

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Bowing before the Lord of History

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Part One:

STUDY GUIDE ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

DANIEL CHAPTER 1

Even when it looks like God has forgotten, He is still at work.

Read through Daniel chapter 1 at least three times using two different translations.

Let's start by correcting how we normally think about chapter 1. We often point to the phrase "Daniel purposed in his heart not to eat the king's meat" and observe that God blessed him. Daniel was uncompromising. Daniel was courageous. So, we might say, "be like Daniel and you'll be super blessed."

That's not completely wrong. But I would propose that **the greatest hero of the story is actually God**, not Daniel. Try this—go through the story and write down the major actions of each character. What did each person do?

Daniel _____

Nebuchadnezzar _____

Azariah _____

The "chief of the eunuchs" _____

God _____

One way to analyze a story is to identify the hero(s), the villain(s), and the agents. (Agents are like walk-on characters—people that aren't really a central part of the story.) Try identifying each of the people above. Beside each name write either "hero," "villain" or "agent."

You're on the right track if you identified both Daniel and God as heroes. But now we have to dig deeper, because we should identify the climax of the story—the event that "solves" the situation and gives us a happy ending. What is it?

Now let's ask who was responsible for it? Who gave this story a happy ending? _____

Let's explain one important detail. The central issue of the story is clearly the food. But what's the big deal? Were vegetables and water more nutritious? (v. 12) Possibly, but this is clearly not the reason. God even wanted His people to enjoy meat and such kinds of food as part of worship! (Deut 14:23) Later, in his life, Daniel Himself did eat meat, fine food and wine (Dan. 10:3).

So why such a big deal here? The key word is the word "defile." Look for it twice in verse 8. Or read Leviticus 11 (c.f. Lev 17:10–18:5). For a Jew, eating one of these foods would defile him—it would make him unclean (see also Acts 10:9–16).¹ So Daniel's solution to avoid disobeying God's law is to request the simplest food instead.

¹ This becomes an important part of understanding why Daniel apparently ate meat, fine foods and drank wine in his old age. As a young student in chapter 1 (probably around 14 years old) he had no choice in what he would eat. As a high official in chapter 10, he certainly had the ability to dictate that his food would be prepared according to God's law

Note that they were just “youths” (v. 4, 10, 13, 15)—probably just 14 or 15 years old. How do you think the miracle of v. 15 affected them in relationship to their peers?

How about the miracle of v. 17 and 20 in relationship to the “wise men of Babylon?”

This brings us to the last big idea of the chapter. Read verses 1-2. Israel was God’s people, called out to become a “light to the nations” who would flock to them to find out their secret (see Deut 28:9–14). But instead of being a light to the nations they have become a pariah on the earth (see Deut 28:64–68). The sacred vessels of the temple now sit in the trophy case of a pagan temple to give glory to Nebuchadnezzar. Judging by human appearances, God seems to have completely lost control of the wheel of human history.

But now read v. 21. Have you heard of Cyrus? This king would be critically important for Israel’s future restoration. Look at Isa. 44:28–45:7; 2 Chron. 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–8. (Be sure to compare Dan. 1:2 with Ezra 1:7-8.) What makes Cyrus so significant?

But note the high position Daniel held in Cyrus’ court (Daniel 6:1–3, 28). According to one historian, when Cyrus read his own name in Isaiah’s prophecy, he called some of the most “eminent Jews” in his kingdom. It seems quite likely that Daniel was part of the counsel that led to Cyrus’ decision to send the people back. So how would you relate the tragedy of Dan. 1:1-3 with the promise of 1:21? What is God doing? Even in the midst of judging His people, what is He already preparing for them?

Reflections:

1. The hero of the story is God. How is this richer and fuller than if Daniel was the only hero?
2. And yet Daniel was human too. What reasons or justifications could he have given to excuse eating the king’s food anyway?
3. Based on what Daniel could see, God seemed to have forgotten His people. But in fact He was already preparing a way of deliverance. How can this story help us more accurately interpret our lives when things seem to be spinning out of control?

DANIEL CHAPTER 2

“To Him belong wisdom and might.”

Read through Daniel chapter 2 at least three times using two different translations.

This story is about two themes—God’s knowledge and His power. Let’s see how it teaches us about each. It starts off with a clear dramatic question—the king has a dream but the wise men are helpless to explain it.

Why was the king so irate? Some translations say “the thing is gone from me” (v. 8) as though he forgot it. But the better translation is probably “my decree is firm.” Apparently it was common for kings to ask for the interpretation of dreams—there were even Babylonian manuals for how to do it. But to ask that they tell him not just the interpretation but the dream itself required that they actually had access to truth.²

Let’s look at the conversation that happens in verses 3-11. How many “cycles” back and forth do they have? Is there a progression each cycle? Most importantly, what is the final, climactic answer of the “wise men?”

The result, of course, is that everyone will die (v. 12). Daniel is apparently included in the group to die (v. 13). But he also hasn’t heard about any of it? Why wasn’t Daniel invited? Compare 1:1 (605 or the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s first year) with 2:1. Also see how long their training would last in 1:5. So when is this happening compared to ch. 1?³

Fill out the contrast between the two groups in the story—Daniel vs. the “wise men.”

The “wise men”	Daniel
Important authorities in the kingdom (2:2).	Merely a student (2:13)
Not concerned to even tell Daniel (v. 13-15).	(v. 17, 24, 49)
Argue and stall for time (v. 4-11)	(v. 16, 26-27)
Have no access to “the gods” (v. 11).	(v. 18-19, 27-28)
Concerned to protect their reputation (v. 10)	(v. 19, 28, 30, 45)

Daniel’s response and conduct is an obvious wonderful example. And yet just as in chapter 1, the true hero of the story is God. One of the major ideas is that the pagan gods are nothing but the true God has all knowledge and power (v. 27-28). Daniel himself has pointed us to view God as the hero of the story (v. 18-19, 21-23, 27-28, 30, 45, 47). Note even who Nebuchadnezzar gives the credit to in v. 47.

We’ve studied most of the chapter now except the dream itself. Read verses 36-45. How would you summarize the truths in this revelation?

1. The kingdoms of the world will _____.

2. The God of heaven will (v. 44ff) _____.

² It’s even possible that because Nebuchadnezzar saw the statue destroyed in his dream and kings like him were often paranoid of coups, Nebuchadnezzar may have suspected a plot. Hence, his demand could be that they either confess the plan or he would get rid of them once and for all.

³ Note also that Daniel has to be introduced in 2:25

This brings us to the center of the entire passage—Daniel’s prayer in verses 20-23. It’s highlighted because it’s poetry, and it has two main themes—wisdom and might. Read through the poem and find where these words occur. Is the placement significant (where this comes in the poem)?

Now read through the poem again and look for a simple two-part outline in the the middle section (v. 21-22) using these same two themes. How is the passage structured?

Let’s take everything we’ve studied and put it all together. We have this contrast:

The “wise men”	Daniel
The gods	Daniel’s God
Ignorance and helplessness	Wisdom and might
Their kingdoms will be destroyed.	His kingdom is forever.

So how would combine this with the two themes of wisdom and might? Here’s the simple conclusion: God is the only true God. All other “gods” are fake. We see His true wisdom and might in two ways:

1. Only He can declare the truth (reveal the king’s dream and its meaning).
2. Only His kingdom will truly last forever.

Reflections:

1. Note that Daniel set up an appointment with the king before he had an answer. What does this imply about his faith? How does this relate to what he did in 1:12–15?
-

2. It’s striking to see Nebuchadnezzar’s response in 2:47. Do you think he became a believer? What about ch. 3? _____

3. If we really believed this passage, how would we respond when faced with a confusing situation or something that seems hopeless (v. 17–18)? _____

4. What is the “eternal kingdom” of v. 44–45? What things can we observe about this “eternal kingdom”?
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DANIEL CHAPTER 3

“Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

Read through Daniel chapter 3 at least three times using two different translations. Let's start by making two connections with chapter 2:

1. Notice that the first part of the story is centered around the image. Where did Nebuchadnezzar get the idea of a huge image of gold? The purpose of the dream in chapter 2 was to demonstrate that all kingdoms will be replaced by God's eternal kingdom. Did Nebuchadnezzar get the point?

2. What were the twin themes of chapter 2? Of those which did chapter 2 emphasize more? (Look especially at Dan 2:20–23). _____ So if chapter 2 proved one of these themes, what might we expect as the core theme of chapter 3?

One interesting thing about this chapter is the repeated lists. Let's write down the verses where we see these words (or similar forms) repeated:

- “Satraps, prefects, governors, counselors...” _____
- “Horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe...” _____
- “The image that King Nebuchadnezzar set up” _____

So what's the point? First, this was clearly a very public event. The whole hierarchy of government is there and watching. And second, this image was clearly connected to the king's honor. To not accept the “image the king set up” was a personal slight on him in front of all of his officials.⁴

Of course, the three friends refuse to bow down.⁵ What verses from the OT law (Exodus-Deut) might they have been thinking of when they refused to bow down? _____

Pay careful attention to the enemies' attack in v. 12. How do they identify these men? _____

Notice also that it is an implicit attack on the king's honor. What words show their manipulation?

According to Daniel 2:49; 3:12, the king already knew these men personally and had given them a position of honor (also v. 19). Perhaps this is why he gave them a second chance (v. 15). But what is the key issue the passage raises (look for parallel words in v. 16 and v. 17 and also v. 29)?

According to v. 18, are the men confident that they will live through this test?⁶ _____

Since the central issue of the passage is power and whether God is able to deliver the men from Nebuchadnezzar, notice the irony of v. 26. His best men were killed putting them into the fire (v. 22).⁷ How will he make them come out? The thing that was their greatest threat has become their safety.

⁴ Though impossible to prove, it seems that Nebuchadnezzar was using this as some sort of test of loyalty or way to force everyone to acknowledge him as king (something similar seems to be happening in Daniel 6). If so, a public challenge from the three Hebrews was the last thing he wanted.

⁵ We might wonder why Daniel was not present for this test. But chapter 2:49 gives us a hint. Daniel was probably still in Babylon maintaining the court of the king. In terms of how the book develops, this proves that not only Daniel remained faithful.

⁶ Verses 17 and 18 might initially sound contradictory. Are they saying God will deliver or not? But it seems they were sure God would take care of them; just not sure if that would be through life or death. Either way, their primary concern is that the king knows that God certainly *can* deliver them

While we can't be sure, by implication who is the fourth person in v. 25? See also Isa. 43:2; Heb. 11:34.

What else does fire sometimes point us to? (Ex 3:2; 13:21; Dt 4:11–12; Ps 18:8) _____

Reflections:

1. Remember that the men did not know whether God would deliver them alive or not. What does this imply about our own faith in difficult situations like theirs?
2. Notice the specifics of their deliverance. In v. 21, 24 they were bound. In v. 25 the bonds are gone. But their clothes and even their hair are untouched. By God's power, the fire has burned only the very specific things that God ordained.
3. Notice the contrast in Nebuchadnezzar's emotions (Dan 3:13, 19, 22, changed in v. 24, 28–30). Ironically, he respects them (v. 28) because they disobeyed his command. How do even lost people view deep, unwavering and uncompromising integrity?
4. Notice the context of Isa. 43:2, especially how 42:24 seems to parallel Daniel 1:1-2 and Isa. 43:5-7 points to the future restoration from exile. How is God fulfilling His promises to protect His people during the exile?

⁷ The choice of punishment might seem strange, but a furnace was probably nearby because they used one to build the statue. Archer says that Babylonian smelting furnaces were shaped like an old-fashioned milk jug with an opening at the top for inserting ore and another at the ground level for adding fuel. It may also have been built into a hillside. That explains how they were thrown in (from the top) but Nebuchadnezzar could see in (the door at the bottom). The temperatures in this kind of smelter could reach as high as 1800 degrees F (1000 C). Miller 115

DANIEL CHAPTER 4

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven.”

Read through Daniel chapter 4 at least three times using two different translations.

Let's start by taking a general look over the passage. Who is the speaker? Also, what kind of document is it? In other words, does it sound like a personal conversation, a personal letter, a proclamation or something else? Take a special look at v. 1–3. Who do you think read or heard this story?

The first crisis of the story is Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Compare the contents of this dream (4:10–18) with the last time he asked for the interpretation of a dream (2:31–35). What ideas seem to be similar again? (Hint: a tall statue in ch 2 with a tall tree in ch. 4. Also compare 2:37–38 with 4:20–22. But what happens to each? Compare 2:34–35 with 4:23.)

Let's make one more comparison between chapters 2 and 4. The way the king calls his wisemen seems very similar in 2:2–11 and 4:6–9 How does Nebuchadnezzar seem to regard Daniel now? But there's also a big difference. Look at 2:24–26 compared to 4:8–9, 18. How has Nebuchadnezzar's view towards Daniel changed?

Notice God's mercy to Nebuchadnezzar. (1) He sent him a dream and Daniel's interpretation as a warning (4:27–29). (2) He gave Nebuchadnezzar time (look at 4:27–29). (3) Even after judgment he gave Nebuchadnezzar a chance to repent and be restored (4:25, 32, 34). (4) Incredibly and miraculously, when the king did repent he received his kingdom back (4:36). Now compare this to 5:24–30. What does this tell us about how God is working with Nebuchadnezzar?

God's choice of judgment against Nebuchadnezzar might seem odd—becoming like an animal. Even in the last few centuries there have been cases of insanity almost exactly like this.⁸ But why do you think God might have chosen this judgment? Look at how God describes kingdoms in 7:3–7 or 8:20–21. How does God view arrogant kings and powerful kingdoms?

What is the theme of this story? One major idea is repeated throughout the chapter. Look at 4:3, 17, 25, 34–35, 37. What did Nebuchadnezzar learn about the source of power and authority?

The passage even includes an illustration of this happening. Look at v. 17, 25 and then what happened in v. 36. What did God demonstrate to the king both in the humiliation and in the restoration?

Finally, let's trace what's happening in Nebuchadnezzar's heart across the entire book up to this point. How would you describe his response to God in each of these stories?

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
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⁸ See Miller no. 138

1:19–20	2:47	3:15 but v. 28-29	4:34-35

Reflections:

1. Some interpreters question whether Nebuchadnezzar became a believer. While we can't know for sure, his declaration of faith in v. 2-3 and v. 34–37 is more clear than many people we assume were believers.
2. Daniel chapter 4 is the only section of the OT composed by a Gentile (the only possible exception might be Job). But it's not just that. This is spoken by a king who persecuted and destroyed God's people (1:1-2). The conclusion is quite clear—God can save (or humble) anyone.
3. This chapter is apparently a decree that was addressed to his entire kingdom. How many people heard the story of God's power and the king because of Nebuchadnezzar's response?
4. Since a major theme of the chapter is also that God can humble anyone, what does it say about Nebuchadnezzar's pride that he was willing to open tell this embarrassing story to his entire kingdom?
5. Compare this story to James 4:10; 1 Pet 5:5–6 or even Phil 2:3–11. What should be our personal response to this story?

DANIEL CHAPTER 5

“You have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this.”

Read through Daniel chapter 5 at least three times using two different translations.

Chapters 2 and 3 (the king’s dream and the fiery furnace) are a closely connected pair around the two themes of God’s knowledge and His power. Chapters 4 and 5 are also a closely connected pair, this time around the theme of humility. In fact, Dan 4:37 is probably a small transition between the two, reminding us that (1) God is always just and (2) “and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”

But that raises an important question. We learned in ch. 4 that God showed Nebuchadnezzar tremendous mercy, giving him a warning, lots of time, and even restoring him at the end. Why not here? Both men were proud; God humbled both of them. But at the end of the story one is dead and the other is alive. Is this really just? Let’s take a look at the chapter to answer this question.

How many times now has Daniel been called in to interpret a dream? Look at chapter 2 and 4 compared here to ch. 5. Notice the pattern each time—something no one understands, they call the wise men to interpret but they fail, and finally Daniel gives a clear interpretation. What does this imply about Daniel’s God as opposed to the gods of the Babylonians? (Note Dan 2:11, 27–28, 47.)

	The Dream or Writing	No One Understands	Daniel Interprets
Ch. 2	Dan. 2:1-3		
Ch. 4	Dan. 4:4-5		
Ch. 5	Dan. 5:5-6		

But there’s something interesting too. In chapter 2 the king did not yet know Daniel. In ch. 4 he comments that “at last Daniel came in before me” and he is sure that Daniel can interpret (Dan 4:8, 18). But in ch. 5 his descendant seems to have forgotten Daniel. Look at Dan 5:10–14 for the reminder he needed⁹ and v. 13 to see that he did remember something. How much did Belshazzar actually know about Nebuchadnezzar’s faith according to Dan 5:22?

Not only did Belshazzar reject the truth he did know, but most importantly, he put his faith in non-existent, pagan gods (Dan 5:23) and “lifted up [himself] against the Lord of heaven”—another theme of Daniel. Consider several facts to put together the whole picture:

- 1) From history, we know that the city of Babylon was surrounded at this time by a huge army (Dan 5:30). And yet Babylon had a huge, impressive defense. Belshazzar wanted to convince his people that they were safe.
- 2) Look at Is 36:18–20. How would a king like Belshazzar have viewed past victories over his enemies?
- 3) These were the vessels of the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had captured (look at Dan 1:1–2; 5:2–3). In other words, they were like trophies of the past victory over Israel’s God.

⁹ Though we cannot be completely sure of her identity, she is not Belshazzar’s wife—they were already present in v. 2. She may have been Nebuchadnezzar’s widow or possibly the wife of another king, Nabonidus

How does this explain God’s harsh judgment on the king for his pride and his blasphemy? What was Belshazzar trying to accomplish by bringing out these vessels?

Read Daniel’s prophecy of immediate judgment in Dan 5:24–28. Does this sound like there will be a delay or that the judgment will be immediate? What would be the believing response to this?

Now look at Belshazzar’s response in Dan 5:29 (c.f. verse 17).¹⁰ Does he seem to believe what Daniel just said?

We should be shocked by the dramatic move directly from Belshazzar’s unbelief in v. 29 to the result in v. 30. God’s word was fulfilled completely and immediately.¹¹

But as we asked above, why did Nebuchadnezzar receive so much grace but Belshazzar never had a second chance? Above we discovered three reasons:

- 1) From Dan 5:22, Belshazzar already knew about _____
- 2) Belshazzar used God’s vessels to assure himself that _____
- 3) From 5:29, even when warned, Belshazzar responded with (5:29) _____

Reflections:

1. The new king in 5:30 (Darius) ruled the kingdom that succeeded Babylon—the Medes and Persians. What does this show us about Dan 2:38–39 or even Dan 7:4–5; 8:20 which were revealed before the events of chapter 5?
2. One of our observations from chapter 4 was that God is willing to save anyone. If chapter 4 is an amazing story of salvation, chapter 5 is a story of judgment. What does this tell us about the nature of saving faith? (Luke 18:14; James 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6)
3. This is one of the biblical chapters we can date exactly—this happened on Oct. 12, 539 BC. At this point, Daniel would have been at least 80 years old and lived in Babylon for 66 years. And yet they still refer to him as “one of the exiles of Judah” (Dan 5:13). Miraculously, we discover that God protects and even promotes Daniel through this chaotic transition into a completely new kingdom (Dan 6:3). How does this confirm the truth that God humbles the proud and exalts the humble?

¹⁰ Belshazzar himself was probably second in command under another king who had fled — Nabonidus. In other words, he is offering that Daniel will be just under his command. Given that, it’s quite rational that Daniel did not want this reward. If a kingdom is about to be conquered, being third in command can be quite dangerous!

¹¹ This also illustrates a recurring theme of the book — God “removes kings and sets up kings” (Dan 2:21)

DANIEL CHAPTER 6

“This Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius—even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

Read through Daniel chapter 6 at least three times using two different translations.

The first thing we should pay attention is the timing. Daniel 1:1 starts off in 605 BC. Chapter 6 happens sometime between 539 and 530, meaning Daniel was between 80 and 90 years old. He has survived an exile, lived through the reign of five Babylonian kings and now survived a change of governments. Incredibly, we find him exalted again. Think back through the previous 5 chapters. How has God blessed Daniel and his three friends?

Dan 1:17-20	Dan 2:46-49	Dan 3:28-30	Dan 4:9	Dan 5:29

And now 6:26-27 repeat God’s blessing on Daniel yet again. If Daniel or the reader wondered whether God will still work the same way after 70 years, what assurance does this give?

Clearly, the satraps have personal jealousies and selfish reasons that they opposed Daniel (Dan 6:3). But notice the hints throughout as well of something more (Dan 6:5, 13). What is the bigger issue going on?

Read back through the chapter again and look for any references from Daniel’s enemies or the king implying that they know about his faith (there are at least five verses).

Daniel certainly knew about the law (Dan 6:10). So why did he pray by his window? Would it have been wrong to just pray privately (Matt 6:6)? There are two reasons:

1 Kings 8:46-53; Psa. 28:2; 138:2; 55:17: _____

Daniel 6:10: _____

Notice v. 22—God delivered Daniel by sending His angel. The OT regularly records “the angel of the Lord” referring to Jesus Christ. While we cannot know for certainty who this is, it is clear that God could have shut the lions mouth without sending someone, but He wanted Daniel to have someone with him. What does this remind you of previously in chapter 3?

The capstone of the chapter leaves us in a very similar place to chapter 1. Look again at Isa. 44:28-45:7; 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-8. In case we missed it the first time (Daniel 1:21), we cannot miss it now. God has strategically put Daniel in place to fulfill His promises for the nation of Israel (Jer 25:12; 29:10).

In fact, God’s work of preservation stretches even further than this. Across the Old Testament God had promised that His people would become a light and a blessing to the world (Gen 12:3; Psa 67:1-7; Is 51:3-4; 60:3). Of course,

Israel deeply failed to fulfill this role. But look at how many national decrees and laws went out because of these faithful believers in Babylon (Dan 2:48–49; 3:28–29; 4:1–3, 34–35, 37; 6:25–27). God is doing a work in Babylon—using His people as a light, even in the midst of His judgment on them for their sin.

Notes and Reflections:

1. There is a good possibility that Darius is another name (like Pharaoh or Caesar) for the Persian king. If so, verse 28 would read, “during the reign of Darius—even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”
2. Naturally, it’s troubling to read in verse 24 that even the families of Daniel’s enemies were thrown into the lion’s den. We should simply note that the story records it happened and that Darius did it; not that this was right or just.
3. We cannot know why Darius was willing to sign this law, except that he may have thought it would help to consolidate his power in a newly unified kingdom (as in Dan 3:1–7).
4. What other parallels can you find between chapters 3 and 6? Take a look at Dan 3:27 with 6:23 or Dan 3:28 with 6:22 for a few ideas.

5. No one should expect to survive a night in a den of lions. Notice Darius’ words in Dan 6:19–20. Based on what he knows about Daniel and Daniel’s God, he actually expects a miracle! Notice also Daniel’s response in v. 21–22. He is clearly not panicked—he has time to be polite!
6. It’s easy to be amazed at Daniel’s success and envy him. He was near the top of command in two different world empires! But we should remember that Daniel also experienced times when he was forgotten (ch. 5), he was severely discriminated against, and more than once faced imminent death. Most importantly, Daniel had never read his own story—he didn’t know what would happen in the lion’s den. What lessons should this give us about how to view our own trials? What encouragement can we take when we don’t see the whole picture of what God is doing?

DANIEL CHAPTER 7

“There came one like a son of man.”

Read through Daniel chapter 7 at least three times using two different translations.

Let's start with this. Why is this chapter so different from what came before? So far each chapter has been a different story about God's deliverance and work. Now take a quick scan through chs. 7-12. How do these chapters seem different?

The most important thing to know is that while chapters 1-6 describe God's deliverance in the past, chapters 7-12 point ahead to the future. This is prophecy now. We will return to this idea later.

The first thing that shocks us is the picture of the beasts in ch. 7:2-8. What are these? We will return here in ch. 8, but each of these is a specific empire that would rule the ancient world.

Lion (v. 4)	Bear (v. 5)	Leopard (v. 6)	Monster (v. 7-8)
Babylon	The Medes & Persians	Greece	Rome & the end time kingdom
626-539	539-331	332-146	146-359; future

At this time Daniel was still living during the Babylonian kingdom. What does this tell us about the kingdoms of the earth? (See Dan 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21, 26, 28).

We tend to focus on the beasts in Daniel 7 because of curiosity. But the focus of the chapter is actually what comes next—God's reign. Earlier we observed that the kingdoms of the earth are constantly being replaced. But look at the sharp contrast with “God's kingdom,” a powerful and beautiful theme in Daniel. (Look at 2:44; 4:3, 34; 6:26; 7:14, 18, 22, 27). What contrasts stand out here between God's kingdom in Dan 7:9–10, 13-14 and the kingdoms of the world in Dan 7:2–8, 11-12?

For the previous six chapters we heard that God is the true king over the kingdoms of this world (Dan 4:17, 25, 32). Now we see Him. The picture of beasts biting, killing and devouring in verses 2–8 contrasts powerfully with God sitting on the throne, as He looks down in at the disgusting scene (c.f. Psa. 2). What does this imply about how God views the current events of our day?

Suddenly we are introduced to a new figure—one like a son of man (7:13-14, 25-26). The phrase means that someone comes who is man-like—a human. The kingdoms of earth are like animals; He is human. But this person also receives dominion and authority forever over all peoples, nations and languages. Who would both be human and receive authority over everything? How does this help us understand Psa 8:4 with Heb 2:5–9, or many other passages like Matt 9:6; 16:13, 27–28; 19:28; 24:30; Acts 7:56; Rev 1:13; 14:14?

We also meet a blasphemous figure fighting against God—the future antichrist (v. 8). But notice how quickly God disposes of him in v. 11-12. Does the opposition stand a chance before God's authority?

In fact, this theme of opposition against God or even more specifically, wicked resistance against God’s Messiah is a much broader theme. Notice the patterns of this struggle in the following passages.

Reference	The Messianic Hope	The Satanic Resistance
Gen. 3:15		
Dan. 7	The Son of Man	The blasphemous horn
Psa. 2:1-2, 12		
Luke 24:7		
Col. 1:13		
Rev. 12:4-5, 9-10		

What is the ultimate expression of this dark rebellion and struggle? (Read Matt 26:63–65.) And notice that in the middle of His trial He quoted this very passage. What does that imply about His authority?

We should observe one more theme—the authority of the Son of man will be shared with “the people of the saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:18, 21–22, 25, 27). There is also struggle while we wait (Dan 7:21, 25), but what is our final victory? (See Is 53:12; Rev 2:26–27; 20:6; 22:3–5.)

Reflections:

1. This chapter is one of the most significant OT chapters about the Messiah—it is quoted or reference more than 30 times in the NT. (Note Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7; 11:15; 14:14, for instance.) The title “Son of man” does speak of His humanity, but by referencing this passage it actually reminds us of His authority over the entire world.
2. Note that this authority was given to Jesus by the Father (Dan 7:14; c.f. Psa. 110:1; John 3:35). But we see this echoed again in Matt. 28:19-20. What is the connection between Daniel 7 and our giving the gospel with people that may not want to hear?
3. We noted two major themes—(1) Satan’s epic struggle against God’s messiah, and (2) our sharing in Jesus’ kingdom and reign. Putting those two together, should we be surprised that Satan would also war against believers (Eph 6:11–13)? How should we biblically view persecution?

DANIEL CHAPTER 8

“The vision refers to many days from now.”

Read through Daniel chapter 8 at least three times using two different translations.

Reading the first half of the chapter you probably came away confused. Don't worry—you're in good company. Daniel “had understanding in all visions and dreams” (Daniel 1:17) and interpreted difficult symbols in ch. 2, 4, and 5. But even Daniel didn't understand (v. 15) and needed an explanation. Even after personalized help from Gabriel himself (v. 16) Daniel “was overcome and lay sick for some days.... [He] was appalled by the vision and did not understand it” (v. 27). Meaning, don't be surprised if you don't understand everything. We'll do our best!

Let's start with the beasts. This vision is very similar to Dan 7:3–8 and ought to remind us of an important truth about the nature of the kingdoms of the earth (you may need to look at the study guide on chapter 7).

So what are these kingdoms? The passage gives us a clear answer. The ram is the kingdom of the Medes and Persians (v. 20) and the goat is Greece (v. 21). While this seems confusing it is actually a very important clue for understanding the book. Two other chapters of the book have given us a series of four kingdoms:

Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Identity
Head of gold	Lion with eagle's wings		2:38—
Chest and arms of silver	A bear raised on one side	Ram with two horns	8:20—
Middle and thighs of bronze	Leopard with 4 heads	Goat divided into four	8:21—
Legs & feet of iron and clay ¹²	Monster with iron teeth		

Using the references we can definitely identify the first three kingdoms based on the clear statements of Daniel. Try filling in the blanks above. (We will discuss the fourth kingdom in chapter 11.)

Now let's notice the date given in 8:1. Belshazzar is the king of chapter 5 and he had been reigning fourteen years by that time. Doing the math on each chapter you will get the following dates for the chapter (remember that BC dates run in reverse).

Ch 1	Ch 2	Ch 3	Ch 4	Ch 5	Ch 6	Ch 7	Ch 8	Ch 9	Ch 10-12
605	603-602	600-599	Before 571	Oct. 12, 539	Before 530	553	550	538	536-535

In other words, Daniel is telling us things here that stretch far into the future, as though someone 400 years ago predicted World War II, the atomic bomb and the information revolution. How does this fit with the themes we saw in Dan 2:20–23?

We also have one very specific illustration of this in the fall of Babylon (ch. 5). Even as the king partied and celebrated the glory of Babylon, Daniel already knew the Medes and Persians would be the next kingdom. Daniel had prophesied this already. In fact, even Isaiah had prophesied it 100 years before (Is 44:28–45:1). What does this imply about faith in God's words or the wisdom of those who listen (c.f. Dan 11:33)?

¹² Verse 33 implies a further distinction between the legs of iron and the feet of iron mixed with clay. It seems that this final part points to Rome but somehow in two stages—a later a kingdom that is different in some way

Looking again at the list of dates, notice that the chapters are in chronological order but they start over again in chapter 7. We also noticed earlier that chapters 7-12 (prophecies) are completely different from 1-6 (stories). The fundamental argument of the book is that God does not change—if Daniel could trust Him for the past we can trust Him for the future as well. What attributes of God does the book emphasize like this?

Attribute of God	In the Past	In the Future
	Dan 2:22, 45	Dan 12:9–10
	Dan 4:34; 6:26	Dan 7:14
	Dan 6:22	Dan 9:4, 23
	Dan 1:20; 2:48–49; 3:30; 5:29; 6:3, 28	Dan 7:18, 22, 27; 12:3
	Dan 4:37; 5:22–23, 30; 6:24	Dan 7:11–12, 25–26; 11:45; 12:2

Finally, we should note that this prophecy is for “the time of the end” (Dan 8:17) and “many days from now” (8:26). While it primarily refers to Persia, Greece and King Antiochus Epiphanes, there is something more going on.¹³ The actions of this blasphemous king points ahead to a future wicked king who will do many of the same things—the Antichrist. Everything Daniel prophesied here was fulfilled precisely in 163-157 BC. But what confidence does that give us as we think about God’s future predictions? Compare 8:21–25 with Dan 9:26–27 and Dan 11:21–35. What did Antiochus’ do and how does that point ahead to the Antichrist?

Reflections:

1. As we will see again in chapter 11, many other historical events happened during these times that history textbooks would call significant. Why did God chose to focus on a relatively minor king, Antiochus? Both here (Dan 8:10, 12–13, 24–25) and in later chapters (Dan 11:30–35) it is clear that Antiochus specifically pursued God’s people. In other words, God gives special attention and judgment to those who persecute His people.
2. It is also notable that Antiochus exalted himself, even choosing for himself the title Epiphanes, meaning “god manifested.” Antiochus also blasphemously desecrated the temple (Dan 8:13). But in the end God humbled him and allowed him to be defeated. What does this remind you of as one of the lessons we learned in Daniel chapters 4, 5? What does it point to about the Antichrist (2 Th 2:3–12; Rev 13)?
3. The fact that Daniel did not fully understand the vision is very interesting (Dan 8:27). He was especially gifted in interpretation and the one who received it directly from God (c.f. 1 Pet 1:10–11). What can this tell us when we are struggling to understand prophecies or know how they fit together? Certainly the curiosity is allowed (Dan 8:15–17; c.f. Rev 1:1), but should we really expect to understand every detail?

¹³ The king of Dan 8:21–25 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (163-157) who fulfilled exactly what is prophesied here. For more information see these verses in the included commentary

DANIEL CHAPTER 9

“To put an end to sin and to atone for iniquity”

Read through Daniel chapter 9 at least three times using two different translations.

We can start with this observation. Daniel is writing in the first year of Darius (9:1), meaning that the defeat of Babylon just occurred (Dan 5:24–31). That was a direct fulfillment of prophecies we just studied in chapter 8. In other words, Daniel is seeing that God fulfills prophecy.

Now take a look at Jer 25:11–12; 29:10. Daniel was taken in that captivity in 605 BC; chapter 9 was written in 550 BC (BC dates run backwards). Looking at the numbers, what is Daniel seeing about the chronology?

Daniel’s immediate response is to pray. If you carefully note the words in Dan. 9:4-19, they are utterly full of verses from the Old Testament. Let’s look at just a few of them.

Daniel’s Prayer	OT Passage	Significance
Dan. 9:4	Deut. 7:9	
Dan. 9:5	Lam. 3:42	
Dan. 9:7	Lev. 26:40	
Dan. 9:11	Lev. 26:14-45	
Dan. 9:16	Psa. 79:4	
Dan. 9:17	Num. 6:25	

What does all of this imply about Daniel’s knowledge and faith in God’s Word? What does it say about God fulfilling what He has said He would do?

Two passages are especially important. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 predicts all of these events, before Israel even entered the promised land. And similarly 1 Kings 8:46–53 during the time of Solomon describes a response just like Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9. Please read through both passages.

Most shocking, notice the detail in 1 Kings 8:48 closely mirroring Dan 6:10. Since 9:1 tells us thus was in the first year of Cyrus, the two periods are the same. In other words, chapter 9 tells us what Daniel was praying about in chapter 6 (the lion’s den). Seeing these ancient prophecies, what role is Daniel taking to recognize his place in the story of God’s work and rightly fulfill his role?

God answered Daniel’s prayer in v. 24-27. The answer is another prophecy much like what we read in Jeremiah 25:11–12; 29:10, predicting another seventy. But this time it will be 70 groups of 7.

One clarification—Some translations say “seventy weeks,” but the Aramaic word for “weeks” is the number “seven.” In other words, the angel told Daniel “there will be seventy sevens”—490 years.

Earlier, with Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years, we saw that Daniel took God’s words seriously and started doing math. So what should we do here? Let’s look at the numbers.¹⁴

¹⁴ The ESV renders Dan 9:25 in a confusing and incorrect way. Use a different translation for this verse.

Daniel 9:24-27	Fulfillment	Date	Total Years
“From the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem” (v. 25)	The decree to Ezra	458 BC	
“Seven sevens” (v. 25)	Jerusalem rebuilt	409 BC	49 years
“Seven sevens and sixty two sevens” (483 years)	The beginning of Christ’s ministry (baptism)	AD. 26	483 years
“A strong covenant for one seven” (v. 27)	The Antichrist’s covenant with Israel	Future	7 years

We cannot know the time of Christ’s return. But could someone have studied these words and calculated to know when Jesus would be born (c.f. Matt 2:1–12)? What does this say about taking God at His word?

As amazing as this prophecy is, that is not the main point. Note “the anointed one, a prince” (v. 25) and “an anointed one shall be cut off” (v. 26). Both times this could be translated “Messiah.”

Now look at the beautiful expressions in v. 24. All of these purposes will be fulfilled in His coming. (For more explanation, look at the commentary section on each of these expressions.) Don’t miss the most important thing. The purpose of the Messiah’s coming is our salvation!

What is the result of Messiah’s coming—what do these expressions in v. 24 mean?

Reflections:

1. Daniel probably never personally experienced the deliverance he prayed for—we don’t know if he ever returned to Palestine. But even if he could not bring the entire nation to repentance, he was ready to pray and fulfill his part in God’s great plan. Later Ezekiel refers to Daniel (Ezek 14:14, 20) as an example of someone praying in behalf of the nation.¹⁵ Sometimes we may not be able to see external visible results, but God is still working and we can have a powerful part in that work through prayer.
2. This passage is the main way we know that the tribulation will last for seven years. We also learn here that the tribulation will be split into two halves of 3 1/2 years. (Note also Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14; in months Rev 11:2; 13:5; in days Rev 11:3). We may be surprised by the gap between the first 69 sevens and the last. But this is also a pattern across Scripture—following Jesus’ death God purposes are delayed while He mercifully waits before judging the world (2 Pet 3:2–9).

¹⁵ This is probably what Moses, Job and Daniel have in common—they interceded for sinners and God answered their prayers (Ex 32:7–14; Job 42:7–9; Dan 9:3–19)

DANIEL CHAPTER 10

“from the first day that you set your heart to understand... your words have been heard”

Read through Daniel chapter 10 at least three times using two different translations.

This chapter is probably one of the most vivid and dramatic in the entire book. Let's start by noticing the vision in Dan 10:5–9. Now compare this to Rev 1:12–17. Who does this appear to be? _____

And yet it's also clear that the individual in the following verses is an angel (Dan 10:10–21). Read verses 5-21 again carefully. Is it possible that the person of verses 5-9 is different from the one who follows? Is it possible that this really is a vision of Christ? _____

The passage leaves us with many questions. Look at verses 13–14, 20–21. Here's what we can definitely say:

- Angels do exist in some kind of rank (Eph. 3:10), and Michael is a “chief prince” (v. 13).
- Spiritual warfare is real. Angels do battle with demons (Rev 12:7).
- It seems that the demons are somehow connected to specific nations (c.f. Rev. 2:1ff; Matt 18:10)

Of course, now lots of questions arise. Does every country have a guardian demon? Are some demons more powerful than others? Does spiritual warfare happen all the time?

The answer is that we don't know. See Rev 10:3–4. God let John hear about the seven thunders, and John apparently could have written them down. But God didn't want those things recorded and apparently it wouldn't be best for us to know those things. Why do you think Daniel 10 records the existence of spiritual warfare and the battles of the angels but stops there, telling us no more? _____

Part of the point here is that the struggles Daniel experiences on earth are tied in some way to realities happening in heaven. What we see happening in the world is not all that exists. There is all true and real spiritual warfare. Can you think of other places in Scripture where the things happening in heaven have a direct affect on the results on earth? (Hint: Try looking at Job or the book of Revelation.)

This is most clearly illustrated right here in our passage. Read verses 2, 11–14, noting especially the “twenty-one days” in v. 13 (full 3 weeks in v. 2). Daniel prayed faithfully and tirelessly. But there was a very specific reason that no answer came. In God's sovereign rule over the universe, there is much more going on than any of us can understand. How could this passage help us better understand when we are waiting for God to answer our prayers?

By comparison, look at Daniel 9:23—a very parallel idea, but in that case the answer was immediate. Daniel's prayers were not all answered the same way or immediately.

Reflections:

1. As a minor observation, we noted in chapter 1 that Daniel refused the king's meat because it would violate God's dietary laws. Here we learn that Daniel did normally eat fine food at the end of his life (10:3). Did Daniel later compromise and give in? The key is that Daniel is probably 85 here and well-established with strong influence in the government (as in ch. 6). If Daniel needed his food to be prepared according to God's law, that would be no problem now. This is helpful when we consider practical decisions. Believer's conclusions might be quite different because their situations are so different.
2. Notice that it is the kingdom of Greece and Persia that each have demons. Remembering that they were represented as beasts in chapter 7, what does this tell us about the nations of the world? See also Matt 4:8-9; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2.
3. One reason that the person in Dan 10:5-6 might be Christ is because of Daniel's response—He was completely exhausted and unable to do anything else (v. 8-9). But in the following verses Daniel is strengthened and even able to interact with the angels. One conclusion is that Daniel's total weakness and exhaustion shows us what happens when someone sees the full glory of Jesus Christ.
4. Another interesting insight is that Daniel is full of very cryptic visions like this. Who is the figure in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:25)? Who joined Daniel in the lion's den (Dan 6:22)? Who is the "man clothed in linen" (Dan 12:6-7), apparently separate from the other angels? In each passage we cannot positively confirm that these are visions of Christ but certain details point that way. And yet several passages are quite clear. Daniel 7 introduces us to the Son of Man who receives all authority and power. There is no question that this is Christ. Daniel 9 introduces us to "Messiah, the prince" who will be cut off (be killed). In other words, there is actually a huge number of references to the Messiah in Daniel. The strong connection between this description and Revelation 1 is just one more example.
5. Finally, chapter 10 is actually an extended introduction to the vision of chs. 11-12. Daniel learned that this vision was really about the end of human history (Dan 10:14; c.f. 8:17; 11:35; 12:4, 9, 13). This explains why there would be even demonic resistance against the angel and spiritual warfare. God's grand purposes in Jesus Christ for bringing salvation to the world are the most important realities; Satan knows that and he's prepared to resist!

DANIEL CHAPTER 11

“The wise among the people shall make many understand.”

Read through Daniel chapter 11 at least twice using two different translations.

Most people’s first reaction to reading Daniel 11 is total confusion. What is this talking about!? The good news is that if you find this challenging or confusing, you’re normal. The biggest reason we don’t usually understand it is that we aren’t familiar with the history. Most of the events in this chapter have already happened. In fact, it’s possible to walk through chapter 11 with your Bible on one side and a history book on the other. The two record the same events—the difference is that the history book only records what happened after but the Bible predicted it all ahead of time!

Try using the study notes that come with this book or download it at EveryTribeAndTongue.com. A good commentary will also show you these historical events. It’s even possible to connect these verses in Daniel chapter 11 to the historical record on Wikipedia! What does this imply about God’s view on history? If He can predict every event of the future and write it as history, what impact would that have on the things we worry about?

If you do that study, one of the things you’ll notice is that God’s priorities for history are rather different from ours. Looking at Daniel 11:1-4, how many verses are dedicated to the kingdom of Persia? _____ The “mighty king” in v. 3 is Alexander the Great of Greece. How many verses are given to Greece? _____ Finally, note verses 5-45 constantly discuss the “king of the south” and “king of the north.” These are two very minor kings that most history books don’t even mention. In other words, while Persia, Greece and Alexander the Great are very important to human history, God has his own set of priorities. How should this adjust the way we view the “historically significant” events in our own time?

So if God’s priorities are not the same as ours, what does matter to Him? Why did he focus on these two minor kings? Look at the reference to “the glorious land” in v. 16, 41. What does this refer to? _____ In fact, even the titles “king of the north” and “king of the south” point this direction—north and south of where? In other words, everything is anchored around God’s people.

This explains what makes these two kings important. Situated on either side of Palestine, these two kings were constantly at war, but when they clashed in the middle it had a huge impact on Israel. In other words, these two minor kings are important to God because they touched His people. How does God view His people or the external things that affect them? (Zech 2:8; Rev 1:20–2:1)

It is easy to promise people that if they will follow God He will make them wealthy and remove all trials. But look at Dan 11:28–39, 44. What are God’s people experiencing during this time?

But notice what word the vision uses to describe God’s people in Daniel 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10. _____ In other words, God’s people are the ones who truly understand what’s going on. This even fits in with what came before in the book—Dan 2:27; 4:18; 5:8, 15. Or most clearly of all, look at Dan 2:21. We might even say:

“God’s people are the truly _____ because He alone can give _____ to those who are willing to hear.”

Earlier we noted that this vision refers to the time of the end (Dan 10:14; 11:35; 12:4, 9, 13). We also observed that verses 1-35 have been fulfilled—we can find these events in past world history. But that record stops at v. 36. In other words, v. 35 is past, but v. 36 and on haven’t happened yet. What’s going on?

Not only does the book of Daniel point to the Messiah, but it also describes a coming resistance to God—a figure who will hate and oppose Him. Read Daniel 7:8, 20–26; 8:8–14, 19–26; 9:26–27; 12:11. Now compare that to Matt 24:15; 2 Th 2:3–4; Rev 13:1–8. What things can we observe about this coming, dark figure?

This takes us back to a lesson we learned earlier. Daniel 1-6 is history—stories of God’s faithfulness in the past. Chapters 7-12 go on to highlight his faithfulness in the future. The same God who worked in the past will continue to be completely faithful and in control. This is true also in Daniel 11. If God can predict the past (v. 1-35), is the future also under control? If His people suffered but ultimately overcame in the past, what about the future also?

Reflections:

1. Clearly the book presents Daniel as having a special gift of revelation. He could interpret dreams and visions because God gave him that knowledge. But here all of God’s people join in on that special privilege. While we may not have Daniel’s special gift, we are “the wise” because we have received the truth. Look at 2 Pet 1:19. How would Daniel view us and the revelation we have now received? Who would have clearer understanding of the coming days?
2. If you feel exhausted reading this long historical account in Daniel 11, it is completely normal. In fact, the endless details of one battle after another are part of the point. Remember Dan 7:4–8 and the four beasts devouring one another. This is the kingdoms of the world—clashing, devouring, destroying. The contrast in chapter 7 is God sitting on His throne. In chapter 11, our natural feeling might be when will all of this hideous conflict finally end? Chapter 12 points us to the grand and beautiful victory—God’s people delivered and exalted.
3. In the meantime, this doesn’t take away our suffering. Chapter 11 records that for a time the wicked seem to prosper (vv. 37–39) and God’s people are cast down (vv. 11:32–35). In fact, the entire book demonstrates this fact. Though we pass through the furnace (ch. 3), the lion’s den (ch. 6) or face the threat of death (ch. 2), God will be faithful until the end. Deliverance and victory is coming.

DANIEL CHAPTER 12

“The wise will shine like the stars, forever and ever.”

Read through Daniel chapter 12 at least three times using two different translations.

The chapter starts off with a warning that great suffering and destruction is soon to come. If 11:36-45 refers to the Antichrist, what would be this “time of trouble”—especially considering that it is worse than any one that ever came before. What does this time refer to? _____

Daniel 12:1 tells us “your people shall be delivered.” Read Revelation 12. What does this refer to?

And yet it is also clear that the ones delivered are those “whose name will be found written in the book.” Look at the many passages across Scripture that use this idea (Ex 32:32–33; Psa 69:28; Dan 7:8, 10, 20–26; Mal 3:16; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rev 13:8; 20:15; 21:27). What are some truths we can gather from this fact that there is a record of our actions, our faith and those who have responded to God.

Daniel 12:3 tells us who these people are—(1) “those who are wise,” and (2) “those who turn many to righteousness.” In chapter 11:33-35 we saw that “the wise” are those who hear and understand the truth (also 12:10). What does “turn many to righteousness” mean? How would we reword both of these two ideas in NT terms?

Almost every chapter of the book of Daniel has contained an ongoing contrast between the wicked and the righteous. Note the conclusion of that contrast here in chapter 12:

	Their Actions—v. 3, 10	The End—v. 2-3
Righteous		
Wicked		

One theme is really striking through the entire book—the theme of persecution and deliverance. At the end of nearly every chapter in the narrative part of the book (chs. 1-6) Daniel and his friends receive a promotion. The first half of the book is an extended account of how God continually exalted them.

And yet this doesn’t mean their lives were easy. In fact, these men faced constant persecution. It’s important to remember that while we know the outcome, they did not. They could not know whether they would live or die. The end of the story brings deliverance, but they had to live through the middle of the story as well.

The Trial	The Deliverance and Promotion
1:10	1:17–20
2:12–13	2:48–49
3:15–18	3:27–30
--	5:29
6:16	6:26–28

Try looking again through chapters 1-6 and watching the fate of Daniel’s enemies. Even as he is being exalted chapter by chapter, what is happening to them?

This pattern is quite clear in chapters 1-6. But the following chapters record much more about persecution and trials. Look at Dan 7:21, 25; 8:10–13, 24; 9:26–27; 11:31–35; 12:1. What is the pattern for God’s people in these chapters? _____

Few faithful Christians today experience the kind of exaltation that Daniel experienced. In fact, where Daniel was exalted while he saw his enemies defeated, We might be tempted to wonder if God’s power and deliverance for us is really the same as Daniel’s.

This allows us to return to a theme we first saw in chapter 1—God has not forgotten His people. Just as Daniel passed through many trials before experiencing victory and deliverance at the end of the story, God’s people can expect to suffer. The deliverance comes only at the end. This highlights the significance of Daniel 12:2-3. At the end of all things, what is the final outcome for unbelievers? What is the final outcome for God’s people?

As the book concludes, we may feel like we don’t yet understand all of the details. Daniel certainly did not—look at 12:8. And yet look at Dan 12:4, 9 (c.f. Dan 8:26; 9:24). Compare this to Rev 22:10. Who is this book ultimately intended for? _____

Reflections:

1. The reference in verse 7 is certainly cryptic—“time, times and half a time.” Later this expression reappears in Rev 12:14, where we also see parallel statements about 1,260 days (Rev 12:6) and forty-two months (Rev 11:2; 13:5). Each of these describes the same length of time—3 1/2 years or one half of the seven-year tribulation (Dan 9:27). This refers to the second half of the tribulation when Israel will be attacked and destroyed by its enemies.
2. The book ends with the assumption that the wicked will continue being wicked; the righteous will continue to live righteously (12:10). We should not be surprised that people will continue to live and act according to their desires. But the final instructions for Daniel are to simply do what he ought. “Go your way until the end” (v. 9, 13). Ultimately we are each responsible for ourselves and our calling is simply to walk faithfully until we are delivered in the final day.

Part Two:

TRANSLATION AND EXEGESIS OF DANIEL

1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim¹⁷, king of Judah, **Nebuchadnezzar**,¹⁸ **king of Babylon** came up to Jerusalem and besieged it.
2. And the Lord gave¹⁹ Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, into **his** hand, [along with] some of the vessels of the house of the Lord²⁰ and **he** brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of **his** gods and **he** placed the vessels in the treasure house of **his** gods.²¹
3. And **the king** said to **Ashpenaz, the chief of the eunuchs** to bring from the people of Israel and from the royal families and from the nobles
4. youths²² which did not have in them any blemish, and pleasant in appearance, and wise ones in all understanding, and having knowledge,²³ and understanding learning, and capable in them to stand in the palace of **the king**, and (he commanded) to teach them the writing²⁴ and tongue of the Chaldeans²⁵.
5. And **the king** appointed for them a day by day portion of the king's food and the wine from his feast and they were to be taken care of for three years, and at the end they were to stand before **the king**.
6. And there were among them from the tribe of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
7. And **the chief of the eunuchs** gave to them names—Daniel called Belteshazzar,²⁶ Hananiah he called Shadrach²⁷ and to Mishael he gave Meshach²⁸ and to Azariah, Abednego.²⁹
8. But Daniel determined in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine from his feast and he petitioned³⁰ **the chief of the eunuchs** that he would not defile himself.³¹

¹⁶ The following translation was derived from the original Hebrew and Aramaic. It is by no means an attempt at a “production worthy” translation. Rather, the goal here has been to represent the original wording as closely as possible (often quite awkwardly and woodenly).

¹⁷ 605. Following his victory over the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar immediately vanquished Judah as well, since Jehoiakim had formed an alliance with Egypt (2 Kings 23:33–24:7). The discrepancy with Jer. 46:2 is because Jeremiah used the Babylonian and Daniel used the Judean calendar. Here, it may be theologically significant that Daniel dates it by the year of the Judean king rather than by Nebuchadnezzar, even though the rest of the book will assume a Babylonian (or Persian) context. God's concern is with His people.

¹⁸ This is the same individual as “Nebuchadrezzar” in Jeremiah or Ezekiel. He also did not become fully recognized as king until several months after this event but he was already functioning as coregent and his father was probably incapacitated at the time. Nebuchadnezzar was essentially functioning as king and furthermore, the author could be speaking proleptically here.

¹⁹ Even at the very beginning of the book, the theme is clear. “Lord” is Adonay, emphasizing God's authority and power as military victor. “Gave” emphasizes being handed over. BDB translates this “give over, deliver up” (Qal, 1c) in the sense of granting permission. Note also v. 9, 17.

²⁰ The return of the vessels becomes a repeated refrain in Jeremiah, repeated in Ezra and Nehemiah (2 Chr 36:7, 18; Ezra 1:7; Neh 13:9; Jer 27:16; 28:3, 6). The idea is broad, certainly including the implements and vessels (Ex 37:16; Ex 38:3; Num 3:31) but probably even the furniture and basic components (Ex 31:7; 39:33; Num 4:15), in some cases including nearly everything but the tabernacle itself (Num 1:50; Num 4:16).

²¹ Of course, this detail coordinates with the record of Ezra 1:7. The victory would have implied to ancient observers that the Babylonian gods overcame Yahweh (see 5:3-4 and notes).

²² Plato comments (Alcibiades, 1.121) that the Persians began training their youths at 14. It's not unreasonable to assume that the Babylonians did something similar and that Nebuchadnezzar wanted young men just entering the teachable age.

²³ Lit. “knowing knowledge.”

²⁴ Around 500 BC, the Babylonian astronomer Naburimannu used extremely accurate astronomical records to measure the solar year at 365 days, 6 hours, 15 minutes and 41 seconds (only 25 minutes, 55 seconds off).

²⁵ Chaldeans refers to an ethnic group of semitic tribes who migrated to Babylonia and became the ruling class under Nebuchadnezzar's father. It can also be used to designate the ruling or elite class of the soothsayers (2:2).

²⁶ “God is my judge” changed to “Bel, protect his life.”

²⁷ “Yahweh is gracious” changed to “command of Aku” (the moon god).

²⁸ “Who is what God is?” changed to “who is what Aku is?”

²⁹ “Yahweh has helped” to “servant of Nebo” (Nabu is the 2nd greatest Babylonian god).

³⁰ There's a contrast between the strength of the two verbs. Daniel “purposed” speaks of a strong commitment. “Petitioned” speaks of respect and deference. Daniel held his beliefs strongly but was willing to view himself in his proper place.

³¹ Miller gives six reasons that Daniel's request was courageous:

- 1) Refusing the royal diet could be viewed as an insult to the king and even direct disobedience to his orders.
- 2) Pressure from his peers would make it more difficult. Everyone else was doing it.
- 3) Bucking the system could have jeopardized their chances for advancement.

9. And God gave Daniel gracious favor and compassion before the chief of the eunuchs.
10. And **the chief of the eunuchs**³² said to Daniel, I fear **my Lord the king**, who assigned your food and your drink. Why should he see your face looking worse than the youths who are your age and you would endanger my head to the king!³³
11. And Daniel said to **the steward**³⁴ whom **the chief of the eunuchs** had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
12. Test, please, your servants for ten days and let them give to us from the vegetables³⁵ that we should eat and water that we should drink.³⁶
13. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's portion be seen before you and according to what you see, let it be done.
14. And **he** listened to them concerning this matter and **he** tested (them) for ten days.
15. And at the end of ten days³⁷ their appearance was better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who were eating the portion of the king.³⁸
16. So **the steward** took away their portion and the wine for their drinking and gave to them vegetables.
17. And (when it came to) these four youths, God gave to them knowledge and understanding in all literature and wisdom and Daniel understood in all visions and dreams.
18. And at the end of the days when **the king** had said for them to be brought in, then **the chief of the eunuchs**³⁹ brought them before Nebuchadnezzar
19. And **the king** spoke with them and there was not found among them all (anyone) like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Therefore they stood before **the king** (as his personal attendants).⁴⁰
20. And (in) every matter of wisdom and understanding which **the king** inquired of them He found them⁴¹ (to be) ten times above all the magicians and the sorcerers⁴² which (were) in all of his kingdom.
21. And Daniel remained until the first year of Cyrus the king.⁴³

4) The food was the best in the land.

5) They were 900 miles away from Judah and no one would know they disobeyed God's laws.

6) They could assume that since God had not delivered them from captivity they did not have to obey his commands.

³² This is the same individual as v. 3, 7.

³³ Nor was this fear unwarranted, according to 2:5, 12, 3:13-23.

³⁴ This was a different person than the chief of the eunuchs mentioned in v. 10. AV transliterates it as a proper name ("Melzar"). Walvoord (40) suggests that when Daniel was rebuffed by the head overseer for a complete diet change, he appealed to the lower official for a temporary experiment. Because of the length of time, the risk was much less and this lower official could also avoid some of the responsibility because of his less significant position. Tremper Longman (54) even suggests that the lower official may have been motivated by the fact that he could take what they didn't eat.

³⁵ The word refers to "that which grows from seed" and would include vegetables, fruits, grains and even bread.

³⁶ There is certainly nothing spiritually superior about this Spartan diet nor does the preference have to do with better nutrition. The point, rather, seems to be that Daniel was willing to eat even the most basic provisions rather than defile himself with the luxurious but forbidden food from the king. Later he was willing to eat meat and wine (10:3), apparently when it could be prepared according to the law. His suggestion to the steward also seems to reflect Daniel's humility and deference in this challenging situation. Calvin suggests that God may have revealed that He would bless Daniel's choice to follow this course of action.

³⁷ Note the time label—the text extended for only ten days—not a period one would expect to see significant health change.

³⁸ It's important to factor ancient nutrition and expectations into this understanding. The fact that God blessed the young men with health would have been exactly counter to every expectation of the people charged with him.

³⁹ This is the same man as at the beginning of the chapter, not the steward who took away the offending food. At some point, however, he had to find out that they had gone through with the experiment and had changed their diet.

⁴⁰ The meaning is that they entered into the king's personal service.

⁴¹ Nebuchadnezzar apparently had some measure of knowledge or education himself in order to interview the young men and evaluate their knowledge. This also shapes the analysis of his response in the next chapter.

⁴² The natural comparison would be with the other young refugees in the court. But the result was that they exceeded all the professional soothsayers—10 times over!

⁴³ 538 B.C. This is after the demise of the Babylonian empire. Daniel probably lived 85-90 years (620 to 535). Though 10:1 speaks of Cyrus' third year (537-536), the idea highlighted here is simply that Daniel continued through to Cyrus' reign. More specifically, it potentially implies that Daniel was present at the time of Cyrus' decree for the captives to return home. (The British Museum suggests 539-530 BC for the [Cyrus Cylinder](#).) In other words, the story concludes by pointing out that God had elevated these young men for specific reasons in salvation history.

CHAPTER 2—DANIEL INTERPRETS NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM OF THE GREAT IMAGE

1. And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar,¹ Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, and his spirit was disturbed² and his sleep was gone away from him.³
2. Then the king told (them) to call to the magicians and to the conjurers and to the sorcerers and to the Chaldeans⁴⁵ to declare to the king his dreams⁶ and they came and they stood before the king.
3. And the king said to them, I dreamed a dream and my spirit is disturbed to know the dream.
4. And the Chaldeans said to the king (*the following* in Aramaic⁷), “Oh King, live forever. Tell the dream to your servants and we will declare the interpretation.⁸
5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, the declaration from me is firm. If you do not make known to me the dream⁹ and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb¹⁰ and your houses will be turned into dunghills.¹¹
6. But if you will declare the dream and its interpretation you will receive gifts and a reward and great honor from me. Therefore declare the dream and its interpretation.
7. They answered a second time and said, “let the king tell to his servants the dream and we will declare the interpretation.
8. The king answered and said, “I know with certainty that you are (trying to) gain time because you see that the matter from me is firm—
9. That if you do not make known to me the dream there is only one law for you; so you conspired with a lying answer and corrupt to say before me until the times change. Therefore tell me the dream and I will know that you can declare to me the interpretation.

¹ The second year of Nebuchadnezzar may have been before the end of the 3-year training regiment mentioned in 1:5 (Wood, 49-50). If so, it could explain why Daniel and his friends weren’t informed of the news (2:13) and why Daniel needed an introduction in 2:25-26. On the other hand, Driver suggests that the Babylonians didn’t count the first year of a king’s reign since it was his accession year. Since Nebuchadnezzar officially acceded to the throne in Sept. 605, Nisan (March or April) 604 would have been year one and Nisan 603-602 his second which would have also been the third year of the training. He also suggests that Jews would have counted a partial year as a whole (Driver, 17; Young 55-56; Baldwin, 85; Miller, 76-77). Either way, Daniel would have been only 17-18 years old when this happened. Whether the training was finished or not, the chronology does explain why Daniel and his friends were not part of the original group. It also highlights how unusual it was for Daniel to be exalted in v. 48.

² Miller says this could be rendered “his spirit was struck” like a hammer on an anvil.

³ Literally, “his sleep was finished upon him.”

⁴ The word could be used broadly of an ethnicity or more specifically of a class of soothsayers and wise men. See Miller, 78, note 13. The number of offices may be to support the idea that they have tried everybody.

⁵ There is not so much significance attached to these different names as the fact that the whole list gets repeated throughout the chapter. This in turn highlights the fact that they were witnesses to the whole process of Daniel’s exaltation.

⁶ The Babylonians viewed dreams as messages from the gods and Nebuchadnezzar would have assumed that this portended his future.

⁷ This could mean that they answered in that language (Aramaic was the official diplomatic language) but is more likely a parenthetical signal that the ensuing verses (through the end of ch. 7) are written in Aramaic.

⁸ Archaeologists have discovered dream code books from Babylon, giving symbolic interpretations for various elements of a dream (Miller, 80, note 21).

⁹ It’s possible that he had forgotten the dream but seems more likely that he was testing them. In 2:1 he continues to be troubled by it and his response to Daniel suggests that he could still confirm that the revelation was true. Their response in v. 7 also confirms this. The fact that he kept them but doubted their truthfulness suggests that this dream was unusual or particularly troubling to him. In other words, why decide to test them now unless he felt a special need for truthfulness? Several factors seem to fit with this. (1) He was still relatively new in this role and may have felt some insecurity. (2) Intrigue was not uncommon in the Babylonian court—2 out of his 3 successors were assassinated. (3) The dream was of a great image that he probably would have identified as himself or his kingdom, toppled and crushed by a great stone. (4) The most likely candidates to be involved in the intrigue were standing right in front of him!

¹⁰ Lit. “you will be made into limbs.”

¹¹ The idea may be that their houses will become public toilets and there is ancient evidence of this happening (Montgomery, 146). Nebuchadnezzar was clearly capable of actions like that (2 Kings 25:7; Jer. 29:22; Dan. 3:19-23). Herodotus records an incident where Darius I massacred nearly all of his wise men (*Histories*, 3.79).

10. The Chaldeans answered before the king and they said, there is not a man upon the earth who is able to declare the king's matter; therefore there is no king, great man, or ruler who asked this (type of) thing of any magician or conjurer or Chaldean.
11. And the matter which the king is asking is difficult¹², and there is none other who can declare it before the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.¹³
12. Because of all of this, the king became angry and very furious and he said to destroy all the wise men in Babylon.
13. So the decree went out that the wise men would be slain¹⁴ and they sought Daniel and his friends to slay them.
14. Then Daniel replied with prudence and discernment to Arioch, the leader of the king's guard¹⁵ who had gone out to slay the wise men of Babel.
15. He answered and said to Arioch, the king's captain, "why is the decree so harsh¹⁶ from before the king?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel.
16. And Daniel went in and requested from the king that (he) appoint a time¹⁷ for him to show the interpretation to the king.
17. Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his friends,
18. And (told them) to seek compassion from before the God of heaven¹⁸ concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babel.
19. Then in a vision at night, the mystery was revealed to Daniel. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.
20. Daniel answered and said,
MAY THE NAME OF GOD BE BLESSED FROM FOREVER AND TO FOREVER
BECAUSE WISDOM AND POWER BELONG TO HIM.
21. HE CHANGES TIMES AND SEASONS
HE REMOVES KINGS AND SETS UP KINGS
HE GIVES WISDOM TO THE WISE¹⁹ AND KNOWLEDGE TO THOSE WHO KNOW UNDERSTANDING.²⁰
22. HE REVEALS DEEP AND HIDDEN THINGS
HE KNOWS WHAT IS IN THE DARKNESS
AND LIGHT DWELLS WITH HIM.²¹
23. TO YOU, O GOD OF MY FATHERS, THANKS AND PRAISE I (GIVE)
FOR WISDOM AND MIGHT²² YOU HAVE GIVEN TO ME
AND NOW YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME WHAT WE²³ SOUGHT FROM YOU.
BECAUSE THE KING'S MATTER YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO US.²⁴

¹² ESV renders "rare"

¹³ Isa. 47:12-13

¹⁴ The participle could mean that it had already started, but probably means that they were about to be slain.

¹⁵ The root of "guard" is "to slay" and this word could actually refer to the executioner.

¹⁶ Most translations go with "hasty," apparently based on 3:22, but both contexts could support this rendering.

¹⁷ This forms a definite contrast with the astrologers and wizards who were stalling for time (2:8). It also would have lent real urgency to their prayers.

¹⁸ This is the first instance of this name for God in Daniel (also 2:18–19, 37, 44). The term also appears heavily in Ezra and Nehemiah but only in the second chapter of Daniel. It surely emphasizes God's sovereignty but may also ironically contrast with the Babylonian's worship of the heavenly bodies and their inability to produce genuine knowledge (2:27).

¹⁹ In 12:3 "the wise" denotes God's own people.

²⁰ The implication would be that any wisdom or knowledge these people have must have come from God and that therefore God is the true source of all wisdom.

²¹ Verse 23 transitions to a more personal conclusion with "you" instead of "he" and with personal pronouns.

²² "Wisdom" and "might" are both definite and refer specifically to the knowledge and enablement he had just received.

²³ Fascinating to note the change in grammatical subjects. Daniel knew and acknowledged that the blessing came in response to the prayers of His friends as well.

²⁴ There is also great faith in these words, since Daniel had not yet talked to the king or heard his confirmation.

24. Therefore Daniel went in before Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went in and spoke thus to Him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon;²⁵ bring me before the king and I will declare the interpretation to the king.”
25. Then Arioch brought Daniel in quickly before the king and spoke thus to him: I have found a man from among the Judean exiles who is able to make known the interpretation to the king.²⁶
26. The king answered and said to Daniel whose name was Beltshazzar, “Are you able to make known the dream²⁷ which I saw and its interpretation?”
27. Daniel answered before the king and said, “the mystery which the king asked, no wise men, conjurers, magicians or enchanters are able to declare to the king.
28. But there is a God in heaven revealing mysteries²⁸ and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days^{29, 30} (As for) your dream and the visions of your head (as you were) upon your bed, this is it:
29. You, O King, (as you lay) upon your bed, your thoughts came (of) what would be after this³¹ and the One who declares mysteries has made known what will be.
30. But as for me, it is not because of wisdom that there is in me more than everyone living that this mystery was made known to me, but rather in order that the interpretation would be made known to the king and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.³²
31. You saw, O king, and behold one great image. This image (was) great, and of exceeding brightness, standing before you, and its appearance was frightening.
32. The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,
33. Its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.
34. While you watched, a stone was cut out, not with hands,³³ and it struck the image against its feet of iron and clay and pulverized them.
35. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold³⁴ were pulverized as one³⁵ and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors and the wind carried them away and there was not a place (where someone could) find them. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.
36. This was the dream. And the interpretation we³⁶ will say before the king.
37. You, O king, (are) the king of kings to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom and the power and the might and the glory,
38. And in every place where they dwell, the sons of men, beasts of the field and birds of the heavens, he has given into your hand and making you ruler over them all. You yourself are the head of gold.³⁷

²⁵ Amazing that Daniel’s first words were out of concern for the protection of his colleagues.

²⁶ Arioch may have taken some of the credit for finding Daniel and his words may also imply that court personnel recognized Nebuchadnezzar’s actions as rash and ill-advised.

²⁷ While Arioch mentioned only the interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar’s question is specifically worded with the original challenge in mind.

²⁸ Goldingay comments that the point is not the existence of a god. The Babylonians would already have assumed that. The point is this God reveals mysteries, unlike the gods assumed by the Babylonian soothsayers (v. 11).

²⁹ This expression can be used of the near future (Deut. 31:29; Jer. 23:20) or eschatologically (Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 38:16) but this apparently includes both.

³⁰ Daniel distills for the king the fact that there is no god but the true God and that the Babylonian idols are false.

³¹ Miller understands this as the context that came before the king’s vision. In other words, he began thinking about coming times after his own reign and God granted this vision.

³² Daniel’s confession emphasizes the fact that God is the Lord of history—He works even in who receives revelations to direct and guide His eternal purposes.

³³ This would describe the supernatural nature and origin of the rock.

³⁴ Apparently, the idea of using metals (even gold, silver, bronze and iron) for broad historical surveys was a common scheme in ancient writings. Still, these postdate Daniel and there is no reason to see borrowing.

³⁵ The wording specifically emphasizes the fact that no kingdom is better than any other in this final eschatological equalizing.

³⁶ The plural could include the friends, but more naturally speaks of God as revealer and Daniel as spokesperson.

³⁷ It is of course reasonable to compound the ruler and realm since Nebuchadnezzar surely represented his kingdom as a whole. But in a very real sense, he personally also represented the Neo-Babylonian empire. Out of the 87 years of its existence (626-539) he ruled for 43 and at the height of its power. Given that he was co-regent and probably the primary actor in the late

39. And after you will arise another kingdom,³⁸ inferior to you,³⁹ and another third kingdom of bronze⁴⁰ which will rule over all the earth.
40. And there will be a fourth kingdom,⁴¹ **strong** as iron because iron **crushes** and **shatters** everything (else). And as iron which shatters, it will crush and shatter all these.⁴²
41. And as you saw the feet and the toes,⁴³ partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom and there will be some of the strength of iron in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with the soft clay.
42. And the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay—[likewise] some of the kingdom will be strong and some will be easily broken.
43. As you saw the iron mixed with the potter's clay, they will become mixed in heredity,⁴⁵ but they will not become adhered,⁴⁶ this with that, even as iron does not mix with clay.
44. And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will raise up a kingdom⁴⁷ which will not be destroyed forever,⁴⁸ not will it be left to another people. It will pulverize⁴⁹ and conclude all these kingdoms and it will stand forever.
45. Just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain which was not with human hands and it pulverized the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what will be after this. The dream is certain and its interpretation is to be trusted.⁵⁰
46. Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and did homage⁵¹ to Daniel and commanded for an incense and offering to be offered to him.

years of his father's reign, his reign was functionally even longer. For all practical purposes, Nebuchadnezzar was the Neo-Babylonian empire.

³⁸ The Medo-Persian empire lasted from 539-331 (208 years), most notably including Cyrus who sent the Jewish refugees back to their homeland. Liberal scholars have proposed that the four kingdoms terminate in the Greek era with Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This requires that Daniel believed in a separate Median empire after Babylon and before Persia. But in 8:20 the two-horned ram represents "the kings of Media and Persia" and Darius follows the "laws of the Medes and Persians" (6:8,15). Miller comments that virtually every scholar holding to a 6th century date for Daniel also identifies the kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

³⁹ It is not clear in exactly which sense the Medo-Persian empire is understood as inferior since it did rule over more territory. It is probably the idea that Nebuchadnezzar had absolute, unchallenged authority that was never really matched in subsequent empires.

⁴⁰ The armies of Alexander the Great defeated the Medo-Persian empire in 332 and lasted until 146 B.C. (185 years).

⁴¹ The Roman empire ruled from 146 B.C. (defeat of Carthage) to 395 A.D. (more than 500 years) and the Eastern division lasted until 1453.

⁴² Since each subsequent empire was subsumed into the next, Rome laid aside all of their power.

⁴³ It is natural enough to recognize that the statue had 10 toes, harmonizing with the 10 horns of Dan. 7:44 (c.f. Rev. 13:1; 17:12). In fact, v. 44 specifies "kings"—apparently some type of confederation.

⁴⁴ How are the feet and toes identified? One possibility here is that the kingdom of God (the rock) began at Pentecost during the old Roman empire. The other possibility is eschatological with the Antichrist's kingdom rising from the ashes of the old Roman empire. Clarification comes through the strong parallelism with ch. 7 where the fourth beast represents Rome but also seamlessly pictures the eschatological kingdom of Satan.

⁴⁵ Lit., the seed of man or as the ESV translates, "in marriage."

⁴⁶ This eschatological federation (probably 10 kingdoms) will unite disparate peoples from the ashes of the old Roman empire but they will ultimately maintain their own political and cultural identities in some sense.

⁴⁷ Is this fulfilled as Christ's reign in hearts or only through the physical, Millennial kingdom? Miller gives 6 reasons for the latter: (1) "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom" (v. 44) most naturally describes the second advent. (2) Since the final kingdom replaces four physical, earthly kingdoms, it is probably physical as well. (3) This will happen during a confederation of kings—a condition not fulfilled in the first advent. (4) The rock destroys the prior kingdoms but Christ certainly did not do so (John 18:36). (5) The kingdom fills the whole earth, but Christ's present reign in hearts is anything but universal. (6) Chapter 7 is parallel but nearly everyone understands the coming of the kingdom in ch. 7 as eschatological (even the 10 toes and horns are parallel).

⁴⁸ This wording is awkward but a close formal equivalent and preserves the force (ESV, "never be destroyed").

⁴⁹ The word also appears in Dan 7:7, 19, 23 of Antichrist's kingdom in the last days.

⁵⁰ The point of these confirming words is as a statement for the veracity of God's revelation. Daniel's confirmation is that these words come not from himself but from "a great God" who has made it known.

⁵¹ These actions normally denote worship of a deity (3:5-7 with 3:28) though he seems to honor Daniel as a proxy for his God. He seems to regard Daniel as holding special significance and power.

47. The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God, He is God of gods⁵² and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.⁵³
48. Then the king made Daniel great and gave him many great gifts and made him rule over the whole province of Babylon and (made him) chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.⁵⁴
49. And Daniel requested of the king and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the court of the king.

⁵² Driver says that similar titles (“Lord of lords” and “Lord of gods”) were commonly attributed to Marduk, Babylon’s supreme god.

⁵³ Based on historical records and even the rest of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar apparently added faith in the Hebrew God to his polytheistic pantheon (Miller, Baldwin).

⁵⁴ Note that Daniel would only have been 17-18 years old at this time. Daniel received two distinct positions—he became administrator over the key province (including the capitol) and he became the king’s chief counselor, holding authority over all the wise men. Recently a member of no significance among the wise men (not even included in entourage to the king), he is now their authority.

CHAPTER 3—SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO FACE THE BURNING FIERY FURNACE

1. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.¹ Its height (was) sixty cubits; its breadth (was) six cubits². He raised it on the plain of Dura³ in the province of Babylon.⁴
2. And Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasures, the judges, the magistrates and all the officials of the provinces⁵ to come to the dedication of the image **which Nebuchadnezzar the king had raised.**⁶
3. Then gathered the satraps and the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the officials of the provinces⁷ for the dedication of the image **which Nebuchadnezzar the king had raised.** And they stood before the image **which Nebuchadnezzar had raised.**
4. And the herald proclaimed strongly, “to you it has been commanded, O peoples, nations and languages.⁸
5. At the time when you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the zither, the lyre, the harp, the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you will fall down and worship before the golden image **which Nebuchadnezzar has raised.**⁹
6. And whoever does not fall down and worship it will be immediately cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.¹⁰¹¹
7. Because of all of this, at what time all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, the flute, the zither, the lyre, the harp, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and languages falling down, worshipped¹² the golden image **which Nebuchadnezzar the king had raised.**
8. Because of all this, at this time, certain Chaldeans¹³ came forward and maliciously¹⁴ accused the Jews.
9. They spoke and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, O King, live forever.
10. You, O King, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, the flute, the zither, the lyre, the harp, the bagpipe, and every kind of music must fall down and worship the golden image.

¹ The fact that it was all made of gold is probably a marker of Nebuchadnezzar's vanity as the "head of gold." It was probably gold plated.

² The measure is ninety feet high and nine feet wide (27.5 meters high, 2.75 wide). The measurement system (sexagesimal) is Babylonian and confirms its genuineness. As to the odd dimensions, the height may have included a base as much as 30-40 feet high (10-12 meters).

³ The location cannot be confirmed. Some understand it to be within the city of Babylon, but the “plain” makes that less likely, not to mention the obvious question why Daniel did not just say it was in Babylon. Miller regards the best location as about 16 miles south of Babylon at a place where a French archaeologist (Oppert) located a large pedestal which he believed was the base for this statue (Miller, 110).

⁴ The timing of this event has to be after ch. 2 (603/602) but sometime during Nebuchadnezzar's reign (562). There must also be time for the events of ch. 4. It is reasonable to place it relatively soon after 602 B.C.

⁵ This list is repeated several times (v. 2, 3, 27), pointing to the final instance where these dignitaries gather to see that the fire could not touch or taint the clothes of God's men. The literary point is to highlight them as witnesses and contribute to the ongoing theme of God's people separated and exalted above their pagan peers.

⁶ Throughout the chapter, this expression is formulaic for the image (v. 2,3,5,7,12,14,15,18), emphasizing the contrast between a god that must be defended and a God that truly delivers.

⁷ These offices are probably listed in decreasing order of significance (7 levels of hierarchy), ending with a universal.

⁸ The international scope fits with Nebuchadnezzar's policy of appointing native rulers to govern his provinces (2 Kings 25:22-25).

⁹ Babylonian kings were not viewed as deity, and therefore this image may have been representing Marduk or one of the other gods. Yet it was still genuine worship of a false god (v. 11, 28).

¹⁰ The choice of punishment seems arbitrary, but a furnace was probably near at hand having been used to construct the statue. Archer says that Babylonian smelting furnaces were shaped like an old fashioned milk jug with an opening at the top for inserting ore and another at the ground level for adding fuel. It may also have been built into a hillside. The temperatures could reach as high as 1800 degrees F (1000 C). Miller, 115.

¹¹ That Nebuchadnezzar was not above burning alive is clear from Jer. 29:22.

¹² This phrasing sounds remarkably like Rev. 5:9 and the worship that rightfully belongs only to the Lord.

¹³ The word could refer to citizens of Babylon who were part of the ruling elite or it could particularly designate astrologers and magicians. Certainly, they were part of the aristocracy and felt endangered by the newfound power of Daniel and his friends (v. 12). Ironically, these were probably the same people Daniel had protected by his interpretation in 2:14-15 (c.f. 2:5).

¹⁴ The verb in other themes means “to eat.” The idea would be of devouring, rapacious accusations. It is a very strong idiom, something akin to “he chewed them up and spit them out.”

11. And whoever does not fall down and worship will be cast into the burning fiery furnace.
12. There are certain Jews¹⁵ whom you have appointed over all the affairs of the province of Babylon¹⁶—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.¹⁷ These men, O King, do not acknowledge you, O king; They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden image **which you have raised**.
13. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in raging fury commanded that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king.
14. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you are not serving my gods and you are not worshipping the golden image **which I have raised?**
15. Now if you are ready (so that) at what time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, bagpipe and all kinds of music you will fall down and worship the image **which I have made**¹⁸... but if you will not worship it, you will be immediately thrown into the midst of a burning fiery furnace and who is the god^{19,20} who will deliver you from my hand?
16. Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego spoke to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we ourselves do not need to return an answer²¹ to you concerning this matter.
17. If it is (so), our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and from your hand, O King, and He will deliver.^{22,23}
18. But (even) if not,²⁴ may it be known to you, O King, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden image **which you have set up**.²⁵
19. Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and his facial expression was altered²⁶ toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.²⁷ He answered by commanding [them] to heat the furnace seven times²⁸ more than it was usually heated.
20. And to the men—mighty men of strength in his army, he said to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, to cast (them) into the burning furnace of fire.

¹⁵ Though jealously probably figured prominently into their attack (the three young men had just been exalted to high positions), the book also highlights an attack on God's people as a key element. The accusers specifically identify these men by their ethnicity. It must point to an underlying antisemitism that is ultimately Satanic in origin. It may also have been a way of highlighting their relative newness in Babylon and the fact that they were a recently vanquished people. From a literary standpoint it highlights the core of the story - that God protects and blesses His chosen people but that wicked men hate them.

¹⁶ This comment was probably intended to make the Jewish young men sound disloyal, since they had just been given a privileged position. It may also have insinuated that the king should have never exalted Jews over natives of Babylon.

¹⁷ Notice how they remind the king both of the demands and of the threats before pointing to the people that had violated them.

¹⁸ Miller suggests that the king may have been offering them another chance—another performance of the orchestra just for them.

¹⁹ The language is emphatic—"what at all God is there?" (Miller, 118).

²⁰ Amazing that Nebuchadnezzar's first assumption seems to be that their intransigence must be related to their God (c.f. Dan 6:5). This also resulted in a very clear testimony before him and the other officials (v. 26, 28).

²¹ The idea is to make a defense or to defend themselves. In other words, "guilty as charged, and there's no reason to call the orchestra or give us time to consider it because our stance is clear."

²² Their answer is highly parallel to Nebuchadnezzar's blasphemous question in v. 15. The NIV and NAS reading (as opposed to the NRSV—"if our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...").

²³ Henry comments, "The saving them from sinful compliance, was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the saving them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature."

²⁴ The question is not God's power to deliver but His sovereignty—whether He will choose to do so. Their response exhibits incredible faith and may even imply their ultimate hope in the resurrection.

²⁵ The true test of faith is when the final outcome is not absolutely clear. Had these men known the outcome beforehand, it would not have been a test of faith at all.

²⁶ Fascinating that he was already "in raging fury" (v. 13) but his expression changed again. In other words, even his past fury was surpassed by His rage now. Perhaps his "toleration" of offering them a second chance was the change.

²⁷ It is notable that in 2:49, it is specifically recorded that these same men had been granted honor and prestige in the kingdom because of Daniel's blessing from the Lord, which had in turn come about partially because of their prayers on his behalf (2:17). It seems suggestive to think that their trial, exclusive of Daniel, may have come about and may be recorded here so that they are shown to be faithful as well. In chapter 2, Daniel is in the spotlight; in ch. 3, they must also stand alone, and they do.

²⁸ Baldwin says that "seven times" is a proverbial way of speaking and probably means "as hot as possible" (Prov 24:16; 26:16).

21. Then these men were bound in their tunics, their trousers, and their hats and their (other) clothing and thrown in the midst of the burning furnace of fire.²⁹
22. Because the king's word was urgent and the furnace heated exceedingly, these strong men who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, the flame of the fire killed them.
23. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego fell down³⁰ into the midst of the burning furnace of fire, having been bound.³¹
24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished and arose in dismay. And answering he said to his counselors, did we not cast three men into the midst of the fire, having been bound? And answering they said to the king, it is certain, O King.
25. And answering he said, but yet... I see four men, having been unbound,³² walking in the midst of the fire and there is no harm to them, and the appearance of the fourth is similar to a son of the gods!³³
26. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning furnace of fire and answering he said, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God³⁴, come out and come here.³⁵ Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out from the midst of the fire.
27. Then they gathered together—the satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's counselors and saw that the fire had no power over the bodies of these men and the hair of their heads was not singed and their cloaks were not damaged³⁶ and the smell of the fire had not been transferred to them.
28. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego³⁷ who sent his messenger and delivered his servants who trusted on Him and set aside the king's command³⁸ and gave up their bodies in order to not serve and not worship any god except their God.
29. So I make a decree that every person, nation and language³⁹ that speaks something⁴⁰ against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego will be made into limbs and his house will be made like a dunghill because there is not another God who is able to deliver like this.⁴¹
30. Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to succeed in the province of Babylon.^{42,43}

²⁹ Of course, one would expect these articles to immediately catch on fire and engulf the men in flame.

³⁰ It appears that they were thrown in through the top (see note on v. 6) and Nebuchadnezzar could then have looked in from the opening on the side.

³¹ The LXX adds another 66 verses after verse 23 here. [Full translation is available](#). Together with Susanna and Bel and the Dragon (Dan. 13-14 in the apocrypha) Palestinian Jews did not regard them as authentic and they do not appear in the Qumran scrolls (1QDan^b) or the Masoretic text (Miller, 50).

³² Fascinating that while their clothes were unharmed and didn't even smell like smoke, their bonds disintegrated in the flame. See Heb. 11:34. Also [1 Macc. 2:59](#) and Isa. 43:2.

³³ The Talmud (and most Jewish scholars) say that he was angelic—Gabriel. The idea of the expression, however, would be that this individual manifested a divine nature (Dan 7:13) and many expositors recognize Him as the preincarnate Christ. See also Isa. 43:2. EBC (85) points out that the fire that was the threat of death becomes an ironic connection to the presence of God (Ex 3:2; 13:21; Dt 4:11–12; Ps 18:8).

³⁴ While this is certainly progress in Nebuchadnezzar's thinking, it is still within his polytheistic pagan notions. God is merely the highest among the others.

³⁵ Of course, Nebuchadnezzar had to ask them to come since he could never approach the fiery furnace himself. In the end, the king whose will seemed irresistible must look to his victims to do what he asks.

³⁶ Literally “changed” but with the implication of change for the worse.

³⁷ The Babylonians certainly would have viewed their recent victory over Judah as clear proof that their gods were superior to Jehovah (Is 36:18–20). This miracle would have been a fitting demonstration that God acted in that case only for His own purposes (Zech. 1:15).

³⁸ Ironic that what he respects them for is their conflict with his own orders. Even unbelievers respect courage and clear beliefs.

³⁹ The international scope of the king's decree defending Daniel's God matches the decrees in v. 4, 7 (“peoples, nations and languages.”) It does seem that this may have been a formula for Babylonian decrees (4:1).

⁴⁰ Not sure of this word.

⁴¹ Miller comments that since Nebuchadnezzar had just witnessed an extraordinary miracle, he may have been seeking to appease this powerful God for mistreating those whom He obviously loved. The king may actually have feared divine retaliation. Apparently he didn't fear it enough (ch. 4).

⁴² Each of the preceding pericopes has ended the same way – with a closing expression of God's increased blessing on His people who have stood strong.

⁴³ God's ancient promises to the nation in Deut. 28:13 ("The Lord will make you the head and not the tail") were reversed because of their sin (Deut. 28:44). But even in exile, a clear result of their sin, He graciously continues to reward obedience by exalting them.

CHAPTER 4—GOD HUMBLER NEBUCHADNEZZAR UNTIL HE CONFESSES THAT YAHWEH IS GOD

1. Nebuchadnezzar the king¹ to all peoples nations and languages that dwell in all the earth:² peace be multiplied to you.^{3,4,5}
2. The signs and wonders which the most High God worked toward me, I thought it good⁶ to declare.
3. HOW GREAT HIS SIGNS ARE AND HOW MIGHTY HIS WONDERS! HIS KINGDOM IS AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM AND HIS DOMINION FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.
4. I, Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house and flourishing⁷ in the palace.
5. I saw a dream and it made me fear, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head disturbed me.
6. So I made an order to bring in before me all the wise men of Babel (so that) the interpretation of the dream they would make known to me.
7. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers came in and I told the dream before them but they did not make known the interpretation to me.⁸
8. But at last Daniel came in before me,⁹ who was named Belteshazzar according to the name of my god and in whom is the Spirit of the holy God,¹⁰ and I told him the dream:¹¹
9. “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians,¹² because I know that the Spirit of the holy God is in you and no mystery is difficult for you, speak the visions of my dream that I saw and its interpretation.

¹ This chapter is unusual. (1) It is epistolary. (2) Archer comments that this is the only chapter in Scripture written under the authority of a pagan. (3) It is written from Nebuchadnezzar’s standpoint instead of Daniel’s. (4) It begins and ends with doxologies (Miller, 128).

² Apparently, it was common for Babylonian kings to speak of ruling over the entire earth (Miller 129).

³ There is no time marker, but v. 29 designates that there was 1 year of warning before the judgment. If the madness lasted 7 years (v. 32) and there was at least a year after the healing, this could have occurred no later than 571 B.C. (Nebuchadnezzar’s reign ended in 562). Miller also gives several reasons that it was probably towards the end of his reign: (1) His building projects seem to be completed (4:30), (2) there was peace throughout the empire (4:4), and two Babylonian priests seem to allude to it (Abydenus quoted by Eusebius ([Praeparatio 9.41.1](#)) and reproduced in Montgomery, 221 and Josephus, [Against Apion 1.20](#); Discussion in Young 110-11). This chronology would also place Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation after the final fall of Jerusalem in 586.

⁴ It is interesting to note that the image described in chapter 2 anticipated the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. Even at that time, he received a warning that his kingdom would be destroyed. When he exalted himself, God humbled him sharply, but it was his humble repentance that won him restoration again. One wonders if this was not also God’s delay of the destruction – a destruction that ultimately did come when Nebuchadnezzar’s son did not continue his humility.

⁵ The story has affinities with the “Prayer of Nabonidus,” an Aramic fragment found in Qumran. Naturally, liberal scholars use this to invalidate the story of Daniel but the better explanation is that the sourcing worked in reverse—“Nabonidus” was derived from Dan. 4. A number of intertestamental period (Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon) and this relationship should not be surprising.

⁶ NIV renders “it is my pleasure.” Considering the narcissism of Babylonian kings, the humility and honesty to record one’s own bout with insanity is remarkable.

⁷ The word is used elsewhere of trees flourishing. It may foreshadow the image of the tree later. Depending on when these events occurred, Nebuchadnezzar had probably vanquished the Egyptians and other opposition so that he was enjoying rest throughout the empire.

⁸ This wording leaves ambiguous whether they were unable or unwilling to give the interpretation. The idea of a luxurious tree being cut down together with the king’s own reaction (v. 5) and v. 17 had to portend something unpleasant for the king. When Daniel gives the interpretation in v. 20-26 a remarkable portion of his words simply recapitulate the dream (v. 9-17. In other words, the interpretation is simply identifying the reference of the tree figure. Even if they didn’t know the full import, they were also probably scared to identify the catastrophe with the king. This also highlights Daniel’s courage in v. 19.

⁹ The text gives no explanation for the delay. As chief over the magicians, he may have handled only situations that stymied them or he may have been busy with other government duties. Either way, his delay helped to highlight the contrast between him and the others. The LXX omits vv. 6-10a in an apparent attempt to answer the difficulty.

¹⁰ Some scholars render this “God” (Young, 99; Wood, 106; Montgomery, 225-26 and Theodotion) but others opt for the plural (Lacocque, 76; Archer, 60-61; Baldwin, 111; Miller, 131). Even with the plural, the idea would be of the national or local gods. See note on “holy God” in 5:11.

¹¹ Lit., “I told the dream before him”

¹² It is remarkable that after as much as 30 years of service, Daniel still occupied this high office.

10. And (here were) the visions in my head (as I lay) upon my bed: I saw and behold a tree¹³ in the middle of the earth and its height was great.
11. The tree grew and became strong and its height reached to the heavens and it was visible to the end of all of the earth.
12. Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant there was food in it for all. The beast of the field was shaded under it and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches and from it was fed all flesh.
13. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed and behold, a watcher,¹⁴ a holy one, came down from heaven.
14. He proclaimed with strength and spoke thus—‘cut down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches.’¹⁵
15. But leave the stump of its roots in the earth and in a band of iron and bronze,¹⁶ amid the new grass of the field. And in the dew of heaven let him be drenched, and with the beasts let his portion be in the grass of the earth.
16. Let his mind be changed from a man’s and let the mind of a beast be given to him and let seven times pass over him.
17. This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones¹⁷ in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest¹⁸ of men.”^{19,20}
18. This dream I, king Nebuchadnezzar saw, and you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able (because) the spirit of the holy God is in you.
19. Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was appalled for a time and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or its interpretation alarm you. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, (may) the dream be for the ones who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies.
20. The tree which you saw, which became great and strong so that its height reached to the heavens and it was visible to the whole earth
21. And its leaves (were) beautiful and its fruit (was) abundant and there was food to all in it, (and) under (it was) shade for the beast of the field and the birds of heaven lived in its branches...
22. You it is²¹ O king, who have become great and strong and your greatness has increased and reaches to the heavens and your dominion to the ends of the earth.
23. And the king saw a watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “cut down the tree and destroy it, but the stump of its roots leave in the earth and with a band of iron and bronze in the new grass of the field and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and let his portion be with the beasts of the field until seven times²² pass over him.”²³
24. This is the interpretation, O king—it is a decree of the Most High which has come upon my lord the king,

¹³ The same figure is used elsewhere for proud people (Is 2:12–13; 10:34; Ezek 31:3–17).

¹⁴ Ch. 4 (vv. 13, 17, 23) contains the only biblical instances of “watcher” (עִיר) for angels. The word means “one who is awake” and pictures them as watching the activities of humanity. (Also Ezek. 1:18 and the cherubim with many eyes.)

¹⁵ Interpreted, the implication is that other people would suffer as collateral from Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation.

¹⁶ The iron band probably represents protection—the fact that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom and authority would not be entirely destroyed. See also Montgomery 233 and Young 104.

¹⁷ An alternate translation is possible (NIV) making this an announcement of the angels rather than a decree.

¹⁸ It is notable that this detail is included here. It points both to the smallness of men who think themselves great, but more than that, it points to the fact that God exalts those that choose to humble themselves before Him. When Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar exalt themselves, they are put down; when Daniel and the three friends humble themselves, they are exalted.

¹⁹ This verse explains in many ways what the book of Daniel is about. This could be considered the key verse.

²⁰ This statement is a beautiful irony. Nebuchadnezzar had to go to the ultimate low point – living like an animal – before he could be restored to rule over the realm of mankind.

²¹ The grammatical expression of v. 20-21 is left open and the first word of v. 22 is an emphatic “you.”

²² Several commentators (Young and Keil) regard this as an unspecified period of time, but they are probably influenced by their desire not to recognize 7 years in 7:25 and 12:7.

²³ Miller (134) cites a number of medical studies documenting this same malady in the present and R.K. Harrison describes a mental patient in the UK suffering from nearly the exact illness to Nebuchadnezzar’s (*Introduction to the OT*, 1116-17)

25. that you will be driven away from man and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field and you will be given grass²⁴ to eat like an ox and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven and seven times will pass over you until you know²⁵ that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of men and whomever it pleases (Him) He gives it.²⁶
26. And (as) it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be confirmed for you from the time you know that the ruler is heaven.
27. Therefore O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you—tear away your sins (by turning to) righteousness, and your iniquities by showing justice to the poor,²⁷ so that there could be an extension of your prosperity.²⁸
28. All this came upon Nebuchadnezzar the king.
29. At the end of twelve months,²⁹ the king was on (top of) the royal palace of Babylon.³⁰
30. The king answered and said, is this not Babylon, the great city³¹ which I myself have built for a royal house by my strength and power and for the honor of my majesty?³² [Check for verbal parallels with the dream]
31. While the word was still in the King's mouth a voice fell from heaven, "to you it has been spoken, O king Nebuchadnezzar—the kingdom has passed from you.
32. And you will be driven away from men with you and with the beast of the field (will be) your dwelling; you will be made to eat grass like an ox and seven times will pass over you until you know that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of men and to whom He desires, He gives it.³³
33. Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar and he was driven away from men, and he ate grass like an ox³⁴ and his body was drenched with the dew from heaven until his hair became as long as eagles' (feathers) and his nails like birds' (claws).³⁵³⁶
34. And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven³⁷ and my understanding returned to me and to the Most High I blessed and to the one who lives forever I praised and honored.³⁸
 HIS DOMINION IS A DOMINION (THAT IS) EVERLASTING
 AND HIS DOMINION (LASTS) FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION³⁹

²⁴ The Aramaic word also includes vegetables and herbs, not just grass.

²⁵ The king's deliverance could have been contingent on his repentance since these types of maladies often have periods of lucidity as well. Miller references a contemporary man who thought he was a cat for 13 years while holding a normal job (138).

²⁶ Along with the moral of the story in v. 37, this is the theme of the chapter.

²⁷ This verse was a major issue in the Reformation. The LXX translation seems to suggest that one can atone / redeem for your sins by giving alms. But (1) "break off" is a better rendering (same root as Gen. 27:40). (2) As "redeemed," the object would be the thing that is rescued. (3) While "charity to the poor" is possible, a more general meaning is better (Goldingay). (4) This idea is theologically inimical to other clear passages.

²⁸ Miller comments that this was not a "plan of salvation" per se, but a course of action that would delay temporal judgment (c.f. Isa. 1:17).

²⁹ It is notable that God graciously gave the king a full year to repent.

³⁰ According to Lacocque (85) this may have been the famous hanging gardens.

³¹ Rev. 14:8; 18:2. Babylon was probably the largest city on earth at the time. See Miller 140-41 for a description of the city.

³² Nebuchadnezzar actually was responsible for some of the most extensive building in the city and the majority of the bricks discovered are stamped with Nebuchadnezzar's name and inscription. One record is almost an explicit parallel—"The fortifications of Esagila and Bayblon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever." (Cited in Miller, 141).

³³ The wording is an exact parallel to Daniel's warning in v. 25.

³⁴ 5:21 further reveals that he lived with the wild donkeys.

³⁵ Nebuchadnezzar's son, Amel-Marduk apparently ran the country during the king's madness. Of course, Daniel apparently continued to exercise a significant role.

³⁶ Archer says that temperatures in modern Iraq stretch from 110°-120° F (43°-49° C) to below freezing in the winter (66). Ancient records about the last 30 years of his reign are sparse.

³⁷ This simple gesture was an expression of submission and humility.

³⁸ The chapter is mostly in the first person from Nebuchadnezzar (v. 1-18, 19b-27 from Daniel) but it switches temporarily to third person (v. 19a, 28-33) and back to first person again (v. 34-37). This literary feature itself highlights the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was mentally incompetent to record the events of his madness.

³⁹ This, of course, exactly echoes v. 3. It's also echoed in 6:26; 7:14, 27 and earlier in Dan 2:44—a truth that Nebuchadnezzar never accepted before losing his sanity

35. ALL THE INHABITANTS⁴⁰ OF THE EARTH ARE CONSIDERED AS NOTHING
AND ACCORDING TO WHAT HE DESIRES, HE DOES IN THE ARMY OF HEAVEN⁴¹
AND THE INHABITANTS OF EARTH
AND THERE IS NO ONE WHO CAN HINDER HIS HAND
OR SAY TO HIM, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
36. At that time, my understanding returned upon me and for the honor of my kingdom, my majesty and
splendor returned upon me and my counselors sought me.⁴² And I was reestablished in my kingdom and
exceeding greatness was added to me.
37. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor⁴³ the King of Heaven, for all his works are truth and
His ways are just and the ones who walk in pride He is able to humble.⁴⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁰ The idea is “the ones dwelling.” In other words, it speaks of them as those who live and dwell in this sphere.

⁴¹ One of the truths of the book is that God’s control and involvement extends not just to earthly kingdoms but to a parallel world of hosts and authorities in heaven.

⁴² The idea is not that they had to look about in the forests to find him but that they were willing to grant him his throne again. As the greatest king the empire ever had, it was in everyone’s best interest to restore his successful reign again. In fact, v. 36 goes on to say that there were more successful years ahead.

⁴³ The participles indicate that his praise, extolling and honoring became ongoing practices for him.

⁴⁴ Was Nebuchadnezzar saved? Wood, Young, Rushdoony, Walvoord and Miller answer yes. Calvin, Keil, Pusey and Archer answer no. See Young, 114 for affirmative arguments.

⁴⁵ “Chapter 4 is a story about two sovereignties,” the might of the greatest of human kings, Nebuchadnezzar, versus the power of the Most High God. Of course, the king of Babylon was no match for the King of the universe. Throughout the book the absolute authority of Israel’s God is set forth. Such is the teaching of Scripture, a teaching that should comfort every believer today who casts a thoughtful glance upon a word in chaos and is tempted to fear. In these times the redeemed of God must look beyond the earthly scene to heaven and remember that God still reigns, and someday he will come and rule directly over the kingdoms of the earth” (Miller, 144).

CHAPTER 5—BELSHAZZAR ARROGANTLY BLASPHEMES GOD AND IS KILLED

1. Belshazzar the king¹² made a great feast³ for a thousand of his nobles and was drinking wine before⁴ the thousand.⁵
2. Belshazzar commanded when he tasted the wine⁶ to bring the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar his predecessor⁷ had brought out from the temple in Jerusalem so that the king and his nobles and his wives and his concubines might drink from them.
3. Then they brought in the gold vessels which had been taken out from the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.⁸
4. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.⁹¹⁰

¹ Belshazzar was the coregent with Nabonidus (5:7, 16, 29) but largely functioned as the de facto king. Nabonidus lived at Tema in Arabia (500 miles south) for most of his reign and Belshazzar reigned in his place. This also explains 5:7, 16, 29 (also Dougherty, *Nabonidus*, 197). Until the mid 19th century, there were no records of Belshazzar and critics used this “fictional character” as evidence against the early date. Since then, further discoveries have removed all doubt about the accuracy of the text. One study has found 37 texts from during Nabonidus’ reign that confirm Belshazzar. As it is, since these records disappeared by Herodotus (5th B.C.) and Xenophon (4th B.C.), the author would not have known Belshazzar’s name if he was writing in the 2nd century (Dougherty and Shea, cited in Miller, 150). Belshazzar’s age is unknown but it’s reasonable to think that he was around 50.

² Ancient sources give some information about Belshazzar’s character. Beaulieu suggests that Belshazzar may have led the plot to assassinate the previous king (Labashi-Marduk), profited financially from it, and suggested his father as the new king since his father would soon die (*Nabonidus*, 90-92, 97-98, 184, 226-30). Xenophon recounts a son of Nabonidus killing the only son of Gobryas (also called Ugbaru, one of Nabonidus’ governors) during a royal hunt because he was jealous of him (Xenophon *Cyropaedia*, 4.6.1-10). This was why Gobryas defected to Cyrus, eventually leading the way into Babylon, and executing Belshazzar himself. These facts highlight why Xenophon calls him “the wicked king” (7.5.27-32).

3

⁴ Miller (151) comments that the king would have normally been hidden from his guests, so drinking before them suggests loss of inhibitions. “Drank” is a participle indicating continuous drinking.

⁵ This event we can positively date for the evening of October 11, 539 B.C., and both Herodotus (*Histories*, 1.191) and Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*, 7.5.15, 21, 25) that Babylon fell (morning of Oct. 12) while a banquet was in progress. The Nabonidus chronicle records that a few days earlier (Oct. 10) the Persians had routed the Babylonians at Sippar and Nabonidus had fled. The rest of the empire had been conquered and only Babylon was left. Why then the celebration? (1) Shea suggests that Belshazzar jumped at the opportunity to proclaim himself king at this coronation celebration. (2) Xenophon and Herodotus suggest that this was a customary annual feast and the Persians took the opportunity. (3) One shouldn’t rule out the possibility of a fatalistic and hedonistic orgy with possible death so at hand. (4) Either way, celebrating was a way of supporting morale and expressing confidence to the citizens in the midst of the Persian threat. The walls seemed impossibly strong, the Euphrates ran into the city, and Xenophon says that they had supplies for 20 years. These details, of course, significantly foreshadow the arrogance for which the king died.

⁶ This may refer to the point when they were becoming intoxicated (Driver, Lacocque, Hartman and Di Lella, Baldwin, Miller) or it could be when the wine began to circulate. One ancient historian wrote that the Babylonians were addicted to wine (Quintus Curtius, 5.1).

⁷ The word is אבִּי which can have the meaning of predecessor. Nabonidus was not descended from Nebuchadnezzar. There is precedent for a preceding ruler to be called the “father” of his successor (the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III calls Jehu the son of Omri though he was not biologically related but only a successor.) Similarly, Jesus is called “Son of David” even though there are many intervening generations. On the other hand, Archer argues that Nabonidus may have married Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter, making Belshazzar his grandson (69; Driver, 62) and Leupold points out that Hebrew and Aramaic have no word for grandfather or grandson (217).

⁸ These goblets had been in storage for 47 years. Why decide to blaspheme God (particularly when the city was surrounded)? While it was common to offer libations to the gods after a feast, doing so in blasphemy to other deities was not. They may have desecrated the gods of other nations as well. The point would be to remind the people that the Babylonian gods had protected them and overcome the gods of other nations. It is also interesting that Daniel had prophesied Babylon’s fall to the Persians (8:1-4, 15-20) and Isaiah had named the Persian king, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28-45:1). Could Belshazzar have been challenging Yahweh in light of these predictions? Daniel later states that Belshazzar was definitely defying Yahweh in spite of how He had worked in Nebuchadnezzar’s life (5:22-24).

⁹ There is cuneiform evidence that Nabonidus was devoted to the moon god and neglected the other gods of the Babylonian pantheon, but Belshazzar worshipped all of them. It is possible that this act was intentional—reverencing the other gods on a night when Belshazzar needed all the help he could get before the Persian threat. Part of the point of describing these gods is to highlight their emptiness—all they are is the material they’re made of.

¹⁰ It was definitely an entrenched part of much ancient thought that military victories represented the triumph of one God over another. So Isa. 37:10-13 or Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* 7.5.22—“we have a god on our side, Hephaestus.”

5. Immediately there came out the fingers of a man's hand, writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall¹¹ of the king's palace¹², and the king saw the palm of the hand¹³ which was writing.
6. Then the king's countenance changed and his thoughts alarmed him, his hip joints gave way¹⁴ and his knees knocked together.
7. The king called as loudly as he could¹⁵ to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers. The king answered and said to the wise men of Babylon, any man who can read aloud this writing and declares its interpretation will be clothed with purple and the chain of gold around his neck¹⁶ and will rule third¹⁷ in the kingdom.
8. Then all the king's wise men came in¹⁸ but they were not able to read the writing or to make known the interpretation to the king.¹⁹
9. Then king Belshazzar was greatly alarmed and his countenance changed²⁰ and his lords were perplexed.
10. The queen,²¹ because of the words of the king and his nobles entered the banquet hall (and) the queen answered and said, "O king, live forever. You should not let your thoughts alarm you and let your color not be changed.
11. There is a noble man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy God²². In the days of your predecessor, illumination and insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your predecessor made him chief of the magicians and conjurers and Chaldeans
12. because a superior spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams and visions, explain riddles and untangle problems were found in this Daniel whom the king named Belteshazzar.^{23,24} Now let Daniel²⁵ be called and he will declare the interpretation."²⁶

¹¹ Excavations of the throne room have found walls "washed over with white gypsum." This plaster of chalk or lime would have highlighted the writing for everyone. "Opposite the lampstand" is intended to confirm that it was visible to anyone in the room.

¹² One archaeologist claims to have found the room. See Miller, 155-56 for a description of the ornate décor.

¹³ This expression could simply refer to the hand, or if the king's back was to the wall and he looked up this could have been exactly what he would have seen.

¹⁴ In other words, his hips and upper leg went completely limp out of panic.

¹⁵ Lit., "in his strength" in the sense of "with all his might."

¹⁶ Purple was the royal color and during the Persian era the gold chain was a special compliment that could be worn only if given by the king (Montgomery, 254).

¹⁷ See note on Belshazzar in 5:1. Some have translated it as simply an officer (Montgomery) or ruler of a third of the kingdom (Lacocque), but third in hierarchy seems the most natural view (Miller, 157-58).

¹⁸ Some readers have found the chronology confusing here. (How did the decree precede the wise men entering?) BHS even recommends emendation on this basis. But a number of possibilities resolve it—some wise men could have entered first while others came behind; the decree could have gone out as part of gathering them; the narrative could simply be

¹⁹ Remarkable that these men had certainly known Daniel's ability (c.f. v. 11), but none of them mention Daniel when they cannot interpret the dream.

²⁰ Lit., "his countenance changed upon him."

²¹ This was not Belshazzar's wife, since v. 2 states that they were already present. She may have been Nebuchadnezzar's widow or Nabonidus' wife. Some have even suggested that Nabonidus married Nebuchadnezzar's widow and adopted Belshazzar (son of Nebuchadnezzar) as his own. She may also have been Nebuchadnezzar's daughter—even Nitocris (Dougherty, 39-44, 53-63, 69-70). Either way, it is clear that (1) she had more dignity than the participants in the feast, (2) she had great authority to be able to enter like this, (3) she immediately took control of the situation, (4) she had lived during Nebuchadnezzar's reign and recalled realities that others had forgotten.

²² Of course this could also read "holy gods" (the plural אֱלֹהִים can be understood either way) but the inclusion of "holy" seems to indicate some recognition of a unique deity. Given Nebuchadnezzar's faith and the queen's connection to him (not to mention her own evaluation of Belshazzar's situation) it's quite plausible that she is designating Yahweh. Note also that this particular formula occurs elsewhere, always referring to Daniel's God (Dan 4:8-9, 18) and sometimes in close proximity to unqualified "gods."

²³ It is fascinating that the queen refers to him by his Hebrew name, even though clearly she also knew his Babylonian name. This probably indicates more than a passing familiarity with Daniel.

²⁴ Here, Belshazzar is not just neglectful, but has completely forgotten that Daniel and his ability exists. In the end, Belshazzar exalts Daniel. But Nebuchadnezzar had already done that! It seems apparent that after his father's death, Belshazzar had completely forgotten about Daniel and the God of heaven that his father had worshipped. He did have the knowledge of God (5:22), but had forgotten it because he was more concerned with himself.

²⁵ The fact that she called him Daniel may indicate that she knew him well or knew him from the very beginning.

13. Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The King answered and said to Daniel, “you are that Daniel from among the exiles of Judah whom the king, my predecessor brought in from Judah.
14. I had heard about you that the spirit of the gods²⁷ is in you, and illumination, understanding and superior wisdom are found in you.
15. Now the wise men—the enchanters were brought in before me to read this writing and to make known its interpretation to me and they were not able to declare the interpretation of the matter.
16. But **I myself**²⁸ have heard concerning you that you are able to give interpretations and to untangle problems. Now if you are able to read aloud the writing and make known to me the interpretation, you will wear purple and a chain of gold (will be) upon your neck and you will rule third in the kingdom.”
17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “(Let) your gifts be for you and give your rewards to another.²⁹ Nevertheless the writing I will read aloud to the king and the interpretation I will make known.
18. You, O King... The Most High God gave the kingdom and the greatness and the honor and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your predecessor.
19. And because of the greatness which He gave to him, all peoples and nations and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he wished was dead and whom he wished stayed alive, and whom he wished became exalted and whom he wished was humbled.^{30 31 32}
20. But when his heart was exalted and his spirit became strong³³ to act proudly, he was cast down from the throne of his kingdom and honor was removed from him.
21. And he was driven away from the sons of man and his mind became like a beasts and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox and his body was drenched with the dew of the heavens until he knew that the Most High God is ruler over the kingdoms of men and sets over it whomever He wishes.³⁴
22. Yet **you**,³⁵ his descendant, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this³⁶
23. and against the Lord of heaven you have exalted yourself and they have brought the vessels of His house before you and you, your nobles, your wife and your concubines (are) drinking wine from them and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone which do not see and do not hear and do not know. But the God in whose hand (is) your life, breath, and all your ways,³⁷ him you have not glorified.
24. Then was sent out before Him the palm of the hand and this writing was inscribed.
25. And this is the writing which was inscribed—‘MENE, MENE,³⁸ TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’³⁹

²⁶ It is plausible that the change of kings also brought a change of administrators. Daniel would have been almost 60 at the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and would have been about 80 (23 years after Nebuchadnezzar’s death). For both of these reasons, Belshazzar could easily have forgotten him. On the other hand, see note on 8:27.

²⁷ In 4:11 the queen spoke of the “holy God”—the unique, or distinctive God, an expression only used elsewhere in Nebuchadnezzar’s mouth (Dan 4:8–9). Here, Belshazzar seems to show no similar confidence in Daniel’s God.

²⁸ The inclusion of the pronoun seems to add additional emphasis to the subject.

²⁹ The interpretation of the vision made the gifts utterly irrelevant (and actually dangerous since this would be a vanquished kingdom within hours). Of course, the king gave Daniel the meaningless gifts and position anyway.

³⁰ These constructions are all the form of “became” + participle. Literally, “whom he became wished (against) became dead.

³¹ There is an irony in this statement, since it is God that has the power to humble (4:37) and He did that very thing to Nebuchadnezzar.

³² Even though Nebuchadnezzar was far more powerful than Belshazzar, he still learned that the most High is far mightier and humbled himself. How much more should Belshazzar?

³³ The translations render this as “hardened, Collins (Hermencia) renders it “became strong,” and at least one lexicon renders “grow arrogant.”

³⁴ The word is the same as “whomever he wished” in v. 19 (צִבְדָּה).

³⁵ The pronoun is emphatic.

³⁶ Babylonian records indicate that Belshazzar was a chief officer under King Neriglissar in 560, 2 years before Nebuchadnezzar’s death (562) and his father, Nabonidus lived in Babylon as one of Nebuchadnezzar’s officials (4:36), so he would have been old enough to witness what happened to the king.

³⁷ The contrast is profound. Other gods are fabrications and described by the materials they’re made of. The true God holds the king’s life and breath in his hand. It is also interesting that Belshazzar just looked at the miraculous “palm of a hand” writing.

³⁸ “Mene” is repeated twice for emphasis and the certainty of what God would do.

26. This is the interpretation of the message: ‘Mene’—‘God has numbered your kingdom and completed⁴⁰ it.’
27. ‘Tekel’—‘you have been weighed in the balances and found lacking.’
28. ‘Peres’⁴¹—‘your kingdom has been divided⁴² and given to the Medes and Persians.’^{43,44}
29. Then Belshazzar commanded and they clothed Daniel (with) purple and a gold chain around his neck and proclaimed concerning him to become the third ruler in the kingdom.⁴⁵
30. In that same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.^{46,47,48,49}
31. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom (at the age of) sixty two.^{50,51}

³⁹ Aramaic was spoken in Babylon. Why was the king unable to interpret it himself? Jewish tradition says they were written vertically; Wood says the characters may have been unusual (139); without the pointings there could have been some ambiguity. But most probably, the words were too difficult to assimilate into a coherent message or identify with a referent. This accords with the fact that Belshazzar was deeply troubled by the message—he probably anticipated that the message was negative.

⁴⁰ The word is used elsewhere of completing a project. The force here is that whatever purposes or uses God had for the kingdom, those are done now and therefore

⁴¹ Of course, the form of this word differs between v. 25 and v. 28 (inclusion of the waw and singular in v. 25). Theodotion, the LXX and the Vulgate attempted to harmonize v. 25 and 28, but the MT is clear and as the harder reading is probably the better. There is no genuine difficulty with the difference since Daniel was interpreting the cryptic statement. “Peres” has the same radicals as “Persians” and was probably an intentional word play (paronomasia).

⁴² The idea is not that the kingdom has been split between the two Medes and Persians but that it would be broken into many parts and dissolved (Keil, 190).

⁴³ Daniel interprets these three words as Aramaic perfect passive participles (the pointing is from accenting or from assimilation to the form of “Mene”). The meaning would be “has numbered,” “have been weighed” and “is divided,” emphasizing the fact that the decision has already been made and the outcome settled. In contrast to his response to Nebuchadnezzar (4:27), Daniel offers no hope to Belshazzar.

⁴⁴ Understanding the three words as monetary weights is interesting, but Brownlee writes “There is one fatal weakness to this method of interpreting the handwriting on the wall: It is not so interpreted in the Book of Daniel itself!” (*Qumran Scrolls*, 41).

⁴⁵ See note on v. 12. The amazing thing is that even when Belshazzar was warned, he continued in his pride. When he made the decree elevating Daniel, he seems to still believe that he has plenty of time and that life will continue on as normal. But the judgment of God was not delayed – he died that very night. In fact, there is an inherent self-contradiction. If Daniel is right, why promote him—the kingdom is done. If you disbelieve what he says (he’s wrong or lying), why reward him?

⁴⁶ The interpretation of the dream was 27 words long (Hebrew). The end of Belshazzar’s life is recorded in 6. As one of the most significant shifts of power in ancient history, it’s marked and significant that the book states these facts unceremoniously. In other words, God’s dealings with people are what matters. The names of the empires or kings are just details. Herodotus records “all this time they were dancing and celebrating a holiday which happened to fall then, until they learned the truth only too well” (*Histories*, 1.191). See Herodotus ([Histories 1.188-192](#)) or Xenophon’s account for a dramatic description of Belshazzar’s death (*Cyropaedia*, 7.5.26-30). Xenophon says that the king ordered the palace gates opened to see what was happening. Gobyras and his soldiers fought their way to the king, whom they found holding a dagger (presumably for suicide?) They “avenged themselves upon the wicked king.”

⁴⁷ The defenses of Babylon were impressive—two sets of double walls with the outermost stretching 17 miles (27.3 k), 25 feet wide (7.5 m) and 50 feet high (12 m). With the Euphrates river and food supplies for 20 years it was also strong against siege. The Persians diverted the river into a swamp and entered the city from within.

⁴⁸ Note that this was a direct fulfillment of Isa. 21:1-10; Jer. 51:30, 57, all of which would have seemed nearly impossible at the time of their writing.

⁴⁹ Nabonidus was apparently extremely unpopular. Both the Nabonidus Chronicle and the Cyrus Cylinder say that Nabonidus was unfaithful to Babylon’s gods and had brutally stopped a rebellion a few years before. After his defeat a few days before, Nabonidus fled to Borsippa where he surrendered and was later to be deported to Carmania. (*Against Apion*, 1.20). Belshazzar was probably even less popular (see note on Belshazzar in 5:1). Furthermore, the captured people received Cyrus gladly when he arrived two weeks later (Oct. 29, 539) because he allowed them to return home (Ezra 1:1-4; Cyrus Cylinder). For all of these reasons, the peaceful transition of power is unsurprising.

⁵⁰ The literal expression is idiomatic here.

⁵¹ The MT places this verse with chapter 6 but it could function either way or as a transition for both.

CHAPTER 6—DANIEL FACES A DEN OF LIONS BECAUSE OF HIS DETERMINATION TO PRAY

1. It was pleasing to Darius¹ to establish over the kingdom as satraps, 120 men² to be over the whole kingdom.³
2. And over them three presidents from whom Daniel was one,⁴ to whom these satraps would give account to them so that the king would not face a loss.⁵
3. Then this Daniel was distinguishing himself⁶ above all the presidents and the satraps because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to establish him over the whole kingdom.
4. Then the presidents and the satraps⁷ looked to find a charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom but they were not able to find any charge or corruption because he was faithful and no charge or negligence was found against him.
5. Then these men said, we will not find any charge against this Daniel except concerning the law of his God.
6. Then these presidents and satraps crowded together⁸ before the king and thus they spoke to him—“O Darius the King, live forever.
7. All are agreed—the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors,⁹ for the king to establish a statute and put in power an injunction that all who request a petition from any god or man during 30 days except from you,¹⁰ O king, will be thrown to a den of lions.¹¹
8. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the writing, not to be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which does not pass away.
9. Therefore King Darius signed the writing and the injunction.
10. And when Daniel knew that he had inscribed the writing, he went into his house where windows had been opened in his roof chamber¹² toward Jerusalem¹³ and three times in the day he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before God, as he had done from (times) previous to this.
11. Then these men crowded together and found Daniel requesting and asking favor before his God.
12. Then they approached and said before the king concerning the injunction, O king, did you not sign an injunction that any man who requested from any god or man during 30 days except from you, O king, will

¹ See [Excursus on Darius the Mede](#) for more information.

² Ancient records indicate that there were 20-30 satrapies or provinces within the Persian empire, but satraps is a flexible term (meaning “protector”) that was used broadly to also include lower officials.

³ The text gives no time marker, but Miller suggests that it was within a year or two of the previous chapter. Daniel would be 80 by this time so it is highly unlikely that a decade or two intervened.

⁴ Later on the Romans followed the same practice of keeping officials from the previous administration. Qualified and experienced personnel held great value and it also ingratiated the captors to the local citizens.

⁵ They may have provided accountability, watching for corruption and graft among the other officials.

⁶ With the “to be” + participial form of the verb, this suggests that it was an ongoing reality, and probably includes the many ways that He had stood apart in chs. 1-6. Darius’ expectations in vv. 16, 19-20 certain support this. It is also interesting that the visions of 9-12 probably occurred during this period, meaning that Daniel continued to exercise prophetic power and the ability to interpret visions.

⁷ This didn’t have to include all 119 satraps, but the plural of presidents means that both of the other presidents were involved.

⁸ The word means to go together as a group but also has a component of a mob or thronging. The idea is that they acted in concert or conspiracy.

⁹ This is probably an exaggeration, claiming universal support when most of these lower authorities in outlying provinces would have no idea.

¹⁰ Because they specified prayer to any gods or any man, the idea seems to be that Darius would be the mediator for all prayers—all praying must go through him. There is no extra-biblical indication of Persian kings ever regarding themselves as God or demanding deification. Given that this territory had just been conquered, this may have been a way of consolidating power and testing allegiance.

¹¹ Lions were indigenous during this time and there is also strong historical precedent for lions being hunted or taken captive. The den is probably a pit with an opening at the top through which people would be lowered. It is safe to assume that there was generally no need to remove people from the pit afterwards. See Goldingay, 128 for the historical precedent.

¹² These rooftop rooms were common in the East as a place with air circulation to be undisturbed.

¹³ See 1 Kings 8:48 (c.f. 8:35, 38, 44). By praying towards Jerusalem, Daniel showed both attentiveness to the details of the OT and also confessed the status of God’s people—in captivity because of their sin.

be thrown into a den of lions? The king answered and said, “The thing is certain according to the law of the Medes and Persians which does not pass away.”

13. Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is from the exiled sons of Judah¹⁴ does not pay attention concerning you, O king, nor concerning the decree which you signed, but three times a day he asks his petitions.¹⁵
14. Then the king, when he heard the matter, was greatly disturbed within him¹⁶ and he set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he exerted himself until the sun went down to deliver him.¹⁷
15. Then these men crowded together before the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that (it is) the law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute that the king establishes can change.”¹⁸
16. Then the king spoke and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king answered and said to Daniel, “Your God whom you serve continually, may he deliver you!¹⁹²⁰
17. And one stone was brought and set over the mouth of the den and the king sealed it with his signet ring and with the signet of his nobles so that nothing would be changed in the matter of Daniel.²¹
18. Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting and no diversions²² were brought before him and sleep fled from him.
19. Then the king arose at the dawn of daylight and went in haste to the den of lions.²³
20. And as he came to the den—to Daniel—he cried out with a sound of anguish. The king answered and said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God whom you serve continually able to deliver you from the lions?”²⁴
21. Then Daniel spoke with the king, “O king, live forever.”²⁵
22. My God sent his angel²⁶ and shut the mouths of the lions and they have not harmed me because I was found innocent before Him²⁷ and also before you, O king, I have committed no crime.
23. Then the king was greatly pleased concerning it and he ordered to bring Daniel up from the den and Daniel was taken from the den and there was no harm found on him because he had trusted in his God.²⁸
24. And the king ordered and they brought those men who slanderously charged²⁹ Daniel and they were cast into the den of lions—they and their children and their wives³⁰ and they did not last to the bottom of the den before the lions attacked them and broke and crushed all their bones.

¹⁴ The only reason to mention this detail was to imply disloyalty and humiliate Daniel (anti-Semitism?)

¹⁵ This clarified that it was not merely a temporary lapse. It also implies that they watched Daniel repeatedly before reporting him.

¹⁶ The disturbance was clearly not at Daniel’s actions but at the situation and possibly at the men for deceiving him. He would have finally realized that the law was a plot, having nothing to do with his own honor

¹⁷ Apparently the law prescribed that the sentence must be carried out the same day.

¹⁸ Even the powerlessness of the king performs two functions: (1) It suggests a contrast with the omnipotent God who has no limitation on his sovereignty, and (2) it begins to fulfill the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that every subsequent kingdom would be weaker than his own.

¹⁹ Note that Daniel himself didn’t know the outcome when he entered the lion’s den.

²⁰ Now even the heathen trust in Daniel’s God! Clearly, Daniel had demonstrated both an ongoing testimony (“whom you continually serve”) and Darius had seen or heard of Daniel’s God accomplishing extraordinary things.

²¹ They typically secured something with chains which were then sealed with soft clay inscribed by the rings. The chains could not be removed without breaking the clay and doing so also broke the king’s seal.

²² This is an Aramaic hapex and the meaning is uncertain.

²³ Lacocque comments that in Babylonian practice, if a victim was tortured but had not died by the next day they would be pardoned (118).

²⁴ Even the fact that Darius went to the den asking this question suggests that he thought there was a good likelihood of Daniel surviving.

²⁵ Sitting in a den of hungry lions, Daniel starts off with formalities. Clearly, his God truly had delivered him!

²⁶ Of course, we do not know the identity of the angel, but a parallel situation in 3:25 describes the helper as “like a son of the gods.”

²⁷ The important thing is not whether your civil leader finds you guilty and throws you to the lions. What matters is that you are found innocent before God.

²⁸ See Heb. 11:33

²⁹ The word (אכל) can mean to eat or to slander, hence “bitingly slandered” or “maliciously slandered” (ESV, NAS).

25. Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and languages which were dwelling in all the land, “May your peace abound.”
26. A decree is established from before me that in all the dominion of my kingdom, (people) are to tremble and fear from before the God of Daniel.
He is the living God and enduring forever,
And his kingdom will not be destroyed and his dominion (will be) to the end.
27. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth
(He) who delivered Daniel from the hand of the lions.
28. And this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.³¹³²

³⁰ Though horribly cruel, this was apparently Persian custom, possibly to prevent crime and to prevent family retaliation. Scripture merely records that this is what the Persians carried out; it does not speak approvingly of what happened.

³¹ If Darius and Cyrus are the same person the translation reads, “reign of Darius, even (namely) the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

³² As in 1:21, the connection to Cyrus must have special significance, calling up God’s promise to use Cyrus to return His people to the land. Through Isa. 49:6, the picture stretches all the way to God’s eternal purposes for the world.

CHAPTER 7—DANIEL’S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS

1. In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon,¹ Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind² (while) lying upon his bed. Then he wrote the dream and he told (this) general summary³:
2. Daniel recounted and said, “I saw in my vision in the night, and behold, four winds⁴ of the heavens were stirring up the great sea⁵
3. And four great beasts⁶ came up from the sea,⁷ different⁸ one from the other.
4. The first was like a lion⁹ and had wings of an eagle. And (as) I looked, its wings were plucked off¹⁰ and it was lifted up from the ground and it was made to stand upon two feet like a man and the heart of a man was given to it.
5. And behold, another beast, a second one, similar to a bear¹¹ and raised up¹² on one side and (it had) three ribs¹³ in its mouth between its teeth and so it was told to it, ‘arise, devour much flesh.’¹⁴

¹ This would have been somewhere between 553-551 B.C. Daniel would have been deported to Babylon 50 years earlier. An ancient record states that in Nabonidus’ third year he entrusted his whole reign to his son. Miller, 194.

² This vision is a clear parallel to the vision of chapter 2 and the two should be interpreted together. Baldwin also comments that this is the broadest historical survey Daniel gives, so that the other visions fit within it as sub-sets. Why then is it necessary to repeat the information again? (1) Chapter 2 may present the kingdoms as the world sees them (glittering metal) while ch. 7 shows what God sees, as they really are (ferocious, ravenous animals). (2) Repetition also serves to indicate certainty. (In Gen. 41:32, Joseph tells Pharaoh that “the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.”)

³ The word (רִשׁוֹן) means “the head or chief of the words,” so Daniel only recorded the most significant details of everything he saw.

⁴ The point is that this was the great, open sea, rather than some inland sea. As it fits into the full vision, it would emphasize the international and global scope of the prophecy. The winds and churning would point to world chaos, turbulence and instability.

⁵ Archer points out that “the great sea” refers elsewhere to the Mediterranean (Josh 1:4; 9:1; 15:12, 47). Given that v. 17 says that they rose from the earth, the point is clearly that they came from the existing peoples of the world. Still, the observation that these nations are in the Mediterranean world is not without merit. The main point, however, is as a figure of the turbulent, agitated peoples of the fallen world. The four winds represent the four points of the compass (Zech. 6:5; Rev. 7:1), the fact that world events continually toss the mass of humanity in tumult, and that these empires would all arise out of that very chaos.

⁶ The four kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Just as in ch. 2, proponents of the Maccabean thesis suggest that this refers to Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece. This is because they judge it impossible that Daniel could have known about Rome. One of the many problems with this is that it would have been an extraordinary historical mistake for Daniel to think that Media and Persia were two different, sequential conquerors. Furthermore, Daniel himself acknowledges an awareness of their union (8:20). Other problems include, (1) Persia did not divide into four parts (v. 6), (2) the identity of the three ribs for Media (divergent views), (3) the Seleucid-Greek division hardly qualifies as a ferocious empire belonging in a list with Babylon and Persia (since these interpreters center the prediction on Antiochus), (4) the identity of the 10 heads if the last beast is Greece, or (5) the identity of the little horn in v. 7 (since Antiochus was not contemporary with 10 kings and did not overthrow three to seize his throne).

⁷ As v. 17 interprets the vision, the sea apparently represents the earth.

⁸ Naturally, each empire had its own peculiarities. Montgomery also points out that the beasts become progressively meaner and more hideous and this accords well with the parallel vision in ch. 2.

⁹ Jer. 49:19-22 refers to both a lion and an eagle in its description of Nebuchadnezzar. (Also Babylon as a lion in Jer. 4:7; 50:17, 44 and an eagle in Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 17:3; Hab. 1:8.) Being raised up to stand like a man also seems to echo Dan. 4:28-36. Also, the preserved [Ishtar gate](#) built by Nebuchadnezzar had lions significantly figured into its design. Contrary to common assertion, it appears that the lion and not necessarily the winged lion was the national symbol of Babylon, but this is subject to archaeology and subjective.

¹⁰ The best identification is probably with Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation and restoration in ch. 4. Losing his wings would speak of his humiliation and being set on his feet as a man would be Nebuchadnezzar’s restoration. Even the passive voice would be another reminder that God was the one acting and giving the king his position.

¹¹ The choice of a bear would simply speak of the Medo-Persian empire’s size and fierceness. Later, in ch. 8, the image of a ram is used instead.

¹² Some regard this as simply speaking of the bear’s readiness to attack, with one foot raised. However, Miller (NAC, 198) suggests that as a joint union (Media and Persia), one part (Persia) eventually rose to much greater prominence. This accords with 8:3, 20, where the ram has two horns and one is much greater than the other.

¹³ The ribs represent successful conquests—each time devouring its foes. The best identification is with the three major successful campaigns: Babylon (539), Lydia (546), and Egypt (525).

6. After this time,¹⁵ I saw another, like¹⁶ a leopard¹⁷ (that had) four wings of a bird on its back and four heads¹⁸ to the beast and dominion was given to it.
7. After this time, I saw in the night visions and behold, a fourth beast, fearsome, and terrible and exceedingly strong, and it had great iron teeth.¹⁹ It devoured and pulverized and the remnant (it) trampled with its feet, and it was different²⁰ than all the beasts before it.²¹ And it had ten horns.^{22,23,24}
8. I contemplated the horns and behold, another horn, a little²⁵ one, came up among them, and three from the horns were uprooted²⁶ before the first horn. And behold, eyes like the eyes of a man were in this horn, and a mouth speaking great things.²⁷
9. While I looked, thrones²⁸ were placed and the Ancient of days sat down. His clothing (was) white as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool, his throne was flames of fire, its wheels were burning fire.²⁹
10. A RIVER OF FIRE (WAS) FLOWING AND COMING OUT FROM BEFORE HIM
A THOUSAND THOUSANDS ATTENDED HIM AND TEN THOUSAND TIMES TEN THOUSAND³⁰ STOOD BEFORE HIM.
THE [COURT IN] JUDGMENT SAT DOWN, AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED.³¹

¹⁴ The Persian empire eventually stretched from Egypt and the Aegean sea to the Indus River on the East. No prior empire had ever ruled over so much territory. The important detail is that Persia's conquest was by divine decree. God is the one Who establishes and brings down kings.

¹⁵ This expression (also 7:1) makes it clear that these beasts are sequential rather than simultaneous.

¹⁶ Not the comparison words here and in v. 4-5. Daniel is looking for a known comparison and these images are clearly figurative.

¹⁷ The leopard is known for speed and aptly represents Greece under Alexander the Great that conquered the entire known Ancient world in 10 years. The wings would only emphasize the speed even more strongly.

¹⁸ After his death, Alexander's empire was split into four parts under his four generals (c.f. 8:8, 21-22).

¹⁹ Interesting that this is the same material as the legs and feet of the statue in ch. 2, possibly connecting the same kingdom in the two separate visions (though v. 19 specifies that it had bronze claws).

²⁰ Multiple aspects of this descriptions indicate that the fourth beast is distinct from all of the rest. (1) The passage explicitly says that it is "different from the rest." (2) It doesn't have any name or classification, presumably because it doesn't fit any normal anatomical categories. (3) The descriptions are more lengthy and shocking than any of the other descriptions. (43 words in the AV for the first two beasts; 34 words for the third; 104 for the fourth.)

²¹ It is fascinating that the beast in Rev. 13:1-2 incorporates the first three beasts of Daniel's vision. Besides identifying the beast of Rev. 13 with Daniel's fourth empire, it also seems to indicate that the prior empires are all incorporated into the final beast in some way.

²² These represent ten kings and/or kingdoms (Rev. 13:1; 17:12; Psa. 132:17; Zech. 1:18). It's interesting that in 2:41 does mention that Nebuchadnezzar saw the feet and the toes. It's fair to assume that this part of the statue (the same as the fourth beast) also had 10 toes.

²³ This beast represents Rome that was different than any kingdom that had come before in its extent and crushing power.

²⁴ This statement and the following descriptions are closely parallel to Rev. 13. Miller draws the parallels in 6 points: (1) Similar symbolism—"beast" can describe either the empire or its leader (Dan. 7:7, 11, 19, 23; Rev. 13:1-2; 17:3). (2) Both kingdoms are opposed to God and ruled by a blasphemous leader (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:1, 5-6). (3) Both beasts have ten horns (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 13:1; 17:3, 12, 16). (4) Both persecute God's people (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:7). (5) Both have nearly unlimited authority for 3 ½ years (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5). (6) Both are destroyed when Christ returns to set up His kingdom (Dan. 7:26-27; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20).

²⁵ "Little" refers to its size at the beginning, when it came up. Apparently it increased in size because v. 20 calls it "greater than its companions."

²⁶ Three other rulers will be violently displaced by the single horn.

²⁷ The eyes speak of personality, insight and intelligence (Zech. 3:9; 4:10; Rev. 4:6; 5:6). The little horn will be extremely intelligent and clever (Zech. 3:9; 4:10; Rev. 4:6; 5:6). This can be identified as the Antichrist. He is also described in Dan. 11:36-37; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; Rev. 13:5-6). Out of the ashes of the Old Roman empire, a new confederation will arise with 10 kings or kingdoms and ultimately ruled by the Antichrist. The resulting kingdom will rule over the entire earth (Rev. 13:3, 7-8, 12). Leupold interprets this as a kingdom that arises in Europe since 10 nations there could easily be traced to the old Roman empire.

²⁸ Considering other passages, these thrones are probably for the saints (Rev. 20:4; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21).

²⁹ Both of these images (his clothing and hair) denote the holiness of God. Fire represents judgment and the wording could mean that his chariot-throne was burning or that it was made of burning fire. Miller comments that it was common in the ANE for great thrones to have wheels.

³⁰ G.A.F. Knight (*Interpreter's One-Volume*, 445) says that this was the square of the largest number Daniel had a word for.

³¹ The books would represent a record of people's actions, particularly in this case, bringing judgment on the Antichrist and his kingdom (c.f. Dan. 12:1; Rev. 20:12-15).

11. I looked then, because of the sound of the great words the horn was speaking. And while I looked, the beast was killed and its body was destroyed and given over to burning with fire.³²
12. (And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion had been taken away³³ but an extension was given for their lives for a season and a time³⁴.)³⁵
13. I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven,³⁶ (one) like a son of man³⁷, (and) he came before the Ancient of Days, and was presented before Him.³⁸³⁹
14. And to him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom that all peoples and nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom one that will not be destroyed.⁴⁰
15. As for me, Daniel, I was distressed in my spirit and the visions of my head alarmed me.
16. I drew near to one of the ones standing there⁴¹ and sought the meaning from him concerning all this. And he spoke and made known to me the interpretation of the things.
17. These four great beasts are four kings who will arise from the earth.
18. And the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess the kingdom forever, forever and forever.⁴²

³² Right in the middle of the Antichrist speaking boastful, blasphemous words against the Most High fire falls and destroys him. The destruction of the beast would include both the Antichrist and the kingdom he controls. Punishment with fire would also comport with Rev. 19:20.

³³ The idea is not that they continued to exist beyond the destruction of the fourth beast. Rather, this statement emphasizes the contrast between the fourth beast and every kingdom that had come before. Where they had each been incorporated in some form into the kingdom that followed them, the fourth beast is unique in that it will be immediately destroyed. See the TNIV. Note also that the rest of the statue in ch. 2 remains until the foundation is destroyed. Another option, however, is to see in this the continuation of the human race [the other kingdoms] during the millennium, though the dominion of the fourth beast (the hegemony of the Antichrist) is not retained).

³⁴ This clearly connects to 2:21 where this wording applies to God Himself. The strong verbal parallels indicate that this figure is attempting to usurp God's place as the One who has fixed the times and the seasons.

³⁵ Season and a time is hendiadys for a fixed period of time (c.f. Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7).

³⁶ The LXX adds ἔρχομαι and ἐπί, implying that the clouds are the mode of transport by which He is approaching the throne room. (Two NT passages use ἐπί; two use ἐν and one uses μετά.

³⁷ The meaning is that he is human in form. There have been various identifications: (1) The angel Michael and his angelic followers (Collins). But v. 27 speaks of human followers. (2) The Jewish people (Montgomery, Lacocque, Hartman and Di Lella, Driver, Heaton), but why is he called "son of man" and not "son of Jacob"? And how can "all humanity" worship (v. 14) if this refers to the Jews (a part of humanity)? (3) A theophany because in v. 14 the nations worship Him (c.f. Rev. 19:10), clouds are associated with deity. Even the Talmud recognizes it as Messianic (Sanhedrin 98a). During Jesus' life, the people apparently understood this title as Messianic (John 12:34 where the two titles are interchangeable). But clearly the strongest evidence is in the NT passages that quote it, all from Jesus' own mouth.

The implications of the passage is that (1) He is human, based on the meaning of "son of man." (2) He rules as an utterly unique king, different from any that came before. (3) And yet He is divine, based on "the clouds of heaven" (c.f. Ex 13:21; Num 10:34; Psa 104:3; Is 19:1) and that all "serve Him," a verb used in Daniel of serving and worshipping God. (4) He shares the victory of His reign with the saints (Dan 7:18, 22, 27) and to some extent is identified with them. He receives the kingdom; hence so do they (v. 27).

A final point of significance is in contrast to the four kingdoms. Acting as ravenous beasts, they are the ultimate contrast with the coming, eternal king who will reign as a human—the meaning of "son of man." In fulfillment of Psa. 8, He will restore man's God-intended rule over the world.

³⁸ This verse is quoted in the NT more than any other verse in the book of Daniel (Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; 22:69). These passages make several things clear: (1) The fulfillment will be the second coming at the beginning of the Millennium. (Miller comments that foreshortening may also allow the judgment of Satan and his hordes at the end of the Millennium to be included.) (2) The reference is also to Jesus Christ.

³⁹ Of course this passage also has great theological significance: (1) It supports the clearest claims Jesus made to his own deity (Matt. 24:30 et al), (2) it asserts both his deity and humanity, (3) it distinguishes Him from the Father (the Ancient of Days) and (4) it anticipates His certain, future receipt of all authority from the hand of the Father.

⁴⁰ This is in contrast to all of the other kingdoms and especially against the fourth. This verse records the coronation celebration of the Messiah..

⁴¹ There is biblical precedent to think that this is an angel (Dan. 9:21; 10:10; Zech 1:9; 2:3; Rev. 17:7), possibly Gabriel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21).

⁴² Saucy points out that "forever" requires kingdom cannot be limited to the millennium. It must extend to the new heavens and new earth and the eternal state (*Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 189-92).

19. Then I desired to know the exact meaning about the fourth beast which was different than the rest, exceedingly terrifying, its teeth of iron and claws of bronze and eating and shattering and trampling with its feet what was left.
20. And concerning the ten horns which were on its head and the other horn that came up and before whom the three horns fell; [the horn] that had eyes and a mouth speaking great things and that (in) appearance was greater than his companions.
21. While I was looking, this horn made war with the holy ones and was able [to overcome] them.⁴³
22. Until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was given⁴⁴ for the saints of the Most High and the time came when the holy ones possessed the kingdom.
23. He spake thus—“concerning the fourth beast, there will be a fourth kingdom on earth which will be different from all the kingdoms and it will devour the whole earth and trample it down and crush it.”⁴⁵
24. And concerning the ten horns—from this kingdom ten kingdoms will arise and another will arise after them⁴⁶ and it will be different from the first ones and he will put down three kings.⁴⁷
25. And he will speak words against the Most High and the saints of the Most High he will wear out⁴⁸ and he will intend to change the times and the law⁴⁹ and they will be given into his hand for time, times and half a time.⁵⁰
26. But [the court] will sit for judgment⁵¹ and his dominion will be taken away to be consumed and to be destroyed until the end.
27. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under all the heavens will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all dominions will serve Him and obey⁵² Him.
28. So here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me and my countenance changed but I kept the word in my heart.

⁴³ This is a new detail that was not included in the earlier vision. The wording here is almost identical to Rev. 13:7.

⁴⁴ The idea is that God adjudicates and condemns the Antichrist but exonerates His people.

⁴⁵ The last two words (trample and crush) are alliterated for dramatic effect.

⁴⁶ So the ten will be established before the new one arises.

⁴⁷ Apparently, the final empire will begin with a confederation of 10 nations (kings) that will all reign contemporaneously under the power of the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13). “Coming after them” implies that he will be additional to the 10 and arise after they have already gained their authority. At some point three of these kings will resist the rule of the little horn (the Antichrist) and be overcome (uprooted).

⁴⁸ The Aramaic word speaks of wearing something down like an overused garment. This will certainly include religious (Dan. 9:27) and economic (Rev. 13:16-17) oppression.

⁴⁹ It is possible that the Antichrist will actually adjust cultural norms like the 10-day workweek during the French revolution (Wood) or the calendar (Archer). Whether this is included or not, it is clear that he will eliminate or adjust religious holidays and have total authority to rescind legal protections (Rev 17:13).

⁵⁰ Rev. 11:2; 13:5 makes it unambiguous that this is 3 ½ years by describing it as 42 months. Also Rev. 11:3; 12:14, 16 ;Dan. 9:27 (middle of the 7); 12:7, approximate to 12:11-12. This refers to the great tribulation—the second half of the tribulation. Montgomery points out that this is an extraordinarily specific time marker (314).

Those who hold to the Maccabean hypothesis date this from the desecration of the temple (Dec. 6, 167) to the temple rededication under Judas Maccabeus (Dec. 14, 164). The problem, of course, is that this is 3 years, not 3 ½, to which Hartman answers that the author simply got it wrong (Hartman, 216).

⁵¹ The subject is not specified and it seems reasonable to understand it as the Ancient of Days.

⁵² Lit. “hear Him.”

CHAPTER 8—DANIEL’S VISION OF THE TWO BEASTS (PERSIA AND GREECE)

1. In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king¹ a vision appeared to me,² Daniel, after the (vision) that appeared to me at the first.
2. And I saw in the vision and when it was I saw, I myself was in Susa the fortress, which is in the province of Elam.³ And I saw in the vision and I myself was at the Ulai canal.⁴⁵
3. And I raised my eyes and I saw and behold, a ram⁶ standing before the canal and it had two horns and the horns were high but one was higher than the second⁷ and the higher one came up last.⁸
4. I saw the ram charging toward the west⁹ and toward the north and toward the south¹⁰ and no beast stood before him and there was no one delivering from his power and he did according to his desire and became great.¹¹
5. And (while) I myself was observing, behold, a male goat¹² coming from the west upon the face of the whole earth and he was not touching the ground and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.¹³
6. And he came to the ram with the two horns¹⁴ which I had seen standing before the canal and he ran to him in the wrath of his power.
7. I saw him arrive near the ram and he was bitterly angry toward him¹⁵ and struck the ram and broke his two horns and the ram had no power to stand before him but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him and no one delivered the ram from his hand.
8. So the male goat became exceedingly great and when he became strong the great horn was broken¹⁶ and four conspicuous ones came up instead of it toward the four winds of heaven.¹⁷

¹ This would have been 550 B.C. It was around this time that Cyrus formed the Medo-Persian alliance which would bring down the Babylonian hegemony 12 years later. Nabonidus was nervous and sought protection by trying to form alliances with Lydia and Egypt. The world would have been watching to see how this would unfold. The vision given to Daniel may have been God’s reassurance to His people that He was caring for them.

² There is both a pronominal suffix and a pronoun here to solidly shift the narrative to 1st person. It may also speak of the honor Daniel enjoyed by receiving this vision.

³ Apparently the city of Susa was also a fortress located 220 miles east of Babylon and 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf. It was the capital of its province (Elam) and later became a royal city in the Medo-Persian empire (Neh. 1:1; 2:1; Esther 1:2). It also became the capital of the Persian empire in 521 and the place where archaeologist found the famous code of Hammarabi (brought there by the Elamites in the 13th century BC). The OT reveals that Esther and Nehemiah lived here.

⁴ The canal passed on the Northeast side of Susa, it was 900 feet wide, and it still exists though today it is dry.

⁵ Daniel may have been physically present in Susa, but more likely he was only transported there in his vision. (1) The wording of v. 2 suggests this. (2) In v. 27 Daniel says that he began serving in Babylon again only a few days later (more than 200 miles away). (3) There is biblical precedent elsewhere for the same effect (Ezek. 8-11; 40-48).

⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus says that the Persian ruler carried a golden ram’s head in front of his army (10.1).

⁷ Obviously, this represents the preeminence of the Persian influence over the power of Media.

⁸ Of the two nations, Media was a major power and Persia was insignificant, but about 550 B.C. Cyrus managed to get power in Media and then elevated Persia between the two.

⁹ Literally, toward the sea (the Mediterranean)

¹⁰ These were the directions that the Medo-Persian empire conquered—Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece (West), Armenia, Scythia and near the Caspian Sea (North), and Egypt and Ethiopia (South).

¹¹ No other empire before Medo-Persia had controlled this much territory.

¹² Literally, “a male goat of the female goats.” The formula appears in Gen 37:31; Lev 4:23; Num 7:16 which the AV renders “kid of the goats” but “an he goat” here. The other translations render “a male goat” and that seems to be the sense with the possible sense that this is a dominating male goat—a leader of a herd.

¹³ Of course, Greece was located to the West of Persia, Greece came to control the entire known world (“crossing the whole earth) and did so with incredible speed (“without touching the ground”). As it relates to speed, note that the Greek empire is portrayed as a winged leopard in 7:6. Alexander unexpectedly succeeded his father in 336 B.C. at the age of 20. Within 2 years he had halted the dominance of the Persians and in 3 years he conquered the entire Near East.

¹⁴ The expression is literally, “the possessor (פֶּעַל) of the two horns” and occurs again in 8:20.

¹⁵ The Greeks deeply resented the Persians since the time of Cyrus, particularly because of invasions by Darius I (490) and Xerxes I (480). Alexander’s conquest was intended, among other things, to avenge these attacks.

¹⁶ The death of Alexander did come precisely at the time of his greatness (June 13, 323 B.C. at 32 years old).

¹⁷ The partition of Alexander’s empire under his four generals was almost perfectly in the four directions of the compass.

9. And out of one of them came one little horn¹⁸ and it became excessively great toward the south and toward the east and toward the beautiful land.¹⁹
10. And it became great up to the host of heaven²⁰ and it cast down to the earth some of the host and some of the stars and trampled them.²¹
11. And it magnified itself even as high as the prince of the host²² is exalted. The regular (burnt offering) it took away and the fixed place of the sanctuary was cast down.²³
12. And a host will be given over (to it) along with the regular (burnt offering) because of transgression²⁴ and it will throw truth to the ground²⁵ and it will act (however it pleases)²⁶ and will prosper.²⁷
13. Then I heard a holy one speaking and one holy one said that one that was speaking, for how long is the vision of the regular (burnt offering), the transgression of desolation,²⁸ the giving over of the holy place and the trampling of the host?
14. And he said to me, for 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be restored.^{29,30}
15. And it was when I myself, Daniel, had seen the vision then I sought understanding. And behold, standing in front of me was one like the appearance of a man.
16. And I heard the voice of a man between (the banks of the) Ulai and he called and said, “Gabriel, cause this man to understand the vision.”³¹
17. So he came beside (where) I stood and when he came I was terrified and I fell upon my face and he said to me, “understand, Son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.”³²

¹⁸ This is [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) (163-157 B.C.) who acceded to the Seleucid throne illegitimately through bribery and intrigue. This is the sense of his insignificance (the “little” horn). The other “little horn” in ch. 7 cannot be the same because he is connected to the fourth empire (Rome). Still, the parallels are probably intentional since Antiochus foreshadows the Antichrist. Both are satanically energized and tyrannically opposed to God’s people.

¹⁹ This is the land of Palestine, beautiful because of its spiritual significance.

²⁰ Based on v. 24, even though the “host” often refers to angelic majesties (1 Kings. 22:19), it refers in v. 10-13 to the saints, metaphorically represented as shining lights (c.f. 12:3)

²¹ “Hosts” refers to saints. Huge numbers of God’s people suffered severe persecution and martyrdom under Antiochus’ persecution between 170 and 163 B.C. After the Roman commander Popilius Laenas halted him in Egypt, Antiochus plundered the temple and slaughtered 80,000 Jews of all ages and even infants (1 Macc. 1:20-32, 41-64; 2 Macc. 5:1-14; 6:2-5).

²² The Prince of the host is God Himself.

²³ The temple was brought low because of Antiochus’ desecrations and opposition to practice there. The grammar here is very rough and a number of thoughts must be supplied.

²⁴ This could refer to Antiochus’ wickedness, but more likely it refers to God’s judgment on His people through the persecution because of their unfaithfulness. 1 Macc. 1:11-15, 43 record that they were unfaithful and had even turned to the Greek gods. That Antiochus later cruelly forced them to worship these gods is part of the irony of rebellion.

²⁵ Antiochus sought to destroy every copy of the law he could find and executed anyone possessing a copy (1 Macc. 1:56-57).

²⁶ The wording is highly elliptical but this rendering follows the NAS (also Miller, 228).

²⁷ In December 167 B.C., Antiochus committed the ultimate sacrilege by erecting an altar to Zeus in the temple and offering pig meat on it. He also forbid the Jews from following their religious laws (diet, circumcision, Sabbath and feast laws) and required his subjects to do homage to Zeus rather than Yahweh. In 167 B.C. he also ordered that all daily sacrifices and temple worship cease and that all sacrifices be made to him instead (1 Macc. 1:44-45).

²⁸ See “the abomination of desecration” in 11:31. This refers to the desecration of the temple by setting up an altar or statue to Zeus within the precincts and sacrificing swine in the temple.

²⁹ Some scholars count the evenings and mornings separately as the two sacrifices, giving a period of 1,150 days or about 3 years. They then trace this from Dec. 167 (when Antiochus set up the image) to the restoration by Judas Maccabeus on Dec. 14, 164. The remaining time (1 month, 15 days) could be because sacrifices may have been stopped earlier. However, Keil points out that (1) the Hebrew construction doesn’t support this view, (2) “evening and morning” is a formula for one day (Gen. 1) vs. counting separately (Gen. 7:4,12), and (3) the correlation with Dan. 7:25 and 9:27 is invalid because the referents are completely different. Schwantes (*AUSJ* 1978, 375-85) points out that 8:14 speaks of evenings and mornings but does not even speak of daily sacrifices, (5) the word for “sacrifice” in 8:13 (תמיד) speaks of both sacrifices in one), and (6) when the sacrifices are designated separately the order is always morning before evening. This leads to a period of 6 years, 4 months. The beginning is the assassination of Onias III (a former high priest) at the instigation of the wicked high priest Menelaus (Antiochus gave him this position for a bribe). Persecution continued from this time (Fall, 170; see 2 Macc. 4:7-50) until the rededication of the temple on Dec. 14, 164 B.C. (1 Macc. 4:52). This victory is still celebrated in the feast of Hanukkah.

³⁰ W. Miller suggested that 2,300 days actually represent years and forecast that Christ would return between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When this failed to happen he admitted his mistake. (K. Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You*, 90-91).

³¹ This may be the voice of God Himself or a preincarnate appearance of Jesus, given His authority over Gabriel.

³² Miller says that “time of the end” is not necessarily eschatological (Baldwin, 159) but speaks of the end of the frame of reference for this particular prophecy – the end of Antiochus’ persecution. Some commentators (Wood, Wakeford and

18. And when he had spoken with me, I fell into a deep sleep³³ with my face on the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up.
19. And he said, Behold, I will cause you to know what will be in the latter part³⁴ of the wrath³⁵ because it relates to the appointed time of the end.
20. Concerning the ram which you saw with the two horns, (these are) the kings of Media and Persia.
21. And the shaggy male goat is the king of Greece and the great horn which is between his eyes, it is the first king.
22. And the (horn) that was broken and the four (horns) in its place are four kingdoms (which will) rise up from (this) nation but not with his power.³⁶
23. And at the end of their kingdom, when the rebels have finished,³⁷ there will arise a king with a hard face³⁸ and understanding riddles.³⁹
24. And his strength will be great but not by his own power,⁴⁰ and (he will cause) incomprehensible destruction and will succeed and act (as he pleases) and destroy mighty men and the holy people.
25. And through his cunning he will cause deceit to prosper by his own hand and in his own mind he will become great.⁴¹ And in (the middle of their) ease⁴² he will destroy many. Even against the Prince of princes⁴³ he will rise up and he will be broken, except by no human hand.⁴⁴
26. The vision of the evenings and the morning⁴⁵ which has been told, it is true. But as for you, seal up the vision⁴⁶ because (it pertains) to many days (from now).⁴⁷
27. And I, Daniel, I was overcome⁴⁸ and sick for days and I arose and performed the work of the king⁴⁹ but I was appalled by the vision and I did not understand it.⁵⁰

Campbell) understand this as typifying the Antichrist through Antiochus' actions. See discussion of [the Antichrist in the Excursus](#). The idea is repeated twice (see note on v. 26). It seems that there is an end-times focus in these phrases, particularly because of the close parallelism in 9:24-27—Antiochus will be a shadow of the coming evil king.

³³ Related forms appear in Jonah 1:5 and Gen. 2:21.

³⁴ This can also be rendered “the end.” The point, though is that the latter events of the vision (Antiochus' persecution and blasphemy against God) are the most important part of the revelation. This is because the prophecy came to prepare God's people and give them confidence in His control as they suffer. Verses 23-26 are the core of the prophecy and the “latter part” that this refers to.

³⁵ Except for Hos. 7:16, this word always refers to God's wrath. In this case it is His anger against the rebellion of Antiochus and the infidelity of His own people.

³⁶ The four divisions of Alexander's original empire never came close to the original power of his rule.

³⁷ Could this be parallel to 5:26—“God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end”? This probably refers to rebellious and idolatrous Jews. When their wickedness has reached its nadir God will judge (Gen. 15:16; Matt. 23:32; 1 Thess. 2:16).

³⁸ The expression speaks of harshness, a lack of mercy or compassion (Deut. 28:50).

³⁹ The NIV renders “master of intrigue.” The word appears in 1 Kings 10:1 of the questions the Queen of Sheba asked Solomon.

⁴⁰ In keeping with the themes and emphases of the book is this reminder that everything Antiochus accomplished (which was considerable) was only allowed to him under God's own authority. It may also be that Antiochus was energized by Satan himself (just as the Antichrist in Rev. 13:2; 2 Thess. 2:9).

⁴¹ [Antiochus inscribed coins](#) with θεός ἐπιφανής (“God, manifest”) which probably was not a claim to deity so much as a claim to represent the deities on earth. Epiphanes also has the idea of “illustrious.”

⁴² The ESV renders, “without warning.” 1 Macc. 1:29-34 records his cunning scheme to lull them into a false sense of security before massacring the people in the spring of 167 B.C.

⁴³ As in v. 11, this refers to God Himself.

⁴⁴ In 163 B.C. Antiochus was defeated in the siege of Elymais and routed by the Jewish forces in Palestine. See 2 Macc. 9:1-28 and [Josephus Antiquities, 12.9.1](#). Following these disappointments he apparently died of sickness and disappointment but not by the hand of any individual attacker.

⁴⁵ Of course the entire vision was true but the evenings and mornings is the most specific detail and objective confirmation.

⁴⁶ This is not concealing but the idea of sealing the document for its preservation (as with any ancient document for archiving). These prophecies would be fulfilled 400 years later; Daniel must write it down and seal it for the future. He receives the same command again in Dan 12:4, 9. And yet notice a very direct and intentional contrast in Rev 22:10.

⁴⁷ While chapter 8 clearly refers to the historical figure Antiochus, this phrase points to the far distant future. The person coming within 400 years will be a shadow of a much darker and horrific person in the distant future—the Antichrist (9:24-27). See note on v. 17.

⁴⁸ The niphal of נִיפַל means “be done, finished, gone, come to an end” (BDB).

⁴⁹ Since Belshazzar did not recognize Daniel in 5:13–14, this must be labor done for Nabonidus (his father and the true king).

⁵⁰ Even though Daniel received a clear interpretation, it is no surprise that he still had many questions. The particular referents of the dream or the time of its fulfillment, for instance, would be completely unknown.

CHAPTER 9—DANIEL’S PRAYER AND SEVENTY SEVENS

1. In the first year to Darius, the son of Ahashuerus,¹ by descent a Mede who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans²...
2. In the first year of his reign,³ I Daniel understood in the books the number of the years which were (in) the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet⁴ to fill up⁵ the desolations of Jerusalem⁶—seventy years.⁷
3. And I set my face toward the Lord God to seek (by) prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.⁸⁹
4. And I prayed to Yahweh my God¹⁰ and confessed and said, “Please,¹¹ O Lord, the great and fearful God, **preserving the covenant and steadfast love**¹² with the ones who love him and with the ones who keep **his commandments**.¹³
5. We have **sinned**¹⁴ and **committed iniquity**¹⁵ and **acted wickedly**¹⁶ and **rebelled** and **turned aside from your commandments and from your laws**.¹⁷
6. **We have not listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke** in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers and to all the people of the land.¹⁸
7. To you¹⁹, O Lord (belong) **the righteousness**, but to us fully open shame²⁰ as at this day, to the men of Judah and to the ones dwelling in Jerusalem and to all Israel, the ones who are near and the ones who are

¹ This is the Hebrews equivalent of the Persian name represented by the Greek $\text{X}\acute{\epsilon}\rho\acute{\alpha}\xi\eta\varsigma$ (Xerxes) and was probably a title rather than a name. This allows for Darius to be identified as Cyrus (see [excursus on Darius](#)).

² Either the province delegated to Darius’ rule (if he ruled under Cyrus) or the fact that the kingdom of the Chaldeans had now passed to the Persians (if Darius is Cyrus).

³ This would be 538 B.C., 67 years after Daniel was taken captive in 605 B.C and 12 years after ch. 8. He was over 80.

⁴ This is a strong statement of verbal inspiration and the uniqueness of Jeremiah’s words.

⁵ Contra ESV, could this be the fulfillment of Deuteronomy’s warnings?

⁶ Wood comments that the plural (“desolations”) highlights total destruction and that “desolations of Jerusalem” would pertain not only to the city but to the entire captivity.

⁷ Jer. 25:11; 29:10; c.f. Lev. 26:34-35, 43. The start date is clearly 605 since (1) this was the first wave of captives (including Daniel) and (2) Jeremiah dates his prophecy (25:11-12 with 25:1). (The same prophecy was also repeated in 597—Jer. 29:10 with 29:2-3; 2 King 24:10-17). Cyrus’ decree came in 538/537 (68 years) and there was probably a period of time before the they arrived back in the land. As a hermeneutical precedent, this certainly highlights the literal fulfillment of prophecy and

⁸ What makes this prayer so significant? (1) It was built on faith in a specific statement of God’s Word (v. 2) and understood in the context of God’s warnings to the nation (v. 11-13). (2) He gave himself to seek the Lord—with his body, his mind (attention), his emotions and his time (v. 3). (3) He prayed with humility (10:12). (4) He based His prayer on the character of God (v. 4,9,14). (5) He humbly confessed sin, agreeing fully with God’s view of it and God’s righteous judgment (v. 5-16). (6) He appealed to God’s own eternal purposes for His glory (v. 15,17,18,19). (7) He cast Himself on the mercy and goodness of God (v. 18). (8) He pleaded (v. 17-19). This is not a formula; it is what should be going on in a believer’s heart in relation to God all the time and in everything. When I really see God with the eyes of faith, I will respond to Him like Daniel did.

⁹ Miller helpfully outlines the prayer as “adoration” (v. 4), “confession” (v. 5-14) and “petition” (v. 15-19).

¹⁰ Miller comments that “my God” points to Daniel’s relationship with God and forms a contrast with the Babylonian gods—Yahweh is Daniel’s God.

¹¹ This (אֲנִי) is hard to render but it is a strong entreaty in prayer (“ah, now!” or “I beseech thee!”). The NAS renders “alas.”

¹² Daniel’s reference to God’s covenant keeping and בְּרִית connects with God’s promises, particularly the Abrahamic land promises. Articular “covenant” could be generic, referring to the covenants in general (Wood) or specific to the Abrahamic (Miller).

¹³ Of course, this is an often repeated OT formula: Ex 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 11:1; 19:9; 30:16; Josh 22:5; Neh 1:5.

¹⁴ Sin as “missing the mark”—the standards of righteousness that God requires (Judg. 20:16).

¹⁵ Sin as being twisted or perverted from God’s straight path of righteousness.

¹⁶ Sin as rebellion; an act of hostility or defiance and a crime against God.

¹⁷ This clearly refers to the Mosaic code (v. 10-11) but also includes more than that—all of God’s words including those spoken through the prophets.

¹⁸ Jer 26:4-9

¹⁹ The pronouns are emphatic and first in the syntax—“to you... but to us...”

²⁰ The word is “to the face” or fully open, uncovered. The same of the nation was manifest in their ongoing captivity and dispersion among the nations.

far and in all the lands to which you drove them away because of **the treachery which they committed** against you.

8. To us, O Lord, (belongs) fully open shame, to our kings and to our princes and to our fathers who have **sinned against you**.
9. To the Lord our God (belong) **mercy and forgiveness**, because we have **rebelled against Him**
10. and **have not listened**²¹ to the voice of **Yahweh** our God to walk in **his laws** which He gave before us in the hand of his servants the prophets.
11. And all Israel **transgressed your law** and **turned aside** with a **refusal**²² to listen to your voice. And the oath and the sworn curse²³ have been poured out on us which are **written in the Law of Moses**²⁴ the servant of God, because **we sinned against Him**.
12. He has carried out²⁵ **His words which He spoke against us** and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring upon us a great evil—[something] that has not happened under the whole heaven like what has happened in Jerusalem.²⁶
13. According to **what is written in the Law of Moses**, all this evil has come upon us and (yet) we have **not humbly sought**²⁷ the face of Yahweh our God, turning from our iniquity and gaining insight in **your truth**.
14. So Yahweh has readied the evil²⁸ and brought it upon us because **Yahweh our God is righteous** in all his works which He has done and we **have not listened to His voice**.
15. And now, Adonay, our God, who brought your people out from the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made to yourself a name, just as at this day; **we have sinned, we have acted wickedly**.
16. O Lord, **according to all your righteousness**,²⁹ turn away please, your anger and your wrath from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain, because **by our sins** and **the iniquities of our fathers**, Jerusalem and your people (have become) a byword to all our neighbors.
17. And now, listen, O our God, to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas, and **cause your face to shine** upon your holy place,³⁰ which is desolate, for your own sake O Lord.
18. **Incline**, O my God, your ear and **hear**.³¹ Open your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by your name.³² For it is not by our righteousness we present³³ our pleas before you, but upon **your great compassion**.
19. O Lord hear! O Lord forgive! O Lord, given attention and act!^{34,35} Do not delay—for your own sake, O Lord, because your name is spoken regarding your city and regarding your people.³⁶

²¹ ESV and others render “obeyed.”

²² The particle here means “non-existence of.”

²³ Both words are definite and singular (referring to a specific curse) and the second may be in apposition—“the oath, even the sworn curse.” This would point back to the Mosaic warnings in Deut. 28:15ff.

²⁴ Clearly, the reference is to passages like Lev 26:14–45 and Deut. 28:14–68.

²⁵ נָשָׂא—“carry out, give effect to, oath, covenant, vow, word, plan, command, of man; of Yahweh.”

²⁶ Clearly other nations had suffered defeat and exile. But Israel had a unique relationship with God that granted them unique promises and opportunities. The result was an extraordinary fall from such blessing to such misery. The nation that should have been a light to the world instead became a byword. (c.f. Psa 135:15–17; Is 44:9–22).

²⁷ or “entreated.” In other themes the word means to make oneself sick and in this theme (Piel) it speaks elsewhere of pandering, begging for favors. The word seems to involve both abject humility and strong pleading.

²⁸ Miller suggests that God was readying and preparing the evil as a consequence for sin and he waited in case they might repent. When they refused He brought it to bear on the nation in keeping with His warnings.

²⁹ The plea is that the wrath would end because due punishment has been accomplished (Is 40:2; Lev 26:41).

³⁰ Num. 6:25

³¹ The word picture is of someone leaning in and turning their ear closer to hear every word. Daniel calls on God to listen closely to his prayer and possibly even the blasphemous charges of the heathen against His own reputation.

³² Lit. “which is called (by) your name upon it.”

³³ Elsewhere in the Hiphil this means “fall” and could have the component of falling prostrate.

³⁴ Or even the English idiom “do something” seems to communicate the force here.

³⁵ The three short phrases with repetition of “O Lord” depicts the desperation and dependence of Daniel’s prayer.

³⁶ We might compress and paraphrase this prayer as follows:

“O God who always keeps your promises and blesses the obedient: We have sinned on every level and in every way. You warned us; we didn’t listen. So all the fault falls on us—you are completely righteous. And the tragedy we’ve suffered is exactly what you warned us would happen. You had to fulfill your word—you’re righteous! So just like you honored your own name

20. And while I was speaking and praying and confessing **my sin and the sin of my people** Israel and presenting my plea before Yahweh my God concerning the holy hill of my God,
21. And while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel whom I saw in the vision in the beginning, came to me in (my) extreme weariness³⁷ about the time of the evening sacrifice.³⁸
22. And he caused me to understand and spoke with me and said, Daniel, I have come out now to give you insight and understanding.
23. At the beginning of your pleas, a word went out and I myself³⁹ have come to declare it because you are greatly beloved⁴⁰. So carefully consider the word and understand⁴¹ the vision.⁴²
24. Seventy sevens⁴³ are decreed for your people⁴⁴ and for your holy city, to finish the transgression and to put an end to sin⁴⁵ and to atone iniquity⁴⁶ and to bring in everlasting righteousness⁴⁷ and to seal up vision and prophet⁴⁸ and to anoint a holy of holies.^{49,50,51}
25. Know, therefore, and ponder (that) from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem until the coming of Messiah the prince⁵² (will be) seven sevens and sixty two sevens.^{53,54} It will be restored and built again with expanse⁵⁵ and trench⁵⁶ but in troubled times.⁵⁷

at the Exodus and you're vindicating your name by judging us now, while we confess our sin please turn away your wrath. Why should the city and nation connected to your name become a byword? Please forgive and bless us!"

³⁷ The majority of translations render this verb as flight ("came to me in swift flight," NIV, KJV, GNB, NKJV, NRSV, Theodotion, Lacocque). Another possibility is to understand the root as referring to weariness—either that the angel arrived with great weariness or that Daniel was weary (NAS renders "came to me in my extreme weariness;" also BDB, Goldingay, Keil, Miller). Against Miller (NAC) it seems possible that the angel could be weary given Daniel's later record of angelic struggles (ch. 10:12-13). See Miller for some of the lexical issues involved.

³⁸ This would be between 3-4 PM. Though the sacrifices obviously would not be offered in Babylon, this time was still used for regular prayers (Ezra 9:5; Psa. 141:2).

³⁹ The emphatic pronoun may emphasize the fact that God sent one of his important angels in answer or it may pinpoint the fact that Gabriel is there in person rather than in a vision. Either way, the entire introduction emphasizes the importance of this revelation and God's great concern to answer Daniel's prayer.

⁴⁰ The word occurs two other times describing Daniel (Dan 10:11, 19). The word describes a desirable (Gen. 27:15), pleasant (Dan. 10:3) or precious thing (2 Chron 20:25; Ezra 8:27). An alternative rendering would be "you are a precious treasure."

⁴¹ "Consider" and "understand" are the same verb, distinguished here only by their theme (Qal vs. Hiphil).

⁴² The idea is of a prophetic revelation though the awareness of the angelic messenger would also involve vision of the unseen (Prov. 29:18; Obad. 1; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 2:2—the word is different but an interchangeable synonym in Dan. 8 and elsewhere). Because of context and parallelism with the previous phrase, the most natural reference is to what Gabriel is about to say.

⁴³ While the identity of the sevens is not specified, it has to be represent periods of time since v. 25-27 use chronological markers. It should also be a consistent reference or enumerating the periods is pointless. This also correlates well with the timing of Christ's first coming and extraordinarily well with the 7 years of the tribulation (Rev. 12:14; 13:5). Finally, there is OT precedent for sevens of days and sevens of years (the Sabbath year). Since days is nonsensical, the natural conclusion is that this does refer to 490 years. See also 4:23.

⁴⁴ The prophecy concerns the Jewish nation. There is no exegetical reason to think or understand otherwise since the passage goes on to specifically speak of Israel, Jerusalem and the temple. These words also came in answer to Daniel's prayer concerning the Jewish nation.

⁴⁵ Transgression is probably general (not only Israel's rebellion punished in the captivity). Sin is slightly more general than transgression and connotes rebellion. Both verbs have similar meanings, speaking of all transgression/sin being completed or finished at the end of time. This would be fulfilled during the restraint of the Millennium and in the total conquest of the end times.

⁴⁶ A covering for sin builds on the previous two expressions and displays that God has found a way to deal with the problem of sin. Where the prior expressions give the result, this is the underlying explanation for how it will happen—the cross of Christ.

⁴⁷ Through God's conquest over sin in the cross (atonement) the nation will live out real, tangible righteousness (Rom. 11:25-29; Zech. 12:10-13:1)

⁴⁸ "Seal up" could either mean the closing of the document or affixing an official seal as authentication. Either way, the idea would be that all prophecies are verified, fulfilled, and no longer necessary (1 Cor. 13:8-10) and the prophecies about Christ cannot be fulfilled like this until the very end of time.

⁴⁹ This could be God's spiritual temple (the consecration of the church—Keil) or anointing a literal, future temple (such as in Ezek. 40-48—Archer, Miller).

⁵⁰ It is important to recognize that these six statements cannot be fulfilled until the end of time. Thus, these verses are ultimately eschatological in viewpoint. There is also a beautiful progression in the statements that might represent salvation history: Sin—cross—righteousness—truth vindicated—eternal dwelling. Leupold comments, "in these six statements we have the sum of all the good things that God promised to men perfectly realized" (416).

⁵¹ Miller calls verses 24-27 the most controversial verses in the Bible (NAC, 252).

26. And after the sixty two sevens the Messiah will be cut off⁵⁸ and have nothing⁵⁹. And the people of the coming prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary.⁶⁰ And its end will come in a flood⁶¹ and until the end there will be war.⁶² Desolations have been decreed.^{63,64,65}
27. And he⁶⁶ will confirm a strong covenant⁶⁷ with many (people) for one seven and for half of the seven he will cause sacrifice and offering to stop.⁶⁸ And on the wing⁶⁹ of abominations⁷⁰, a desolator⁷¹ (will come) even until decreed total desolation is poured out on the desolator.⁷²

⁵² It is fairly obvious that this individual is Jesus. (1) This person is anointed—either a ruler or a priest. (2) He is a “the prince,” generally used of kings or other rulers. (3) Contextually, one would expect Messianic information given the six purposes in v. 24 (including atonement). (4) This is the most traditional interpretation. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and He is both a priest and a king.

⁵³ While this prophecy is remarkable for its specificity and clarity, there are some chronological details to unsort. Archer has effectively argued that the Jews did not use a 360-day calendar which makes Nehemiah’s decree in 445 B.C. unworkable (ending date of A.D. 39; See the discussion of prophetic years in excursi.). But the decree of Artaxerses I to Ezra in 458 B.C. points results in A.D. 26 which would coordinate with Jesus’ baptism and the time when He was anointed (“Messiah). While the next verse speaks of Him being cut off the timing is linked to Messiah the prince and not specifically to His death. While the decree to Nehemiah specifically points to rebuilding the city, it is apparent from Ezra 4:7-12 that significant rebuilding work had been done on the city during Artaxerses I’s reign (464-423 B.C.). (So Miller, Archer, Wood, Payne.) [See excursus on prophetic years.]

⁵⁴ Interpreters have been divided about whether to connect “sixty-two” to the following sentence (as ESV) or keep the two numbers together (“seven sevens and sixty-two sevens”) as NIV. The Masoretes placed an atnah here, designating a divide. However, Jerome and subsequent interpreters have connected them together. Either is gramatically possible, but the NIV reading is part of the literal years Messianic view argued here. Why then the division of 7 from the 62 instead of simply specifying 69? The division points to some significant event 49 years after the decree. Using Artaxerses’ decree to Ezra (458), this timing points to the completion of Jerusalem’s rebuilding around 409 B.C. The Elephantine Papyri designates another man as governor of Judah in 407 so Ezra had passed off the scene by then.

⁵⁵ The idea is of the plaza or common area within a city.

⁵⁶ This hapax (word used only once in Scripture) is derived from a word for “cut” so it may be a trench dug on the outside to make the walls even higher. A less likely possibility is to emend the word to mean streets (so the Peshitta). Or the word appears in the Dead Sea Copper Scroll to mean conduit—the water system for a city.

⁵⁷ Nehemiah recounts the troubled times involved in rebuilding the city (4:1ff; 9:36-37).

⁵⁸ The verb can be used of destruction in death (Gen. 9:11; Exod. 31:14; Jer. 9:21; 11:19) and clearly refers here to the Messiah.

⁵⁹ Matt. 8:20. Jesus died with nothing left to Him and from an external standpoint, a complete failure.

⁶⁰ This was fulfilled in A.D. 70, but it is not the coming prince but *the people of the coming prince* who will do this—the Roman empire from which the Antichrist will arise (Dan 7:7–8).

⁶¹ The idea is not of literal water but of the totality of the destruction.

⁶² C.f. Rev 12:15–16

⁶³ Another translation is “and until the end, war has been decreed with desolations” (Miller, 269). This is if war is the subject of “decreed.”

⁶⁴ (1) The desolations have been decreed by God—it is His agency that underlies Jerusalem’s destruction. (2) The desolations will continue to the end—either until the city is destroyed or until the end of time (2nd advent).

⁶⁵ We are led to expect a gap since Messiah is cut off and Jerusalem destroyed after the 69 sevens and yet not during the final 7. This gap is only natural since the entire prophecy concerns Israel (in answer to Daniel’s prayer on behalf of the nation). Between the destruction of the Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the restored existence of the nation recently, there have been few developments that would could possibly concern the nation.

⁶⁶ The most obvious grammatical antecedent is the “prince who is to come”—Antichrist—and it is also the only that makes interpretational sense. (Spiritualizing the entire passage, E.J. Young actually identifies this as Christ instituting the covenant of grace, but his view encounters serious problems almost immediately. See Miller, 270).

⁶⁷ The “covenant” is a treaty (Gen. 14:13; 21:27,32; 31:44) and Baldwin comments that the unusual verb (“confirm with strength”) may speak of his pressuring or bringing about the covenant by force.

⁶⁸ This is the second half of the tribulation, elsewhere called “the great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14). Other passages designate this period as unique and as lasting 3 ½ years (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:14; 13:5). Before the Antichrist can put a halt to sacrifices, they will apparently have been resumed. This may be part of the grand bargain he makes with the nation in the first half of the tribulation.

⁶⁹ The use of “wing” is difficult but it could refer to an aspect of the temple (though without any OT usage as a precedent) or as a figure of abominations that spread over everything (Isa. 8:8; So Miller).

⁷⁰ The idea is of something blasphemous, idolatrous and shameful. The Hebrew is plural (though the LXX is singular; also NIV and NRSV). During Antiochus Epiphanes reign, 1 Macc. 1:54 and 2 Macc. 6:2 describe the temple being repurposed for abomination and idolatry. This would certainly include Antichrist’s erection of an idol in the temple (Rev. 13:15) but may include more.

⁷¹ Apparently, both through the abominations he works and by his causing sacrifice and offering to stop, the Antichrist will cause the temple to be desolate. But the sense is almost certainly broader as well, including all the desolations he will cause upon the entire earth.

⁷² The end is nearly perfunctory as God metes out His predetermined judgment on this rebellious, wicked figure. The judgment on him will be “poured out” like a flood (Dan 7:11, 26; 2 Th 2:8; Rev 19:19–21).

CHAPTER 10—DANIEL RECEIVES AN ANGELIC MESSENGER

1. In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia¹² a word was revealed to Daniel who was named Belteshazzar.³ And the word was true and it was a great conflict⁴. And he understood the word and understanding of the vision (was given) to him.⁵
2. In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning⁶ three entire weeks.
3. Tasty food I did not eat and meat or wine did not enter my mouth and I certainly did not anoint (myself) for the entire three weeks.⁷
4. And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month⁸, I was (standing) on the side of the great river—that is, the Tigris.⁹
5. And I lifted up my eyes and behold, a man clothed in white linen¹⁰ and his waist girded with the gold of Uphaz¹¹,
6. And his body like beryl¹² and his face as the appearance of lightning and his eyes like torches of fire and his arms and his feet like the sparkle of polished bronze and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.¹³
7. And I, Daniel, saw the vision alone, and the men who were with me did not see the vision but a great trembling fell on them and they ran to hide.
8. And I was left alone and I saw this great vision and there was no strength remaining in me and my radiant appearance upon me was changed to (a look of) desolation and I retained no strength.

¹ This would have been 536/535, two years after ch. 9 and shortly after the first exiles returned on Cyrus' decree. The lion's den would have occurred sometime proximate to this vision, though there is no way to know if it came before or after. Daniel would have been nearly 85 (69 years after being exiled). The chronology also explains why he remained in Babylon while the other exiles returned. Given his age and his exalted position in Babylon, Daniel simply choose to remain there.

² On the charge that "king of Persia" is anachronistic, see Young 223 and [R.D. Wilson in PTR, 15 \(1917\), 90-145](#).

³ Repeating both names helps to identify him and reference his past, extending all the way back to the exile (ch. 1).

⁴ "Great conflict" is highly elliptical and could refer to all the earthly battles this vision predicts or the spiritual conflicts between angels and demons (10:13-14, 20-21). The best understanding is probably to include both, since Daniel presents these conflicts as intermeshed. Baldwin also suggests (less plausibly) that it speaks of Daniel's struggle to understand the vision.

⁵ This naturally echoes earlier statements about Daniel (Dan 1:17; 2:19–23, 30, 47; 4:9, 18; 5:11–12, 14, 16).

⁶ The word describes a state of mourning, for the dead (Gen. 37:4), sin (Ezra 10:6; Neh. 1:4) or calamity (Ezek. 7:12).

⁷ This vision came in response to Daniel's dedicated prayer (10:12), but why such concern? Daniel's people had returned to the land but the work was facing opposition and may have already ground to a halt (Ezra 4:5, 24). His focused prayers may also have been related to the timing of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see note on v. 4). In keeping with how God delivered the nation in the Exodus, Daniel recognized the great needs of the present (c.f. 9:15). He may have also fasted through Passover and the feasts because he was not able to celebrate them. Of course, it was also part of Daniel's character to regularly and consistently pray (Dan. 6:10).

⁸ This means that Daniel began fasting on the 3rd day of Nisan (March-April). Passover occurs on the 14th and the Feast of Unleavened Bread extends from the 15th to 22nd. Miller points out that Daniel would only fast through Passover and the feast if he was living away from Jerusalem.

⁹ The Tigris began several hundred miles away from Babylon but ran within 20 miles of the city. There is no indication why he was there. The vision is apparently the same in 12:6 where it references the river.

¹⁰ The word is "linen" but was so often bleached that BDB glosses it "white linen." Besides the connection with multiple holy ones (Ex 28:42; Lev 6:10; Is 1:18; Ezek 9:2–3, 11; 10:2, 6–7; Dan 7:9; 11:35; 12:10; Rev 3:5; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 15:6), the significance is certainly the holiness of this messenger.

¹¹ Uphaz is apparently a place (only other occurrence in Jer. 10:9). The point is that this is somehow purer or more precious than unmodified **זָהָב** ("gold").

¹² Pliny says that this stone is "transparent... with a refulgence like that of gold" and the verse later says his arms and legs were like highly polished bronze. It has been rendered with "chrysolite, beryl or topaz."

¹³ While most writers identify this person as Gabriel, there is reason to think it may be a Christophany: (1) When Daniel met Gabriel in 9:21 (also 7:16) he was not afraid but here he must be revived three times. (In 8:16-18 it is possible that Daniel fainted because of the identify of the other voice.) (2) The descriptions are shocking similar to other Christophanic revelations (Ezek. 1:26-28; Rev. 1:12-16). (3) In Dan. 12:6 he seems to have more knowledge than other angels. (4) The book of Daniel is hardly lacking in Christophanies (7:13-14). (5) "One in the likeness of a son of man" in v. 16, 18 may be an explicit parallel to Dan. 7:13. The only problem with this view is 10:10-15 where the speaker is obviously limited in power, but Miller suggests that this is a different person than in the surrounding passage. The speaker in v. 15ff may return to the Christophany ("one in the likeness of a son of man" in v. 16, 18) or it may be the same angelic messenger (v. 20, 12:5-6).

9. Then I heard the sound of his words and as I heard the sound of his words I fell upon my face on the ground.
10. And behold a hand¹⁴ touched me and set me to trembling upon my knees and the palms of my hands.
11. And he said to me, Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words which I myself am speaking to you and stand upright in your place because now I have been sent to you. And when he had spoken this word with me I stood trembling.
12. And he said to me, do not be afraid O Daniel, because from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself¹⁵ before your God, your words were heard and I myself came because of your words.
13. And the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood before me twenty one days¹⁶ and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me because I myself was left there with the kings of Persia.¹⁷¹⁸
14. And I came to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days because the vision is still for future days.¹⁹
15. And when he had spoken with me according to these words, I turned²⁰ my face toward the ground and I became mute.
16. And behold, (one) in the likeness of a son of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and I spoke and said to the one standing before me, “My Lord, because of the vision anguish has turned upon me and I have retained no strength.
17. And how can such a servant of my Lord be able to talk with such as my Lord? And as for me, even now there remains no strength and no breath left in me.
18. And again, one like the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.
19. And he said, “Do not be afraid, O man greatly beloved; peace to you; be strong and take courage.²¹ And while he spoke with me, I was strengthened and I said, “let my Lord speak because I received strength.
20. And he said, “do you know why I have come to you?²² And now, I return to fight against the prince of Persia and I am going out even now, and behold, the prince of Greece will come.²³
21. However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth²⁴; and there is no one standing with me against these besides Michael your prince.²⁵

¹⁴ This is probably best identified as Gabriel, though it is a different person than in v. 5 or 15ff. See note on v. 6.

¹⁵ The word is connected elsewhere with fasting (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27, 32; Psa 35:13).

¹⁶ The timing corresponds exactly with Daniel’s prayer lasting for three weeks, since the angel was sent on the first day of Daniel’s prayer (v. 12).

¹⁷ The instances of both שָׂרָא (“prince”) and מְלִיכָא (“king”) here probably refers to angelic authorities. While the information given is limited, this would comport with revelation elsewhere about angelic authority and hierarchies (Eph 6:12).

¹⁸ This seems to indicate that demonic powers stand over certain nations or groups of people. This can be negative: Because of Persia’s massive influence in world events at this time, it’s only natural that the designated demonic protector would also be powerful (possibly Satan himself). Note that in v. 20 it appears that the demonic overseers will change when the ruling nations change (“prince of Greece is coming”). Note also Eph. 2:2; 6:12 and the fact that both Antiochus and the Antichrist will receive demonic enabling (Dan. 8:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2). On the other hand, there is also good enablement from angelic powers. In v. 21 it appears that Michael is designated to oversee the nation of Israel. Likewise in 11:1 the angel works to strengthen and help Darius I who spoke affirmingly of the true God (Dan 6:25–27) and (if identified as Cyrus) ordered the return of the exiles.

¹⁹ This is a difficult Hebrew construction and the translation represents the sense though not the structure. The earlier expression “latter days” is clearly eschatological and this expression confirms that sense. While the ensuing vision describes events fulfilled in the intertestamental period, it ultimately points to the actions of the Antichrist.

²⁰ Lit., “I gave my face to the ground” in the sense of turning over his face and pressing it into the ground.

²¹ The roots and even the grammatical forms are identical. I am not sure why they are translated separately.

²² Since the messenger had already answered this (v. 12, 14), this question is rhetorical or may be because of Daniel’s overwhelmed confusion.

²³ The struggle with the prince of Persia would continue through the next 200 years of the empire (539-331) through Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther’s struggles. A similar struggle would continue when the Greek empire rose to prominence and God’s people suffered under Alexander and Antiochus. The references to Persia and Greece also naturally turn the readers’ attention to the ensuing vision.

²⁴ This is more than just Daniel’s ensuing vision. Keil comments that this “is the book in which God has designated beforehand, according to truth, the history of the world as it shall certainly unfold” (423).

²⁵ This is less to emphasize the lack of help but the lack of need for help (c.f. Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6).

CHAPTER 11—THE ANGEL’S MESSAGE OF FUTURE WARFARE AND PERSECUTION

1. And as for me, in the first year¹ of Darius² the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.³⁴⁵
2. And now I will tell you the truth^{6,7}. Behold, three more kings will arise for Persia⁸ and the fourth will gain riches far greater than them all and when his strength (has come) through his riches he will stir up the whole kingdom against Greece.⁹¹⁰
3. Then a mighty king will arise and he will rule with great authority and he will do as he pleases.
4. And when he has arisen¹¹, his kingdom will be broken and divided to the four points of the heavens¹² but not to his descendants and not like the authority which he ruled because his kingdom will be plucked up and (will go) to others besides these.¹³
5. Then the king of the South¹⁴ will grow strong and one from his princes will become strong over him and will rule with great authority and dominion.¹⁵

¹ This would have been 539 B.C. It would also have been significant as the year when Cyrus sent out his decree for the exiles to return.

² The LXX and Theodotion read “Cyrus” here in place of “Darius.”

³ Though Miller understands this as Gabriel strengthening Michael, it seems more natural to understand it as his strengthening Darius. The king’s first year was certainly momentous with the fall of Babylon, the prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27) and Cyrus’ decree for the exiles to return. That Cyrus was in some way sympathetic to God’s purposes is implied in 2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:1-2; Is 44:28-45:1; Dan 6:25-27. Archer comments, “knowing that such a development could lead to the ultimate appearance of the Son of God as the Messiah for God’s redeemed, Satan and all his hosts were determined to thwart the renewal of Israel and the deliverance of its people from destruction” (127). It’s also striking to think of Cyrus’ own participation in these events. Even as he made a political calculation for his own benefit, God was at work through his actions to accomplish key purposes in salvation history.

⁴ The MT, LXX, Theodotion and the English versions place 11:1 with the next chapter (probably because the chronological marker is similar to the beginning of other chapters), but it belongs with ch. 10.

⁵ Campbell says that vv. 1-35 contain 135 specific prophecies that have been literally fulfilled (125). (1) The chapter demonstrates that God has perfect knowledge and control over all world events. (2) The continual rise and fall of world kingdoms shows the brevity of earthly power and the eternity of God’s control. (3) Ultimately, the worldly kingdoms opposed to God will all fail even as God’s people are purified through trials, but God’s people will ultimately triumph and be delivered.

⁶ This may connect with the “book of truth” in 10:21.

⁷ The basic outline of the following section is Persia (v. 2), Greece (v. 3-4), the Ptolemaic and Seleucid divisions (v. 5-20), Antiochus (v. 21-35) and the Antichrist (v. 36-45). The majority of the material, therefore, is concerned with Antiochus and the Antichrist. This balance of material also demonstrates the focus of the vision. Persia and Alexander’s empire receive a total of 3 verses combined. The next 16 verses concern the Ptolemaic and Seleucid divisions because they were in continual conflict over Palestine. Naturally, Antiochus and the Antichrist are directly concerned with the people of God. In other words, whole centuries and empires may not matter but “minor” rulers are significant insofar as they relate to God’s people and purposes.

⁸ The three kings after Cyrus were [Camybses II](#) (530-522), [Bardiya](#) (also Smerdis or Gaumata; 522) and [Darius I Hystapes](#) (522-486).

⁹ The fourth king after Cyrus was [Xerxes I](#) (486-465) who amassed great wealth and engineered a massive but unsuccessful attack on Greece. The nine subsequent rulers in Persia are not relevant to the author’s discussion and are not mentioned. The relevant point is that Xerxes stirred up a Greek counterattack, the subject of the next verse. This also highlights the fact that this brief survey serves only as background for the central focus of the vision—Antiochus and the Antichrist.

¹⁰ This covers 539-336 B.C.—over 200 years of human history and an entire empire in 18 words (Hebrew).

¹¹ [Alexander the Great](#) (336-323) conquered the Persians (334-331) and established the massive Greek empire. He was apparently unstoppable until he suddenly died at the height of his conquests from a fever.

¹² Of course, the reference is to the four directions of a compass.

¹³ Diodorus records when asked on his deathbed to whom he would pass the kingdom, Alexander replied *τοὶ κρατίστοι* (“to the strongest”—[17.117.4](#)). At his death, Alexander’s sons (Alexander IV and Herakles) were murdered and after significant fighting among the “diadochi” the kingdom settled into [four blocks by 281](#): Ptolemy ruled the Ptolemaic in Egypt, Seleucus ruled the Seleucid in the east, Lysimachus ruled Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Cassander ruled the Macedonian. Naturally, these divisions never approached the original power of Alexander’s empire.

¹⁴ [Ptolemy I Soter](#) (323-28) who was one of Alexander’s original generals and ruled over Egypt (v. 8).

¹⁵ [Seleucus I Nicator](#) (312-280) was one of Alexander’s lesser generals and became satrap of Babylon in 321, only to flee when Antigonos seized the city in 316. He served under Ptolemy in Egypt as a general until Antigonos’ defeat in 312 when Seleucus returned and consolidated immense power, beginning “the Seleucid era.” Eventually his rule exceeded all the other divisions including Ptolemy’s, and extended to Babylonia, Syria and Media. This led to ongoing clashes between the two kingdoms.

6. And at the end of some years, they will form an alliance and the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to make an agreement but she will not retain the strength of her power¹⁶ nor will his power endure,¹⁷ but she will be given up and her attendants and her child¹⁸ and he who obtained her (in former) times.¹⁹
7. And one will arise in his place from a branch of her roots and he will come against the army and enter into the stronghold of the king of the north and deal with them and overcome.²⁰
8. Also he will take in captivity to Egypt their gods with their molten images, with their vessels of precious silver and gold. And for some years he will be inactive (toward) the king of the north.²¹
9. Then he will enter into the realm of the king of the south and return to his (own) land.²²
10. And his sons will stir up strife and assemble a multitude of great forces, continuing to come and overflowing and passing through and returning to provoke again as far as his stronghold.²³
11. And the king of the south will be enraged and go out and fight with him—with the king of the north and raise up a great multitude and the multitude will be given into his hand.²⁴
12. And (when) the multitude is carried away, his heart will be exalted and he will cast down ten thousand but he will not overcome.²⁵
13. And again the king of the north will raise up a greater multitude than the first and after an interval of years he will be coming with a great army and with much equipment.²⁶
14. And in those times many (people) will rise up against the king of the South and the violent ones among your people will exalt themselves to fulfill the vision and they will stumble.²⁷
15. Then the king of the north will come and he will throw up²⁸ a siege ramp and capture a fortress-city and the forces of the south will not stand—even the very best soldiers, because they will have no strength to stand.²⁹

¹⁶ Lit. “of her arm” but used here and again later in the verse as metonymy for political and military power.

¹⁷ This refers to Ptolemy II, the engineer of the treaty, specifically because everything unraveled when he died.

¹⁸ A change in the pointing can render “her child” (הַיְלִידָה) which is an easier reading and has good textual support (Montgomery, 430). On the other hand, it is also true that Ptolemy II’s death prompted Antiochus to take Laodice back, ultimately leading to the subsequent murders.

¹⁹ In 250 [Ptolemy II](#) made a treaty with [Antiochus II Theos](#) of the Seleucid Empire whereby Ptolemy’s daughter [Berenice](#) (of the South) would marry Antiochus (of the North). Antiochus’ powerful wife [Laodice I](#) naturally objected, murdering Antiochus (“he who obtained her” (or received her), Berenice and their child (“her power did not last”).

²⁰ [Ptolemy III Euergetes](#) (246-221) succeeded his father (“in his place”) and sought to avenge his sister’s death (a relative—“from a branch of her roots”) by attacking Syria with a great army. In the Third Syrian War (246-241) he reached all the way to Babylon, eventually capturing and looting the Seleucid capital of Antioch and executing Laodice.

²¹ Ptolemy III looted Syria of its gods and valuables but after his conquests he made peace with [Seleucus II](#) in 240.

²² The translations (NIV, NAS, NRSV, NKJV, ESV) understand “he” as the king of the north (Seleucus II). There is no record of a full invasion of Egypt, so this was probably a brief excursion with a retreat back to Syria.

²³ After Seleucus II death (226), his sons [Seleucus III Ceraunus](#) (226-223) and [Antiochus III](#) (223-187) continued and increased the fighting with the Ptolemaic kingdom. In the [Fourth Syrian War](#) (219-218) he won victories as far as Phoenicia and Palestine (“as far as his stronghold”).

²⁴ Responding to this attack, Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203) gathered a massive army. The [battle of Raphia](#) (June 22, 217), fought near modern Rafah, was one of the largest in this era, involving 132,000 infantry, 11,000 cavalry and 175 elephants. See [Polybius, 5.79](#).

²⁵ Antiochus lost 14,000 soldiers in the battle ([Polybius, 5.86](#)) and Ptolemy IV certainly but the conquest did not last. In fact, Ptolemy’s arming of Egyptian soldiers may have led to the [secession of upper Egypt in 205](#) and gradual crumbling of the Ptolemaic empire. The arrogance of Ptolemy IV and “casting down” of many may also refer to the massacres recorded in 3 Maccabees, which though certainly inaccurate in many respects, likely contain some elements of truth.

²⁶ In the chaos of accession after Ptolemy IV died in 203 (Ptolemy V was 4-6 years old), Antiochus III invaded in the [Fifth Syrian War](#) (202-195), taking Phoenicia, Palestine and the fortress at Gaza.

²⁷ As Ptolemaic power weakened and because of Ptolemy V’s young incompetence, this period was full of disorder and rebellion. Philip V of Macedon took territory in the Aegean Sea and Anatolia during the [Cretan War](#) (205-200). [Hugronaphor](#) and his successor [Ankhamakis](#) led Upper Egypt in a rebellion against Ptolemy IV in 205 and the kingdom was divided until about 185. Some Jews also joined in this rebellion—ironically fulfilling Daniel’s vision (probably unknowingly). [General Scopas of Egypt](#) successfully subjected Judea to Ptolemaic rule again.

²⁸ Lit., “pour out,” but this idiom sounds odd in English. ESV renders “throw up.”

²⁹ After a severe defeat at the [Battle of Panium](#) in 199, General Scopas retreated to the fortress city of Sidon. [After a siege](#) he was forced to surrender or starve (“even the very best soldiers... will have no strength to stand.”)

16. But the one coming against him will do according to his pleasure and no one will stand before him and he will stand in the beautiful land and destruction (will be) in his hand.³⁰
17. And he will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom. And (he will bring) terms with him and do it. And he will give to him the daughter of women to destroy but it will not stand and will not be to his (advantage).³¹
18. Then he will turn his face toward the coastlands and he will capture many of them but a commander will bring an end to his arrogant scorn. In fact, he will turn his scorn back onto him.³²
19. Then he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land and he will stumble and fall and be found no longer.³³
20. Then there will arise in his place one who sends out a task master (for) the glory of the kingdom but within a few days he will be shattered but not in anger nor in battle.³⁴
21. And in his place will arise a worthless man upon whom the honor of the kingdom was not given and he will enter during (a time of) tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.³⁵
22. And the armies like a flood will be swept away from before him and they will be broken, even the prince of the covenant.³⁶
23. And after the alliance made with him he will practice deception and go up and become strong among a small people.³⁷
24. In (a time of) tranquility he will enter into the richest and most prosperous (parts) of the realm and do what his fathers or the fathers of his fathers did not do—the plunder and booty and possessions that are theirs he will scatter³⁸ and he will devise schemes against the strongholds, but only for a time.³⁹

³⁰ After these Ptolemaic defeats, Antiochus gained significant power and had unmitigated power to do his will. The Jews apparently greeted him as a deliverer from Egypt (Archer, 132), not knowing that in the next 25 years they would suffer deeply at the hands of the Seleucids. “The beautiful land” is clearly Palestine (Dan. 8:9; Ezek. 20:6). The Syrian Wars (274-168) were fought between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires over the broad region including Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine. “The beautiful land” was caught in the middle of this constant fighting for nearly a century. After the conquest of 198, it remained with the Seleucids.

³¹ Antiochus forced a peace agreement on Ptolemy V and sealed it by giving his daughter, [Cleopatra I](#) for a wife. They were married in 193 (Cleopatra was 10; Ptolemy V was 16). It was apparently his hope to draw Egypt under his own control through her, but Cleopatra was apparently loyal to her husband and the Ptolemaic kingdom.

³² Soon after his victories over Egypt, Antiochus turned toward coastline Mediterranean countries. Allied with the Greeks, the Roman general [Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus](#) defeated Syria at the [Battle of Thermopylae](#) in 191. According to Appian ([IV, 16-20](#)), the Romans lost about 200 men and Antiochus lost 10,000. When Antiochus withdrew to Asia Minor the Romans defeated his large army at the [Battle of Magnesia](#) in Turkey (190). Not only did Antiochus lose significant territory, but he was forced to pay a heavy indemnity of 15,000 talents (532 tons), surrender much of his army, and hand over 20 hostages, including his son, Demetrius I Soter (see note on v. 21; [Polybius, 21.14,17,42](#)).

³³ Following his defeat, several of Antiochus’ own provinces sought independence. While reasserting control and trying to pay the Roman indemnity, Antiochus III tried to pillage the temple of Zeus at Elymais but was killed by an angry mob in 178.

³⁴ Antiochus III’s successor was [Seleucus IV Philopator](#) (187-175) who sent [Heliodorus](#) to collect the indemnity payments for Rome (“the glory of the kingdom”). He apparently even sought to plunder the temple in Jerusalem ([2 Macc. 3:7-40](#)). After only a few years he was poisoned by Heliodorus who sought the throne (possibly with the help of Antiochus IV).

³⁵ After the poisoning of Seleucus IV, the throne should have passed to his son [Demetrius I Soter](#), but Demetrius was a hostage in Rome. [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) managed to oust Heliodorus and proclaimed himself co-regent with an infant son of Seleucus whom he subsequently murdered. “During a time of tranquility” refers to the fact that he came to the throne peacefully, through deception.

³⁶ [Ptolemy VI Philometor](#) (180-145) tried and failed to retake Palestine and Phoenicia. While Ptolemy VI was captive, his brother Physcon took the throne. As a way to gain increased influence in Egypt, Antiochus made a covenant with Ptolemy VI (“the prince of the covenant”) to restore him to the throne. It was during this time that he issued coinage in Egypt with the title “King Antiochus, God Manifest” where one would normally find “Ptolemy the King” (Archer, 137). The other possibility is that the “prince of the covenant” refers to the high priest Onias (Wavoor, 265) but this seems unlikely. In his sweeping victories over Ptolemy VI, his later force against Physcon and his conquests in Jerusalem, Antiochus swept like a flood over his enemies.

³⁷ Antiochus then feigned friendship with Ptolemy VI while he secretly gained control of Egypt using small bands of soldiers.

³⁸ Antiochus used bribes and spread the spoils of war in order to consolidate power for himself.

³⁹ Antiochus enjoyed sweeping military conquests, conquering fortresses and looting rich cities. His progress also extended to Egypt (stretching as far as Memphis and later nearly invading Alexandria), Judea and other provinces where he enjoyed success. Still, his exploits were always limited by God’s timetable.

25. And he will stir up his strength and his heart against the king of the South with a large army and the king of the south will mobilize for war with an extremely⁴⁰ large and mighty army and will not stand because of schemes devised against him.⁴¹
26. And (even) those eating morsels from his portion will break him and his army will be swept away and many will fall slain.⁴²
27. And as for the two kings, their hearts (will be focused) to do evil and at the same table they will speak lies and will not succeed because the end is still at the appointed time.^{43,44}
28. And he will return to his land with much wealth and his heart (will be) against the holy covenant. And he will do (his own will) and return to his land.⁴⁵
29. At the appointed time he will return and enter the south but it will not be as the first or as the previous time.⁴⁶
30. And ships of Kittim will come against him and he will be afraid and retreat and be indignant and act against the holy covenant. And he will return and pay attention to the ones who forsake the holy covenant.⁴⁷
31. And armies from him will rise up and profane the sanctuary of the fortress and abolish regular sacrifices and set up the abomination of desolation.^{48,49}
32. And he will seduce with smooth words the ones who are profaning the covenant and the people who know God will remain strong and take action.⁵⁰
33. And the wise⁵¹ among the people will exercise discernment⁵² for many though they will fall by sword and by flame and in captivity and in plunder for some days.⁵³
34. And when they stumble they will be granted a little help and many will join along with them in slipperiness.⁵⁴

⁴⁰ Lit., “to the point of exceeding.”

⁴¹ In 170, Ptolemy sought the return of Palestine and Syria, so Antiochus embarked on a massive preemptive strike against Egypt. Both kings acted in significant intrigue against each other.

⁴² Ptolemy’s army and advisors were riddled with corruption which was part of the reason for his demise.

⁴³ “The end is still at the appointed time”—God’s purposes are not moved or affected by anyone’s schemes.

⁴⁴ Antiochus and Ptolemy VI had engineered schemes to recover the Egyptian throne from Ptolemy VII Euergetes (Physcon), and Ptolemy VI later betrayed those plans by joining with Physcon. These plans failed for both men. Ptolemy VI was always merely a puppet to the Syrian ruler and Antiochus never enjoyed full control after he was stopped by Rome before Alexandria.

⁴⁵ When Antiochus returned from his first campaign in Egypt (169) he returned through Palestine in the midst of an insurrection (1 Matt. 1:16-28; 2 Macc. 5:1-21). His response was to massacre 80,000 people and loot the temple together with the corrupt high priest, Menelaus.

⁴⁶ This refers to the Antiochus’ second invasion of Egypt in 168.

⁴⁷ Kittim was a town in Cyprus and became an ancient name for the island. Here it speaks of the Roman fleet that came to Alexandria. Antiochus met the Roman Ambassador [Gaius Popillius Laenas](#) four miles outside of Alexandria, who threatened that war with Egypt would mean war with Rome. When Antiochus stalled for time, Gaius drew a circle around him in the sand and insisted on an answer before he left the circle. He finally acquiesced to the Roman demands.

Out of anger at his abject humiliation, Antiochus lashed out against the Jews. He sent Apollonius, who first pretended to come in peace and then attacked suddenly on the Sabbath, massacring and plundering (1 Macc. 1:29-40; 2 Macc. 5:23-26; 6:1-6). He also rewarded corrupt Jews like Menelaus who cooperated (1 Macc. 1:1, 43; 2 Macc. 4:7-17).

⁴⁸ The expression could be either “abomination of desolation” or “appalling abomination.” In the former case, the idea would be that this abomination is so horrific it will leave the temple desolate of true worshippers.

⁴⁹ The “fortress” is the temple because it was used as a military citadel. Religious persecution began in earnest in 167 (1 Macc. 1:41-50, 63; 2 Macc. 6:1-6). Those who observed Jewish religious practices faced death. On the 15th of Chislev, 167 (Dec.), an altar to Zeus was erected in the temple which was to be renamed “the temple of Olympian Zeus” (1 Macc. 1:54). On the 25th, sacrifices of pig were offered on the altar (1 Macc. 1:47,54,59; 2 Macc. 6:4-5). All faithful Yahweh worshippers would be forced to turn from this desecrated temple.

⁵⁰ 1 Macc. 1:11-15; 2:18; 2 Macc. 7:24

⁵¹ As in 12:3, this refers to believers.

⁵² The glosses are “*observe, mark, give heed to, distinguish, consider* (with attention).” ESV renders “make many understand” which is also a possibility.

⁵³ There were still faithful Jews who sought to lead others to the truth, such as Mattathias and his sons (the Maccabees). See 1 Macc. 1:62-63; 2:1-14. Through challenging military efforts (Zech. 9:13-17), they were able to overcome this oppression and restore the temple on the 25th of Chislev, 164 (Dec. 14). See 1 Macc. 3:10-4:35, 52. The faithful not only refused to participate in idolatry themselves, but they also worked to teach their brothers and lead them in the truth. Some may appear in Heb. 11:34-35.

35. And some of the ones exercising discernment will fall in order to refine them and purge and make them white until the time of the end because it is still the appointed time.^{55,56,57}
36. And the king will do according to his pleasure⁵⁸ and exalt and magnify himself above every God⁵⁹ and against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary⁶⁰ things and he will succeed until the indignation is completed⁶¹ because what is decreed will be done.⁶²
37. And he will not consider the god of his fathers or the desire of women⁶³, nor will he consider any god because he will magnify himself above all.⁶⁴
38. And the god of fortresses he will honor instead—a god which his fathers did not know he will honor with gold and silver and precious stones and treasures.⁶⁵
39. And he will work with the strongest fortresses with a foreign god; [Those who] acknowledge (him) he will give honor and he will make them rulers over many and [divide] a parcel of land for a price.⁶⁶
40. And at the time of the end⁶⁷ the king of the south⁶⁸ will attack him but the king of the north⁶⁹ will attack like a whirlwind against him with chariots and horsemen and many ships.⁷⁰ And he will enter into countries and overflow and pass through.⁷¹

⁵⁴ At the beginning of the resistance, the number opposed to Antiochus was small, but as the Maccabean revolt grew, large numbers including the Hasidim began to join in the effort (1 Macc. 2:42-48). Antiochus himself died in 163 in Persia. The Maccabean revolts continued from 168 to 143 and the Jewish state received independence in 142 until coming under Rome in 63.

⁵⁵ As with all persecution, part of the benefit of these difficult events was the purifying of God's people.

⁵⁶ This marks the end of the predictions for Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Conservative interpreters agree that the following verses refer to the Antichrist for various historical and exegetical reasons: (1) Many historical details cannot be made to fit Antiochus. He did not reject "the gods of his fathers" (v. 38) and he died in Tabae, Persia rather than in Palestine (v. 54). (2) Exegetically, the timing is "at the time of the end" (v. 40) and the "time of distress" (12:1) relates naturally to the tribulation (Matt. 24:21, 29-31; Rev. 7:14). Most clearly, the resurrection of 12:1-3 delivers the saints from his power. (3) This has been the established view of the church since ancient times (Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret).

But why the sudden transition without warning? Verses 36-39 do repeat some information that seems to cue the reader that a different individual may be in view. There are also exegetical reasons that the same individual cannot be in view before v. 36 and after it. The idea of prophetic foreshortening is also no surprise. Most of all, however, the point of the passage is to show the commonalities between Antiochus and the Antichrist, not to highlight their differences. Moving seamlessly between them communicates this.

⁵⁷ Proponents of the Maccabean hypothesis continue to read this as Antiochus, interpreting the differences as "polemical exaggeration" by the author. They make no attempt at correlating v. 40-45 since it obviously does not fit Antiochus' life. In essence, the Maccabean hypothesis chooses a bad interpretation that does not fit the text and then uses it to falsify the reliability of the text. Calvin interpreted v. 36ff as referring to Rome and Rashi and Ibn Ezra identify it as Constantine the Great. The biggest problem with these views is still the eschatological connections throughout the passage.

⁵⁸ The same expression appears of various persons in 4:35, 8:4,12; 11:3, 16. See also Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:7

⁵⁹ 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:4,8,12; 16:2; 14:9-12. Baldwin comments that "so thoroughgoing is his egotism that he has no option but to be an atheist" (197). This is the end of all pride.

⁶⁰ Meaning "surpassing, extraordinary," the meaning is "astonishing, shocking or unbelievable things"—blasphemies.

⁶¹ Used in Isa. 10:25; 26:20; 30:27; Mal. 1:4 of God's wrath, אַף will be poured out on both the Antichrist and the world he leads. The world will gladly follow his wicked leadership and while he is an enabler of further wickedness, it is in keeping with what the world has always desired.

⁶² Dan. 7:8,11,20,25; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5-6; Rev. 17:3

⁶³ The rendering may be "will not consider... the one desired by women" (ESV, TNIV, Mauro, Miller). As women would desire to be mother of the Messiah he will not recognize the Messiah. The rendering here (NAS, Keil, Young), means that he will have no interest in normal human relationships.

⁶⁴ 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:12,14-15

⁶⁵ Like the Roman god Mars, Antichrist's only religion will be power itself, expressed through warring conquest. "honoring" this god will probably take the form of huge financial investment in increasing his army. See 7:8,24; 11:40-45; Rev. 13:4; 16:13-16.

⁶⁶ The Antichrist will conquer with the "god of war" and conquest—essentially worship of himself and his power. Those who acknowledge him will receive great honors, authority, and even ownership over land.

⁶⁷ It is interesting that 11:27, 35 both speak of the appointed time of the end with the idea that there is still a delay before that time comes. Here the time of end has finally arrived. Correlated with the other details of the following verses, this must be the end of salvation history.

⁶⁸ This is probably the king of Egypt but probably includes a confederacy allied with him (see Dan 7:8)

⁶⁹ Is the "king of the North" identified as Antichrist, or is he a different individual, allying with the "king of the south" to attack Antichrist from two different fronts? Wood and others point out that (1) in 11:36-39 Antichrist is called "the king," not "king of the North." (2) Antichrist is connected to Rome which is hardly due north from Palestine (though Babylon was called

41. And he will enter into the beautiful land and many will fall and these will be rescued from his hand—Edom and Moab and the first of the sons of Ammon.⁷²
42. And he will stretch out his hand against (other) countries and the land of Egypt will not escape.⁷³
43. And he will become ruler over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Ethiopians will (follow) at his heels.⁷⁴
44. But reports from the east and from the north will disturb him⁷⁵ and he will go up in great anger to destroy and to exterminate many.
45. And he will pitch his palatial tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain.⁷⁶ And he will come to his end with no one as a helper for him.⁷⁷

“land of the North” in Jer. 6:22; 10:22 though it was northeast; the significance is that the invasion proceeds from the North). (3) Ezek. 38-39 predicts an invasion of Israel from the North which some have identified as Russia. In fact, Ezekiel’s northern attacker also has allies in Libya, just as here.

These reasons are ultimately unconvincing, however. The Seleucids are repeatedly called “king of the North” in v. 6-35. Since Antiochus is a strong type of the Antichrist it would be natural to use the same expression. See Tanner, [“Daniel’s King of the North”](#) in *JETS*, Sept ’92, 315-328 for an overview of the views. One problem with Tanner’s conclusion is that it seems unlikely for the king of the North to overcome the Antichrist.

⁷⁰ This could be because technology will be reduced to its ancient equivalents or these may be describing their modern counterparts. (In this respect, how else would a writer in the 5th century before Christ describe helicopters, tanks and guns?)

⁷¹ Miller correlates this battle with Ezek. 38-39 as the Battle of Armageddon. See Miller, 310-11 for some of the other views.

⁷² ESV renders “the main part of the Ammonites” but NAS renders “foremost of the sons of Ammon.” These nations all inhabited the area southeast of Palestine (now in modern Jordan). Even at the time of Antiochus, Moab no longer existed as a nation (Young, 252). Of course, the reference is to these regions. Modern Jordan will not suffer Antichrist’s invasion as God’s people will.

⁷³ Egypt may be singled out because of its role as the “king of the South” in v. 40 and earlier. It may also represent the idea that Egypt will lead a confederation of Arab nations.

⁷⁴ “At his heels” could mean that they are allies of the king of the North (NAS, ESV, Whitcomb, Wood, c.f. Ezek. 38:5) or that they are in submission to him (NIV, Montgomery, Miller). Since these verses (v. 40-45) emphasize Antichrist’s conquests, the latter seems superior, but the meaning is essentially the same either way.

⁷⁵ Attacks from the east may be described in Rev. 9:13-19; 16:12 and from the north may be Ezek. 38-39.

⁷⁶ The two seas are the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. The Antichrist will set up his headquarters on Mount Zion (“beautiful” and “holy”) and apparently use the Jerusalem temple for his headquarters (2 Thess. 2:4; Matt. 24:15). The final battle of Armageddon will follow, fought within Israel itself in the valley of Meggido (Rev. 16:16). An alternative rendering is to take “seas” as singular (whether from the Syriac or because in poetic usage 𐤍𐤓𐤕 can also be singular. In this case, the translation would be “between the sea and the beautiful mountain,” placing his camp somewhere on the plain between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean.

⁷⁷ Like so many rulers before him (Dan. 4:30-31) the end of his life is unceremonious, without dignity. The defeat and death of the Antichrist is a demonstration of the overwhelming power of the true God and vindication of God’s people (Dan. 7:11,26-27; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20).

CHAPTER 12—THE CONCLUSION OF DANIEL'S VISIONS

1. And at that time¹ will stand Michael, the great prince, standing over the sons of your people² and there will be a time of distress³ which has never happened from the (time) there was a nation until that time.⁴ But at that time your people will be rescued—everyone who has been found written in the book.⁵
2. And many⁶ sleeping in the dust of the ground will awake—some to eternal life and some to reproach⁷ and everlasting⁸ abhorrence^{9,10}.
3. And the ones who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky and the ones who direct many people towards righteousness like the stars¹¹ forever and ever.¹²
4. But as for you, Daniel, seal the words and lock up the book¹³ until the time of the end. Many will run around to and fro so that knowledge will increase.¹⁴
5. Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on this bank of the river.^{15,16}
6. And he said¹⁷ to the man dressed (in) linen who was above the waters of the river,¹⁸ “how long¹⁹ (until) the end of the wonders^{20?}”

¹ This phrase designates an eschatological fulfillment but also points the reader back to the time of 11:36-45. Archer comments that ch. 11 describes Antichrist's political and earthly conquests while ch. 12:1-3 refocuses attention on God's people and His messianic purposes.

² This correlates with the great warfare between Michael and demonic forces in Rev. 12:7-9. Michael protects the nation even as Satan (energizing Antichrist) seeks to destroy it (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 12; 13:2). Note that “time, times and half a time” (12:7) also appears in Rev. 12:14.

³ This is the great tribulation of Dan. 12:7, 11-12; Rev. 12:6,14; also Zech. 12:1-9; 13:8-14:2).

⁴ The idea may be “since before there were any nations” or “since the founding of Israel as a nation.” Most translations go with the former which also seems superior. Christ nearly quotes this statement in Matt. 24:21. This further confirms that an eschatological fulfillment is in view. Furthermore, this cannot be inter-testamental, since the Babylonian destruction far exceeded Antiochus' persecution.

⁵ This refers to the book of life (Exod. 32:33; Psa. 69:28; Mal. 3:16; Lk. 10:20; Rev. 3:5; 20:12), a figure apparently based on a book listing the true citizens of a city or community. Goldingay calls this the “the citizen list of the New Jerusalem” (306).

⁶ While it is not impossible for this to mean “all” (Baldwin), “many” (NAS, ESV) or “multitudes” (NIV, Miller) is a superior rendering. This also comports with pretribulationism since believers of all prior ages will be resurrected before the Antichrist's coming to power (Walvoord, 290).

⁷ This is a plural of “intensive fullness” (Keil, 483)—overwhelming shame.

⁸ Against annihilationism, the word is **עוֹלָם** and the same word is used for the eternal life of believers earlier in the verse. It is also used to describe God's eternal nature. See Archer, 152.

⁹ The only other instance of the word in Isa. 66:24 speaks of the dead bodies burning and smoldering “and they will be loathsome to all mankind.” The disgust will be so palpable that people will turn away from it.

¹⁰ Some have limited this to national resurrection for Israel (Ironside, A.C. Gabelein, W. Kelly), but it is individual resurrection (Walvoord, 286). This is considered the most explicit Old Testament teaching concerning individual resurrection (also Job 19:26; Psa. 17:14; Isa. 26:19). Since this includes both believers and unbelievers (c.f. John 5:28-29) it probably involved telescoping (as in Isa. 61:1-4; Zech. 9:9-10). Rev. 20:4-6, distinguishes the first resurrection of believers after the tribulation from the second resurrection of unbelievers a thousand years afterwards.

¹¹ Note Matt. 13:43.

¹² The two phrases are parallel—“wise” with “those who turn many to righteousness” and “brightness of the sky” with “the stars.” True believers both possess the truth and are expected to share it with others. This description also distinguishes them from those who do not know God. God's people hold the truth.

¹³ Both phrases speak of preserving the book for the future, not concealing its contents (8:26). Jer. 32:9-12 records an example of a copy being sealed for archiving and safekeeping, even while another copy is available for inspection. Those facing the difficult times of the end will need this revelation to endure.

¹⁴ This is not an increase in transportation or scientific knowledge. The verb “run around” is used elsewhere of searching about for something (2 Chron. 16:9; Jer. 5:1; Amos 8:12; Zech. 4:10) and the Polel is an intensive. In other words, as the end approaches and arrives, people will be desperate for answer and explanations. Those who are wise will understand the truth from this book; the wicked will be deceived by the lies of the Antichrist.

¹⁵ Collins views this periscope (v. 5-13) as concluding the entire book and not just the final vision.

¹⁶ The two angels do not serve as witnesses for the oath of v. 7, for Christ needs no witnesses. Also 8:13-16 and Miller, 322. Rather, they probably serve as attendants to the royal personage. The interpreting angel may also have still been present. The scene would have been striking.

7. And I heard the man dressed in linen who was above the waters of the river and he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by the one who lives forever²¹ that (it will be) for a time and times and half (a time)²² and (that) when the shattering of the power of the holy people is finished, all these things will be finished.²³
8. And I myself heard but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my Lord, what (will be) the outcome of these things?”²⁴
9. And he said, Go, Daniel, because the words are sealed and locked up until the time of the end.²⁵
10. Many people will be purified and be made white and be refined²⁶ but the wicked will be wicked and none of the wicked will understand but the ones who have understanding will understand.²⁷
11. And from the time when the regular sacrifice is abolished and the appalling abomination²⁸ is set up (there will be) 1,290 days.²⁹
12. Blessed is the one who waits and attains to the 1,335 days.³⁰
13. But as for you, go (your way) until the end³¹ and you will rest and you will stand in your assigned place at the end of the ages^{32,33}.

¹⁷ The text does not specify who asked the question, though it is either Gabriel or one of the angels. It’s interesting that angels are also curious about these questions (1 Pet. 1:12).

¹⁸ This person stands out from the others: (1) None of the others are described with their clothing. (2) His position above the waters may indicate “supernatural authority and power” (Whitcomb, 165; Young, 259). (3) Daniel asks him for his input but not from the others. Together with the similar description in 10:5 that seems to be a Christophany, this probably represents Christ. This would also connect with Revelation 10:5-6 that paraphrases this proclamation.

¹⁹ It’s clear that this is a chronological marker by the answer in v. 7 and by the same phrase in 8:13.

²⁰ Just as in 11:36, the idea is of astonishing, shocking events.

²¹ There could hardly be a stronger way of affirming something than to raise both hands and swear by the eternal God. Why the solemnity? Those who live through these events will despair of them ever ending but this promise assures them that it will only extend for 3 ½ years.

²² Correlated with 4:16, 25,32; 7:25 and Rev 11:3; 12:6, 14, it is clear that this is the 2nd half of the tribulation, lasting for 3 ½ years and elsewhere termed the “great tribulation.”

²³ The power of the Jewish nation will be destroyed (Zech. 12-14—or this may also be the breaking of their resistance against God). In their desperation they will finally turn to God in submission (Zech. 12:10-14; 14:3-11).

²⁴ The question is probably general, referring to all of the end time events. It may mean “what will happen at the end of these things” or “how will these things come to an end.” The lack of clarity may be because of Daniel’s inability to even ask intelligently. In essence the question is a request for more explanation.

²⁵ The revelation of the book will be preserved until the end, and this is a significant part of its purpose. The statement probably also serves to say that the relevance of this revelation is not really for Daniel so much as the future generations. In the meantime, Daniel should continue with his life.

²⁶ Though the first two verbs are Hithpa’el, Montgomery says they function as Niphal passives (447; also Baldwin, Leupold, Miller, NIV, NAS, KJV, NRSV but not ESV). Similar wording appears in 11:35 and trials always result in purifying, but the focus here is definitely eschatological (Mal 3:2-3).

²⁷ Remarkably, the wicked will continue in their obstinate rebellion (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9,11). In fact (contra Postmillennialism), the last days will bring increasing polarization between the righteous and wicked, both in their morality and in their comprehension of the truth.

²⁸ Daniel gives no further detail about the abomination, but considering the same expression in 11:31, Jesus’ indication that it would occur in the temple before His return (Matt. 24:15) and further information in Rev 13:11–15, Antichrist will apparently set up a blasphemous image in the precincts of the temple.

²⁹ 3 ½ years is 1260 days, so why the extra 30? Baldwin symbolizes (210), Archer says that 3 ½ is just an approximation (156, but what about Rev. 11:2-3 that designate 1260 days and 42 months?) and Wood says that this includes the judgment of the nations after Jesus’ return (Matt. 25:31-46; Wood, 328; also Miller, 325-26). Ultimately there are no simple answers to this or the 1335 of v. 12. It does highlight, however, the complexity of these events and the extraordinary specificity of Scripture. Each of these events has a specific duration and Scripture is accurate to those complex realities.

³⁰ Wood (328) and Miller (326) suggest that this (a total of 75 days after the end of the tribulation) is the official inauguration of Christ’s earthly kingdom. The extra 45 days are what is required to set up the kingdom.

³¹ This refers to the end of Daniel’s life (Keil, 505). This wording may have suggested to Daniel that this was the last revelation he would receive. For the remainder of his days he must be satisfied that he knows all that is necessary and that these events will be fulfilled at the end of time.

³² The noun has an Aramaic plural ending and Hartman and Di Lella (314-15) suggest that this proves that Daniel was translated from an original Aramaic base. Miller (326) explains that Daniel spoke Aramaic his whole life and would certainly have been influenced. Furthermore, this ending appears elsewhere in biblical Hebrew (Judg. 5:10).

³³ Daniel also receives a personalized statement of the promise of 12:2-3.

Part Three:

INTRODUCTION AND THEOLOGY OF DANIEL

DATE / AUTHOR

I. Maccabean Theory

A. Distinctives

1. The Maccabean Theory proposes a 2nd century date for the book of Daniel. A number of arguments have been made.
 - a. Linguistically, Daniel includes a high number of Persian and Greek loan words. The Persian empire, however, only came into power at the end of Daniel's life and it's unlikely that his vocabulary would have reflected the change so soon. Greek loan words, on the other hand, would not have been expected until well later under the conquests of Alexander.
 - b. Daniel's absence from Ben Sira's list of significant Israelite books is taken as a suggestion that he was not familiar with the book.
 - c. At its core, however, the most basic argument for the Maccabean Theory is based on the specific prophecies made in ch. 11 (not to mention the visions of ch. 2, 7, 8). Liberal proponents cannot accept the possibility that Daniel could actually foretell specific events. The Maccabean Theory, in essence, becomes a way to avoid this conclusion.
2. Within this framework, the assumption is that the author wrote pseudonymously as Daniel in order to encourage the people of his own day and rally their resistance against persecution. Said bluntly, according to the Maccabean Theory, the Book of Daniel is a forged document and an attempted deception.

B. Evaluation of the Maccabean Theory

1. The purported arguments have significant flaws.
 - a. Regarding loan words, about half of the list of 20 are actually government positions or technical terms—words Daniel would definitely have needed to use as an official. In fact, Kitchen has demonstrated that they are old Persian words (pre 300), ironically lending support to an older date. Regarding Greek words, one is already found in Homer (800), leaving only two words to build an argument from silence. Greek culture was hardly weak in its intellectual influence and contribution before this era. Further research has located extensive borrowing of Greek in Aramaic documents dating to the 5th century. Finally, Archer has demonstrated that the Aramaic of Daniel is actually closest to Old Aramaic. Ultimately the linguistic evidence is either inconclusive or points to an early date.
 - b. Regarding Ben Sira's testimony, his list is quite selective and it's hardly surprising that it does not include all Old Testament books. On the contrary, the argument from silence is quite tenuous, as even Driver acknowledges. Actually, five fragments have recently been found that copy about 2/3 of Daniel and one manuscript of Ben Sira shows signs that he was actually aware of the book.
2. Archaeological research has confirmed the accuracy of the historical information in Daniel and it seems unlikely that someone living in the 2nd century would have known this information so clearly.
3. Recently discovered Qumran fragments date to before the 160s BC—around the time when the Maccabean Theory says the book was written. But it's implausible that the document could have reached and been accepted by the Qumran community so soon after it was written.
4. Similarly, the LXX was completed by 132 BC, but that would leave only around 30 years from its writing to have been accepted, distributed and venerated as Scripture. On the contrary, it appears that the book was already quite old by this time because the LXX translators had evidently forgotten certain Persian terms (guessing at the meaning).
5. The Maccabean theory struggles with myriad details in the kingdom visions of ch. 2, 7, 8.
 - a. In chs. 2 and 7 the view is forced to identify the four kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece in order to avoid Daniel's revealed knowledge of Rome. But for Daniel to view Media and Persia as distinct, successive empires is an extraordinary mistake. Given his knowledge of

other historical details, how could he miss something so obvious? Furthermore, the text explicitly recognizes their union (Dan 5:28; 6:8, 12, 15).³⁴

- b. 7:7-8 identifies the fourth beast as different from the others—“dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly.” The Maccabean theory identifies this as the Seleucid Greek Kingdom under Antiochus IV, but this kingdom was anything but powerful. In fact, Leupold observes that it was rather a second-rate kingdom in comparison to the ones that preceded it (Miller, 201). Nor do the ten kings or the little horn supplanting three kings fit well into the Seleucid history.
- c. The details surrounding the leopard in ch. 7 and the goat in ch. 8 clearly associate it with Greece, not Persia (speed of conquests, division into 4 parts)
- d. Dan. 9:24-27 must refer to Antiochus Ephiphanes, even though “the many” certainly did not make a covenant with him and even though the chronology does not work out.
6. Ezekiel (6th century) specifically refers to Daniel (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3). Maccabean scholars have argued that this refers to a mythological figure “Danel” in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat. But the Ugaritic Danel was an idolater, serving Baal, El and Anath. How or why would the prophet choose him as a hero to set before his readers?
7. Jesus’ reference to Daniel in Matt. 24:15 assumes that he was an actual historical figure and that the book was not written pseudonymously. Christ’s allusion in Matt. 26:64 also assumes a futurist understanding that applies to Him (rather than a focus on Maccabean concerns).

II. The Conservative View

- A. In contrast, we believe that Daniel was a true historical figure whom God used to pen the words of this book in the 6th century B.C. Daniel was not written pseudonymously but by a Judean refugee whom God exalted to high office in the Babylonian and Persian courts.
- B. On this basis, the date for the events recorded in Daniel range from 605 to around 535 and the book itself was probably written around 535 BC.

605	Daniel 1 (King’s Meat); Battle of Carchemish; first captivity (2 Kings 23:35-24:7)
603/602	Daniel 2 (King’s Dream)
600-599	Daniel 3 (Fiery Furnace)
Mar. 15, 597	2 nd attack on Jerusalem; King Jehoiachin and Ezekiel taken as exiles (2 Kings 24:8-17; 25:27-30)
July 586	Final fall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:18-20; Jer 52)
Before 571	Daniel 4 (Humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar)
562/561	King Jehoiachin released from prison in Babylon and honored by King Evil-merodach
553	Daniel 7 (Vision of the Four Beasts)
550	Daniel 8 (Vision of the Two Beasts)
Oct 12, 539	Daniel 5 (Fall of Babylon)
539-530	Possible range for the Cyrus Cylinder—Policy of returning refugees to their homelands
539-536	Daniel 6 (Lion’s Den); Absolute latest possible date is 530.
538	Daniel 9 (Daniel’s Prayer); First return of exiles to Jerusalem under Jeshua and Zerubbabel
536/535	Daniel 10-12 ; Temple Building Begins
530	Death of Cyrus the Great
458, 445	Ezra and Nehemiah’s return to Jerusalem

³⁴ Even the order of the Medes before the Persians may indicate an earlier date, since the Persians were usually named first in later writing.

GENRE

- I. Daniel combines two distinct genres.
 - A. Historical narrative (chs. 1-6)—accurate records of actual events.
-[recorded from the third person omniscient viewpoint]
 - B. Prophetic visions and prediction (chs. 7-12)—detailed, specific declarations of events God will accomplish in the world.
-[recorded from the first person, objective, finite viewpoint]
- II. It is generally unhelpful and largely tautological to call Daniel apocalyptic.
 - A. Properly speaking, chapters 7-12 are the only sections of the book that could be called apocalyptic (portions of ch. 2 could be a possible candidate). See Lacocque, 122.
 - B. When the definition of apocalyptic is pressed for definition and details, it essentially comes to mean little more than literature that is written an awful lot like Daniel.
 1. The assertion that there were many documents following this pattern falls away once the Maccabean hypothesis is disproven. Most of the extant examples of apocalyptic would postdate the conservative date of Daniel—in other words, they are only poor copies of the biblical book rather than precedents that Daniel followed.
 2. Even more importantly, critics assert that Daniel is apocalyptic because the genre is pseudonymous and uses *vaticinium ex eventu* (prophecy that had actually already happened). This quickly becomes circular reasoning that rests on the starting assumption that Daniel could never have actually foretold world events. In essence, the choice becomes quite simple: either the book is a deceptive document with no true value for people interested in the truth, or it is an actual inspired prophecy from God.

PURPOSE

The book couples historical narrative together with future prophecy. The original readers were at the end of one of the most troubling and unsettling moments in their national history. The book of Daniel would have reassured them that there was still hope for God's blessings on national Israel.

STRUCTURE

- I. For the macro structure of the book, there are several possibilities:
 - A. Chapters 1-6 with narratives and Daniel in the 3rd person; Chapters 7-12 with visions and Daniel in the first person.
 - B. Chapter one as an introduction; Chapters 2-7 in Aramaic concern the future of the Gentile powers; Chapters 8-12 in Hebrew concern the future of Israel.
 - C. A variation of the previous version sees an intricate double chiasm.
 1. Chs. 1 and 12 are a prologue and epilogue; chs. 2-7 are a first chiasm with chs. 4-5 at the center; chs. 8-12a are the second chiasm with 9:26 (“an anointed one shall be cut off”) at the center and the highlighted center of the entire book.
 2. Advantages of the view:
 - a. It represents the linguistic data well. In many ways it rests almost entirely on this facet.
 - b. Placing 9:26 at the center of the book gives it a strongly christological focus.
 3. Disadvantages of the view:
 - a. The sophisticated pattern is something only a scholar could find. Like many chiasms, the pattern is hard enough to remember; it is nearly impossible to observe without a diagram. As such, its plausibility is questionable.
 - b. While representing the linguistic pattern (Hebrew vs. Aramaic) it ignores the narrative viewpoint, content and chronological patterns. Most importantly, it ignores the theological structure (God's working in the past leading to confidence for the future.)

	Chapter 1-3		Chapter 4		Chapter 5-6		Chapter 7-10 ³⁵		10:12-12:4 ³⁶		12:5-13	
Viewpoint	Omniscient		Nebuchadnezzar		Omniscient		Daniel		Messenger		Daniel	
Content	Historical ³⁷						Prophetic					
Chronology	Ch 1	Ch 2	Ch 3	Ch 4	Ch 5	Ch 6	Ch 7	Ch 8	Ch 9	Ch 10	Ch 11	Ch 12
Year	605	603/ 602	600- 599?	Before 571	Oct. 12 539	Before 530	553 ³⁸	550	538	536/535		
Language	Ch 1	Chs. 2-7					Chs. 8-10					
	Hebrew	Aramaic					Hebrew					

II. Structural observations about Daniel

- A. The major break comes at 1-6 and 7-12
 1. The viewpoint shifts from third person to first person narrative.
 2. The chronology starts over again at chapter 7. Both sections are in chronological order within their section but because chapter 7 begins again in 553 B.C. several of the dates between the two sections overlap (specifically, all of the events of 7-12 probably occurred between ch. 4 (before 571) and ch. 6 (sometime before 530).
 3. The content is also distinct with past historical events recorded in chs. 1-6 and future prophecies revealed in chs. 7-12.
- B. This yields the most natural rendering in two major divisions (past and future) with 6 subdivisions in the first and 4 in the second.

OUTLINE

- I. God's work in the past (1:1-6:28).
 - A. Daniel and his three friends refuse the king's food (1:1-21).
 - B. Daniel interprets Belshazzar's dream of the great image (2:1-49).
 - C. Daniel's three friends are delivered from the fiery furnace (3:1-30)
 - D. Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by being reduced to life as an animal (4:1-37).
 - E. Belshazzar blasphemes God and is slain (5:1-31).
 - F. Daniel is delivered from the lion's den (6:1-28).
- II. God's work in the future (7:1-12:13)
 - A. Daniel's vision of the four beasts (7:1-28).
 - B. Daniel's vision of the two beasts (8:1-27).
 - C. Daniel's prayer and revelation of the 70 sevens (9:1-27).
 1. Daniel's prayer of repentance in behalf of the nation (9:1-19).
 2. The revelation concerning 70 sevens (9:20-27).
 - D. Final Vision (10:1-12:13)
 1. Preparation for the Vision (10:1-11:1)
 2. Angelic Vision (11:2-12:3)
 - a. Prophecies about Persia (11:2)
 - b. Prophecies about Greece (11:3-4)
 - c. Prophecies about Egypt and Syria (11:5-20)
 - d. Prophecies about Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-35)
 - e. Prophecies about the End Times (11:36-12:3)
 3. Final Instructions (12:4-13)

³⁵ The only exceptions are 7:1; 10:1

³⁶ 10:15-18 uses an omniscient narrator

³⁷ The obvious exception is the vision of chapter 2, but even here the framing and primary content is historical narrative, and chapter 7 reiterates this content in much more detail with a prophetic, predictive focus.

³⁸ Note that the order is chronological for chs. 1-6 and begins again from ch. 7 in chronological order.

Theology of Daniel

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

- I. God is in charge. He is the true king.
 - A. He rules among the inhabitants of earth.
 1. He sets up kings and puts down kings. They can rule only if He allows it.
 2. His dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom one that will not go away. Their kingdoms, on the other hand, will go out of existence.
 3. He works even in and through their rebellion.
 - a. The kings of the earth have always rebelled against God.
 - b. Human rebellion will reach its nadir in the Antichrist.
 - c. God will ultimately prevail.
 - B. He rules in the armies of heaven.
 1. He is the true God in total contrast to the idols.
 2. He rules among the angelic intelligences.³⁹
 - a. In the heavenly throne room He sits on a throne before tens of thousands.
 - b. He sends messengers according to His will.
- II. Because God is in charge, we can take hope.
 - A. God's people stand apart from the pagans.
 1. They respond believingly to His word.
 2. They entrust themselves to Him (6:23).
 3. They submit themselves humbly under His rightful reign.⁴⁰
 4. They enjoy His sovereign blessings.⁴¹
 - B. As a result, God's people often suffer.
 1. God's people may suffer under His chastening hand.
 - a. When God's people sin, they will be punished like the pagans.
 - b. God sometimes uses chastening to turn pagans into His people.
 2. God's people often suffer at the hands of the pagans.
 - a. Persecution fills the story of God's people in the past.
 - b. Persecution will only continue and increase in the future.
 - C. Yet God's people will ultimately triumph.
 1. Even in the midst of struggle, they have His presence and they are the wise.
 2. In the end, those oppressed by the rulers will rule and reign.
- III. Our victory is embodied in the person of the Messiah.
 - A. He is cut off and has nothing.
 - B. Yet He ultimately rules and reigns, victorious over all.

³⁹ Dan 2:18; 3:28; 4:35; 6:22; 8:16-19; 9:21; 10:13, 20-21; 12:1

⁴⁰ Humility and submission connect directly to the main theme of the book of Daniel. If God is truly sovereign over all, there is no reason to look to self or even to the powers of men. Recognizing Him as the ruler of all, we must respond in humility because He is all that matters and therefore we cannot look to ourselves. The corresponding emotion must therefore be trust in the true God. Therefore, we can say that when we see the reality of God's sovereignty, the response towards ourselves will be humility; the response to our circumstances and towards others will be trust in God.

⁴¹ Daniel also describes God's people as the "wise," "those who turn many to righteousness," and as the covenant people

THEOLOGICAL OUTLINE

- I. God's work in the past—stories of how God demonstrated that He is the true God and that men must respond in humble obedience.
 - A. Positive examples: faithful obedience to God through trial results in exaltation and blessing.
 1. God blesses the young men's unshaking commitment to God even in their diet (1:1-21).
 - God is in control of every detail of human history.
 - God grants special blessing to those who are faithful to Him, exalting them above the pagans.
 - Even in the midst of catastrophe God is still bringing about His redemptive purposes.
 2. The king demands knowledge of his dream; the wise men of Babylon fail and face death, but Daniel receives knowledge from the Lord and gives the dream; the king believes in God as a result (2:1-49).
 - Yahweh is the true God and all others are fakes.¹
 - God is the one true source of wisdom and power.
 - Daniel received blessing and his life was sustained because of his *humble* dependence on God.
 - Daniel was granted immense honor and influence among the pagans because of his relationship with God.
 - God is the Lord of history with all knowledge and all power. All the empires of the earth are merely temporary before Him.
 3. The king demands worship and the three young men refuse so that they are cast into the fiery furnace, but when God delivers them the king worships God and exalts them (3:1-30).
 - Loyalty to God above any human authority or the pressures they can exert will sometimes result in exaltation even with them.
 - We must exercise faith and show our ultimate loyalty to God's expectations, even when the outcome is unknown.
 - Our faithfulness to God before unbelievers presents a testimony that can push them to the truth.
 - B. Negative examples: proud self-exaltation results in God's humiliation, though God sometimes restores those that humbly submit to Him (4:1-5:31).
 1. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that when interpreted by Daniel reveals God's intention to humble him if he refused to repent; when Nebuchadnezzar continued in his pride, God reduced him to a base animal until He recognized God's sovereignty (4:1-37).
 - God is intent on humbling the proud and he knows how to best do it.
 - God offers men opportunities to repent so that they don't have to bear the full brunt of his judgment.
 - God sometimes restores men to their former place when they are willing to repent in humility.
 - Anyone can experience redemption, but the process often spans many stages (chs. 1-4).
 2. Belshazzar uses the vessels from the Jewish temple and receives God's immediate judgment—removal from the kingdom and death. Daniel interprets the message and receives Belshazzar's honor (5:1-31).
 - God particularly judges those who have had the knowledge of the truth and rejected it anyway.
 - Sometimes God judges in a way that will allow for restoration if it is followed by repentance. Sometimes He doesn't allow for that possibility.
 - God especially takes the sacredness of His temple and its vessels seriously.
 - C. Yet even in the change of kingdoms and kings, the godly Daniel is still prominent and is delivered from trouble by his loyalty to God and trust in Him (6:1-28).
 1. Evil men plot to destroy Daniel by making legislation he will not obey (6:1-9)
 2. Yet Daniel remained loyal to his God and faithfully obeyed Him and as a result faced execution (6:10-18).
 3. Daniel was delivered, and in the end, He was exalted for His faithful trust in God (6:19-28).
 - Here also, Daniel was delivered specifically *because* he trusted in God. In contrast, the wicked were

¹ Note the Chaldeans' words, "except for the gods" and Nebuchadnezzar's comment, "God of gods." The entire story parallels in some sense the plagues brought on Egypt, specifically as a refutation of their gods and the contest with the Egyptian wise men or even Elijah on Mt. Carmel.

destroyed in their attempt to harm God's servant.

-Daniel's success extended even to the reign of Cyrus, the Persian. Thus Daniel served under four kings and found success and prominence under all of them!

II. God's work in the future—In spite of the rebellion of wicked men, God is always in control.

- A. Daniel has a vision of four kingdoms and one wicked king; In the throne room of heaven, God is the one in control; Rule over the nations is given to the Messiah and to His people.
 1. Daniel has a vision of four terrible beasts representing kingdoms, ending in the greatest with a horn speaking great things (7:1-8)²
 - The nations of the earth are but beasts and ever changing.
 2. Daniel sees the throne room of heaven and the Son of Man receives authority over all the kingdoms (7:9-14).
 3. Though God's people will suffer in this time, in the end, God will deliver them and they will rule (7:15-28).
 - Only one kingdom will endure forever—the one ruled by the Ancient of Days.
 - All authority has been given to the Son of Man.
 - Though there is still rebellion in direct opposition to God's authority, there will be a day of reckoning ("the books were opened").
- B. Daniel has a vision of two rams, ending with a horn that becomes great and overcomes the others (ch. 8)
 1. The first ram is Medo-Persia, and the second ram is Greece in Alexander the Great. Immediately after his victory, his kingdom will be split into four. The little horn that arises becomes great and persecutes God's people.
 2. It is notable that in chapter 7, the horn is with the final beast, which is subsequent to Greece. But here, the horn arises from Greece. It is apparent that this is a different figure than the eschatological figure. Therefore, it must refer not to the anti-Christ, but to a later figure that foreshadows the Antichrist (Antiochus Epiphanes).
- C. Daniel realized that the restoration would come soon and cried out to God to answer (ch. 9)
 - Daniel's prayed, not because he was trying to effect an outcome, but because He saw what God was doing and his heart urgently responded with desire that it be done.
 - Daniel's prayer was answered before he even finished his prayer.
 - Daniel's prayer was built around theological truth – truth about God that was applied to the people and to the situation.
 - Daniel used theo-logic. He argued with God on the basis of the truth and on the basis of what he knew to be God's most central concerns.
 - Daniel's grasp of the person of God directly impacted Him with humility and repentance.
- D. Daniel's concluding vision
 1. Chapter 10
 - Prayer is powerful.
 - We have no idea of all the things God is accomplishing.
 - God's sovereignty extends to both heaven and earth.
 2. Chapter 11
 - There has always been antagonism between God's people and the pagans.
 - God's greatest concern is always with His people.
 - The true victor is fully assured.³
 3. Chapter 12
 - There are two groups of people on planet earth—God's people and everyone else.
 - The final state of God's people will be the enjoyment of eternal victory in His presence.
 - God has only revealed the truth that we and future generations need to know.

² -The first beast is Babylon, the second is Medo-Persia, the third is Greece and the final is Rome, which extends into the last times in the anti-God final kingdom.

³ The connection here is particularly strong with the historical section (ch. 1-6). (1) Persecution will come. (2) God's people must be faithful. (3) God will sustain His people and direct toward ultimate victory.

	Protagonist	Issue	Theological Significance
Ch. 1	Daniel and the three friends	Eating the king's meat.	Their trust in God's dietary laws is tested specifically in contrast to the ways of the Gentiles.
Ch. 2	Daniel	Interpreting the king's dream.	The knowledge of the pagans is fake and Daniel's is demonstrably genuine, but he humbly credits his God.
Ch. 3	The three friends	Worshipping the king's image.	They cannot worship a false God and instead trust God for deliverance as the true authority.
Ch. 4	Nebuchadnezzar	Exalting himself.	God is the true sovereign, and humbles or exalts every king—especially those who exalt themselves.
Ch. 5	Belshazzar	Using the sacred vessels and pride.	God can destroy a king or an entire kingdom, and will do so to punish pride and desecration of His sacred vessels.
Ch. 6	Daniel	Praying to God or the king.	Worship belongs to God; not the king. God delivers those who are loyal to Him; the wicked are destroyed.

OTHER POSSIBLE THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES

- God is not to be mocked. He is patient but there is a limit.
- God's sovereign ability to humble extends to all—even the king.
- What God decrees He will complete; no kingdom is above it;
- The king's choices brought judgment on His people (ch. 5).
- God will use whatever He wishes to do His will; any kingdom, any man, any animal, any miracle...
- The wheels of history grind slow but always according to God's plan.
- How quickly people forget God's blessing and revelation (Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's faith forgotten by Belshazzar).
- The futility of the pagan's gods.
- Our God can't be molded (as an idol) but He does mold (working on people).
- In the threat of powerful evil, we place our fate in the hands of God.
- Stand firm in your conviction regardless of the cost.
- God protects those who faithfully serve and trust in Him.
- Even powerful pagans recognize the virtue of faithful godly men.
- With every persistent stand for God there is always opposition.
- There is no age limit on when God uses His people.
- The kingdoms of the earth resist God and His rule but He is always in control.
- Ultimately the Son of man and the people of God have received the everlasting kingdom.
- God's power and His ways are beyond man's comprehension.
- Daniel sets a strong precedent for literal fulfillment of prophecy.
 - Daniel understands Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years literally and God confirms it (Dan. 9:2-3).
 - The only workable understanding of Dan. 9:24-27 is literal and recognizes specific time markers as accurate.
 - The vision of ch. 10-12 was fulfilled literally and historically in extraordinary detail.

Excursi

WHO IS DARIUS THE MEDE?

I. Darius is Cambyses, Cyrus' son and successor.

A. Background

1. Cambyses ruled in Babylon during his father's reign and even held the title "king of Babylon."
2. Cambyses died prematurely, apparently because he violated religious etiquette.

B. Problems:

1. He was not old enough to fit this description—in 5:31 he is 62 years old.
2. Both of his parents were Persians, so why would he be called "the Mede?"

II. A fictional character or a historical error

A. Background

1. This view is represented by those who subscribe to the Maccabean hypothesis (Hartman, DiLella, Lacocque, Montgomery, Rowley, Porteous).
2. The theory is that Daniel picked up certain historical facts about Darius I (522-486), the king who succeeded Cambyses. He did divide the empire into satrapies and he was father (rather than son, 9:1) to Xerxes I.

B. Problems

1. Any competent Jew would know that Cyrus released the Jews to their homeland (c.f. Ezra 1:1) and that Darius ruled much later (Ezra 4-5). For an author that repeatedly shows remarkable historicity elsewhere, this historical blunder strains at credulity.
2. Later in the book, it is clear that Daniel is aware of Cyrus' existence and reign. Considering that Daniel records both the first year of Darius (9:1-2) and the third year of Cyrus (10:1), the author would have to be foolish to think that they were sequential. Daniel would have been over 80 in the third year of Darius (536 B.C., 69 years after the captivity; recorded in Dan. 9:1-2) and there simply isn't time for another ruler.
3. Liberals also considered Belshazzar a fictional character at one time.

III. Gubaru

A. Background

1. Gubaru was governing Babylon during this time. The Nabonidus Chronicle states that Cyrus appointed him over the city immediately after its fall and other records relate that he continued until the fifth year of Cambyses (539-524).
2. The Nabonidus Chronicle speaks of his appointing subgovernors in Babylon (c.f. Dan. 6:1-2).

B. Evaluation

1. Dan. 5:31 ("received the kingdom" could refer to Cyrus' handing authority down to him as well as 9:1 ("was made king").
2. "King" could be used loosely enough to include a sub-governor.
3. Xenophon states that Gobryas/Gubaru was "well advanced in years" (*Cyropaedia* 4.6.1).
4. A huge number of scholars accept this hypothesis (Whitcomb, Leupold, Wood, Archer, Albright, Wilson, Delitzsch).
5. All in all, there is no reason that this theory is unworkable or unacceptable to conservative scholars.

IV. A different title for Cyrus the Great (Wiseman, Bulman, Baldwin, Miller).⁴⁵

A. Background

⁴ James Bulman offers a thorough argument for this view in [Westminster Theological Journal, Spring '73, pg. 247](#). Also [D.J. Wiseman, Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel](#).

⁵ In the past, some scholars identified Darius as Cyaxares II, father-in-law of Cyrus, but conflicts in the ancient evidence have rendered this untenable. See Shea, ["Darius the Mede: An Update" in AUSS](#).

1. Dual titles were common for kings in the ancient near east—Cyrus and Darius were both titles.
 - a. Coming from the Avestan Persian word for “king” (*dara*), *Darayavahush* may have meant “the Royal One.”
 - b. Because of ruling a split empire, Darius may have needed two different appellations—Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede.
 - c. Cyrus did apparently try to emphasize his Median heritage. Nabonidus (his 2nd cousin) called him “King of the Medes” and Herodotus confirms that he used this title, even after Babylon fell (*Histories*, 1.206).
 - d. Darius’ father was Persian but his mother was Median (c.f. 5:31; 9:1). Jewish practice was to designate children in a mixed marriage by maternal descent (Ezra 10:3 and the Talmud, Midrash; see Bulman, “Identification,” 263).
 - e. The book itself is filled with double names (Daniel and his three friends).
 - f. Why then did Daniel use two different titles for Cyrus? Bulman suggests that Isa. 13:17 and Jer. 51:11, 28 had predicted that Babylon would fall to the Medes. Daniel linked these prophecies to Cyrus by using this title. Of course he also used “Cyrus” to designate his position as ruler over the known world.
 2. The chronology fits perfectly. Cicero says that Cyrus died at 70 and ruled for 9 years after conquering Babylon. Therefore, in 539 he would be 62 (Dan. 5:31).
 3. There is reason to believe that Cyrus used Babylon as a winter residence (*Cyropaedia*, 7.5.57) so he would have been present.
 4. The statement in 6:28 can be translated “the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” This has a close parallel in 1 Chron. 5:26 where Assyrian records explicitly identify Pul and Tiglath-Pileser as the same person.
 5. Since Xerxes (literally, Ahasuerus) was a royal title (used by a number of other kings), 9:1 could refer to his father Cabyses or his grandfather, Astyages, the king of the Medes.
 6. Ancient Jewish sources seem to have assumed this identification. The LXX and Theodotion have “Cyrus” in 11:1 where the MT reads “Darius the Mede.” Bel and the Dragon identifies the king who cast Daniel to the lions as Cyrus.
 7. There are significant parallels between Cyrus and Darius.
 - a. Both ruled over Medo-Persia.
 - b. Both have their reigns dated from the fall of Babylon. (Daniel dates Darius this way and cuneiform sources also date Cyrus from the same event.)
 - c. Both appointed satraps after conquering Babylon.
- B. Evaluation
1. A number of scholars (including conservatives) have adopted this view (Wiseman, Bulman, Baldwin, Miller).
 2. This is a much simpler solution to the problem and avoids many of the interpretational difficulties of identifying Darius as Gubaru. It also makes literary sense of the references to Cyrus in the book (1:21; 6:28; 10:1).

THE ANTICHRIST

The following summarizes everything that Scripture tells us about the Antichrist. The passages surveyed and included here are Dan. 7:7-12; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18-19, 22; 4:2-4; Rev. 11:7; 13:1-17:18; 19:17-20:10.

1. He will rule over the final empire that is “terrifying, dreadful and exceedingly strong” (Dan. 7:7 Rev. 13:2).
2. He will rule in an alliance with seven kingdoms (Rev. 17:10-11) and ten kings though He will be different and superior to them (Dan. 7:20; Rev. 13:20; 17:11-14). They will hand their authority over to him (Rev. 17:13, 17) and he will eventually overcome three of them (Dan. 7:8, 20; Rev. 13:1; 17:3).
3. He will speak boastful, arrogant and blasphemous things against the most High (Dan. 7:8,11,20, 25; 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5-6; Rev. 17:3).
4. He will make war with the saints and overcome them (Dan. 7:21, 25 c.f. Rev. 12:17; 13:7; 17:6-7).
5. He will control every aspect of society (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:7).
6. He will rule for 3 ½ years (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5).
7. He will be destroyed and his dominion given to God’s people (Dan. 7:26; Rev. 17:14; 20:4).
8. He is called “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3), “the son of destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3), antichrist (1 John 2:18) and “the beast” (Rev. 13:5-8).
9. He will oppose every other god or object of worship and demand worship for himself (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:4,8,12; 16:2; 14:9-12).
10. He will claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4)
11. He will take his seat in the temple (2 Thess. 2:4)
12. He is currently restrained by the Holy Spirit until his time comes (2 Thess. 2:6)
13. He will be annihilated by the words of Jesus (2 Thess. 2:8)
14. He will be energized by Satan (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2).
15. He will perform signs and wonders or have them performed for him by the false prophet (1 Thess. 2:9-10; Rev. 19:20).
16. He will be a deceiver, using “wicked deception” and “a strong delusion” (2 Thess. 2:10-11; 2 John 7) and relying on great signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:10-11; Rev. 13:13-14; 19:20)¹.
17. His coming indicates the “last hour,” which is already happening (1 John 2:18; 4:3).
18. His nature is typified in the actions of all that deny the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18-19, 22; 4:3).
19. The spirit of antichrist is already at work in the world (1 John 4:3).
20. He will deny the Father and the Son and deny that Jesus came in the flesh (2 John 7).
21. He will make war and eventually overcome the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7).
22. He will suffer an apparently fatal wound and then be miraculously healed, leading to his preeminence (Rev. 13:3,12,14; 17:8).
23. An image of the beast will come to life, receive worship, and cause the death of all who do not worship the antichrist (Rev. 13:14-15; 19:20).
24. Everyone on earth will be forced to take the mark of the beast—666 (Rev. 13:16-18; 19:20).
25. Those who worship him or receive his mark will be damned (Rev. 14:9-12).
26. He will be allied with Babylon (Rev. 17:3) but eventually turn against her (Rev. 17:16).
27. His reign will only be very brief before he goes into damnation (Rev. 17:8; 19:20; 20:10).
28. He will make war against the Lamb (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-20).
29. He is typified by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Greek Seleucid Empire.
 - a. Both are symbolized as little horns at the beginning that become great (Dan. 8:9 and 7:8).
 - b. Both are described as having features that are “stern” and “imposing” (Dan. 8:23 and 7:20).
 - c. Both have great power and authority (Dan. 8:24 and 11:39, c.f. 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:7-8).
However, it is also clear that the source of their power is external—the energizing of Satan (Dan. 8:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2).

¹ Apparently, these signs are performed by Satan (2 Thess.) and the other beast (Rev. 13) but used to certify the power of the antichrist.

- d. Both destroy thousands of lives (Dan. 8:24 and 11:36, c.f. Rev. 17:12).
- e. Both prosper for only a short time (Dan. 8:24; 11:36; Rev. 17:12).
- f. Both persecute God's people (Dan. 8:24; 7:21,25; Rev. 13:7).
- g. Both are masterful deceivers (Dan. 8:25; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:4; 19:20) and this is evident in their use of intrigue (Dan. 8:23 and 7:8, 20).
- h. Both are exceedingly arrogant and blasphemously boastful (Dan. 8:25; Dan. 7:8,11,20,25; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5).
- i. Both blaspheme the true God (Dan. 8:25; 7:25; 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5-6).
- j. Neither is killed by any human agency (Dan. 8:25; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20).

PROPHETIC YEARS

I. Biblical support

- A. One strategy for understanding the chronology of Daniel 9:25-27 involves calculating the 490 years on the basis of 360 days each. This case was most significantly made by Sir Robert Anderson, who suggested that this was the assumption of ancient Israel and several of its neighbors.
- B. Several passages describe periods of time with different markers. The argument, of course, is that if these are exactly equivalent, each year must last only 360 days. (3 ½ years of solar years would render 1278.4 days.)
 - 1. 3 ½ years— Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14
 - 2. 42 months— Rev 11:2; 13:5
 - 3. 1260 days— Rev 11:3; 12:6
- C. The problem is that there are also two passages that specify longer periods of time. In other words, if we followed this line of reasoning consistently in the book of Daniel, we would have to conclude that prophetic years are 368.6 days or 381.4 days long. (Of course, no one actually contends this).²
 - 1. Dan. 7:25 speaks of “time and times and half a time.”
 - 2. Dan. 9:27 speaks of half of one 7-year period
 - 3. Dan. 12:11 speaks of 1290 days.
 - 4. Dan. 12:12 speaks of the blessing of arriving at the 1,335 days.

II. Historical support

- A. The Babylonian calendar consisted of twelve thirty day months (360 days) and this was the context of Daniel's prophecy.
- B. The Jewish calendar had 360 days.
 - 1. Support
 - In *Chronography*, Julius Africanus understands Daniel's prophecy to be using Jewish lunar years.
 - 2. Problems
 - a. Around 500 BC, the Babylonian astronomer Naburimannu used extremely accurate astronomical records to measure the solar year at 365 days, 6 hours, 15 minutes and 41 seconds (only 25 minutes, 55 seconds off).
 - b. It's actually far from authoritatively demonstrated that either the Jewish or Babylonian calendars used 360 day years. Gleason Archer demonstrates that on the contrary, Israel's neighbors were quite aware that there are 365 days in one year (EBC, 114-115).

III. Conclusion

- A. It seems hermeneutically suspect to grant absolute status to one set of passages and ignore another set of passages.

² One difference is that these descriptions are separated by several chapters in Daniel whereas they do appear together in one case (Rev. 11:2-3). Still, this passage does not draw an exact equivalence. In fact, the periods of time describe two different prophetic realities (Gentile nations trampling Jerusalem vs. the prophesying of the two witnesses).

- B. It's natural to ask whether Scripture intends this level of precision and specificity. We should make the comparison to the Babylonian captivity and 70 years, recognizing that the people returned in waves and these events were not accomplished in one day.

EXEGESIS OF DAN. 9:24-27

I. Literal years ending with Antiochus Epiphanes

A. Major Proponents—liberal interpreters including Montgomery, Porteous, Hartman and Di Lella, Goldingay, Lacocque, Towner, Collins

B. Distinctives

1. The passage refers to 490 literal years.
2. The starting year is 586 B.C. (the date of Jerusalem's fall).
3. The first 49 years terminate with the fall of Babylon in 539/538, the release of the exiles by Cyrus and the influence of Joshua the high priest as the "anointed one."
4. The next 434 years extend from 538 to a different "anointed one"—the high priest Onias III who was assassinated in 170. The discrepancy is explained either as a calculation error (Montgomery) or simply round numbers (Collins).
5. The last seven years extend from 170-163.
6. The intention of the prophecy is to predict the Lord's return during Antiochus' reign (the time when the book was supposedly written pseudonymously).

C. Evaluation

D. Advantages

1. The years are literal.
2. Proponents make an attempt to fit the framework into actual history.

E. Problems

1. Beginning the decree in 586 B.C. is necessary to make the chronology work, but the date is extremely arbitrary since the text designates "the going out of the decree..."
2. This view posits that the "anointed one" in v. 25 comes after 7 years by splitting the 6 and 72 (so the Masoretic punctuation and ESV).³ Besides creating a rougher reading, this rendering also leads to the absurdity of Jerusalem being continually rebuilt for 434 years.
3. Antiochus did not stop the sacrifices for a full 3 ½ years but only three years.
4. Even with these significant disturbances to the text, this view still leaves 67 years missing. Proponents maintain that the writer simply made a historical mistake or used round numbers.
5. This view rests on the premise that the pseudonymous writer was forecasting the Lord's return in his own time (assumed to be the days of Antiochus). Therefore, this view presumes the illegitimacy of the biblical text.

II. Symbolic periods ending in the 1st century

A. Major Proponents—Amillennialists and Postmillennialists including Young and Rushdoony.

B. Distinctives

1. The first 49 years extend from 538 (Cyrus' decree) to the end of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (roughly 400). Clearly, the years must be symbolic for this chronology to fit.
2. The next 434 years extend from 400 B.C. until Christ's coming.
3. The last 49 years continued from Christ's coming until an unspecified time after Christ's ministry and before A.D. 70.
4. Baldwin has a variation of this view that extends the final 7 week from Christ's second advent to the end of the ages.

C. Evaluation

1. Advantages

³ See Miller, 254, note 30 for more information.

- a. This view appropriately begins counting from Cyrus' decree in 538.
- b. This year recognizes the "anointed one" as the Messiah.
2. Disadvantages
 - a. While Cyrus' decree freed the refugees, it didn't specify anything about rebuilding Jerusalem. While these interpreters maintain that it is implicit in the decree, Jerusalem was not rebuilt until nearly 100 years later (Neh. 1:3; 2:17; Ezra 4:12).
 - b. If the sevens don't refer to seven of any particular thing, do they really mean anything?
 - c. Specific timing becomes extraordinarily arbitrary and some periods can last longer than others with no exegetical basis.⁴ Sevens in the first period last for 20 years each; seven years in the second; less than 6 in the final 7 or even open ended (Young). Miller comments that "even if the sevens are symbolic, we would expect them to be fairly similar in length." Furthermore, why the division of sevens into separate groups if the symbolism will reduce them to saying little more than "first A, then B followed by C?"
 - d. If the covenant of v. 27 is the covenant of grace (as Young) and the one who made the covenant is Christ, bringing about the end of sacrifices in the church age, why is this only for half of the final sevens?

III. Symbolic periods ending in the 2nd advent

A. Major Proponents—Amillennialists including Keil, Leupold

B. Distinctives

1. The first 7 sevens stretch from Cyrus' decree (538) to Christ's first coming.
2. The next 62 sevens stretch from Christ's first coming to the antichrist's persecution of the church. The rebuilding of Jerusalem refers to the growth of the church.⁵
3. The last 7 sevens are eschatological. "The anointed one" being cut off (v. 26) is the worldwide rejection of Jesus Christ and his people during the tribulation. Likewise, the destruction of the city and "end to sacrifice and offering" refers to the Antichrist's persecution and near annihilation of the church.

C. Evaluation

1. Advantages
 - By making the fulfillments symbolic, problems of chronological details are much easier to resolve.
2. Disadvantages
 - a. Interpreting events figuratively (particularly in v. 26-27) becomes highly subjective. Why, for instance, is rebuilding of Jerusalem literal at the beginning of v. 25 but figurative at the end?
 - b. Interpreted symbolically, the destruction of Christ's kingdom and people in v. 26-27 is quite pessimistic, particularly considering other passages (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 11:11-13).
 - c. The sevens vary greatly in length from 80 years (first 7) to at least 32 years (next 62) to an unknown length.

IV. Literal years ending with the second coming

A. Major Proponents—premillennialists including Miller, Walvoord.

B. Distinctives

1. The first 49 years begin with the command to rebuild Jerusalem, concluding with completion of the work.
 - This can be the decree to Ezra in 458 or to Nehemiah in 445. This results in a termination date of either 409 or 396.
2. The next 434 years extend from the completion of the work to Christ's coming.
 - This is either His baptism in A.D. 26 or Palm Sunday in A.D. 32/33.

⁴ For instance, one writer understands each seven to be any possible multiple of the number seven—some are seven years but others are 14. The last group of sentence is 10 years each. Other than making the interpretation possible, there is no basis for any of these multiples. [D. H. Lurie in *JETS* 33](#) (1990), 303-309.

⁵ As in the first view, this requires the splitting of the seven and sixty-two weeks in v. 25 (ESV).

3. There is an extended intervening period because the prophecy has a Jewish concern and the Jewish nation rejected the Messiah. God's present work is concentrated among Gentiles, but the focus of redemption history will return to the Jewish nation again.
4. The last 7 years begins with the tribulation that will ultimately result in Jewish repentance (Rom. 11:25-29; Zech. 12:10-13:1). This period will end with Christ's second coming and the millennium. The fact that this correlates so clearly with Revelation (Rev 11:2-3) and the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25) is a significant strength.

C. Evaluation

1. Advantages

- a. This is the only interpretation that allows for a truly literal interpretation of Daniel's words.
- b. This interpretation demonstrates an incredible precision in God's fulfillment of His promises.
- c. The interpretation perfectly fits the context—Daniel's prayer of concern for His people, national Israel.

2. Disadvantages

- a. There is still some disagreement between writers on the exact timing. Some use the decree to Ezra; others use the decree to Nehemiah. Some use 360 day years and others use 365 day years. The important conclusion to recognize is that there are multiple ways that the prophecy may have been fulfilled. The fact that we are unsure of exactly which way God chose to fulfill His Word in no way mitigates the fact that He did fulfill it. Nor do multiple ways of demonstrating that the chronology fits make the interpretation less clear.
- b. The intervening period between Daniel's 69th and 70th weeks has no explicit exegetical indicator in the text (besides the fact that the 70th week is listed separately). However, this is far from uncommon in Scripture.⁶ On the contrary, we ought to view it as a reminder that God views vast periods of time as merely passing moments

⁶ In Luke 4:18-19, note Jesus' reading of Isa. 61 that stopped at Isa. 61:2a. To go on in his reading would have included prophecies about God's judgment (potentially tribulational?) and the millennium. Similarly, in Acts 2:16-21, note Peter's quotation of Joel 2:28-32 that was partially fulfilled in Pentecost but awaits complete fulfillment in the events of the tribulation.

	Strictly Inter-Testamental	Symbolic to 1 st Century	Symbolic to 2 nd Advent	Literal Years to 2 nd Coming
Proponents	Montgomery, Collins, Lacocque	Young, Rushdoony	Keil, Leupold	Miller, Walvoord, Leon Wood
Theological Viewpoint	Liberal	Amillennial or Postmillennial	Amillennial	Premillennial
Beginning date ("going forth of the commandment to... build Jerusalem" in v. 25)	Jeremiah's prophecy of the captivity (Jer. 25:1-11) in 605 B.C., but the sevens begin in 586 (fall of Jerusalem)	Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem around 538 (c.f. Isa. 44:28; 45:13)	Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem around 538 (c.f. Isa. 44:28; 45:13)	The decree to Ezra (458) or Nehemiah (445) to rebuild.
End of the 1st seven weeks (until the anointed one..., there will be seven and sixty-nine sevens," in v. 25)	539/538, with Babylon's fall, Cyrus' release of exiles and Joshua the high priest as "the anointed one" (Ezra 2:2, Zech. 3:1)	The completion of the city and temple under Ezra and Nehemiah (440-400); the 49 years are symbolic.	Coming of Jesus Christ (4-3 BC)	The completion of the work either in 409 (Ezra) or 396 (Nehemiah).
Rendering of "seven and sixty-two years" in v. 25	"...there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty two weeks..." (as ESV)	"seven sevens" and sixty-two sevens" (as NIV)	"...there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty two weeks..." (as ESV)	"seven sevens and sixty-two sevens" (as NIV)
End of the 69 weeks ("And after the 62 weeks an anointed one shall be cut off..." in v. 26)	The beginning of Antiochus' persecution (cleaning the temple in 164 or his death in 163).	The coming of Christ (also His death in v. 26).	Sixty nine weeks of the church's being rebuilt ("Jerusalem") end in a great apostasy ("cut off" meaning lost followers in the church).	Christ's coming at his baptism in 26 (Ezra) or Palm Sunday in 32/33 (Nehemiah)
Last 7 years in v. 27	Persecution of Antiochus (170-163)	Destruction of Jerusalem and the church (open ended)	Final persecutions and struggles of the end times	Seven years of tribulation
"Anointed one" of v. 26	Onias III (death in 170 BC marks the end of the 62)	Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ
"Prince" of v. 26	Antiochus	Christ (His people are the church)	Antichrist	Antichrist
"Desolator" of v. 27	Epiphanes	Titus, destroying the temple	Antichrist	Antichrist

Selected Bibliography

This bibliography is hardly comprehensive, but represents major sources. Here they are divided into conservative and liberal, roughly in order of their relative helpfulness. All prices are USD on Amazon.com (September, 2015).

CONSERVATIVE COMMENTARIES

Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* in *The New American Commentary* series. Nashville: B&H, 1994.

Premillennial and very accessible but still thorough. A helpful focus on the theological message of the book. 352 pgs; \$15.50; \$10 on Kindle.

Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973.

Premillennial and helpful on the prophecy sections. He is not as attentive to narrative details as Miller and sometimes seems to focus on defending premillennialism to the neglect of the theological focus. (336 pgs; \$18).

John Walvoord. *Daniel*. Chicago: Moody, 2012 (432 pgs; \$20 or \$10 on Kindle).

Premillennial and quite similar in some ways to Leon Wood. Also quite helpful on the prophecy sections. Some analysis in the narrative sections are lacking and some interpretations seem wooden. Also not terribly strong on theological analysis. 336 pgs; \$18.

Tremper Longman III, *Daniel* in *The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Amillennial with the prophecy sections of the book almost entirely unhelpful. Elsewhere, however, Longman gives helpful discussion of theological implications and application. 320 pgs; \$18 or \$11 on Kindle.

John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* in the *Everyman's Bible Commentary* series. Chicago: Moody, 1985.

Premillennial. The commentary is helpful as far as it goes, but is really more like an extended reading companion than a full commentary. 175 pgs; \$10.

Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel* in the *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* series. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1978

Amillennial and sometimes surprising in her interpretational methods with the prophecy passages. Quite helpful in the narrative passages. 232 pgs; \$15 in paperback and Kindle.

H. F. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969.

Amillennial and not terribly helpful on prophetic portions except to sometimes give a good overview of the interpretive options. He is most helpful in refuting liberal approaches (though the work is now somewhat dated) as well as in the narrative sections. 549 pgs., \$10.

LIBERAL COMMENTARIES

John J. Collins, *Daniel* in the *Hermeneia* series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Collins offers some of the most technically thorough exegesis, providing genuine insight into text, words and narrative analysis. Unfortunately his conclusions are also thoroughly liberal throughout. The result is genuinely helpful for scholarly purposes but the final conclusions are consistently frustrating to the conservative reader. 499 pgs; \$61.

John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* in the *Word Biblical Commentary* series. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989.

Among other things, Goldingay provides one of the most thorough bibliographies on the book of Daniel. His narrative analysis is quite helpful. He is amillennial. Unfortunately, he also gives a 2nd century date for the book and follows a documentary hypothesis. 416 pgs; \$15.

André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1976.

I have not had the opportunity to use this book but find it heavily cited in other sources. 328 pgs; \$33.

Charles, R.H.—Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel

Montgomery, James A.—*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Daniel* ([free on Internet Archive](#))