

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Bowing before the Lord of History

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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 2:95

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?
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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”? _____

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.¹⁵ 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?

¹⁵ 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 this 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. I 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.