moved to Rome, where he remained until his death, which marked the end of the Herodian dynasty.

A second possibility, is that the “indignation” or “wrath” in verse 36 refers to the activities that caused that wrath to come upon those who rejected Christ.

Herod the Great was alive when Christ came, and Herod tried to murder him. The rejection of Christ did not occur just at the cross; that rejection started shortly after his birth. Herod knew the prophecies, and Herod rejected the promised Messiah.

1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 — Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: **for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.**

Matthew 3:7 — But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from **the wrath to come?**

Yes, there was a wrath **to come**, but there was also a wrath that **is come** upon them to the uttermost. Why? Because the Jews rejected and killed the Messiah, and Herod the Great was the first to reject and seek to kill Jesus. Herod was the first viper of that generation of vipers.

As we have seen with judgment, the wrath was certain once the rejection of God's promised Messiah occurred, and so perhaps, in that sense, the wrath was accomplished during the lifetime of Herod. And Herod's dynasty was still around to see the actual day of wrath in AD 70.

DANIEL 11:37

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

Let's continue checking whether these descriptions can apply to Herod.

Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers.

This phrase suggests that we are not talking about a king of Syria or a king of Rome here. Why? Because what would it matter if such a king had no regard for the god of his fathers?

Who was "the God of his fathers"? We have two choices.

Before we look at them, let's look at another question that may help us identify who the "fathers" are in the phrase "god of his fathers."

Was Herod Jewish?

Ethnically, he was not. Herod's father, Antipater, was an Idumean, and his mother was Cypros, an Arab princess from Petra, east of the Jordan River.

Herod clearly saw himself as Jewish, and more importantly wanted others to see him as Jewish, although his credentials as a Jew were challenged by his opponents throughout his career

When the Hasmonean Jewish ruler John Hyrcanus I conquered Idumea in 130-140 BC, he required all Idumaeans to obey Jewish law or to leave, and most Idumaeans converted to Judaism, including Herod's family. So Herod was a Jewish proselyte.

Idumea was the Greek name for the territory south of Judea that was inhabited by the Edomites until they were later displaced by the Nabateans. It is located west of the Dead Sea, about 15 miles from Jerusalem.

Idumea is mentioned only once in the New Testament, where it is simply stated that part of the great crowd that followed Jesus came from Idumea (Mark 3:8).

And so who was the god of his fathers?

If we look for Herod's literal fathers (his ancestors), then perhaps "the god of his fathers" is the god of the Idumeans? Who was that?

Josephus answers that question when he describes another Idumean, Costobarus, who was Herod's brother-in-law until Herod had him killed:

Costobarus was an Idumean by birth, and one of the principal dignity among them, and one whose ancestors had been priests to the Koze, whom the Idumeans had [formerly] esteemed as a god; but after Hyrcanus had made a change in their political government, and made them receive the Jewish customs and law, Herod made Costobarus governor of Idumea and Gaza, and gave him his sister Salome to wife.

Josephus tells us that the Idumeans worshiped a false god called Koze. Who was that?

The Idumean god called Koze by Josephus seems to be the Greek name for Qos, the god of the Edomites. Edom was founded by Esau, and Qos seems to be the Edomites' corrupted conception of God, much like Allah is the Muslims' corrupted conception of God. The name of the Edomite god is found in Ezra 2:53, which mentions a man named Barkos, or Son of Qos.

That seems a bit remote for the context here, but it does suggest that we are on the right track.

I think we have find better fit for "the god of his fathers" if we understand verse 37 to be telling us that Herod had no regard for God (the true God as opposed to the

flawed Edomite conception of God). And I think that view is bolstered by the next phrase in verse 37.

In this case, “his fathers” might be better translated “our fathers,” a phrase that Josephus tells us Herod frequently used in addressing the Jews.

Under this view, Herod’s lack of regard for God can be seen both by Herod’s attempt to murder the son of God, and also by Herod’s embrace of Rome, even to the point of erecting shrines to Augustus.

Neither shall he regard the desire of women.

This is a difficult phrase, and again we have a few choices.

Herod had ten wives, which might cause some to think that he did regard the desire of women, but, of course, it really shows just the opposite.

As Herod had no regard for God, Herod likewise had no regard for his wives. In fact, he had his favorite wife, Mariamme, killed, along with their two sons.

Another possibility is that this phrase is describing Herod’s lack of regard for Cleopatra and his mistrust of her.

But, I think, a better possibility is that the desire of women in verse 37 is a reference to Christ, and that the opening phrases of this verse are telling us that Herod had no regard for God the Father or God the Son.

But how can “the desire of women” be a reference to Christ and events in the life of Christ?

Matthew 2:17-18 — Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Each of those murdered baby boys was the desire of his mother, and Herod had them slaughtered. Herod had no regard for those mothers or for their desire, their sons. And as for the long promised Messiah, Herod clearly had no regard for Jesus having attempted to murder him as an infant.

And again, for any of the liberal critics who doubt that Herod did this foul deed, I would point out that we know Herod killed three of his own sons to prevent them from taking his throne. Does anyone really think Herod would be reluctant in any way to do the same thing to other people's sons?

I think this final view has an edge given what we will see in the next phrase and also what we will see in verse 44.

Neither shall he regard any god.

This description seems to bolster the view the "the desire of women" is a reference to Christ. Why? Because the verse seems to be listing gods! It seems to be saying that Herod would not have regard for any god, true or false.

He would not regard God the Father, he would not regard God the Son, and he would not regard any false god. Herod was irreligious, and we see that in every action in his life.

For he shall magnify himself above all.

And, of course, this is what one would expect to see in a man who has no regard for any god. Herod was his own god, and he magnified himself above all.

But wasn't Herod in subjugation to Rome? Yes, and Herod put on quite a show to demonstrate his loyalty to Rome. But did Herod do that because he loved Rome? Did Herod have regard for Rome? No. Herod flattered Rome so that he could remain in power, and it worked.

DANIEL 11:38

38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

How about verse 38? Does it apply to Herod the Great?

But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces.

Here we see Herod's relation with Rome. I don't think the "god of forces" could apply to any other but Rome in this time frame. Rome was built by force, and Rome worshipped force. Force was Rome's god.

And how did Herod honor Rome?

Herod's honor of Rome went first to Julius Caesar, then to Antony, and then to Antony's conqueror, Augustus. Josephus tells us how Herod sent delegations to Rome, and also to Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt, with many costly presents. Herod converted the ancient Strata's Tower into a magnificent seaport, and named it Caesarea, in honor of Caesar. Herod rebuilt Samaria, and renamed it in honor of Augustus. Herod built many other fortified cities and named them in honor of Caesar.

And a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

How we interpret "the god whom his fathers knew not" in this verse depends on how we interpret "the god of his fathers" in verse 37.

If "the god of his fathers" in verse 37 is the false god of the Idumeans, then "the god whom his fathers knew not" in verse 38 is most likely God himself, and the second half of verse 38 would then be describing Herod's rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Josephus describes Herod's rebuilding of the temple, telling us that Herod honored it with gold, and with silver, and with costly stones, and with pleasant things. Josephus says, the stones were white and strong, and that the expenses Herod laid out upon the temple were "vastly large, and the riches about it unspeakable."

Did Herod build the temple to honor God. We know he did not, which is something that Josephus confirms. Herod rebuilt the temple and turned it into a fortress to firmly establish his own rule.

Josephus tells us that a fortress built into the temple was such that "those that could get [it] into their hands had the whole nation under their power, for without the command of [it] it was not possible to offer their sacrifices; and to think of leaving

off those sacrifices, is to every Jew plainly impossible, who are still more ready to lose their lives, than to leave off that divine worship which they have been wont to pay unto God.”

Herod could close the temple whenever he wanted to, and that gave him almost complete control over the Jewish populace.

If, instead, “the god of his fathers” in verse 37 is God (which I think is the better view), then “the god whom his fathers knew not” in verse 38 would be Rome, and the second half of verse 38 would be showing us the same thing as the first half of verse 38 — namely, how Herod honored Rome. We will see more evidence of what Herod did to honor Rome in the next verse.

In any event, Herod’s motivations for rebuilding the temple provide more evidence that Herod had no regard for God, but only for himself. As one commentator noted:

Herod’s relationship to Judaism consistently appears more functional and pragmatic than personal or devotional. When power or money were at stake, Herod did not let any religious convictions stand in the way of advancing his personal fortunes, even at the expense of the Jews whom he ruled.

DANIEL 11:39

39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

Does verse 39 also apply to Herod?

Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory.

I think “the God of forces” in verse 38, the “god whom his fathers knew not” in verse 39, and the “strange god” in verse 39 are all the same false god — Rome in general, and the deification of Caesar in particular.

Herod built many fortified cities in honor of Augustus Caesar, calling them by his name. In those cities, Herod erected temples, dedicated to Augustus as a divinity.

Here is how Josephus describes it:

Yet did he [Herod] not preserve their memory [the Roman leaders] by particular buildings only, with their names given them, but his generosity went as far as entire cities; for when he had built a most beautiful wall round a country in Samaria, twenty furlongs long, and had brought six thousand inhabitants into it, and had allotted to it a most fruitful piece of land, and in the midst of this city, thus built, had **erected a very large temple to Caesar**, and had laid round about it a portion of sacred land of three furlongs and a half, he called the city Sebaste, from Sebastus, or Augustus, and settled the affairs of the city after a most regular manner.

To say all at once, there was not any place of his kingdom fit for the purpose, that was permitted to be without somewhat that was for Caesar's honor; and when he had filled his own country with temples, he poured out the like plentiful marks of his esteem into his province, and built many cities which he called Cesareas.

That is how Josephus describes it. Here is how verse 39 describes it: "Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory."

What about the next phrase?

And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

Herod's loyalty to Rome and dependence upon Rome meant that Herod did everything he could to cement Rome's rule over Judea. Herod was a client king of Rome, and Herod never forgot who the client was!

And finally, Herod parceled out land to his friends and supporters to buy and keep their loyalty to him. Herod also was in the habit of parceling out to his friends the land adjacent to places that it was important for him to control in case of emergency.

So where are we at the end of verse 39?

So far we have seen a very close fit of these prophecies to Herod the Great. In fact, I think the fit is closer than the fit to Rome.

What about verse 40?

DANIEL 11:40

40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

The time of the end in verse 40, as it did earlier, simply points to the time appointed by God for the events in the vision to come to pass. All it likely means here is that we are nearing the end of the vision.

We should avoid the temptation to mindlessly leap to the end of the world every time we see the word “end” in the Bible. I wish more commentaries on Daniel would avoid that temptation!

But we do see a shift in focus when we get to verse 40. Instead of describing “the king” who was introduced in verse 36, we are back to seeing the king of the north and the king of the south.

So who are these two kings in verse 40, and why have we changed the subject?

First, we haven’t changed the subject as much as it might seem. Both of these kings are somehow related to “the king” in verse 36 — “shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him.”

So who are the king of the north and the king of the south, and how are they related to Herod the Great?

What we see starting in verse 40 is a description of one of the most famous battles that ever occurred — the Battle of Actium.

The Battle of Actium was a naval battle fought between Octavian (who later became Augustus, the first emperor of Rome) and the combined fleets of Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII Philopator. This Cleopatra is the “Elizabeth Taylor” Cleopatra, and if you have seen that movie you have seen the Battle of Actium!) The battle took

place on September 2, 31 BC in the Ionian Sea, near the former Roman colony of Actium, Greece, and it was the climax of over a decade of rivalry between Octavian and Mark Antony.

As for the horsemen in verse 40, the battle also had a land component. A recent book about the Battle of Actium called “The War That Made the Roman Empire” says that each side had 12,000 cavalrymen.

Octavian’s victory enabled him to consolidate his power over Rome and its dominions. In 27 BC, he was awarded the title of Augustus (“revered”) by the Roman Senate. This marked the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire.

The battle ended the Ptolemaic kingdom, which itself was the last vestige of the Greek kingdom. Egypt itself fell to Octavian in 30 BC. Cleopatra and Marc Antony committed suicide in Alexandria.

And for any who doubt the lasting impact of Actium, I would know that we still see its effects today, even in some unexpected ways.

In 8 BC, the Roman Senate decided to honor Augustus by naming a month after him. And so, the month in which Augustus entered Alexandria, in which his enemies Antony and Cleopatra died, and in which he announced the annexation of Egypt, became Augustus, which is our month of August.

So, back to the text, who is the “king of the south”? Cleopatra VII of the Ptolemies, aided by Marc Antony.

And the “king of the north”? Octavian of Rome. No longer is the king of north a Syrian ruler; now the king of the north is a Roman ruler!

But how are these events related to Herod the Great?

Herod fortunes were tied to the fate of Rome, and so Herod had to be careful to steer a safe course between the warring Roman factions.

Herod was very distrustful of Cleopatra, having staved off a push by Cleopatra to reinstate Ptolemaic influence in Judea. But ultimately Herod sided with Antony

against Octavian. Although Herod was not personally present at Actium, he sent troops to fight for Antony against Octavian.

One might have thought that Herod's end would have come with Antony's end, but that is not what happened. When Antony was defeated by Octavian at Actium, Herod switched his allegiance to the victor.

To demonstrate his commitment to Octavian, Herod helped him purge Jerusalem of all Jews hostile to Rome. Josephus records that Jews of all ages, including women and infants, were slaughtered without mercy, their bodies piled up in heaps.

Here is how one author describes the situation:

In this way, Herod the Great, through treachery and shameless political opportunism, now served as Rome's pawn in Jerusalem. In return, Augustus placed the full might of imperial Rome behind Herod. One can only imagine the ill will that the local Jewish populace had for Herod. He was so hated in Jerusalem that the Romans were forced to keep a permanent garrison there to protect their puppet king.

And so back to verse 40: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind."

Under this view, the phrase "at him" in verse 40 should be likely better translated as "with him." That is, Antony and Cleopatra came "with" Herod, and Octavian then came "against" Herod. As always, Judea found itself in the middle of a fight between north and south!

What about the final phrase — "and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over"?

Quoting *The War That Made the Roman Empire* again:

Augustus did not stop expansion [after Actium] — far from it. Romans expected their leaders to conquer new territory and thereby demonstrate the favor of the gods. Augustus carried out this responsibility with enthusiasm. As his favored poet, Virgil, wrote, Rome had a duty to achieve "empire without end." So, Augustus won new lands in Hispania and the northern Balkans, as well as annexing Egypt. A huge effort to conquer Germany as far east as the Elbe River ended in a military disaster late in Augustus's life, although the Romans were able to hold on to the left bank of the Rhine.

And how important was the Battle of Actium to God's plans for bringing Christ into the world at the perfect time and in the perfect setting? Again, I quote from that secular history book:

Victory at Actium meant **peace**. ... [Augustus] ended a century of civil war and laid the foundations of two hundred years of peace and prosperity: the famous **Pax Romana**, or "**Roman Peace**." Trade flourished in the Augustan peace. The cheapest way to transport goods was by sea. Thanks to Agrippa's victories, Rome ruled the waves, and piracy virtually disappeared. Rome represented a huge market for grain imports, but many other goods were traded as well. Stability and the security of Roman law encouraged money lending. A military drawdown took pressure off taxes. In short, conditions were ripe for **good times**.

Or, as Paul would later describe it:

Galatians 4:4 — But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman.

Yes, Jesus was born in a manger, but in a larger sense God had prepared a perfect cradle for his son.

DANIEL 11:41

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

The "he" in verse 41 is still Augustus, the king of the north.

In 30 BC, after the Battle of Actium, Octavian prepared to invade Egypt. He wanted Antony dead, he wanted Cleopatra to be his prisoner, and he wanted her treasure to be his property.

Octavian marched his army south from Asia Minor through Syria. At Ptolemais, he was met by King Herod, and the two men rode side by side in an inspection of the troops. Herod fed his troops and gave Octavian two thousand talents of silver. It was perfect example of how Herod switched sides throughout his life, considering that Herod had not only been Antony's ally but also owed his throne to Antony.

When Antony was defeated, Herod had switched sides. Octavian realized the importance of Herod as a client king and so confirmed his royal status.

The glorious land in verse 41 is Palestine, and verse 41 is describing Octavian's invasion of Egypt after the Battle of Actium, during which he passed through Palestine as we just saw. That invasion led to the death of Antony and Cleopatra by suicide.

Cleopatra died on August 10, and, on August 29, Octavian announced the annexation of Egypt. Henceforth, Egypt would belong to Rome or, more precisely, to Octavian, because he claimed the country as his personal estate.

Octavian's annexation of Egypt was the end of the 300 year old Ptolemaic dynasty. It was also the end of something even grander: the 3000 year old history of Egyptian kings. It was the beginning of Imperial Rome and, with it, the foundations of the modern West.

From 30 BC on and for the next five centuries, until the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the Mediterranean would become simply Mare Nostrum: "Our Sea." Few expressions better express the arrogance of an empire that considered the world to be its own.

The many countries that shall be overthrown in verse 41 includes Egypt, of course, but also includes other countries as Rome continued to expand under Augustus, including Hispania, the northern Balkans, and parts of Germany.

Another possible translation for "many countries shall be overthrown" is "tens of thousands shall fall." Those "tens of thousands" who fell would be those who were on the losing end of Rome's continued expansion.

What about that final phrase in verse 41? "But these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon."

That phrase tells us that Rome also had its share of failures. One in particular may be in view in the final half of verse 41.

In 26 BC, Augustus commanded Gallus to undertake a military expedition to Arabia, where he was to either conclude treaties making the Arabian people a client state, or to subdue them if they resisted. That expedition ended in complete failure

due to a desert guide who proved untrustworthy, along with a combination of disease, over-extended supply lines, and a tougher desert environment than the Romans had expected.

As for the names Edom, Moab, and Ammon, I like a point that was made by one commentary:

The reference in verse 41 to the countries of Edom, Moab and Ammon should be enough, without anything further, to show that we must seek the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy in Bible times. Those names had a geographical significance to Daniel, and to others of his day, who would understand by them the mingled peoples of the lands adjacent to Judea on the east and south.

We are not looking at the end of the world in these verses!

DANIEL 11:42-43

42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.

Yes, parts of Arabia escaped the Romans, but Egypt did not escape.

“But he [Augustus] shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt.”

After the defeat of Cleopatra, Octavian confiscated the royal treasures of Egypt. Michael Grant says that Octavian’s “seizure of the Cleopatra’s treasure made him wealthier than the Roman state itself.”

As for Libya and Ethiopia being at his steps, here is how one commentary describes it:

The conquest of Egypt and maritime Libya laid inner Libya and Ethiopia open to the steps, that is, as we may interpret the term, to the inroads of Augustus Caesar, and his officers, of which advantage was soon after taken by them.

The later conquest of Lybia by Cornelius Balbus was considered so great an achievement that Balbus, though not a native Roman, was allowed a triumphal procession. Petronius the governor of Egypt made an expedition into Ethiopia about the same time as Gallus' failed expedition into Arabia.

So, while Augustus did not himself subdue those countries himself, they were "at his steps," as the verse says, at the time he left Africa and returned to Rome.

The reference to "his steps" may also be a reference to the triumphal procession that Augustus received after his victory over Egypt, which looked forward to the later triumph enjoyed by Balbus. Antony and Cleopatra killed themselves to avoid appearing in this procession.

The procession, the famous Roman triumph, was a ritual marking the end of a victorious military campaign. Only the most successful generals received the privilege of celebrating a triumph, an honor granted by vote of the Senate. Octavian had been honored with not one but three triumphs, a rare distinction, which he celebrated in an unprecedented way, by back-to-back, three-day ceremonies. The first day would be a triumph for the Illyrian War of 35 to 33 BC. The second day would be a triumph for the Actium War of 32 to 31 BC. And the third day would be a triumph for the Alexandrian War of 30 BC.

DANIEL 11:44

44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

Who is the subject of verse 44?

Again, we might be tempted to think that the subject of verse 44 is the same as the subject of verse 43 (Augustus), and that would be a natural way to read the two verses. But, once again, let's remember that we have seen some sudden unannounced shifts in subject in this chapter, so we should also be on the lookout for that.

Is that happening here between verses 43 and 44? Yes, I think it is. I think verse 44 is shifting back to the king we met in verse 36, and that we last saw in verse 40.

Why do I think that? Because verse 44 fits better with Herod than it does with Augustus. Here is how one commentary describes the situation:

Verses 40-43 assume a parenthetical form, within the predictions that refer to the king of the 36th verse, and the parenthesis forms a distinct and complete series of actions: opening up with a war between a king of the south and a king of the north, and ending with the overthrow of the kingdom of the south. Looking at the passage in this light, the antecedent to the pronouns in the 44th verse is to be found at a considerable distance backwards from them. But this is in consistency with a practice, which is not unfrequent in the Hebrew prophets.

So perhaps we should think of verses 40-43 as having parentheses around them.

If so, then the focus in verse 44 switches back to Herod the Great, who was introduced in verse 36. Absent such a switch of focus back to that king the text would have left us hanging with regard to his fate.

We learned what would happen to Alexander the Great in verse 4. We learned what would happen to Antiochus the Great in verse 19. What would happen to Herod the Great?

If verse 44 is again talking about Herod, how did Herod fulfill this verse?

“But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.”

What are we looking for? We are looking for tidings from the east and tidings from the north that caused Herod to go forth with great fury.

Let's start with the tidings out of the north.

I earlier mentioned that Herod killed three of his own sons, but we haven't yet looked at the details of how that happened.

While his son Antipater was at Rome, he sent letters to Herod in an attempt to convince him that two of his other sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, were conspiring against him and were making false accusations about him to Augustus. These letters certainly qualify as tidings out of the north that troubled Herod.

In fact, they troubled Herod so much that Herod returned with the three princes to Jerusalem, where eventually had all three of them executed.

What about the tidings out of the east?

Were there any tidings from the east that caused Herod to go forth with fury?

Matthew 2:1-4 — Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men **from the east** came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

Matthew 2:16-18 — Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, **became furious**, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

There could be no closer fit than that! In response to the tidings he received from the north and from the east, Herod went forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many, just as verse 44 tells us.

Verse 44 is the primary reason why I believe that “the king” in verse 36 is Herod the Great.

In the history of the Jewish people the next and last stage was occupied by a king, whose character was one of the most detestable, and whose doings were among the most atrocious, of any that have been recorded in the annals of the human race, he being, moreover, the only “king” over the Jewish nation in all this long period of more than 500 years.

DANIEL 11:45

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

So far, we have seen that neither Alexander the Great nor Antiochus the Great ended in greatness, and the same is true of Herod the Great.

Herod had two palaces in Jerusalem (the glorious holy mountain), one in the temple area and the other in the upper city. Both of these palaces were between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea (between the seas).

As for the final phrase (“he shall come to his end, and none shall help him”), here is how Josephus describes the death of Herod the Great:

But now Herod’s distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by God’s judgment upon him for his sins: for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also ex-ulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. ... When he sat upright he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree.

[And] he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven. A man he was of great barbarity towards all men equally, and a slave to his passions; but above the consideration of what was right; yet was he favored by fortune as much as any man ever was, for from a private man he became a king; and though he were encompassed with ten thousand dangers, he got clear of them all, and continued his life till a very old age.

And there ends one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible.

So where are we at the end of Chapter 11?

We have marched verse by verse through the history of the world from the days of Daniel and King Cyrus up to the days of Christ and Herod the Great. As we end Chapter 11 with the death of King Herod in 4 BC, Jesus has been born, Rome is in charge of Palestine, and all the world around is enjoying the Roman peace that followed the Battle of Actium.

We should keep this time frame in mind as we move into the final chapter of this wonderful book!

CHAPTER 12

DANIEL 12:1-4

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

The most important words in understanding this section of the vision are the first four words in verse 1: “**And at that time.**” This key phrase is repeated twice in verse 1, and it provides 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 Daniel 12 will occur at the time when the events of Daniel 11 come to an end. What was happening when Daniel 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 Bible to see when that happened. Let's consider these other clues.

First Clue: At this time, we are told that the angel Michael would arise.

Here Michael is called “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” In Daniel 10:21, he is called “your prince.” Just as Persia had a prince in Daniel 10, the Jews also had a prince — Michael. The fact that Michael is involved here confirms that this part of the vision is focused on the Jews.

This focus 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. (“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.”) This entire vision has been focused on the Jews, and the opening verses of Daniel 12 are no exception.

Second Clue: At this time there would be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time” This language was a common way of describing a very terrible calamity. Did such a calamity befall the Jews in the first century? Yes. Read the description of Jerusalem's destruction found in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:21 — For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

We can 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.

Third Clue: Verse 1 tells us that:

At that time thy people (the Jews) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Did that happen in the first century? Absolutely.

Jeremiah 33:14-16 — Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. **In those days, and at that time**, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. **In those days** shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

Luke 1:68-70 — Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.

But, you say, how can we be in the first century when verse 2 talks about the final resurrection at the end of the world? Let's take a closer look at that verse.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

For starters, if this is the final resurrection, then we must conclude that the vision includes the end of the world, and so we must conclude that the Jews have a special role to play in the end of the world. Such a conclusion would be in clear conflict with other scriptures that tell us there is no distinction between Jew and Greek in the church.

But, you say, verse 2 sure sounds like the final resurrection. Does it really? Let's take a closer look. How many people will be raised from the dead at the end of the world?

2 Corinthians 5:10 — For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one** may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Notice the word "all" and the phrase "every one" in that verse. If we will **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, doesn't that tell us that **all** who have died will be raised from the dead?

If **every knee** shall bow to God and **every tongue** confess to God (Romans 14:11), then doesn't that tell us that **every person** who has died will be raised?

Acts 24:15 — There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Is anyone not included among the just and the unjust?

But what does Daniel 12:2 say? Does verse 2 say: “And all who sleep in the dust of the earth shall be raised”? No. Daniel 12:2 says that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Many of them? Doesn't that language suggest that some will continue sleeping in the dust? Maybe this verse doesn't sound as much like the final resurrection as we first thought! I think even the text itself suggests that the final resurrection is not in view here. (I do think we will see the final resurrection in this chapter, but I don't think we are seeing it here.)

But we have more than just the text of this verse — we also have the context and time frame of this verse. And the context and the time frame confirm that this resurrection in verse 2 is not the final resurrection at the end of the world. The context is the fate of Daniel's people, the Jews, and the time frame at the end of the vision is the first century after the death of Herod the Great.

Then to which resurrection does it apply if not the final resurrection? It is the figurative resurrection of many from the Jewish nation that occurred when their promised Messiah came to bring blessings to the entire world.

What happened to the Jews at this time? Those Jews who followed Christ were saved. Here they are pictured as awakening to everlasting life. Verse 3 shows them being turned to righteousness by those who were wise and shining as the brightness of the firmament. This awakening is the spiritual resurrection of the faithful Jewish remnant who entered into the kingdom of God under the rule of their Messiah.

They had long been under foreign domination — they were under the Persians when this vision was received. They would be under the Greeks, and they were under the Romans when the vision ended. But the day was coming when they would once again be ruled by a son of David, and that rule would last forever.

Listen as an angel of God tells Mary all about it 500 years after Daniel received this vision.

Luke 1:32-33 — He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Those Jews who rejected Christ were lost. Here in verse 2 they are pictured as awakening to shame and everlasting contempt.

All of the Jews were asleep in the dust of the earth as they awaited the Messiah. Jesus came to bring them life. Those who awakened are those who heard the gospel. Those who awoke to everlasting life are those who heard and obeyed the gospel. Those who awoke to shame and contempt are those who heard the gospel but rejected it. Many of the Jews fell into those two categories. But some never woke up at all because they did not hear the gospel call.

And so, just as verse 2 describes, many of them that slept in the dust of the earth awoke, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

But is this figurative resurrection of the Jews spoken of elsewhere in the Bible? Yes.

Ezekiel 37:12-14 — Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

John 5:24-25 — Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

Ephesians 5:14 — Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Luke 2:34 — And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.

Isaiah wrote about nations that would not experience such a figurative resurrection.

Isaiah 26:14 — They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.

This language may also help explain a very puzzling event that occurred at the death of Christ. Recall:

Matthew 27:52-53 — And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

I think that this actual physical resurrection of faithful Jews in Jerusalem was a sign of the spiritual resurrection that was occurring for the faithful Jews at that time.

Many use Daniel 12:2 to apply to the end of the world. I think they are taking it out of context. If we want to apply Daniel 12:2 to the end of the world, then we should be aware of the logical consequence from Daniel 11 that the Jews must then have some special future role to play in God's plan.

So is this figurative resurrection in the first century the only resurrection? Of course not, but some have also made that mistake, such as Max King, who has followed the way of Hymenaeus and Philetus.

2 Timothy 2:17-18 — And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

And if you don't know about Max King ... be thankful!

As there was a spiritual resurrection at Christ's first appearance, so will there be a physical resurrection at Christ's second appearance.

1 Corinthians 15:52-53 — In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

And, again, I think we will see that final physical resurrection before we leave Chapter 12.

Finally, in verse 4 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 22:10!) In Daniel's case, the time of the end likely refers to the end of the vision in Chapter 11, which was the first century, about 500 years after the book of Daniel was penned.

What is meant by that last phrase: "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

That final phrase in verse 4 confirms our first century time frame for these opening verses of Chapter 12. Where in the first century do we see many running to and fro so that knowledge shall be increased?

Matthew 28:19-20 — Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Mark 16:20 — And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

Verses 1-4 are still focused on the Jews, and those verses are describing what happened to the Jews when Jesus, their long awaited Messiah, arrived. Many of the Jews awoke and heard the gospel, with some obeying it and others not. The terrible judgment on Jerusalem occurred because of those who rejected Christ, and the gospel was proclaimed all throughout the world.

DANIEL 12:5-7

5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power

of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

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, times, and an half,” or better translated “a time, two times, and half a time” and that everything in the vision would be accomplished when the power of the holy people is scattered or shattered.

Notice that verse 7 gives us the termination point of the vision — “all these things shall be finished.” This is the end of the vision.

If we can determine what verse 7 is talking about then once again we have an all-important time frame to help us understand the prophecy.

So what is verse 7 talking about?

Nowhere is there a clearer statement than in verse 7 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 Roman Empire, and the Romans are the ones who shattered the power of the holy people. They shattered it to the point that it has never recovered. The priestly records were destroyed, and so the Jewish priesthood came to a permanent end. Animals sacrifices ceased and to this day have never returned. Verse 7 happened in AD 70.

The “time, two times, and half a time” is a broken seven, and we have seen this symbol before. The angel is telling Daniel that AD 70 is not the end for the people of God. The power of Rome would end one day, and the faithful remnant (both Jew and Gentile) would be victorious in Christ.

As for the Jews, the door did not close on them in AD 70. God’s plan for the Jews had always been to save them through Christ. That was God’s message to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. That was God’s message to Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. That was God’s message to David in Psalm 2. That was God’s message to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 33:14-16.

And it is also God’s message to Isaiah.

Isaiah 59:20 — “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD.

Paul quoted those same prophecies from Jeremiah 33 and Isaiah 59 when he likewise explained how the pathway to salvation remained open for the Jews.

Romans 11:26 — And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

These prophecies are all telling us the same thing — the door was not closed on the Jews even after AD 70. The promise of worldwide blessing through Christ was a promise for the Jews just as much as it was for the Gentiles.

The Jews have a pathway to salvation, but they do not have a pathway different from the pathway for the Gentiles. Jesus is the one and only pathway to life for both Jew and Gentile.

That is why we see the broken seven symbol used here. Whatever happens to the faithful people of God in this world, it can only be a broken seven as long as they remain faithful to the end. And that was true even with mighty Rome.

Yes, Rome had control, but not perfect control; yes, Rome had power, but not perfect power. Rome had a delegated control and a delegated power. We have already seen that Rome was acting as the servant of God in fulfilling the prophecies of this book. Rome would not last forever. It would be destroyed once it had served its purpose. A son of David would rule from the throne of David, and his kingdom would outlast and destroy Rome and all other worldly kingdoms.

The very best description of the “broken seven” symbol is found in Romans 8.

Romans 8:31-39 — What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died — more than that, who was raised — who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither

death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is what it means when we see a broken seven.

DANIEL 12:8-12

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. 11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

Daniel 10:1 tells us that Daniel had understanding of the vision, yet verse 8 tells us that he did not understand the vision. How do we explain that?

First, Daniel 10:14 tells us that the angel came to bring understanding of the vision to Daniel, and the angel is still speaking.

But second, I think by verse 8 Daniel understood the vision with his head, but perhaps he was still having trouble understanding the vision with his heart.

How could everything end with the people of God being shattered? How could God's plan for the Jews end with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple? Daniel is asking the angel for an explanation.

How does the angel respond?

First, the angel reminds Daniel that the end of the vision would not occur for some time. He would not be personally affected 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. They would know that the events that were occurring had been spoken of long before in Daniel 11 and 12.

Second, in verse 10, the angel assures Daniel that God will bless those who are good and that the wicked will perish. This is just what Daniel needed to hear after seeing the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

It must have appeared to Daniel 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. (And here we are reminded once again of a key theme in this book — things are not what they seem! We must learn to see things, including ourselves, as God sees them. We must learn to use our spiritual eyesight.)

Third, the angel then gives us what may be the most difficult two verses in the entire book of Daniel to understand:

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

The book of Daniel remains challenging all the way to the end!

The angel 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, he says that those who wait for 1335 days (45 days longer than the 1290 days) will be blessed. Why 1290? Why 1335? Why 45 more days? What do they mean?

First, note that the 1290 days occur after both the removal of the burnt offering and the abomination that makes desolate. That is, the 1290 days do not separate these two events, as some suggest.

Second, 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 occur in the

first century (Matthew 24:34). The abomination of desolation in Daniel 11:31 occurred nearly 200 years before the birth of Christ.

There are two such abominations in the book of Daniel — one perpetrated by Antiochus Epiphanes and another perpetrated over two centuries later by the Romans. The earlier one is spoken about in Daniel 8:13 and Daniel 11:31. The latter one is spoken about in Daniel 9:27 and here in Daniel 12:11.

Which abomination is this then? We have already answered that question. 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 and 24:34, Jesus said that the abomination he spoke of would occur in the first century. It did, and this verse in Daniel is telling us about it.

Back to our earlier question: What about the 1290 days and the 1335 days? What do they denote? Let's turn that question around: What would we expect them to denote?

Daniel doesn't understand how God's plan for the Jews could end with the destruction of the Jews. But after he hears this final message from the angel, he understands God's plan (as we were told in Daniel 10:1). What must God have told him?

God must have told Daniel that God's plan for the Jews did not end with the destruction of their city and their temple, but for those Jews who were faithful to God, they would enter an eternal kingdom ruled by a son of David. God must also have told Daniel that those who destroyed the city and the temple would themselves be destroyed, and thus would not ultimately be victorious.

How do these two symbols depict that?

Revelation 13:5 uses 1260 days to describe the temporary power of Rome. Because 1260 days is 42 months (thirty days each), we have three and a half years. Thus, 1260 days points to a broken seven.

But here we have 1290 days, which is 30 days more than a broken seven. 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 seven plus a little bit more.

A more elaborate explanation is that thirty days were added to the lunar calendar every three years to bring it in line with the solar calendar, which could explain why we have 1290 instead of 1260. But I prefer the simpler explanation — 1290 days is three and half years plus just a little bit more.

What about the extra 45 days between the 1290 days and the 1335 days? What does that mean?

The context suggests that it denotes the time after Rome during which God's followers must continue to persevere. Those who wait and come to the end of the 1335 days will be blessed.

For those that have been wanting to find the end of the world in Daniel, I think we have finally found it!

I think these 45 days denote the time between the judgment of Rome and the final judgment. Those who wait and are faithful during this period will be blessed at the end of it. I think we are living today in that figurative 45 day period.

But why 45? The short answer is that I don't know for sure, and no commentary I have looked at seems to know for sure either. If, as seems likely, the number 45 had some special figurative meaning to the Jews of Daniel's day, then that understanding may have been lost. But we can speculate a bit.

The number 5 is said by some to symbolize the grace of God. (The number 5 and multiples of 5 occur all throughout the descriptions of the tabernacle.) The number 9 is said by some to denote finality and judgment. (The 9 judgments of Haggai 1:11, for example, and the number 9 being the final digit.)

And so, 45 being 5 times 9 may denote the grace of God leading to the final judgment of the world. In my opinion, that is the most likely explanation for the extra 45 days.

It is also possible that the number 45 denotes a countdown to the end of the world. Why, you ask, would 45 be used to denote a countdown? Because 45 is equal to $9 + 8 + 7 + 6 + 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1$.

One other possibility is that the 45 days (a 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 understanding would fit in well with our explanation of the extra thirty days in the 1290 days.

DANIEL 12:13

13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Finally, Daniel is assured that although he will not live to see these events ("for thou shalt rest"), he will be present at "the end of the days."

And the "end of the days"? What does that refer to?

As I said, 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 all. Daniel is again present and standing in his allotted place. I think that 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. And so it does not violate the time frame of that vision to say that Daniel is now hearing about the end of the world at the end of this chapter.

What we are studying now is the answer to Daniel's question in verse 8: "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

This question parallels the question in Matthew 24:3 — "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

In response to that question, Jesus first told the apostles in verses 4-34 about the destruction of the city, which was coming in their generation, and then Jesus told

them in verses 35-51 about the end of the world, which would not come with any signs.

Here, I think we also see an answer that jumps from the destruction of Jerusalem to the final judgment of the world, just as Jesus did in Matthew 24 (after quoting Daniel).

And so, while I do not think Daniel 12:2 refers 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. How could that occur absent a resurrection?

So, for those who ask us to show evidence of the final resurrection in the Old Testament, we should not point them to Daniel 12:2 (as many mistakenly do), but we should instead point them to Daniel 12:13.

The book ends with a complete confirmation of one of the book's main 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.

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, as Daniel, are waiting for that day when we will stand up and take our allotted place among the people of God.

What a beautiful book! What a beautiful promise! The faithful people of God, as did Daniel, will go to their rest, but they will one day take their place with Daniel when the King comes to claim his own.

I don't know about you, but I want to be standing right next to Daniel on that great day!

DANIEL - LESSON 1

THE FOUR EARTHLY KINGDOMS OF DANIEL 2

King David (died 970)
Divided Kingdom (931)
Israel exiled to Assyria (722)
Isaiah preaches to Judah (died 680)

Josiah
(640-609)
Jehoahaz
(609)
Jehoiakim
(609-598)
Jehoiachin
(598-597)
Zedekiah
(597-586)

| (1) Babylon |
|---|
| Nabopolassar (626-605) |
| Nebuchadnezzar (605-562) Daniel 1-4 Lived like an ox (582-575) |
| Amel-Marduk (562-560) 2 Kings 25:27-30 |
| Neriglissar (560-556) |
| Labashi-Marduk (556) |
| Nabonidus (556-539) |
| Belshazzar (553-539) Daniel 5:1, 7:1, 8:1 |

Babylon defeats Assyria in 610.
Jeremiah preaches in 608.
Battle of Carchemish in 605.
Daniel taken captive in 605.
Ezekiel taken captive in 597.
Jerusalem destroyed in 587.
Obadiah preaches in 586.
Ezekiel's vision in 573.
Buddha is born in 563.

(1) BABYLON

Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:1)
Amel-Marduk (2 Kings 25:27-30)
Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1)

(2) PERSIA

Cyrus the Great
(Is. 44:28, 45:13, Ezra 4:5)
Darius I (Ezra 4:5, Zech. 1:1)
Xerxes I (Ezra 4:6, Esther 1:1)
Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7, 7:1)

(3) GREECE

Alexander the Great (Zech. 9:1-8)
Cassander
Lysimachus
Ptolemy
Seleucus

(4) ROME

Julio-Claudian Dynasty

Augustus (Luke 2:1)
Tiberius (Luke 3:1)
Caligula
Claudius (Acts 11:28)
Nero (died AD 68)

Civil War Emperors

Galba
Otho
Vitellius

Flavian Dynasty

Vespasian
Titus
Domitian (died AD 96)

And in the days of **these kings** shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. (Daniel 2:44, Acts 2)

Coregency
See Daniel 5:16

(2) Persia

Cyrus the Great (559-530)
Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; 45:13 & Ezra 4:5
Daniel 10:1

Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon in 539.
First Return under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in 538.

Cambyses II (530-522)

Cambyses conquers Egypt in 525.

Pseudo-Smerdis (522)

Darius I (522-486)
(Darius the Great
Darius Hystaspes)
Ezra 4:5

Babylonian revolts in 522-521.
Haggai & Zechariah preach in 520.
Egyptian revolt in 519-518.
Temple completed in 515.
Roman Republic founded in 509.
Greeks defeat Persians at Marathon in 490.
Egyptian rebellion in 486.

Xerxes I (486-465)
(Ahasuerus)
Queen Esther
Ezra 4:6 & Esther 1:1

Battle of Thermopylae in 480.
Xerxes captures Athens in 480.
Battle of Salamis in 480.
Esther becomes Queen in 479.
Confucius dies in 479.

Artaxerxes I (464-424)
(Longimanus)
Ezra 4:7; 7:1
Nehemiah 2:1; 5:14

Second Return under Ezra in 458.
Third Return under Nehemiah in 445.
Parthenon is built in 440.
Malachi preaches in 433.
Plato is born in 427.
Herodotus dies in 425.

Darius II (423-404)

Socrates dies in 399.
Aristotle is born in 384

Artaxerxes II (404-359)

Alexander the Great is born in 356.

Artaxerxes III (359-338)

Arsas (338-336)

Darius III (336-331)

Persia falls to Alexander the Great in 331.

Who was
Darius the Mede?
See Daniel 5:31,
9:1, 11:1.

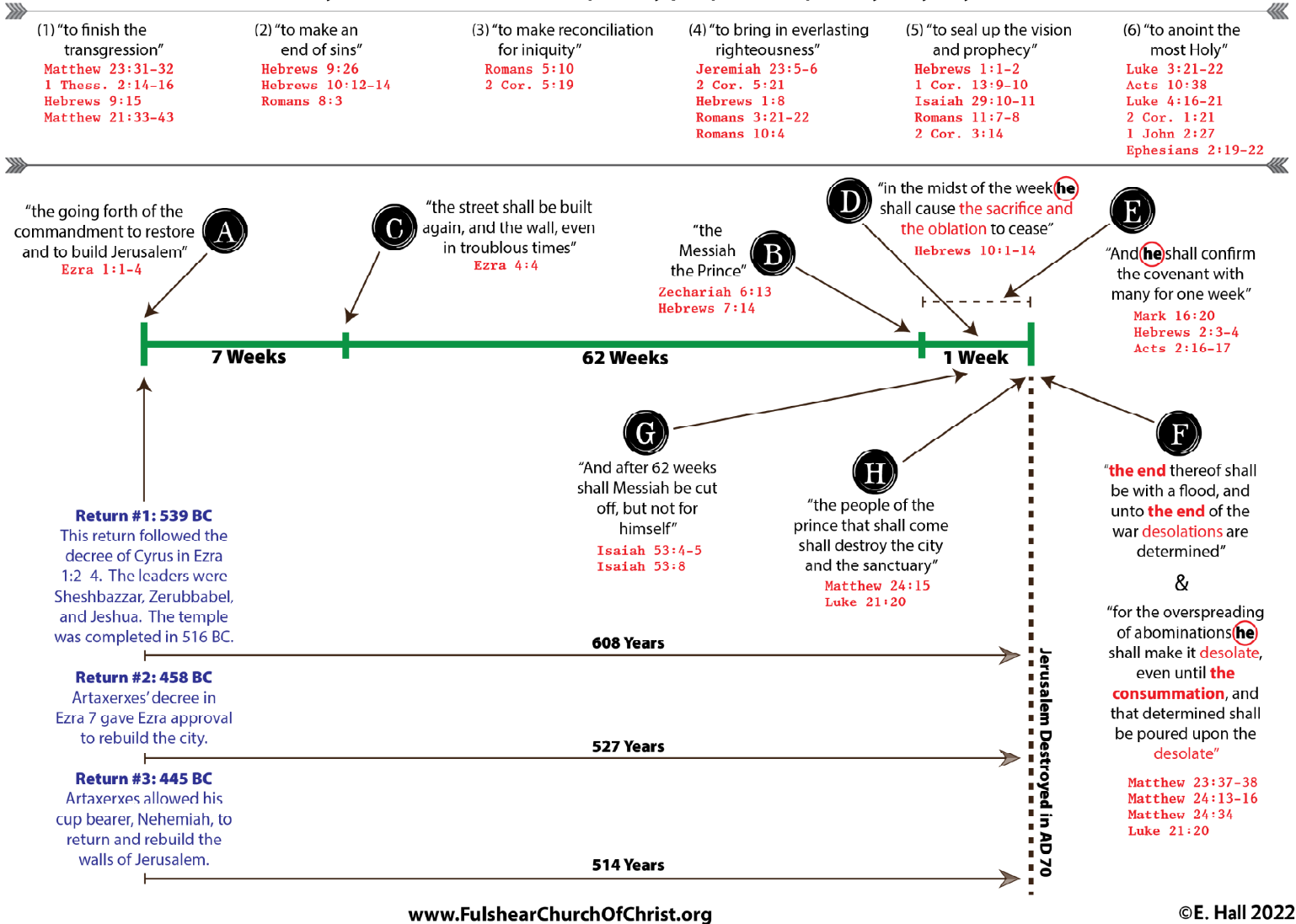
DANIEL
Ezekiel 14:14
Ezekiel 14:20
Ezekiel 28:3
Matthew 24:15
Mark 13:14

FULSHEAR CHURCH OF CHRIST

E. Hall 4/10/22

DANIEL 9:24-27

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city"



DANIEL 11

WITH ANNOTATIONS

1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. 2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. 3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. 5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. 6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. 7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. 9 So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. 10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. 11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. 13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. 14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south; also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. 15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities; and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land which by his hand shall be consumed. 17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. 18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. 19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. 20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. 21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even 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 be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. 27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. 28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land. 29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. 31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. 32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. 33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. 36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; and shall prosper full the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces, and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. 40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships, and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. 44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

★ There are two different "desolation" prophesies in Daniel — one done by the Greeks (8:13 and 11:31) and one done by the Romans (9:27 and 12:11).